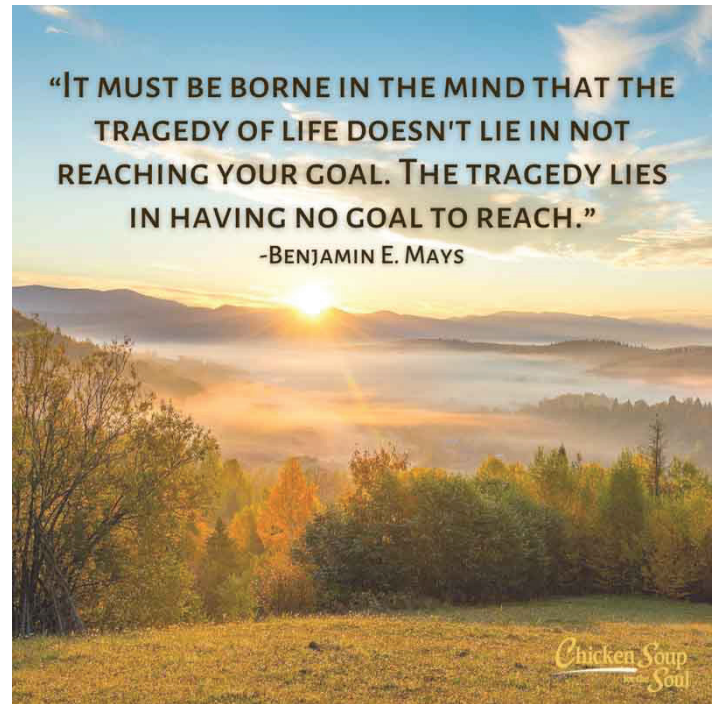


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## Upcoming Events

### Monday, Nov. 8

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

### Tuesday, Nov. 9

Junior High GBB at Webster Area. 7th Grade at 4 p.m. followed by 8th grade game

SoDak16: Hamlin vs. Mobridge-Pollock at Groton at 6 p.m.

### Thursday, Nov. 11

2 p.m.: Veteran's Day Program in the Arena

Junior High GBB: Langford at Groton. 7th grade game at 4 p.m. followed by 8th grade game

### Friday & Saturday, Nov. 12-13

Debate & Oral Interp at SF Washington

**Groton Daily Independent**  
**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**  
**Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460**

**OPEN:** **Recycling Trailer in Groton**  
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
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## GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

### School Board Meeting

November 8, 2021 – 7:00 PM – GHS Library Conference Room

#### AGENDA:

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

#### POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

#### CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of October 12, 2021 school board meeting as drafted or amended.
2. Approval of October 2021 District bills for payment.
3. Approval of October 2021 Financial Report, Custodial Accounts, and Investments.
4. Approval of October 2021 School Lunch Report.
5. Approval of October 2021 School Transportation Report.

#### OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Continued discussion and necessary action on District response to COVID-19.
  - a. Local COVID-19 Update
3. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

#### NEW BUSINESS:

1. Review of 2021 District and School Report Card
2. Approve resignation of Karen Johnson, Kitchen Staff, effective 10/12/2021.
3. Approve hiring Alexandria Homsombath, Study Hall/Office Assistant, at \$12.10/hour.
4. Executive Session pursuant SDCL1-25-2(1) personnel.

#### ADJOURN

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## Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

The Minnesota Vikings fall to 3-5 as they struggle to maintain an early 14 point lead against Lamar Jackson and the Baltimore Ravens. What looked like a huge road victory for the struggling Vikings quickly turned into another tough loss.

### First Half:

The Vikings came into their matchup against the Baltimore Ravens hoping to claw their way to a win despite missing key players. After kicking off, the Vikings' defense was able to stop Lamar Jackson on a 4th & 2. However, the refs threw a flag on DJ Wonnum for a horse-collar tackle. After the replay, it was evident that Wonnum made a legal tackle. The Ravens capitalized on the blown call and kick a 37-yard field goal by Justin Tucker; Ravens 3 – Vikings 0.

Vikings responded with a 50-yard touchdown thanks to a deep ball from Kirk Cousins to Justin Jefferson on 3rd & 7; Vikings 7 – 3. After a Ravens punt, the Vikings got the ball at their own 6. On 3rd & 1, Dalvin Cook—who has struggled to break any long runs this season—finally got loose for a 66-yard run. Nine plays later, the Vikings extend their lead to 14-3 with a Kirk Cousins 1-yard touchdown on a quarterback sneak.

The game then saw both teams punt on their next two drives, respectively. With 1:52 remaining in the first half, rookie safety Cameron Bynum made an incredible diving interception and returned the ball to the 16-yard line. The offense could not move the ball and settled for a field goal with 1:29 remaining in the first half; Vikings 17 – Ravens 3.

Once again, the Vikings fail to lock it down before halftime, this time it was thanks to a 42-yard defensive pass interference call on safety Xavier Woods. Devonta Freeman was able to get wide open for a 5-yard touchdown reception from Lamar Jackson with 0:19 remaining in the first half, cutting the Vikings lead to 17 – 10.

### Second Half:

The second half began with fireworks for the Vikings as Iowa State rookie runningback, Kene Nwangwu, took a 98-yard kickoff for a touchdown to start the second half; Vikings 24 – Ravens 10. Down two scores, the Ravens were able to put together back-to-back long touchdown drives to even the score Vikings 24 – Ravens 24. These two drives saw the Ravens run 28 plays and use up 16:25 of game clock, a recipe that would begin to tire out the Viking defense.

The Vikings punt again. The Ravens drive down the field to score another touchdown. It would give them a 31-24 lead over the Vikings with 3:29 remaining.

With their backs against the wall, Kirk Cousins and the Viking offense (with just 13-yards in the second half), started their drive from the Ravens 25. Miraculously, the Viking's offense was able to put together a game-tying drive concluding in a 1-yard touchdown reception by Adam Thielen with 1:06 remaining in the 4th quarter. The game would go to overtime with both teams tied 31 - 31.

### Overtime:

The Ravens got the ball to start overtime. As they were driving down the field, Vikings linebacker Anthony Barr tipped a Lamar Jackson pass and was able to corral it for an interception. However, the offense that showed up in their last drive decided to remain dormant, as they quickly punted on three plays and 1 yard of offense.

A tired Viking defense trotted back out onto the field and allowed the Ravens to drive the ball into field goal range. With 0:20 remaining in overtime, Ravens' kicker Justin Tucker nailed a 36-yard field goal to give the Ravens the win.

The final score of the game: Ravens 34 - Vikings 31.

### Statistical Leaders:

Kirk Cousins 17 for 28, 187 yards, 2 TD

Dalvin Cook 17 carries for 110 yards rushing, 0 TDs

Justin Jefferson 3 catches for 69 yards, 1 TD

### Next game:

The Vikings travel to Los Angeles to face the Chargers next week. Although this is a road game on paper, the Chargers are notorious for struggling to have their fans in the stadium for this game. Hopefully, the Vikings can rebound before their struggles become insurmountable.

## Resetting the Internal Clock

Daylight savings time has just ended and now everyone has had the chance to “fall back” to standard time. While many people enjoy that extra hour of sleep that comes each fall, 63 percent of Americans say that they would support the elimination of seasonal time changes and there are some health issues to consider. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine also supports this stance due to the sleep disruption that occurs related to this biannual change.

Our body has its own internal clock called the circadian rhythm which helps set our internal sleep-wakefulness cycle. This cycle is sensitive to light, especially daylight. It is responsible for the production of melatonin and serotonin in our brain. Melatonin helps synchronize our sleep-wake cycle to our environment. Unfortunately, bright lights and anything with a back lit screen – phone, television, tablet, or computer - suppresses your body’s production of melatonin and can adversely affect your sleep quality.

A study completed in 2020 by the National Institutes of Health found that 150,000 Americans experience negative health effects related to daylight savings time changes, mainly with the “spring forward” changes. The four most prominent health conditions with increased risks of occurring in the weeks following the time changes include the following: cardiovascular disease (including increased risk of heart attacks), increased risk of injuries, worsening of mental or behavioral disorders, and flares in immune related diseases.

What can you do to minimize your risk? Try to gradually prepare the body by slowly adjusting your sleep cycle before and after the time change to make the change less abrupt. One thing that will help is by slowly changing your bedtime in 15 to 30-minute increments each night until you get to your new desired sleep and wake times. In the hours leading up to bedtime, try to avoid bright lights and anything with a back lit screen.

Going outside in natural daylight, especially in the morning, can help reset your internal clock. Light exercise in the morning or afternoon can help lower stress hormones and promote better sleep later that evening. Try to keep a bedtime routine and work to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night. A consistent schedule for when you go to bed and when you get up is much easier on your body and its internal clock.

So, after you have changed your smoke detector batteries and reset all your clocks, remember to work on gently helping your body reset its own internal clock with healthy choices. This will help you transition to the new time schedule with ease. Your body will thank you.

Jill Kruse, D.O. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org) and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show celebrating its twentieth season of truthful, tested, and timely medical information, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



By Jill Kruse, D.O.



## The Life of Karen Bakke



Karen Bakke, age 72, of Marshall, Minnesota, died on Friday, November 5, 2021, after a valiant battle with cancer. Funeral Services are 11:00 a.m. Tuesday, November 9, 2021, at Living Word Lutheran Church in Marshall, Minnesota. A reception for attendees will follow in the church basement. Visitation will be held from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. Monday, November 8, 2021, at the Hamilton Funeral Home in Marshall. A prayer service will begin at 6:30 p.m. followed by a time to share memories. Visitation will then continue one hour prior to the service on Tuesday, from 10:00 a.m. until the time of services at 11:00 a.m., at the church. Interment will be at 11:00 a.m., Wednesday, November 10, 2021, at the Groton Union Catholic Cemetery in Groton, South Dakota. The public is again welcome to attend this final tribute on Wednesday.

Karen Ann Sanderson was born on July 14, 1949, in Aberdeen, South Dakota, to Wayne and Patricia (Rix) Sanderson. She spent her childhood on a farm north of Groton, South Dakota, with sisters Kathy, Peggy, and Patti - playing paper dolls, and ice skating on the cattle pond.

Karen graduated from high school in Groton in 1967 and moved to Rapid City, South Dakota, to attend National College of Business. It was in Rapid City that Karen met the love of her life, Emmet Bakke, on a blind date. After an evening of conversation, they both knew they wanted to spend more time together, and they married on January 31, 1970.

Karen and Emmet were stationed in Rapid City, SD; Island of Guam; San Bernardino, CA; Denver, CO; and Wichita, KS, while Emmet finished his military commitment. They ultimately settled in Marshall, Minnesota, where they formed many lifelong friendships, and Karen's dream of becoming a mom of many continued. Erich, Kris, and Ryan joined the family through adoption in 1975.

Karen loved playing cards with the kids on snow and rainy days, and spent every night from Thanksgiving to Christmas making holiday goodies for friends and family members. She never missed the kids' sporting events and musical performances, and she joined every available booster club, parent group, and school committee to support their interests – all while working full-time for National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

After retiring from NRCS in 2010, Karen dedicated her time to the things she loved best: her faith, her friends, traveling, and playing with her nine grandchildren. She was a past member of the Jaycees and enjoyed time spent at the Senior Center playing cards and visiting with others.

Karen was a long-time member of Living Word Church, where she participated in several Bible study groups and helped out where ever needed. She also enjoyed volunteering at the local hospital gift shop. She was a loyal friend who sent birthday, anniversary, and holiday cards to everyone she loved and acquaintances. When the kids were young, Karen and Emmet took them on long summer trips throughout the US in their old wood-paneled station wagon. Later, the couple traveled the world by plane, train, and automobile. Nothing, however, could compare to Karen's many trips with her sisters, where they shopped, dined, and laughed until they couldn't breathe. Karen dearly loved her grandchildren, and it showed. No one could rock a baby to sleep or send the grandkids into fits of giggles the way she could. Karen will be dearly missed by all.

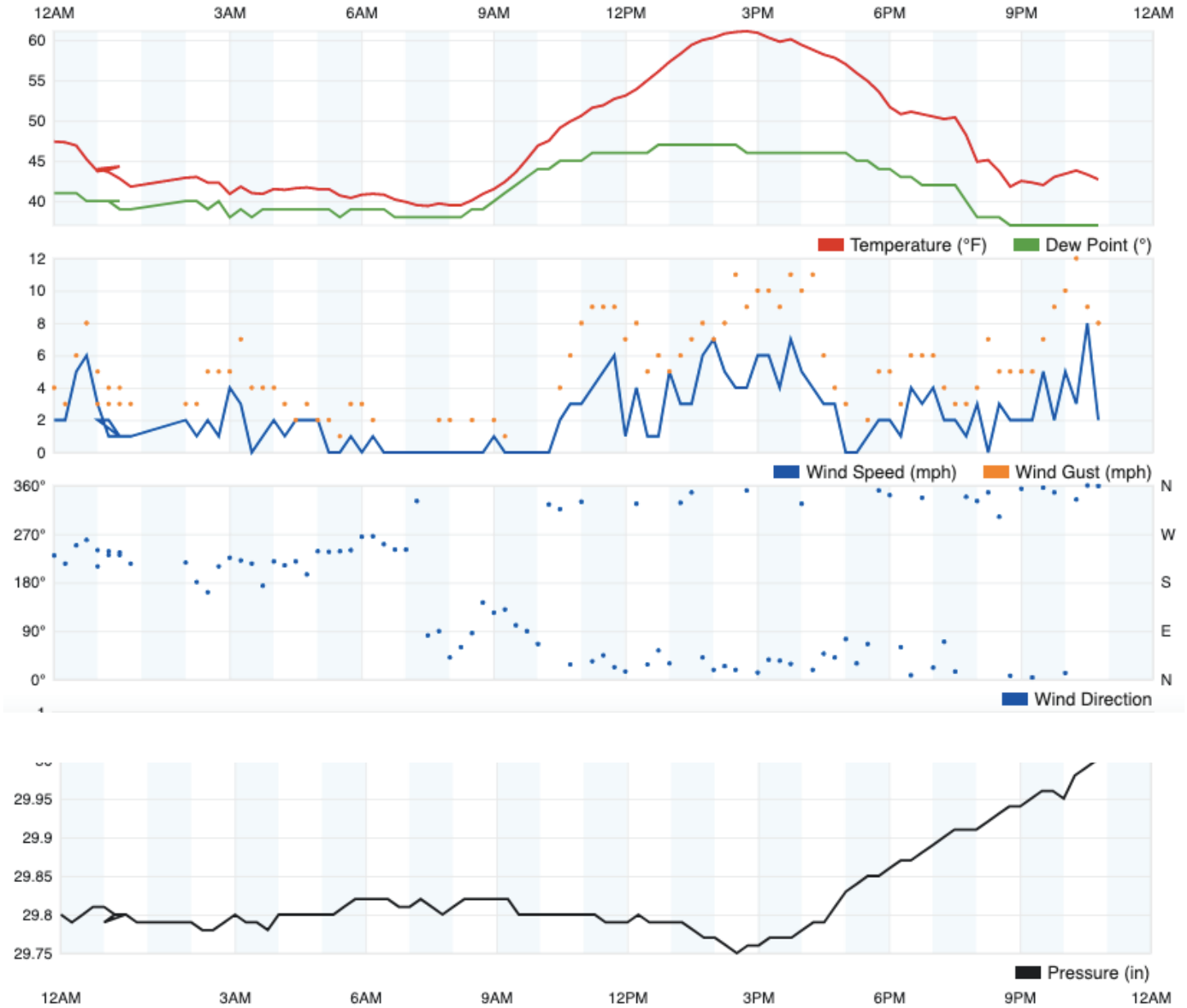
She is survived by her husband of 52 years, Emmet Bakke of Marshall; children, Erich Bakke of Green Bay, WI; Kristin (Bryan) Asche of Alexandria, MN; Ryan (Tonya) Bakke of Katy, TX; her beloved grandchildren, Katelyn Bakke, Andrea Williams-Verduzco, Dawson Bakke, Ian Bakke, Sawyer Bakke, Schylar Bakke, Zoe Bakke, Beaux Asche, Croix Asche; her dear nieces and nephews; and a multitude of friends.

Karen was preceded in death by her parents, Wayne and Patricia Sanderson, and her in-laws, Peder and Olga (Skogen) Bakke.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs








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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
 20%			 20%	 70%
Slight Chance Rain then Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Slight Chance Rain	Rain Likely
High: 54 °F	Low: 29 °F	High: 54 °F	Low: 37 °F	High: 49 °F

## Changes Ahead

Today	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
				
Light rain showers possible	5 to 10 degrees above normal	Rain, breezy conditions	Strong winds, periods of rain and snow possible	Strong winds, snow and blowing snow possible
HI: 48-54F LO: 28-34F	HI: 50-55F LO: 35-40F	HI: 46-52F LO: 28-34F	HI: 40-45F LO: 22-26F	HI: 30-36F LO: 16-22F

Light rain showers are possible today, with cooler but still above average temperatures. A strong storm system will then impact the Northern Plains Wednesday through Friday. The first accumulating snow of the season is possible along with blowing snow, particularly across northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota Thursday into Friday, but there is uncertainty in amounts. What's more certain is strong northwest winds and the arrival of colder air. Stay tuned for updates!

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## Today in Weather History

November 8th, 1985: Southern South Dakota saw heavy snow from the morning of the 8th through the evening on the 10th. Snowfall ranged from 5-10 inches over the area, with up to a foot or more in the Black Hills. The most significant amount was 18 inches in the higher elevations of the Black Hills. Winds gusting around 40 mph at times, combined with falling snow, produced near-blizzard conditions during the afternoon of the 9th through the early morning hours on the 10th, in the southwest. Some storm total snowfall amounts include; 16.0 inches near Presho; 11.5 inches in Kennebec; 9.0 inches in Murdo; and 4.0 inches in Timber Lake and near Onida.

1870: The U.S. Signal Corps Weather Service issued the first storm warning on this day. Professor Increase A. Lapham believed that warnings of deadly storms on the Great Lakes could be derived from telegraphed weather observations. As a result, a bill was introduced and signed into law to establish a national telegraphic weather service. The Signal Corps began taking observations of November 1st, 1870. On this date, Lapham would issue the first storm warning, a cautionary forecast for the Great Lakes.

1879: A tornado struck Crawford County, Arkansas, killing several people.

1913: The Great Lakes Storm of November 7-13, 1913, was a blizzard with hurricane-force winds that devastated the Great Lakes Region, sinking as many as 19 ships and stranding 19 others. This storm would be the deadliest and most destructive natural disaster ever to hit the Great Lakes.

1943 - An early season snowstorm raged across eastern South Dakota and Minnesota into northern Wisconsin. The storm produced 22 inches of snow at Fairbault and Marshall MN, 20 inches at Redwood Falls MN, and 10.1 inches at Minneapolis. Drifts fifteen feet high were reported in Cottonwood County MN. The storm produced up to two feet of snow in South Dakota smothering a million Thanksgiving day turkeys. (6th-8th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1953 - Residents of New York City suffered through ten days of smog resulting in 200 deaths. (The Weather Channel)

1966 - The temperature in downtown San Francisco reached a November record of 86 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms over Texas produced locally heavy rains in the Hill Country, with 3.50 inches reported at Lakeway, and 3.72 inches reported at Anderson Mill. Thunderstorms over Louisiana produced hail an inch in diameter at Clay and at Provencial. Blustery northwest winds, ushering cold air into western Kansas and into northwest Texas, gusted to 46 mph at Hill City KS. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Fair weather prevailed across much of the nation for Election Day. Midland TX equalled their record for November with an afternoon high of 89 degrees, and the record high of 87 degrees at Roswell NM was their fifth in eight days. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms developing along and ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from northern Louisiana into central Georgia. Thunderstorms spawned three tornadoes, and there were sixty-four reports of large hail or damaging winds. A late afternoon thunderstorm in central Georgia spawned a tornado which killed one person and injured eight others at Pineview. Late afternoon thunderstorms in central Mississippi produced baseball size hail around Jackson, and wind gusts to 70 mph Walnut Grove. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1994: The twelfth and final tropical cyclone of the Atlantic hurricane season formed in the southwestern Caribbean. While Hurricane Gordon was only a Category 1, it killed 1,149 individuals, including 1,122 in Haiti.



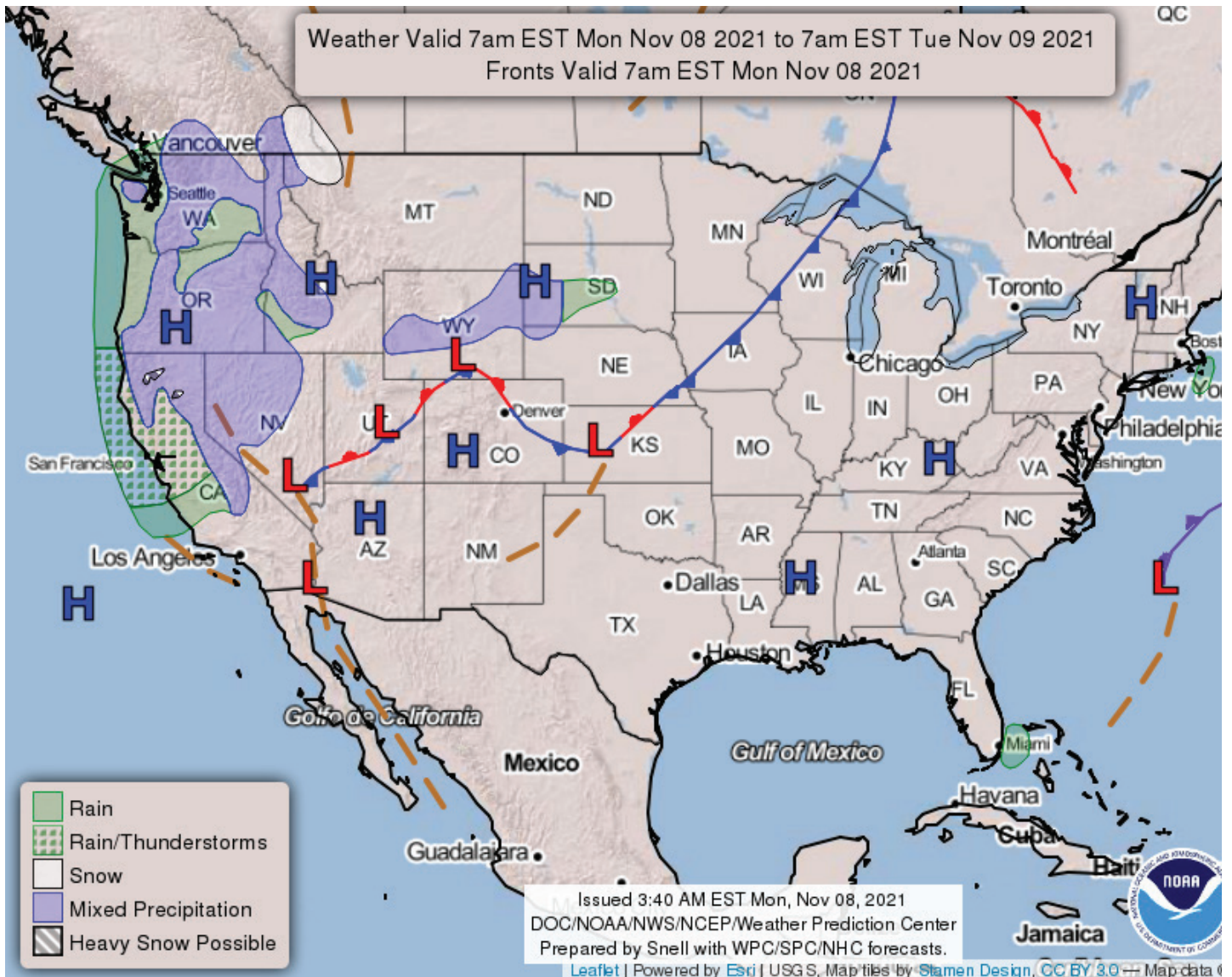
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 61.1 °F at 2:45 PM**  
**Low Temp: 39.5 °F at 8:00 AM**  
**Wind: 12 mph at 10:15 PM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

**Record High: 77° in 1999**  
**Record Low: -3° in 1936**  
**Average High: 46°F**  
**Average Low: 23°F**  
**Average Precip in Nov.: 0.26**  
**Precip to date in Nov.: 4.30**  
**Average Precip to date: 20.73**  
**Precip Year to Date: 19.72**  
**Sunset Tonight: 5:11:38 PM**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:22:05 AM**



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## Giving Thanks

Sometimes it seems as though we have more holidays and days to celebrate people and events than there are days on the calendar. But this month contains a national holiday that has special religious significance. This special day has been set aside for us to pause, ponder, praise, pray and give thanks to God for His blessings.

Many families will gather together and share stories of God's love, mercy, grace, and salvation. They will talk of God's peace and presence and tell of His goodness and guidance, hope and healing, power and protection. God's generous blessings will be the most important topic of their discussions. He will be honored!

There will also be families where God will not be respected or mentioned. It is not that there will be an absence of thanks, but God will not be recognized or respected as the giver of all gifts. They will focus on what they have, have accomplished or achieved -believing that they have "done it on my own." They will not recognize His gifts.

Some will resent the day because they feel short-changed or even forgotten by God. They have had trials too tragic to share and losses too great to describe. Their lives seem hopeless with nothing before them but darkness. The consequences of wrong choices have left them scarred for life. However, God still loves them!

But everyone can join the Psalmist and say, "Praise the Lord and give Him thanks!" - Even those who feel hopeless and ungrateful. Why? This verse talks of His mercy which is always available to everyone: the humble, the proud and the resentful.

Prayer: Lord, You have given us so very much. You often give us more than we recognize. Yet, we ask for and need one more thing: A thankful heart! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim his greatness. Let the whole world know what he has done. Psalm 105:1

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## 2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)  
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)  
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm  
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS  
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.  
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament  
06/19/2021 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon  
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament  
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament  
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton  
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course  
08/13/2021 Groton Basketball Golf Tournament  
**Cancelled** Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am Olive Grove Golf Course  
08/29/2021 Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day at GHS Parking Lot (4-5 p.m.)  
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove  
09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)  
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)  
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
10/29/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)  
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/11/2021 Veteran's Day Program at the GHS Arena  
11/21/2021 Groton Area Snow Queen Contest  
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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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White..... \$41.54/year
- Colored ..... \$74.55/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly\* ..... \$21.30/year

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## News from the Associated Press

### Annual sandhill crane migration takes birds to Texas, Mexico

By MARK WATSON Black Hills Pioneer

SPEARFISH, S.D. (AP) — Each October, a high bugling call is heard overhead in western South Dakota. An eye turned upward may have to search before it spies what makes the sound — sometimes thousands of feet above.

Sandhill cranes migrate through the area, riding rising air from the ground below, circling higher before gliding south.

"They are generally seen at high altitudes spinning in circles over the state. If you've ever watched them migrate, they are spinning in pinwheels, riding the thermals," said Rocco Murano, senior waterfowl biologist for the South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks.

Traveling as far north and west as parts of Siberia, in Russia, the cranes fly south to Texas and even parts of Mexico for the winter arriving at those grounds in late November or December, he said.

The cranes are rarely seen on the ground in western South Dakota in the fall as they fly hundreds of miles a day. The birds seen in the state are from the mid-continent population of sandhill cranes, one of three distinct groups of the birds.

The Rocky Mountain population is farther west, while the Eastern population is generally east of the Mississippi river, although its range is expanding rapidly and some are found in far eastern South Dakota, Murano said.

In the spring, the large birds are found in the tens of thousands in eastern South Dakota, the Black Hills Pioneer reported.

"We actually have document cranes breeding in South Dakota now," Murano said. "In the eastern fringe of eastern counties Deuel, Grant, and Roberts counties, we've had confirmed breeding of sandhill cranes for the last four or five years. Those are the first breeding cranes, in the eastern part of the state anyway, probably since extirpation since the late 1800s, early 1900s."

South Dakota offers a two-month hunting season along a narrow corridor in eastern South Dakota in the fall. However, Murano said fewer than 500 are taken annually. South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota are among 16 states that allow hunting the birds.

Dubbed ribeye of the sky, "Crane is one of the finest table fare for game there is," he said. "It's awesome. I've only had it a few times, but it is excellent. A very, very tasty meat."

Sandhill cranes can often be found in wet meadows.

"They are not like a duck or goose, where it needs a deep wetland," he said. "They need wet meadows, wet pastureland, sedge meadows. They are a wetland-dependent species, but they are not out there swimming. They are more like a wading bird."

In a nest built of plant material, often above the wetland, two colts, as the babies are called, hatch. Those new birds can walk shortly after hatching and will be cared for by the adults for the better part of a year.

"They are a long-lived bird," Murano said. "They live a long time but have a low reproductive rate. ... That's opposed to birds like a pheasant that has a lot of chicks but a short lifespan."

In the spring the birds begin their long migration back north. They stage along the way, found in the hundreds of thousands along the Platte River in Nebraska.

It is there, in late March, that the annual survey is conducted from the air. Murano said the population can range from as low as 600,000 to close to 1 million birds.

It is in the spring that the birds mate.

"It's pretty neat to watch," Murano said of the birds in their courtship. "They'll dance. They jump in the air and kinda flutter down."

The tall birds are omnivores.

"They'll eat about anything," Murano said. "They'll eat grain. But then they will eat mice, and salaman-

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ders, frogs, snakes, and things like that. They'll eat underground tubers."

He said the Rocky Mountain population will even go into chili fields and eat chili peppers.

"Birds can't taste capsaicin," he said. "They can go in there and eat a pile of habaneros and they wouldn't know (the heat) is there.

At four feet tall and a wingspan of more than seven feet, the birds are of an ancient order of species classification.

"They seem almost prehistoric. It is a really old bird order," Murano said.

The oldest known fossil of the birds were found in Florida and dated back 2.5 million years.

## Edward Engler, founder of The Laconia Daily Sun, dies at 74

LACONIA, N.H. (AP) — Edward J. Engler, the former mayor of Laconia and the founder of The Laconia Daily Sun, has died at age 74.

The Daily Sun reports that Engler died Friday in Los Alamitos, California, where he had lived with his daughter's family since April. The cause of death was colon cancer.

After working in journalism in several states, Engler founded The Daily Sun in 2000, later serving as editor and publisher. He was elected mayor in 2013, 2015 and 2017.

Among his accomplishments was the successful effort to renovate Laconia's Colonial Theater. The theater's auditorium was named for Engler in 2019 upon his retirement as mayor.

Friends, relatives and former colleagues recalled Engler as a dedicated journalist and public servant.

Reporter Michael Kitch worked for Engler as a reporter, from 2003 to 2017, and recalled how Engler pushed the paper to cover local stories with detail and context.

"Personally, I never had the opportunity to work, for so long, for such an extraordinary guy," Kitch said.

Engler was born in Ipswich, South Dakota, on June 8, 1947. He was preceded in death by his parents and his wife of 25 years, Suzanne, in 1998. He is survived by his two children, four grandchildren and two sisters.

## Sioux Falls police investigating shooting with multiple victims

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls Police are investigating an overnight shooting with multiple victims. The Argus Leader reports officers responded to the shooting about 2:45 a.m. Sunday.

Police say in a statement officers found "several" victims with gunshot wounds who were taken to local hospitals for treatment.

No other details of the shooting were released.

Police say Minnesota Avenue will be closed from 14th Street to 17th Street for several hours on Sunday morning while the shooting scene is processed.

## As ban lifts, visitors to US await long-delayed hugs, kisses

By JOHN LEICESTER and TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT, France (AP) — The U.S. lifted restrictions Monday on travel from a long list of countries including Mexico, Canada and most of Europe, setting the stage for emotional reunions nearly two years in the making and providing a boost for the airline and tourism industries decimated by the pandemic.

Wives will hug husbands for the first time in months. Grandmas will coo over grandsons who have doubled in age since they last saw them. Aunts and uncles and cousins will snuggle babies they haven't met yet.

"I'm going to jump into his arms, kiss him, touch him," Gaye Camara said of the husband in New York she has not seen since before COVID-19 brought the fly-here-there-and-everywhere world to a halt.

"Just talking about it makes me emotional," Camara, 40, said as she wheeled her luggage through Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport, which could almost be mistaken for its pre-pandemic self, busy with humming crowds, albeit in face masks.

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The rules that go into effect Monday allow air travel from a series of countries from which it has been restricted since the early days of the pandemic — as long as the traveler has proof of vaccination and a negative COVID-19 test. Those crossing land borders from Mexico or Canada will require proof of vaccination but no test.

American citizens and permanent residents were always allowed to enter the U.S., but the travel bans grounded tourists, thwarted business travelers and often separated families.

Airlines are now preparing for a surge in travel after the pandemic and resulting restrictions caused international travel to plunge. Data from travel and analytics firm Cirium showed airlines are increasing flights between the United Kingdom and the U.S. by 21% this month over last month.

When Camara last saw Mamadou, her husband, in January 2020, they had no way of knowing that they'd have to wait 21 months before holding each other again. She lives in France's Alsace region, where she works as a secretary. He is based in New York.

"It was very hard at the beginning. I cried nearly every night," she said. "I got through it thanks to him. He knows how to talk to me, to calm me."

Video calls, text messages, phone conversations kept them connected — but couldn't fill the void of separation.

"I cannot wait," she said. "Being with him, his presence, his face, his smile."

Maria Giribet has not seen her twin grandchildren Gabriel and David for about half of their lives. Now 3 1/2, the boys are in San Francisco, which during the height of the pandemic might as well have been another planet for 74-year-old Giribet, who lives on the Mediterranean isle of Majorca.

"I'm going to hug them, suffocate them, that's what I dream of," Giribet said after checking in for her flight. A widow, she lost her husband to a lengthy illness before the pandemic and her three grown children all live abroad.

"I found myself all alone," said Giribet, who was flying for the first time in her life by herself.

For Martine Kerherve, being separated from loved ones in the United States was filled with worries that they might not survive the pandemic that has killed more than 5 million people worldwide.

"We told ourselves that we could die without seeing each other," said Kerherve, who was heading for Fort Lauderdale, Florida, from Paris. "We all went through periods of depression, anxiety."

Before the pandemic, it was a trip Kerherve and her partner, Francis Pasquier, would make once or twice a year. When they lost that, "we lost our bearings," Pasquier said.

The change will also have a profound effect on the U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada, where traveling back and forth was a way of life until the pandemic hit and the U.S. shut down nonessential travel.

Malls, restaurants and Main Street shops in U.S. border towns have been devastated by the lack of visitors from Mexico. On the boundary with Canada, cross-border hockey rivalries that were community traditions were upended. Churches that had members on both sides of the border are hoping to welcome parishioners they haven't seen in nearly two years.

River Robinson's American partner wasn't able to be in Canada for the birth of their baby boy 17 months ago. She was thrilled to hear about the U.S. reopening.

"I'm planning to take my baby down for the American Thanksgiving," said Robinson, who lives in St. Thomas, Ontario. "If all goes smoothly at the border, I'll plan on taking him down as much as I can."

It's "crazy to think he has a whole other side of the family he hasn't even met yet," she added.

The U.S. will accept travelers who have been fully vaccinated with any of the shots approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization, not just those in use in the U.S. That's a relief for many in Canada, where the AstraZeneca vaccine is widely used.

But millions of people around the world who were vaccinated with Russia's Sputnik V, China's CanSino or others not OK'd by the WHO won't be able to travel to the U.S.

The moves come as the U.S. has seen its COVID-19 outlook improve dramatically in recent weeks since the summer delta surge that pushed hospitals to the brink in many locations.

Those in the travel industry hope it will provide a boost after COVID-19 travel bans brought the sector

to its knees.

Ben and Becca Akhurst were making the kind of trip Monday that many in the industry hope for: They were leaving London's Heathrow Airport to visit Disney World.

The husband and wife, both aged 31 and from Ashford, England, had been forced to cancel similar trips five times. They planned to spend time with friends they made during the pandemic through their "shared love of Disney."

Travel agent Francis Legros, flying from Paris to a travel industry convention in Las Vegas, jetted off determined to breathe life back into his company.

"We are rebuilding," he said. "It's a new chapter, a new professional life."

Associated Press writer Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed to this report.

## Report: NSO spyware found on 6 Palestinian activists' phones

By FRANK BAJAK and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Security researchers disclosed Monday that spyware from the notorious Israeli hacker-for-hire company NSO Group was detected on the cellphones of six Palestinian human rights activists, half affiliated with groups that Israel's defense minister controversially claimed were involved in terrorism.

The revelation marks the first known instance of Palestinian activists being targeted by the military-grade Pegasus spyware. Its use against journalists, rights activists and political dissidents from Mexico to Saudi Arabia has been documented since 2015.

A successful Pegasus infection surreptitiously gives intruders access to everything a person stores and does on their phone, including real-time communications.

It's not clear who placed the NSO spyware on the activists' phones, said the researcher who first detected it, Mohammed al-Maskati of the nonprofit Frontline Defenders.

Shortly after the first two intrusions were identified in mid-October, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz declared six Palestinian civil society groups to be terrorist organizations. Ireland-based Frontline Defenders and at least two of the victims say they consider Israel the main suspect and believe the designation may have been timed to try to overshadow the hacks' discovery, though they have provided no evidence to substantiate those assertions.

Israel has provided little evidence publicly to support the terrorism designation, which the Palestinian groups say aims to dry up their funding and muzzle opposition to Israeli military rule. Three of the hacked Palestinians work for the civil society groups. The others do not, and wish to remain anonymous, Frontline Defenders says.

The forensic findings, independently confirmed by security researchers from Amnesty International and the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab in a joint technical report, come as NSO Group faces growing condemnation over the abuse of its spyware and Israel takes heat for lax oversight of its digital surveillance industry.

Last week, the Biden administration blacklisted the NSO Group and a lesser-known Israeli competitor, Candiru, barring them from U.S. technology.

Asked about the allegations its software was used against the Palestinian activists, NSO Group said in a statement that it does not identify its customers for contractual and national security reasons, is not privy to whom they hack and sells only to government agencies for use against "serious crime and terror."

An Israeli defense official said in a brief statement that the designation of the six organizations was based on solid evidence and that any claim it is related to the use of NSO software is unfounded. The statement had no other details, and officials declined requests for further comment. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss security matters.

Israel's Defense Ministry approves the export of spyware produced by NSO Group and other private Israeli companies that recruit from the country's top cyber-capable military units. Critics say the process is opaque.



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It's not known precisely when or how the phones were violated, the security researchers said. But four of the six hacked iPhones exclusively used SIM cards issued by Israeli telecom companies with Israeli +972 area code numbers, said the Citizen Lab and Amnesty researchers. That led them to question claims by NSO Group that exported versions of Pegasus cannot be used to hack Israeli phone numbers. NSO Group has also said it doesn't target U.S. numbers.

Among those hacked was Ubai Aboudi, a 37-year-old economist and U.S. citizen. He runs the seven-person Bisan Center for Research and Development in Ramallah, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, one of the six groups Gantz slapped with terrorist designations on Oct. 22.

The other two hacked Palestinians who agreed to be named are researcher Ghassan Halaika of the Al-Haq rights group and attorney Salah Hammouri of Addameer, also a human rights organization. The other three designated groups are Defense for Children International-Palestine, the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees.

Aboudi said he lost "any sense of safety" through the "dehumanizing" hack of a phone that is at his side day and night and holds photos of his three children. He said his wife, the first three nights after learning of the hack, "didn't sleep from the idea of having such deep intrusions into our privacy."

He was especially concerned about eavesdroppers being privy to his communications with foreign diplomats. The researchers' examination of Aboudi's phone determined it was infected by Pegasus in February.

Aboudi accused Israel of "sticking the terrorist logo" on the groups after failing to persuade European governments and others to cut off financial support.

Israel says the groups are linked to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a leftist political faction with an armed wing that has killed Israelis. Israel and Western governments consider the PFLP a terror group. Aboudi served a 12-month sentence last year after being convicted of charges of involvement in the PFLP but denies ever belonging to the group.

Tehilla Shwartz Altshuler, a legal expert at the Israel Democracy Institute, called the findings "really disturbing," especially if it is proven that Israel's security agencies, who are largely exempt from the country's privacy laws, have been using NSO Group's commercial spyware.

"This actually complicates the relationship of the government with NSO," said Altshuler, if the government is indeed both a client and regulator in a relationship conducted under secrecy.

Aboudi, along with representatives from Al-Haq and Addameer, held a press conference in the occupied West Bank on Monday in which they condemned the hacks as an attack on civil society. Addameer director Sahar Francis called for an international investigation.

"Of course we are not going to close our organizations," Francis said. "We will continue our work, continue providing services."

The executive director of Frontline Defenders, Andrew Anderson, said the NSO Group cannot be trusted to ensure its spyware is not used illegally by its customers and says Israel should face international reproach if it does not bring the company to heel.

"If the Israeli government refuses to take action then this should have consequences in terms of the regulation of trade with Israel," he said via email.

Al-Maskati, the researcher who discovered the hacks, said he was first alerted on Oct. 16 by Halaika, whose phone was determined to have been hacked in July 2020. Al-Haq engages in sensitive communications with the International Criminal Court, among others, involving alleged human rights abuses.

"As human rights defenders living under occupation, we expect it was the (Israeli) occupation," Halaika said when asked who he believed was behind the hack.

The phone of the third named hacking victim, Hammouri, was apparently compromised in April, the researchers said. A dual French national living in Jerusalem, Hammouri previously served a seven-year sentence for security offenses, and Israel considers him a PFLP operative, allegations he denies.

Hammouri declined to speculate who was behind the hack, saying "we have to determine who had the ability and who had the motive."

After Halaika alerted him, Al-Maskati said he scanned 75 phones of Palestinian activists, finding the six

infections. He could not determine how the phones were hacked, he said, though the timeline of evidence encountered indicated the use of a so-called "iMessage zero-click" exploit NSO Group used on iPhones. The exploit is highly effective, requiring no user intervention, as phishing attempts typically do.

Facebook has sued NSO Group over the use of a somewhat similar exploit that allegedly intruded via its globally popular encrypted WhatsApp messaging app.

A snowballing of new revelations about the hacking of public figures — including Hungarian investigative journalists, the fiancée of slain Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi and an ex-wife of the ruler of Dubai — has occurred since a consortium of international news organizations reported in July on a list of possible NSO Group surveillance targets. The list was obtained from an unnamed source by Amnesty International and the Paris-based journalism nonprofit Forbidden Stories. Among those listed was an Associated Press journalist.

From that list of 50,000 phone numbers, reporters from various news organizations were able to confirm at least 47 additional successful hacks, the Washington Post has reported. NSO Group denied ever maintaining such a list.

Bajak reported from Lima, Peru.

## Survivor expected to testify in Rittenhouse trial's 2nd week

By MICHAEL TARM, SCOTT BAUER and AMY FORLITI Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — A man who suffered a severe arm injury when he was shot by Kyle Rittenhouse during a night of protests against racial injustice is expected to testify this week as prosecutors near the end of their case in Rittenhouse's murder trial.

Gaige Grosskreutz, 27, who had a gun in his hand as he stepped toward Rittenhouse, was shot in the arm moments after Rittenhouse fatally shot two others in the streets of Kenosha, Wisconsin. Testimony during the first week of Rittenhouse's trial showed bystanders came to Grosskreutz's aid and placed a tourniquet on his arm before loading him into a vehicle that rushed him to a hospital.

Rittenhouse, 18, is charged with shooting Grosskreutz and fatally shooting Joseph Rosenbaum and Anthony Huber on Aug. 25, 2020. The one-time police youth cadet from Antioch, Illinois, was 17 when he went to Kenosha with an AR-style rifle and a medical kit in what he said was an effort to safeguard property from the demonstrations that broke out over the shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man, by a white Kenosha police officer.

Rittenhouse is white, as are the three men he shot, but the case has raised polarizing questions about racial justice, policing, firearms and white privilege.

In the first week of Rittenhouse's trial, prosecutors played numerous videos that showed the events of that night from different angles. Jurors heard testimony from people who were with Rittenhouse, as well as from police officers and loved ones of the men who died.

Jason Lackowski, a former Marine who was on the streets of Kenosha carrying his own rifle, testified Friday about Rosenbaum, the first man Rittenhouse shot. Lackowski said Rosenbaum was acting "belligerently" but did not appear to pose a serious threat.

Lackowski said he considered Rosenbaum a "babbling idiot," and turned his back and ignored him. He acknowledged that he didn't see everything that went on between Rittenhouse and Rosenbaum, including their final clash.

Other witnesses testified last week that a "hyperaggressive" Rosenbaum angrily threatened to kill Rittenhouse that night and that Rosenbaum was gunned down after he chased Rittenhouse and lunged for his rifle.

Prosecutors have portrayed Rittenhouse as the instigator of the bloodshed as well as an inexperienced teen who misrepresented his age and medical training to others that night. Rittenhouse's lawyer has argued that he acted in self-defense, suggesting among other things that Rittenhouse feared his weapon would be taken and used against him.

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The prosecution suffered a potential blow when Rosenbaum's fiancée, Kariann Swart, disclosed that he was on medication for bipolar disorder and depression but hadn't filled his prescriptions because the local pharmacy was boarded up due to the unrest — information Rittenhouse's lawyers could use in their bid to portray Rosenbaum as the aggressor.

On the day he was killed, Rosenbaum, 36, had been released from a Milwaukee hospital. The jury was told that much, but not why he had been admitted — after a suicide attempt.

Rosenbaum's killing has emerged as one of the most crucial moments that night because it set in motion the bloodshed that followed moments later.

Rittenhouse shot and killed Huber, a 26-year-old protester seen on bystander video hitting Rittenhouse with a skateboard. Rittenhouse then wounded Grosskreutz,

Rittenhouse could get life in prison if convicted. The case has stirred furious debate over self-defense, vigilantism, the right to bear arms and the racial unrest that erupted around the U.S. after the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis and similar cases.

Two jurors were also dismissed last week. One man was dismissed for potential bias after he told a joke about the Blake shooting to a court security officer, and a woman who is pregnant was dismissed after she said she was experiencing some discomfort. Eighteen jurors remain, and 12 will ultimately be picked to deliberate.

Bauer reported from Madison, Wisconsin; Forliti from Minneapolis.

Find AP's full coverage on the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse at: <https://apnews.com/hub/kyle-rittenhouse>

## **EXPLAINER: How US rules on international travel are changing**

By TALI ARBEL Associated Press

More than a year and a half after COVID-19 concerns prompted the U.S. to close its borders to international travelers from countries including Brazil, China, India, South Africa, the United Kingdom and much of Europe, restrictions are shifting to focus on vaccine status.

Beginning Monday, bans on travel from specific countries are over. The U.S. will allow in international travelers, but they must be vaccinated — with a few exceptions.

The U.S. is also reopening the land borders with Canada and Mexico for vaccinated people. Most trips from Canada and Mexico to the U.S. are by land rather than air.

Here are some questions and answers about the changes:

### **WHY ARE THESE CHANGES HAPPENING?**

The goal is to restore more normal travel while limiting the spread of COVID-19, the government says. The travel industry and European allies have pushed for an end to country-specific bans. Americans have been allowed to fly to Europe for months, and Europeans have been pushing the U.S. to change its policies.

In 2019, before the pandemic, about one-fifth of the roughly 79 million visitors to the U.S. came from Europe.

### **WHAT ARE THE MAIN REQUIREMENTS?**

All adult foreign nationals traveling to the U.S. must be fully vaccinated before boarding their flight. Like before, travelers will still have to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours of departure to the U.S.

### **EVERYONE NEEDS TO BE VACCINATED?**

Yes, with some exceptions. Children under 18 don't need to be vaccinated but they do need to take a COVID test. Kids 2 and younger are exempt from testing requirements.

### **WHAT ABOUT ADULTS WHO AREN'T VACCINATED?**

Since half the world remains unvaccinated, and vaccine distribution has been so skewed to rich countries, the Biden administration is leaving a loophole for people who live in countries where vaccines are scarce. That list includes about 50 countries where fewer than 10% of people have been vaccinated. Travelers

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from those countries will need permission from the U.S. government to come, and it can't be just for tourism or business travel.

The U.S. government says it will permit unvaccinated international visitors to enter the country if there is a humanitarian or emergency reason, such as an emergency medical evacuation. Those exceptions will be applied "extremely narrowly" and require approval from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There could also be a medical exception, with documentation from a doctor.

## WHAT WILL AMERICANS HAVE TO DO?

Americans who are unvaccinated have to show proof of a negative COVID-19 test within one day of international travel. If you're vaccinated, you need to take a test within three days of your departure, for both Americans and citizens of other countries. This does not apply to flights within the U.S.

## WHO IS GOING TO ENFORCE THE VACCINE RULES?

That's up to airlines. They will have to verify vaccine records and match them against ID, and if they don't, they could face fines of up to nearly \$35,000 per violation. Airlines will also collect information about passengers for contact tracing efforts. There will be CDC workers spot-checking travelers for compliance in the U.S.

## WHICH VACCINES WILL LET YOU IN?

Most but not all of them. Any COVID-19 vaccine approved for emergency use by the World Health Organization, which include the Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines used in the U.S. as well as most used overseas, such as AstraZeneca and China's Sinovac. Not currently allowed is Russia's Sputnik V vaccine, which is authorized in 70 countries. The WHO is reviewing Sputnik but hasn't approved it.

## WHAT IF YOU DRIVE IN FROM MEXICO OR CANADA, OR TAKE A FERRY?

The land borders have only been open for "essential" travel. Now, anyone can come, if they're vaccinated against COVID. Be prepared to show proof of the shot to Customs and Border Protection agents. Children are exempt from the requirement.

## HOW WILL THIS AFFECT TRAVEL?

While the administration is characterizing this as a reopening, some people who were technically allowed to fly to the U.S. earlier in the pandemic are now blocked because of their vaccination status. Other roadblocks to normal travel resuming are big delays in issuing U.S. visas, which people in most countries need to visit the U.S. for business and tourism, and restrictions in other countries that make travel difficult.

Even though people coming from China will now be allowed into the U.S., for example, not many are expected to travel because of restrictions at home. Before the pandemic, Chinese tourists were a lucrative market for the U.S. travel industry.

Industry experts do expect a big influx in people flying from Europe, and hope that a broader recovery in travel follows as more people globally get vaccinated, U.S. visa processing speeds up, other countries lift their own restrictions and people feel less scared about getting COVID because of travel.

## High court to hear secrets case over Muslim surveillance

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is preparing to hear a case about the government's ability to get lawsuits thrown out of court by claiming they would reveal secrets that threaten national security.

The case before the high court Monday involves a group of Muslim men from Southern California. They filed a class action lawsuit claiming that the FBI spied on them and hundreds of others in a surveillance operation following the Sept. 11 attacks. The group, represented by lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union and others, claimed religious discrimination and violations of other rights, saying they were spied on solely because of their faith.

A lower court dismissed almost all their claims after the government said allowing the case to go forward could reveal "state secrets" — whom the government was investigating and why. But an appeals court reversed that decision, saying the lower court first should have privately examined the evidence the government said was state secrets to see if the alleged surveillance was unlawful.



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The Biden administration, like the Trump administration before it, is telling the justices that decision is wrong.

The case involves a confidential informant, Craig Monteilh, the FBI used from 2006 to 2007. Monteilh pretended to be a new convert to Islam as a way to become part of Southern California's Muslim community.

Monteilh told people he was a fitness consultant, but he was really working as part of a surveillance program known as Operation Flex. Monteilh regularly attended the Islamic Center of Irvine in Orange County and has said that he was told to collect as much information on as many people as possible. He gathered names and phone numbers and secretly recorded thousands of hours of conversations and hundreds of hours of video using a camera concealed in a shirt button.

Ultimately Monteilh's handlers told him to ask about jihad and express a willingness to engage in violence. Those questions caused members of the community to report him to the FBI and other authorities and seek a restraining order against him.

The FBI has acknowledged Monteilh was an informant, and the story was covered in the news media including on the National Public Radio show "This American Life."

Three of the men Monteilh allegedly recorded sued seeking damages and asking the government to destroy or return the information it had gathered.

This is the second case the court has heard involving the state secrets privilege since beginning its new term in October. Last month the court heard a case involving a Guantanamo Bay detainee that also involved the states secrets privilege.

## **Biden faces fresh challenges after infrastructure victory**

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

REHOBOTH BEACH, Del. (AP) — He has been here before.

President Joe Biden doesn't need to look any further back than his time as vice president to grasp the challenges that lie ahead in promoting his new \$1 trillion infrastructure deal to the American people and getting the money out the door fast enough that they can feel a real impact.

When President Barack Obama pushed through a giant stimulus bill in 2009, his administration faced criticism that the money was too slow to work its way into the sluggish economy, and Obama later acknowledged that he had failed to sell Americans on the benefits of the legislation.

Obama's biggest mistake, he said in 2012, was thinking that the job of the presidency was "just about getting the policy right" rather than telling "a story to the American people that gives them a sense of unity and purpose."

Biden began his own effort to fashion such a story when he took a victory lap Saturday after his infrastructure bill cleared the Congress, notching a hard-fought win on a \$1.2 trillion piece of legislation that he says will tangibly improve Americans' lives in the months and years to come.

The Democratic president called it a "a once-in-a-generation investment" to tackle a range of challenges — crumbling roads and bridges, gaps in access to affordable internet, water tainted by lead pipes, homes and cities ill-prepared to cope with increasingly frequent extreme weather conditions.

Coming at the end of a particularly difficult week in which his party suffered surprise losses up and down the ballot in elections nationwide, passage of the legislation was a respite from a challenging few months for an embattled president whose poll numbers have dropped as Americans remain frustrated with the coronavirus pandemic and an uneven economic recovery.

But the legislative win sets up a series of challenges for Biden, both in promoting the new deal and at the same time continuing to push for a long-argued-over \$1.85 trillion social safety net and climate bill, which would dramatically expand health, family and climate change programs.

The stakes for Biden are clear in his sagging poll numbers.

Priorities USA, a Democratic big money group, warned in a memo this past week that "voters are frustrated, skeptical, and tired — of COVID, of economic hardship, of school closings, of higher prices and

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stagnant wages, of unaffordable prescription drugs and health care and more.”

“Without results (and effectively communicating those results), voters will punish the party in power,” chairman Guy Cecil said.

While polls broadly suggest Americans support the infrastructure package, some indicate the nation is still not certain what’s in it. About half of adults surveyed in a Pew Research Center poll conducted in September said they favor the infrastructure bill, but a little over a quarter said they weren’t sure about it.

In an effort to correct past messaging mistakes, the White House is planning an aggressive sales campaign for the infrastructure bill, with Biden planning trips across the U.S. to speak about the impacts of the legislation.

He’ll visit a port in Baltimore on Wednesday and promises a splashy signing ceremony for the infrastructure bill when legislators are back in town.

The administration is also deploying the heads of the Transportation, Energy, Interior and Commerce departments, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency administrator and top White House aides to speak about the bill on national and local media and African American and Spanish-language press. And they’re putting out explainers across the departments’ digital platforms to help Americans better understand what’s in the bill.

But even as White House officials speak about what’s in the bill, they’ll also have to ensure the money gets spent. It’s a challenge with which Biden is intimately familiar, having overseen the implementation of the 2009 stimulus as vice president. Then, despite promises to prioritize “shovel-ready projects,” challenges with permitting and other issues led to delays, prompting Obama to joke in 2011 that “shovel-ready was not as shovel-ready as we expected.”

Democrats felt at the time that the party didn’t do enough to remind Americans how they had improved their lives, and ultimately allowed Republicans to frame the election conversation around government overreach. The next year, Democrats faced massive losses in the midterm elections, losing control of the House and a handful of seats in the Senate.

Biden, for his part, insisted Saturday that Americans could start to see the effects of the infrastructure bill in as little as two to three months. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg made the rounds promising that some projects are just waiting for funding, but others, like investments in new electric vehicle chargers and efforts to reconnect communities divided by highways, will take longer. In contrast to the 2009 stimulus, Buttigieg told NPR, Biden’s infrastructure bill is “about both the short-term and the long-term.”

“There will be work immediately, and for years to come,” he said.

While he’s selling the infrastructure bill as evidence that Democrats can deliver, Biden still will have to contend with ongoing dickering on the other big item on his agenda — the social spending bill.

Unlike the infrastructure bill, which passed with the support of 19 Republicans in the Senate, the social spending package is facing unified GOP opposition, which means Biden will need every Democratic vote in the Senate to get it across the finish line. With the party’s moderate and progressive factions squabbling over the details of the final bill, and two centrist holdouts — Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona — opposed to many key progressive priorities, winning final passage of the second part of his agenda may be a much tougher puzzle to solve.

“Everybody agreed on infrastructure. You can always agree on whether or not build the roads and the bridges and create the water and sewage that you need and fix your rail and your ports,” said Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., on Fox’s “Fox News Sunday.”

“But it’s something else again when you start getting into new stuff,” Clyburn said.

## People fleeing Ethiopia allege attacks, forced conscription

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — A new round of deadly attacks and forced conscription has begun against ethnic Tigrayans in an area of Ethiopia now controlled by Amhara regional authorities in collaboration with soldiers from neighboring Eritrea, people fleeing over the border to Sudan tell The Associated Press as

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the yearlong war intensifies.

Three men who fled the western Tigray communities of Adebay and Humera in the past week described warnings from Amhara authorities against supporting the rival Tigray forces who are approaching Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, to press Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to step aside.

Their threat led Ethiopia's government to declare a state of emergency last week while the United States and other countries urged citizens to leave immediately. U.S. and African Union envoys have been holding urgent talks in Ethiopia in search of a cease-fire in a war that has killed thousands of people after political tensions with the Tigray forces who once dominated the national government turned deadly. The U.N. Security Council is expected to meet on Monday.

The new accounts confirm assertions by the U.S. and others that Eritrean soldiers remain in the Tigray region, and they indicate that pressure is growing on Tigrayans of mixed heritage who have tried to live quietly amid what the U.S. has alleged as ethnic cleansing in western Tigray.

As reports grew about the Tigray forces' momentum, Amhara authorities at a public meeting in Adebay on Oct. 29 warned residents against supporting them, two men who fled to Sudan said.

"There are people working for (the Tigray forces). You should give them to us or we will kill you all together," one who fled, 28-year-old Mawcha Asmelash, recalled authorities saying.

Five days later, he said, Amhara militia attacked. "I saw four people being killed on the run," he said.

He and other men hid in the bush for two days, gathering information from local women and trying to judge whether it was safe to return. But the women estimated scores of men had been killed and residents had been forbidden to bury their bodies. The women urged them to flee.

Another man who fled Adebay, 36-year-old Berhane Gebremikael, confirmed the public meeting. He said he saw one man killed as he ran from Amhara militia and the Eritrean soldiers, who he said have a camp in the community.

"They called it revenge," he said. He described a perilous situation for Tigrayan residents of Adebay who had remained during the war, with many changing their identity, paying bribes or using mixed heritage for a measure of protection. Berhane, whose mother is Eritrean, now fears he can't return.

"Maybe the worst things will happen in the next days," he said. "The international community should intervene."

A man who fled to Sudan from the city of Humera, near the Eritrean border, told the AP he had stayed there because of his part-Tigrayan heritage, but last week Amhara authorities "started collecting people. Young men and boys are being forced to join the fighting."

Again, it started with a public warning, 28-year-old Alemu Abraha said. Then Amhara authorities, along with Eritrean soldiers, started visiting homes at night to take people away. His friends were taken, he said, and he believes the men are being sent to the Amhara region, where most fighting has occurred in recent months.

Amhara regional spokesman Gizachew Muluneh did not respond to AP questions. Amhara regional officials have asserted that western Tigray is historically their land, and during the war witnesses and humanitarian workers have described scores of thousands of Tigrayans forced from communities there.

Meanwhile, reports of mass detentions of Tigrayans continue under the state of emergency. An Ethiopian Orthodox Church official in Addis Ababa, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution, said dozens of priests, monks, deacons and others had been detained in the capital because of their ethnicity. Ethiopian authorities have said they are detaining people suspected of supporting the Tigray forces.

The government-created Ethiopian Human Rights Commission in a statement noted with concern that "arrests appeared to be based on ethnicity" and included the elderly and mothers with children.

As the war closes in, Ethiopia's government insists that life in the capital remains normal. On Sunday, scores of thousands of people rallied in Addis Ababa in a show of support, some carrying signs criticizing the international community, including foreign media.

There were also calls for peace amid the sometimes graphic calls to war. "Can they not discuss around a table?" said one demonstrator, Lemelem Selega, who also denounced those "who are spilling our soldiers'

blood.”

African Union special envoy Olesgun Obasanjo, a former Nigerian president, was briefing the AU Peace and Security Council on Monday about his meeting with Tigray leader Debretsion Gebremichael in the Tigray regional capital over the weekend. Tigray forces spokesman Getachew Reda called the discussion “very fruitful.” Obasanjo’s spokesman did not respond to questions.

The U.S. has not released details on special envoy Jeffrey Feltman’s meeting with Ethiopia’s prime minister last week, which the prime minister’s spokeswoman called “constructive.”

## **Sleaze claims roiling UK govt put Johnson under pressure**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson wants to talk about climate change. But his opponents want to focus on sleaze.

As a United Nations climate summit aimed at staving off catastrophic global warming enters its final week in Glasgow, Scotland, host leader Johnson is facing a barrage of criticism in London over his attempts to change the system that oversees lawmakers’ standards.

On Monday, the House of Commons will hold an emergency debate on political ethics after the government tried to block the suspension of a Conservative lawmaker found guilty of breaching lobbying rules.

Opposition parties say the episode has revealed a Conservative government that plays fast and loose with the rules, and they want a public inquiry into corruption allegations.

Labour Party leader Keir Starmer said Johnson should apologize to the nation and “clean out the filthy Augean stable he has created.”

The lobbying episode is the latest to fuel allegations that Johnson and his Conservative government don’t follow rules that apply to everyone else.

Lawsuits have been launched over the government’s awarding of tens of millions of pounds (dollars) in contracts to provide equipment and services during the coronavirus pandemic — often in haste and with little oversight.

Home Secretary Priti Patel was allowed to keep her job after she was found to have bullied members of staff. Johnson himself has been criticized for accepting expensive holidays in Mustique and Spain, and faces investigation by Parliament’s standards watchdog over the source of money that was used to refurbish his apartment in Downing Street, the prime minister’s official residence.

The issue hit boiling point after the House of Commons standards committee recommended a 30-day suspension of Conservative legislator Owen Paterson for lobbying on behalf of two companies that were paying him more than 100,000 pounds (\$137,000) a year. The Commons Standards Committee said Paterson’s actions were an “egregious case of paid advocacy” and had “brought the House into disrepute.”

Instead of backing the committee’s decision, as has happened in all similar cases for decades, Conservative lawmakers were ordered by the government to oppose it and instead to call for an overhaul of the whole standards process.

That vote on Wednesday sparked fury — and not just from the opposition. Generally supportive newspapers reflected the anger, with the Daily Mail proclaiming: “Shameless MPs Slink Back Into Sleaze.”

The next day the government did a U-turn, saying it would look for cross-party consensus on overhauling the disciplinary process. Paterson abruptly quit Parliament after 24 years as a lawmaker.

Environment Minister George Eustice said the uproar was a “storm in a teacup” of little interest to the wider public.

But former Conservative Prime Minister John Major lashed out at Johnson, saying the way the government had acted was “shameful, wrong and unworthy of this or indeed any government.”

“There’s a general whiff of ‘we are the masters now’ about their behavior,” Major told the BBC. “It has to stop, it has to stop soon.”



## Feds urge schools to provide COVID-19 shots, info for kids

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is encouraging local school districts to host clinics to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to kids — and information to parents on the benefits of the shots — as the White House looks to speedily provide vaccines to those ages 5 to 11.

First lady Jill Biden and Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy are set to visit the Franklin Sherman Elementary School in McLean, Virginia, on Monday to launch a nationwide campaign to promote child vaccinations. The school was the first to administer the polio vaccine in 1954.

The visit comes just days after federal regulators recommended the COVID-19 vaccine for the age group. The White House says Biden will visit pediatric vaccination clinics across the country over the coming weeks to encourage the shots.

At the same time, Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra and Education Secretary Miguel Cardona are sending a letter to school districts across the country calling on them to organize vaccine clinics for their newly eligible students. The officials are reminding school districts that they can tap into billions of dollars in federal coronavirus relief money to support pediatric vaccination efforts.

The Biden administration is providing local school districts with tools to help schools partner with pharmacies to administer shots. And it's asking schools to share information on the benefits of vaccines and details about the vaccination process with parents, in an effort to combat disinformation surrounding the shots.

The White House is encouraging schools to host community conversations and share fact sheets on the vaccines and is working with the American Academy of Pediatrics to partner local physicians with schools aiming to share science-based information about the shots.

About 28 million kids ages 5 to 11 are newly eligible for shots now that the Pfizer vaccine is approved for the age group. The White House says the federal government has procured enough of the two-dose vaccine for all of them.

A Pfizer study of 2,268 children found the vaccine was almost 91% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 infections. The Food and Drug Administration studied the shots in 3,100 vaccinated kids in concluding the shots are safe.

While kids are less likely than adults to develop severe COVID-19, with the delta variant they get infected and transmit "just as readily as adults do," Dr. Anthony Fauci, government's top infectious diseases expert, said at a recent White House briefing.

Since the coronavirus pandemic began, at least 94 children ages 5 to 11 have died from COVID-19, more than 8,300 have been hospitalized and more than 5,000 have developed a serious inflammatory condition linked to the virus.

## German COVID infection rate at new high as vaccinations slow

By GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Germany's coronavirus infection rate climbed to its highest recorded level yet on Monday as what officials have called a "pandemic of the unvaccinated" gathers pace.

The national disease control center, the Robert Koch Institute, said the country has seen 201.1 new cases per 100,000 residents over the past seven days. That was above the previous record of 197.6 from Dec. 22 last year. While it's still a lower rate than in several other European countries, it has set alarm bells ringing.

The seven-day infection rate has long ceased to be the only policy yardstick in Germany, with new hospital admissions now an important factor. Those are currently at just under 4 per 100,000 residents over a week — compared with a peak of about 15.5 last Christmas — but officials say hospitals are filling up in badly affected areas.

The disease control center said Monday that 15,513 new COVID-19 cases were reported over the past 24 hours — down from a record 37,120 on Friday, but figures are typically lower after the weekend. Another 33 deaths were recorded, bringing Germany's total to 96,558.

Germany has struggled to find ways to pep up its much-slowed vaccination campaign. At least 67%

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of the population of 83 million is fully vaccinated, according to official figures, which authorities say isn't enough. Unlike some other European countries, it has balked at making vaccinations mandatory for any professional group.

As at many times during the pandemic, Germany has a patchwork of regional rules. Most places restrict access to many indoor facilities and events to people who have been vaccinated, have recovered or been tested — with the latter now being excluded in some areas. Those rules are often enforced laxly.

Rules on whether schoolchildren must wear masks in class vary from state to state.

Free rapid tests for all were scrapped nearly a month ago in an effort to incentivize more people to get vaccinated. There are now widespread calls for them to be reintroduced. And officials now advocate booster vaccinations for everyone who got their initial shots six months ago or more.

Germany currently has a caretaker national government after its election in September. The parties that are expected to form the next government plan to bring legislation to parliament this week that would allow an "epidemic situation of national scope," in place since March 2020, to expire at the end of the month but provide a new legal framework for coronavirus measures.

There has been criticism of that decision. But Katrin Goering-Eckardt, the parliamentary leader of one of those parties, the Greens, told ARD television that "we need to create measures now that can't be questioned by courts."

She argued that, with two-thirds of residents vaccinated, the current rules weren't legally waterproof.

Schools and other facilities can be closed if necessary, but "with so many people vaccinated, we won't be able legally to do a complete lockdown for those who are vaccinated," Goering-Eckardt said.

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

## Satellite images show China built mock-ups of US warships

BEIJING (AP) — Satellite images show China has built mock-ups of a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier and destroyer in its northwestern desert, possibly for practice for a future naval clash as tensions rise between the nations.

China has massively upgraded its military in recent years, and its capability and intentions are increasingly concerning to the United States as tensions rise over the South China Sea, Taiwan and military supremacy in the Indo-Pacific.

The images captured by Colorado-based satellite imagery company Maxar Technologies dated Sunday show the outlines of a U.S. aircraft carrier and at least one destroyer sitting on a railway track.

Maxar identified the location as Ruoqiang, a Taklamakan Desert county in the northwestern Xinjiang region.

The independent U.S. Naval Institute said on its website that the mock-ups of U.S. ships were part of a new target range developed by the People's Liberation Army.

It wasn't clear from the images how many details had been included in the apparent targets, although USNI said it had identified features on the destroyer including its funnels and weapons systems.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at a daily briefing Monday that he had no information about the images, saying, "I'm not aware of the situation you mentioned."

China's massive military upgrade has emphasized countering the U.S. and other countries' naval forces.

That includes the development of land, sea and air-launched missiles to repel and possibly sink opposing vessels, expressed most emphatically by the land-based DF-21D ballistic missile known as the "carrier killer."

Recent months have also seen a substantial increase in Chinese military flights just southwest of Taiwan, the self-governing island republic claimed by Beijing and which it threatens to annex by force. Washington provides Taiwan with much of its weaponry and U.S. law requires that it ensures the island can defend itself and treats threats to it as matters of "grave concern."

The images released by Maxar come amid growing concerns over the possibility of military conflict between the world's two biggest economies, who are at odds over a litany of political and economic issues.

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The Pentagon this month issued a report saying China is expanding its nuclear force much faster than U.S. officials predicted just a year ago. That appears designed to enable Beijing to match or surpass U.S. global power by midcentury, the report said.

U.S. defense officials have said they are increasingly wary of China's intentions, largely with regard to the status of Taiwan.

"The PLA's evolving capabilities and concepts continue to strengthen (China's) ability to 'fight and win wars' against a 'strong enemy' — a likely euphemism for the United States," the report said.

China's navy and coast guard are also adding new vessels at a record pace, concentrating them in the South China Sea, the strategic waterway that China claims virtually in its entirety.

While the U.S. Navy remains predominant, its resources are divided between the Indo-Pacific, the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean and other regions where American interests lie.

China's test of a hypersonic weapon capable of partially orbiting Earth before reentering the atmosphere and gliding on a maneuverable path to its target also surprised top U.S. military leaders. Beijing insisted it was testing a reusable space vehicle, not a missile, but the weapon system's design is meant to evade U.S. missile defenses.

Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the test was "very close" to being a "Sputnik moment," akin to the 1957 launching by the Soviet Union of the world's first space satellite, which fed fears the United States had fallen behind technologically.

## Nearly 20 years on, Israeli barrier shapes Palestinian lives

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

QAFFIN, West Bank (AP) — Three days a week, Palestinian farmers in the occupied West Bank village of Qaffin line up at a yellow gate and show military permits to soldiers in order to tend their crops on the other side of Israel's separation barrier.

The farmers say that because of increasingly onerous Israeli restrictions they can no longer live off their land, which is suffering without proper cultivation. The olive groves just beyond the gate are scorched from a recent blaze — firefighters also need permission to enter.

Nearly two decades after Israel sparked controversy worldwide by building the barrier during a Palestinian uprising, it has become a seemingly permanent feature of the landscape — even as Israel encourages its citizens to settle on both sides.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians navigate its checkpoints every morning as they line up in cramped terminals to enter Israel for jobs in construction and agriculture. Farmers in Qaffin and dozens of other villages need permits to access their own private property.

Israel says the barrier helped stop a wave of suicide bombings and other attacks by Palestinians who slipped into the country during the 2000-2005 uprising and is still needed to prevent deadly violence.

Eighty-five percent of the still-unfinished barrier is inside the occupied West Bank, carving off nearly 10% of its territory. The Palestinians view it as an illegal land grab, and the International Court of Justice in 2004 said the barrier was "contrary to international law."

In Jerusalem and the West Bank city of Bethlehem, the barrier is a towering concrete wall several meters (yards) high crowned with barbed wire and cameras. In rural areas it largely consists of barbed wire fencing and closed military roads.

Along Israel's main north-south highway, it's concealed by earthworks and landscaping, so that motorists get no more than a passing glance at the reality of military rule.

Palestinians in Qaffin say the wall has lopped off some 4,500 dunams (1,100 acres) of their farmland, all of it inside the West Bank.

Ibrahim Ammar says he used to grow an array of crops including watermelon and corn, but is now limited to olives and almonds because they require less attention. Even during the annual olive harvest, which began last month, he can only enter his land three days a week and must apply for permits to bring family members along to help.

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"My father, my grandfather, they were totally dependent on the land," he said. "Now I can't provide for myself and my children."

He drives a taxi to supplement his income. Other villagers work menial jobs inside Israel and its West Bank settlements. At least one resident, frustrated by the restrictions, grows vegetables on the roof of his home.

"Three days is not enough to serve the land," said Taysir Harashe, who was mayor of the village when the barrier was built. "The land is getting worse and worse."

The U.N. estimates some 150 Palestinian communities are in a similar predicament, and that 11,000 Palestinians live in the so-called Seam Zone inside the West Bank but west of the barrier, requiring Israeli permits just to stay in their homes.

HaMoked, an Israeli rights group that helps Palestinians secure permits, says the farmers' situation is worsening. It says data obtained from the military through a freedom of information request shows that 73% of applications for permits were denied last year, compared to 29% in 2014. Less than 3% are denied on security grounds, it said.

In 2014, Israel stopped granting permits to relatives unless they are listed as agricultural workers on larger plots. In 2017, the military began dividing larger holdings among the members of extended families and ruled that anything smaller than 330 square meters (3,500 square feet) was agriculturally unsustainable. Owners of so-called "tiny plots" are denied permits.

"There's no security justification," said Jessica Montell, the director of HaMoked, which is challenging the regulation before Israel's Supreme Court. "They've decided you own a plot of land that they think is too small to warrant cultivation."

She said other regulations are based on "elaborate calculations" about how many hands are needed to tend to various crops. "It's a crazy table. They say if you are growing cucumbers you can get X number of helpers per dunam."

Asked about the restrictions, the military said its forces aim to "ensure a smooth fabric of life for all sides." The military "sees great importance in the coordination of the olive harvest, and operates in accordance with guidelines and the situational assessment," it said in a statement.

Israel has always said the barrier was not intended to delineate a permanent border, and some supporters said at the time that by reducing violence it would aid the peace process.

"The fence was built according to the needs of security only," said Netzah Mashiah, a retired Israeli colonel who oversaw construction of the barrier until 2008. "We understood while building it that it might be a border in the far future... but this was not the goal of this fence."

Indeed, the barrier only looks like a heavily guarded border.

Israelis and Palestinians live on both sides, and Israel is actively building settlements and settlement infrastructure east of the barrier. There have been no substantive peace talks in more than a decade, and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett is opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and other territories Israel seized in the 1967 war.

In Bethlehem, the towering concrete wall is covered with political graffiti and often satirical artwork. One refers to an episode of Larry David's HBO comedy "Curb Your Enthusiasm" in which Jewish men avail themselves of a Palestinian restaurant to conceal their affairs from their wives. Another pays tribute to George Floyd, who died under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer last year.

It became an eclectic tourist attraction after the world-famous graffiti artist Banksy secretly painted the wall in the 2000s. In 2017, he opened the "Walled-Off Hotel," a monument of bleak resistance-themed art.

Abu Yamil, the owner of a nearby souvenir shop who declined to give his full name, sells Banksy prints and postcards among other trinkets.

The 70-year-old waxes nostalgic about the situation decades ago, when Palestinians could travel freely. "It was occupation, but we lived together," he said. "I drove my car to Tel Aviv."

Like many Palestinians, he doubts the unfinished barrier serves much of a security purpose — workers without permits have always managed to sneak in.



"This wall will be here forever, because they don't want peace," he said. "Israel wants all the land."

## Bangladesh ruling party set to win vote boycotted by rivals

By JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

SREENAGAR, Bangladesh (AP) — Bangladesh's ruling party is set to win a series of local elections to choose representatives at the village level amid a boycott by the country's largest opposition party, after widespread allegations of misconduct in the last national vote.

The ruling Awami League party of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is all but certain to win Thursday's election for 848 rural councils. A total of 4,571 local councils, known as union parishads and responsible for community development and public welfare services at the village level, are being contested in phases.

In the first phase of elections for 204 councils in June, 148 candidates from the ruling party won and the rest went to independents.

Analysts say it's an opportunity for the ruling party to consolidate its position ahead of the next general elections slated for 2023. It follows the trend in the last two general elections in 2014 and 2018, which Hasina's party won in a landslide despite allegations of vote rigging and manipulation.

"The way political and institutional structure has been designed and rendered into, I think it's difficult to imagine that the truly free and fair election will take place in Bangladesh in the next round," said Iftekharuzzaman, who heads the Bangladesh chapter of the Berlin-based Transparency International.

He blamed the Election Commission for incompetence and top officials' allegiance to the ruling party.

"We have decided to stay away from this local government election," said Rumeen Farhana, a lawmaker from the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, led by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, an archrival of Hasina. "My party has made their position very clear that without a non-party, neutral government we will not contest the next general elections."

"Since 2014 the election process has been destroyed, from grassroots to the national level and it's going from bad to worse. There is no choice left for the voters to choose their candidates," she said.

Obaidul Qader, the Awami League's general secretary, said that people from Zia's party are taking part in the election as independent candidates.

"If you have the courage, take part in the polls visibly with your party symbol," he told reporters.

The opposition often says a skewed political atmosphere is preventing them from participating fairly in national elections.

Farhana says their activists across the country are facing politically motivated charges, a common tactic in Bangladesh to keep the opposition busy with legal protection. Authorities routinely deny such allegations, saying the court cases come from specific charges.

Since 1991, when Bangladesh returned to a democratic system, Hasina and Zia had alternately ruled the country before Hasina came to power with an overwhelming win in the 2008 election that was accepted as free and fair.

But that has changed. Election monitoring groups say more than half of the constituencies in the 300-seat Parliament were elected uncontested from the ruling party in 2014, while ballot stuffing was a common practice in 2018 amid allegations of intimidation.

Iftekharuzzaman said the politics in Bangladesh under the two major parties has become a zero-sum game, and they have used the Election Commission and public administration for their partisan benefits.

"The key problem lies with the institution of the Election Commission, which has been rendered dysfunctional ... as well as allegations of corruption against them," he said.

The Election Commission has denied the allegations and said they are performing their constitutional duties properly.

Iftekharuzzaman said democracy is the main victim as the country's leaders can no longer claim full legitimacy from elections.

"They do not have the genuine mandate of the people and they do not have the confidence needed to really claim themselves as public representatives," he said.

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Many voters feel they are left with little choice.

"I want an election that is inclusive of all parties, which used to happen in Bangladesh, and which is now lost," said Mohammed Mojibor, a businessman. "This election is one-sided. I don't know about others, but personally I feel that this is unacceptable."

## Defense carries Titans past Rams 28-16 for 5th straight win

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — On two snaps 20 seconds apart, Jeffery Simmons and Kevin Byard forced Matthew Stafford into a pair of terrible decisions. The stunning sequence ended with Byard sprinting to the end zone carrying the second of Stafford's back-to-back interceptions.

With Derrick Henry sidelined for at least the near future, the Tennessee Titans might need a new identity on their Super Bowl quest.

In their first game without the NFL's rushing leader, the Titans found it: They're a dominant defensive team capable of forcing even Stafford and the Los Angeles Rams' powerful passing offense into game-deciding mistakes.

Byard returned Stafford's second consecutive interception 24 yards for a touchdown in the second quarter, and Tennessee's defense carried the Titans to a 28-16 victory in a showdown between conference co-leaders.

"Those guys played fantastic," Titans coach Mike Vrabel said of his defense. "It was fun to watch them play. ... We really think that group is playing with a lot of confidence right now. They would be able to come in here and play the way they did and hold them to field goals, and we played great in red zone."

Simmons had three of Tennessee's five sacks of Stafford, and he made another play that sent the Titans (7-2) well on their way to their fifth consecutive victory.

Simmons, who had more sacks than any Titans player since 2008, was about to sack Stafford in the end zone when the quarterback inexplicably threw a desperate pass into the heart of Tennessee's defense to avoid the safety. David Long Jr. returned his gift of an interception to the Rams 2, and Geoff Swaim caught a touchdown pass on the next snap.

Right after the kickoff, Stafford's throw toward Robert Woods on the sideline was returned by Byard for his first career pick-6.

"The defense played huge all game, and those plays early were unbelievable," quarterback Ryan Tannehill said. "You look at (Simmons') pressure on the QB, and then David making a play on the ball, then Kevin reading the pattern and getting underneath that out, it was huge. They played a heck of a game."

Tannehill passed for 143 yards and a touchdown and rushed for another score for the Titans, who managed just 194 offensive yards without Henry, who's out indefinitely after foot surgery. Adrian Peterson rushed for just 21 yards, but the veteran running back made a TD run with 3:00 left in the first game of his 15th NFL season.

The Titans still won with defense. They got a key stop on downs near midfield with 6:39 to play, and Tennessee's defense nearly kept the Rams out of the end zone for just the fourth time in their 73 games under Sean McVay.

"I feel like KB (Byard) said it best in the locker room," Titans linebacker Harold Landry said. "He was like, 'We're not out to prove people wrong, but to prove ourselves right.' We know how talented we are in that locker room and the group of guys that we have."

Sony Michel caught a 3-yard TD pass with 24 seconds left, but it scarcely dampened Tennessee's dominance.

Stafford passed for 294 yards and threw the 24th pick-6 of his career — most among active quarterbacks — during easily the worst game of his debut season with the Rams (7-2). Los Angeles' four-game winning streak ended in just the fourth meeting in 15 years between two teams with their conferences' top records.

"I basically spotted them 14 points," said Stafford, who barely practiced during the week while managing a stiff back and then injured his ankle during the game. "Just wasn't good enough early in the game. The

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turnovers are on me. Our defense played good. If we don't turn over the ball tonight, we've got a chance."

Los Angeles, the NFL's least-penalized team, also got flagged 12 times for 115 yards — the most yards in McVay's career.

"We have to play cleaner football," McVay said. "I want to see what we learn from our response. The last time we had a setback, I liked how we responded. ... A lot of things happened tonight that are uncharacteristic of us."

## AP ARRIVES

Peterson had been out of the league before he signed with the Titans on Monday. Tennessee promptly put him in the starting lineup, and Peterson scored his 119th career rushing TD and 125th total touchdown, tying him with Walter Payton for 11th-most in NFL history.

"I thought he brought an energy and a professionalism," Vrabel said.

## NO POINTS

Los Angeles had a touchdown taken off the board to begin the second half when officials ruled Tyler Higbee's toe had gone out of bounds before his scoring catch. The Rams kicked a field goal instead.

## NO VON

Von Miller did not make his debut for the Rams after they acquired him from Denver early this week. Miller is still working back from an ankle injury while learning the intricacies of the Rams' defense, and Los Angeles didn't rush the eight-time Pro Bowl selection.

## INJURED

Titans: Taylor Lewan was active, but Bobby Hart started at left tackle. Lewan was "unavailable" except in an emergency, Vrabel said. ... Aaron Brewer also started at right guard in place of Nate Davis.

Rams: Henderson injured his ankle in the second quarter, but kept playing. ... WR Jacob Harris left with an undisclosed injury in the second half.

## UP NEXT

Titans: Host Saints on Sunday.

Rams: Visit 49ers next Monday night.

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

## Nicaragua's Ortega seeks reelection after jailing rivals

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (AP) — Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega sought a fourth consecutive term in elections the United States has called a "pantomime" following the jailing of his top rivals and the country's opposition has urged voters to boycott.

Ortega has railed against alleged interference by Washington in Sunday's elections to determine who holds the presidency for the next five years, as well as 90 of the 92 seats in the congress and Nicaragua's representation in the Central American Parliament.

The ruling Sandinista Front and its allies control the congress and all government institutions. Ortega first served as president from 1985 to 1990, before returning to power in 2007. He recently declared his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, his "co-president."

Voting was orderly and closed Sunday evening without reported incidents. Provisional vote totals were expected Monday.

The opposition had called on Nicaraguans to stay home in protest of an electoral process that has been roundly criticized as not credible by foreign powers. In June, police arrested seven potential presidential challengers to Ortega on charges that essentially amount to treason. They remained in detention on election day. Some two dozen other opposition leaders were also swept up ahead of the elections.

The remaining contenders on Sunday's ballot were little known politicians from minor parties seen as friendly with Ortega's Sandinista Front.

On Saturday, the Blue and White National Union, an opposition alliance, issued an alert after at least eight of its leaders were "abducted by the regime in illegal raids" Saturday afternoon and evening.

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The Civic Alliance, another opposition coalition, reported "harassment, surveillance, intimidation, assault, attacks, illegal and arbitrary detentions" of some of its leaders around Nicaragua.

On Sunday, Mayela Rodríguez found her local voting center at a school in Managua virtually empty. "In past years it was really full," she said. "Before you had to (wait) in a big line to come here and now, empty."

Around midday, Ortega spoke live on television after voting — he held up his inked finger.

He blasted the United States for interference in Nicaragua, noted there had been alleged fraud in the last U.S. election, reminded that those who stormed the U.S. Capitol were called terrorists and remain jailed. He repeated his claim that the U.S. government supported huge protests in Nicaragua in April 2018, which he has called an attempted coup.

"They have as much right as we do to open trials against terrorists," Ortega said.

In a statement released around the close of voting, U.S. President Joe Biden called Nicaragua's election process "rigged" and said the U.S. would use the tools at its disposal to hold the Nicaraguan government accountable.

"The Ortega and Murillo family now rule Nicaragua as autocrats, no different from the Somoza family that Ortega and the Sandinistas fought four decades ago," Biden said.

He criticized the vote as a "pantomime election that was neither free nor fair, and most certainly not democratic."

In neighboring Costa Rica, President Carlos Alvarado Quesada tweeted that his government won't recognize the election because of "the lack of democratic conditions and guarantees."

Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Denis Moncada said the peaceful vote sends a message to the world powers that "Nicaraguans are dignified patriots and we are not going to bend to their threats, sanctions and non-recognition of the elections."

With little doubt as to the presidential election result, focus is already turning to what the international response will be as Ortega seeks to tighten his grip on power.

The United States and European Union have imposed sanctions against those in Ortega's inner circle, but Ortega responded only by arresting more of his opponents.

On Friday, a senior U.S. State Department official, who spoke with reporters on the condition of anonymity, said the U.S. government was willing to consider additional targeted sanctions, but had tried to avoid measures that would more broadly impact the Nicaraguan people.

"It is very hard when you have a government that has very minimal goals that include remaining in power at any cost and disregarding the will of their own citizens or the needs of the citizens to retain that power," the official said.

The Organization of American States will hold its annual general assembly in Guatemala later this week. Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico were among seven countries that abstained from a vote on a resolution last month in the OAS condemning the repression in Nicaragua.

International observers present for past Nicaraguan elections were not present. Instead, the government accredited 232 "electoral companions," mostly from leftist governments and parties.

Among them was Dmitry Novikov, representative of Russia's Duma. He visited several polling places and said he observed "respect for the principal of non interference" and criticized European leaders who questioned the election.

Gerardo Berthin, director of Latin American and Caribbean programs for the democracy promotion organization Freedom House, said Sunday the vote was going as scripted by Ortega.

"This is what they want in terms of showing people voting, even though we know that they have lists actually of people who work for the government and they are checking who's going and who is not," Berthin said.

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Associated Press writers Christopher Sherman in Mexico City and Javier Cordoba in San Jose, Costa Rica, contributed to this report.



## Barriers, crowd control in focus in Houston concert deaths

By JUAN A. LOZANO and JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Investigators are expected to examine the design of safety barriers and the use of crowd control in determining what led to a crush of spectators at a Houston music festival that left eight people dead and hundreds more injured.

Authorities planned to use videos, witness interviews and a review of concert procedures to figure out what went wrong Friday night during a performance by rapper Travis Scott. The tragedy unfolded when the crowd rushed the stage, squeezing people so tightly they couldn't breathe.

Billy Nasser, 24, who had traveled from Indianapolis to attend the concert, said about 15 minutes into Scott's set, things got "really crazy" and people began crushing one another. He said he "was picking people up and trying to drag them out."

Nasser said he found a concertgoer on the ground.

"I picked him up. People were stepping on him. People were like stomping, and I picked his head up and I looked at his eyes, and his eyes were just white, rolled back to the back of his head," he said.

Over the weekend, a makeshift memorial of flowers, votive candles, condolence notes and T-shirts took shape outside at NRG Park.

Michael Suarez, 26, visited the growing memorial after the concert.

"It's very devastating. No one wants to see or hear people dying at a festival," Suarez said. "We were here to have a good time — a great time — and it's devastating to hear someone lost their lives."

The dead, according to friends and family members, included a 14-year-old high school student; a 16-year-old girl who loved dancing; and a 21-year-old engineering student at the University of Dayton. The youngest was 14, the oldest 27.

Houston officials did not immediately release the victims' names or the cause of death, but family and friends began to name their loved ones and tell their stories Sunday.

Thirteen people remained hospitalized Sunday. Their conditions were not disclosed. Over 300 people were treated at a field hospital at the concert.

City officials said they were in the early stages of investigating what caused the pandemonium at the sold-out Astroworld festival, an event founded by Scott. About 50,000 people were there.

Authorities said that among other things, they will look at how the area around the stage was designed.

Julio Patino, of Naperville, Illinois, who was in London on business when he got a middle-of-the-night call informing him his 21-year-old son Franco was dead, said he had a lot of questions about what happened.

"These concerts should be controlled," Patino said. "If they don't know how to do that, they should have canceled the concert right then, when they noticed there was an overcrowd." He added: "They should not wait until they see people laying down on the floor, lifeless."

Steven Adelman, vice president of the industry group Event Safety Alliance, which was formed after the collapse of a stage at the Indiana State Fair in 2011 killed seven people, helped write industry guidelines widely used today.

Besides looking at safety barriers and whether they correctly directed crowds or contributed to the crush of spectators, Adelman said, authorities will look at whether something incited the crowd besides Scott taking the stage.

Adelman said another question is whether there was enough security there, noting there is a nationwide shortage of people willing to take low-wage, part-time security gigs.

"Security obviously was unable to stop people. Optically, that's really bad-looking," he said. "But as for what it tells us, it's too early to say."

Contemporary Services Corp., headquartered in Los Angeles, was responsible for security staff at the festival, according to county records in Texas. Representatives for the company — which advertises online as being "recognized worldwide as the pioneer, expert and only employee owned company in the crowd management field" — did not immediately respond to emails and phone messages seeking comment.

Houston police and fire department officials said their investigation will include reviewing video taken by concert promoter Live Nation, as well as dozens of clips from people at the show.

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Officials also planned to review the event's security plan and various permits issued to organizers to see whether they were properly followed. In addition, investigators planned to speak with Live Nation representatives, Scott and concertgoers.

Izabella Ramirez of Texas City was celebrating her 21st birthday and said that once Scott came on stage, no one could move.

"Everybody was squishing in, and people were trying to move themselves to the front. You couldn't even lift up your arms," Ramirez said.

Ramirez said a security guard pulled her over the barricade, while her date, Jason Rodriguez, lifted her up.

"Everyone was yelling for different things. They were either yelling for Travis or they were yelling for help," Rodriguez said.

On video posted to social media, Scott could be seen stopping the concert at one point and asking for aid for someone in the audience: "Security, somebody help real quick."

There is a long history of similar catastrophes at concerts, sporting events and even religious events. In 1979, 11 people were killed as thousands of fans tried to get into Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum to see a concert by The Who. Other past crowd catastrophes include the deaths of 97 people at a soccer match in Hillsborough Stadium in 1989 in Sheffield, England, and numerous disasters connected with the annual hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

Experts who have studied deaths caused by crowd surges say they are often a result of too many people packed into too small a space.

Also Sunday, one of the first of many expected lawsuits was filed on behalf of a man injured in the crush of people in state court in Houston. Attorneys for Manuel Souza sued Scott, Live Nation and others, saying they were responsible.

In a tweet posted Saturday, Scott said he was "absolutely devastated by what took place." He pledged to work "together with the Houston community to heal and support the families in need."

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Associated Press writers Jake Bleiberg in Dallas; Randall Chase in Dover, Delaware; Kristin M. Hall in Nashville and Bob Christie in New Bloomfield, Pennsylvania, contributed to this report.

## Aspiring border agent, dancer, engineer among concert dead

By RANDALL CHASE and MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

A teen who loved dancing. An aspiring Border Patrol agent. A computer science student. An engineering student working on a medical device to help his ailing mother. And his friend and high school football teammate.

Clearer pictures began to emerge Sunday of some of the eight people who died after fans at the Astroworld music festival in Houston suddenly surged toward the stage during a performance by rapper Travis Scott.

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'LOVED HIS MOM'

Franco Patino, 21, was working toward a mechanical engineering technology degree at the University of Dayton, with a minor in human movement biomechanics, his father, Julio Patino, said in an interview. He was a member of Alpha Psi Lambda, a Hispanic interest fraternity, and the Society of Hispanic Professional

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Patino described his son as a charismatic, energetic leader who was active in his community and intent on helping people with disabilities.

He said his son was working with a team on a new medical device, and that he wanted to find a way to help his mother walk again after she was severely injured in an automobile accident in Mexico two years ago.

Through tears, Patino described how his son — who enjoyed weight lifting, football and rugby — used his strength to break a door and free his mom from the wreckage.

"He loved his mom," Patino said. "He said everything that he was doing, it was trying to help his mom. The entire goal."

Julio Patino, of Naperville, Illinois, was in London on business when the phone rang around 3 a.m. He answered it and heard his wife, Teresita, crying. She said someone had called from a hospital about their 21-year-old son, Franco, and that a doctor would be calling her soon. About 30 minutes, she called back with the doctor on the line.

"The doctor was giving us the news that our son had passed away," Patino said.

Patino said he had last spoken with his son about 2 p.m. Friday. Franco told his dad that there weren't a lot of people at the festival site yet.

"Don't worry, I'm fine," Patino recalled his son saying. "I just said, 'Ok, just be careful.'"

'HUGE HOLE IN OUR LIVES'

Jacob "Jake" Jurinek, 20, was a junior at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, where he was "pursuing his passion for art and media," his family said in a statement Sunday. He was just a over two weeks short of his 21st birthday.

He was attending the concert with Patino, his friend and former high school football teammate, according to Patino's father Julio Patino. He was deeply committed to his family and was known as "Big Jake" by his younger cousins.

He will be missed by his father, Ron Jurinek, with whom Jake became especially close after Jake's mother died in 2011.

"In the decade since, Jake and Ron were inseparable — attending White Sox and Blackhawks games, sharing their love of professional wrestling, and spending weekends with extended family and friends at Jake's favorite place, the family cottage in Southwestern Michigan," the family's statement said.

"We are all devastated and are left with a huge hole in our lives," his father, Ron Jurinek, added in an emailed statement.

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"He was (an) innocent young soul who would always put others before him. He was a hard-working man who loved his family and took care of us. He was there in a heartbeat for anything. He always had a solution to everything," Basil Baig told ABC News.

A funeral for Danish Baig is expected to be held on Sunday in Colleyville in the Dallas-Forth Worth area, his brother said. Messages left with Basil Baig were not returned.

LOVED TO DANCE

Brianna Rodriguez's family told People magazine that she was among those who perished at the concert. She was 16, a student at Heights High School and loved dancing, according to the family the magazine spoke with. A message left with the family was not immediately answered.

COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENT

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The school in Bellingham, Washington, released a statement Sunday: "By all accounts, Axel was a young

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man with a vibrant future. We are sending our condolences to his family on this very sad day.”

ASPIRING BORDER AGENT

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“Rudy was a close friend of mine,” she said. “We met in high school. He was an athlete... He brought happiness anywhere he went. He was easy to get along with. It was like positive vibes from him at all times.”

“We all came to have a good time ... it was just horrible in there,” she added.

Associated Press writers Jamie Stengle and Juan Lozano in Houston contributed to this report. Chase reported from Dover, Delaware. Catalini reported from Trenton, New Jersey.

## Top Republicans bullish on 2022 prospects after Virginia win

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Fresh off a strong showing in last week’s elections, some of the nation’s leading Republicans expressed newfound confidence this weekend that they were well positioned to retake control of Congress next year and ultimately win back the White House.

Speaking at the Republican Jewish Coalition’s annual leadership meeting in Las Vegas, Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, a potential presidential contender in 2024, boasted that Democrats were “freaking out” after losing the Virginia governor’s race and nearly falling short in New Jersey. Ronna McDaniel, the chair of the Republican National Committee, called Tuesday’s strong showing “a tsunami” and a “precursor of really great things to come in 2022.”

But beneath the bravado coursing through the grand Palazzo ballroom at the Venetian Resort, the GOP was still navigating around the shadow of Donald Trump, the former president who plans to play a major role in next year’s midterms and may again run for the White House in 2024. Virtually everyone who addressed the crowd praised Trump, who also spoke by video. But for the first time since losing the 2020 election, he seemed relegated to the background as others encouraged the party to think about its future.

The Republican strength in Virginia and New Jersey last week was fueled by candidates who deliberately kept Trump at arm’s length and successfully turned out rural conservatives who make up the former president’s base, while also appealing to suburban voters who had abandoned the party in recent years. That could provide a model for GOP success in future elections.

But Chris Christie, the former New Jersey governor who may run for president again in 2024, warned that would only happen if GOP leaders, including Trump, focus on the future instead of re-litigating the past, including the former president’s lie that last year’s election was stolen.

Republicans have “extraordinary opportunities over the next few years,” Christie said, but only if they offer voters “a plan for tomorrow, not a grievance about yesterday.”

“We can no longer talk about the past and the past elections, no matter where you stand on that issue — no matter where you stand — it is over. And every minute that we spend talking about 2020,” he said, was “wasting time.” The party needs to “take our eyes off the rearview mirror and start looking through the windshield again.”

In an interview after his speech, Christie said he believed Trump’s role in the party going forward was “completely dependent upon the president’s own behavior.”

“If the president wants to talk about the future and spend most of his time talking about the future and what he sees next, then I’m sure that he’ll be a welcome voice in any kind of debate,” he said. “But if all we’re going to do is talk about grievance politics and put out statements saying either you reverse the 2020 election or Republicans shouldn’t vote in ‘22 and ‘24, I mean, that can’t be the leader of our party. It just can’t.”

The RJC event, dubbed the “kosher cattle call” by its organizers, offered a chance for candidates mulling runs to woo some of the party’s biggest and most influential donors on stage and in private forums. Beyond Christie and Cruz, those appearing included former Vice President Mike Pence, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations,



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Nikki Haley.

Candidates running for Congress and governor also worked the room, including retired football player Herschel Walker, who is running for Senate in Georgia, and New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, who was repeatedly urged to launch a campaign for Senate, which he is considering.

"We're sort of the kosher nostra gatekeepers for those running down the road. You have to come here first and show us your stuff," said former White House press secretary Ari Fleischer, who serves on the group's board of directors. "It's really fun to watch potential future candidates strut their stuff, to see what they got. They're going to improve, they're going to have to change. It's years away. But this is how candidates get better."

But first, some of the attendees stressed, came winning next year.

"A lot of people have come here to audition," noted Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. "We have a very rich bench. We have a lot of energetic people. We have resumes that I think would make them qualified to lead this nation. But none of that matters to me until you get 2022 right."

With that in mind, some of those eyeing presidential runs made sure to first emphasize the importance of next year's elections. Pence was among those who received the loudest applause as he served as the headlining speaker on Saturday night, predicting the country was "just 12 months away from a great Republican comeback."

"Right here and right now, from this point forward, we will all resolve to do our part to win back the House, the Senate, governorships across the country in 2022," he said, offering no hints about plans for his own political future. "And we're going to win back this country in 2024."

Others focused on culture war issues surrounding vaccination mandates and critical race theory, an academic framework that came to dominate the final weeks of the Virginia governor's race. It centers on the idea that racism is systemic in the nation's institutions and that they function to maintain the dominance of white people. In recent months, it has become a catch-all political buzzword for any teaching in schools about race and American history.

DeSantis, who proclaimed his state the "freest" in the country, railed against pandemic restrictions, including mandatory vaccinations, while South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, like others, accused the administration of turning its back on Israel.

"They're not just trying to discredit Israel," she said. "They're not just trying to defund Israel. They're not just trying to alienate Israel. They're trying to delegitimize Israel. And they're challenging Israel's right to exist."

And they stressed lessons learned from Tuesday, including the importance of focusing on issues that voters care about, including education.

"Virginia was won by parents. Virginia was won by moms — moms who were frustrated, who were outraged at the arrogance and the condescension of Democratic school boards and of a Democratic administration that looks down on them," said Cruz.

"You just woke up a whole bunch of moms," echoed McDaniel.

## Packers' special teams let down Love in 13-7 loss to Chiefs

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The Green Bay Packers did all they could defensively to help out Jordan Love in his first career start.

Too bad for Love their special teams weren't on board.

In fact, the Packers were so bad on kicks and punts in a 13-7 loss to the Chiefs on Sunday it almost seemed as if they were trying to sabotage the backup quarterback, who was forced to start when Aaron Rodgers tested positive for COVID-19 this week.

There was the 40-yard field-goal attempt that Mason Crosby, their erstwhile sure-footed kicker, missed late in the first quarter that would have made it a 7-3 game. And the 37-yard attempt by Crosby that Chiefs defensive end Alex Okafor swatted away early in the second quarter as Kansas City took a 13-0 lead into the break.

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There was the punt that bounced off downfield blocker Malik Taylor, which Kansas City recovered and turned into an easy field goal, and another punt early in the third quarter that Amari Rodgers muffed but was fortunate to recover himself.

Aaron Rodgers would have struggled just as much as Love to overcome that mess.

"I mean, obviously we could have used those six points," Packers coach Matt LaFleur said afterward, "and we basically gave them points when we fumbled the ball. You can't have that happen."

Indeed, the two missed field goals proved to be the difference in the final score.

Not that Love did much to make Green Bay brass feel good about spending a first-round pick on him last year.

He was 19 of 34 for 190 yards with a touchdown in the closing minutes, which at least gave Green Bay (7-2) a chance to keep its seven-game winning streak alive. But he also threw an interception near the Kansas City goal line a few minutes earlier, another mistake that cost the Packers a chance to escape Arrowhead Stadium with a win.

"I mean, what it comes down to is making plays," said Love, the Packers' first-round pick in the 2020 draft, who had thrown just seven regular-season passes before Sunday. "I think if we would have been able to hit one of the plays against their all-out blitz, you wouldn't have seen it as much. That's all it takes is the one play. But I didn't do enough."

That doesn't mean Love doesn't think he can the next time.

Asked whether he thinks he's ready to be a full-time NFL quarterback, Love replied: "Yes, I do."

Still, the performance puts the Packers in quite a predicament.

Rodgers did little to endear himself to the organization, its fans and the rest of the league this week when it came out that he was unvaccinated — despite claiming to be "immunized" against COVID-19 earlier in the year. And his loose adherence to NFL rules for unvaccinated players means there could be additional punishment coming down the line.

His future in Green Bay beyond this season already was murky after he nearly departed this past off-season.

More immediately, there's the fact that Rodgers must test negative to return by Saturday at the earliest. That means a tight window for him to play against Seattle next week; otherwise, Love would get his second career start.

"Jordan will get the reps and we'll see where we're at," LaFleur said. "(Rodgers) is our starting quarterback. It's just, I think he's gone through enough. Yeah, you like guys to practice all week long but I don't think it's absolutely imperative to do that. We just have to make sure he's well in tune with our plan."

At least the Packers' defense did what it could against Kansas City to help Love out on Sunday.

They held Patrick Mahomes to 20-of-37 passing for 166 yards — the fewest in a complete game in his career — and the high-flying Chiefs offense to 237 yards in all. They stuffed them on fourth-and-1 in the first half, held on third-and-goal at the Green Bay 4 to force a field goal later and forced a punt on third-and-1 late in the third quarter.

It was the kind of performance that — at least with Rodgers under center — is usually enough.

"Any time you can hold an offense that explosive to 13 points, I think you had a great night," Packers running back Aaron Jones said. "Most of the time we should win the the game when we hold a team to 13 points."

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

## Aspiring border agent, dancer, engineer among concert dead

By RANDALL CHASE and MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

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This story has been updated to correct the name of the mayor's spokeswoman to Mary Benton, not Barton.

## 'Nimblewill Nomad,' 83, is oldest to hike Appalachian Trail

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — An 83-year-old from Alabama started walking when he retired more than a quarter-century ago — and never stopped.

M.J. "Sunny" Eberhart strode into the record books Sunday as the oldest hiker to complete the Appalachian Trail.

Eberhart, known by the trail name Nimblewill Nomad, acknowledged that despite having tens of thousands of miles under his belt, the trail was tough going at his age, leading to quite a few spills on slippery rocks.

"I've got a couple of skid marks on me, but I'm OK," he said in a recent interview. "You've got to have an incredible resolve to do this."

He hiked the trail out of order, in sections, to take advantage of optimal weather, and had already completed northern sections including Maine's Mount Katahdin. He completed his final section in western Massachusetts, in the town of Dalton, in the same year in which a 5-year-old became among the youngest to complete the feat.

Joining Eberhart for the finish was the former record holder, Dale "Greybeard" Sanders, who lives outside Memphis, Tennessee. He completed the hike at age 82 in 2017. He's not sad to see the record fall.

"My dear friend Nimblewill is taking my record away from me, and I'm happy for him. Records are made to be broken," Sanders said.

Sanders confirmed the completion of the feat as Eberhart was toasted with Champagne at a friend's



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house.

Jordan Bowman, of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, confirmed that Eberhart is the oldest to finish the trail, surpassing Sanders.

Eberhart began his wanderlust in earnest after retiring as an optometrist in Florida in 1993.

The man with flowing locks and an impressive beard actually hiked farther than most who traverse the 2,193-mile (3,530-kilometer) trail that runs between Georgia's Springer Mountain and Maine's Katahdin. He started his hike in February at his home in Flagg Mountain, Alabama, adding hundreds of extra miles to the route.

The journey represented a modest distance, relatively speaking, for a guy who trekked 4,400 miles (7,080 kilometers) from the Florida Keys to northern Quebec, an adventure he chronicled in a book, "Ten Million Steps." He later hiked from Newfoundland to Florida, an even greater distance. He also walked from Chicago to California on Route 66.

He said he was feeling his age on this hike. His reflexes aren't what they once were, so he tried to limit himself to eight hours of hiking a day.

But he still got banged up.

On a recent day in New Hampshire, he took a tumble and bloodied his elbow. A hiking companion asked if he wanted to take a break.

Eberhart retorted, "Do you think if I complain about it it will go away?" before picking himself and pressing onward, said Odie Norman, of Huntsville, Alabama, who hiked 100 miles with Nimblewill.

Eberhart's age puts him at the opposite extreme from a pair of young hikers who completed the trail during the pandemic.

A 4-year-old, Juniper Netteburg, finished her journey with her missionary parents last year, and a 5-year-old, Harvey Sutton, from Lynchburg, Virginia, completed the trail with his parents in August.

Eberhart actually met Sutton, known as Little Man, on the trail. The youngster "impressed the dickens out of me," Eberhart said.

Eberhart hasn't lost his desire to keep moving or to seek the sense of calm that he finds on the trail in the company of the tight-knit and diverse hiking community.

His first major hike coincided with a search for peace after lugging emotional and mental baggage that involved a divorce and losing the respect of his children, he said. He eventually found his peace, and forgiveness.

"You can seek peace. That doesn't mean that you're going to find it. I persevered to the point that the good Lord looked down on me and said you're forgiven, you can be at peace," he said recently during a break near the Maine-New Hampshire border.

"It's a profound blessing. It's as simple as that," he said.

With the hike over, Eberhart will return to his home at Flagg Mountain, the southernmost mountain topping 1,000 feet in the Appalachians, where he serves as caretaker of a fire tower and cabins built by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Norman, who publishes "The Hiker Yearbook," said Eberhart probably won't hang up his boots anytime soon.

"He said, 'You know they're calling this my final hike.' Then he laughed," Norman said. "I don't think it's going to be his last hike. I just don't think he knows what's he's going to hike next."

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Associated Press photojournalist Robert F. Bukaty contributed to this report.

## Mourning starts as Houston officials probe concert deaths

By JUAN A. LOZANO and JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Investigators Sunday worked to determine how eight people died in a crush of fans at a Houston music festival, as families mourned the dead and concertgoers recounted the horror and confusion of being trapped in the crowd.

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Authorities planned to use videos, witness interviews and a review of concert procedures to figure out what went wrong Friday night during a performance by rapper Travis Scott. The tragedy unfolded when the crowd rushed the stage, squeezing people so tightly they couldn't breathe.

Billy Nasser, 24, who had traveled from Indianapolis to attend the concert, said about 15 minutes into Scott's set, things got "really crazy" and people began crushing one another. He said he "was picking people up and trying to drag them out."

Nasser said he found a concertgoer on the ground.

"I picked him up. People were stepping on him. People were like stomping, and I picked his head up and I looked at his eyes, and his eyes were just white, rolled back to the back of his head," he said.

Over the weekend, a makeshift memorial of flowers, votive candles, condolence notes and T-shirts took shape outside at NRG Park.

Michael Suarez, 26, visited the growing memorial after the concert.

"It's very devastating. No one wants to see or hear people dying at a festival," Suarez said. "We were here to have a good time — a great time — and it's devastating to hear someone lost their lives."

The dead, according to friends and family members, included a 14-year-old high school student; a 16-year-old girl who loved dancing; and a 21-year-old engineering student at the University of Dayton. The youngest was 14, the oldest 27.

Houston officials did not immediately release the victims' names or the cause of death, but family and friends began to name their loved ones and tell their stories Sunday.

Thirteen people remained hospitalized Sunday. Their conditions were not disclosed. Over 300 people were treated at a field hospital at the concert.

City officials said they were in the early stages of investigating what caused the pandemonium at the sold-out Astroworld festival, an event founded by Scott. About 50,000 people were there.

Authorities said that among other things, they will look at how the area around the stage was designed.

Julio Patino, of Naperville, Illinois, who was in London on business when he got a middle-of-the-night call informing him his 21-year-old son Franco was dead, said he had a lot of questions about what happened.

"These concerts should be controlled," Patino said. "If they don't know how to do that, they should have canceled the concert right then, when they noticed there was an overcrowd." He added: "They should not wait until they see people laying down on the floor, lifeless."

Steven Adelman, vice president of the industry group Event Safety Alliance, which was formed after the collapse of a stage at the Indiana State Fair in 2011 killed seven people, helped write industry guidelines widely used today.

He said investigators will examine the design of the safety barriers and whether they correctly directed crowds or contributed to the crush of spectators. He said, too, that authorities will look at whether something incited the crowd besides Scott taking the stage.

Adelman said another question is whether there was enough security there, noting there is a nationwide shortage of people willing to take low-wage, part-time security gigs.

"Security obviously was unable to stop people. Optically, that's really bad-looking," he said. "But as for what it tells us, it's too early to say."

Contemporary Services Corp., headquartered in Los Angeles, was responsible for security staff at the festival, according to county records in Texas. Representatives for the company — which advertises online as being "recognized worldwide as the pioneer, expert and only employee owned company in the crowd management field" — did not immediately respond to emails and phone messages seeking comment.

Houston police and fire department officials said their investigation will include reviewing video taken by concert promoter Live Nation, as well as dozens of clips from people at the show.

Officials also planned to review the event's security plan and various permits issued to organizers to see whether they were properly followed. In addition, investigators planned to speak with Live Nation representatives, Scott and concertgoers.

Izabella Ramirez of Texas City was celebrating her 21st birthday and said that once Scott came on stage,

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no one could move.

"Everybody was squishing in, and people were trying to move themselves to the front. You couldn't even lift up your arms," Ramirez said.

Ramirez said a security guard pulled her over the barricade, while her date, Jason Rodriguez, lifted her up.

"Everyone was yelling for different things. They were either yelling for Travis or they were yelling for help," Rodriguez said.

On video posted to social media, Scott could be seen stopping the concert at one point and asking for aid for someone in the audience: "Security, somebody help real quick."

There is a long history of similar catastrophes at concerts, sporting events and even religious events. In 1979, 11 people were killed as thousands of fans tried to get into Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum to see a concert by The Who. Other past crowd catastrophes include the deaths of 97 people at a soccer match in Hillsborough Stadium in 1989 in Sheffield, England, and numerous disasters connected with the annual hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

Experts who have studied deaths caused by crowd surges say they are often a result of too many people packed into too small a space.

Also Sunday, at least two of the first of many expected lawsuits were filed on behalf of a man injured in the crush of people in state court in Houston. Attorneys for Manuel Souza sued Scott, Live Nation and others, saying they were responsible. Another lawsuit was filed on behalf of Noah Gutierrez by Ben Crump, a civil rights lawyer who has represented the families of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black people killed by police.

In a tweet posted Saturday, Scott said he was "absolutely devastated by what took place." He pledged to work "together with the Houston community to heal and support the families in need."

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Associated Press writers Jake Bleiberg in Dallas; Randall Chase in Dover, Delaware; Kristin M. Hall in Nashville and Bob Christie in New Bloomfield, Pennsylvania, contributed to this report.

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A previous version of this story was corrected to show Travis Scott is 30, not 29.

## Tension rises in Iraq after failed bid to assassinate PM

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — The failed assassination attempt against Iraq's prime minister at his residence on Sunday has ratcheted up tensions following last month's parliamentary elections, in which the Iran-backed militias were the biggest losers.

Helicopters circled in the Baghdad skies throughout the day, while troops and patrols deployed around Baghdad and near the capital's fortified Green Zone, where the overnight attack occurred.

Supporters of the Iran-backed militias held their ground in a protest camp outside the Green Zone to demand a vote recount. Leaders of the Iran-backed factions converged for the second day on a funeral tent to mourn a protester killed Friday in clashes with security. Many of the faction leaders blame the prime minister for the violence.

Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi suffered a light cut and appeared in a televised speech soon after the attack by armed drones on his residence. He appeared calm and composed, seated behind a desk in a white shirt and what appeared to be a bandage around his left wrist.

Seven of his security guards were wounded in the attack by at least two armed drones, according to two Iraqi officials. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to give official statements.

Al-Khadimi called for calm dialogue. "Cowardly rocket and drone attacks don't build homelands and don't build a future," he said in the televised speech.

Condemnation of the attack poured in from world leaders, with several calling Al-Khadimi with words of support. They included French President Emmanuel Macron, Jordan's King Abdullah II and British Prime

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Minister Boris Johnson. Saudi Arabia called the attack an apparent act of "terrorism." Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi on Facebook urged all sides in Iraq to "join forces to preserve the country's stability."

Secretary of State Antony Blinken talked with al-Kadhimi on Sunday to relay U.S. condemnation of the attack and to underscore that the U.S. partnership with the Iraqi government "is steadfast," State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

Also on Sunday, al-Khadimi met with Iraqi President Barham Salih and headed security and Cabinet meetings.

A security video showed the damage to his residence: a van parked outside the residence badly mangled, a shallow crater near the stairs, cracks in the ceiling and walls of a balcony and broken parts of the building's roof. Two unexploded rockets were filmed at the scene.

There was no claim of responsibility, but suspicion immediately fell on Iran-backed militias. They had been blamed for previous attacks on the Green Zone, which also houses foreign embassies.

The militia leaders condemned the attack, but most sought to downplay it.

It was a dramatic escalation in the already tense situation following the Oct. 10 vote and the surprising results in which Iran-backed militias lost about two-thirds of their seats.

Despite a low turnout, the results confirmed a rising wave of discontent against the militias that had been praised years before as heroes for fighting Islamic State militants.

But the militias lost popularity since 2018, when they made big election gains. Many hold them responsible for suppressing the 2019 youth-led anti-government protests, and for undermining state authority.

The attack "is to cut off the road that could lead to a second al-Kadhimi term by those who lost in the recent elections," said Bassam al-Qizwini, a Baghdad political analyst. "They started escalating first in the street, then clashed with Iraqi Security Forces, and now this."

On Friday, protests by supporters of the pro-Iran Shiite militias turned deadly when the demonstrators tried to enter the Green Zone where they had been camped out, demanding a recount.

Security forces used tear gas and live ammunition. There was an exchange of fire in which one protester affiliated with the militias was killed. Dozens of security forces were injured. Al-Khadimi ordered an investigation.

"The blood of martyrs is to hold you accountable," said Qais al-Khazali, leader of the Asaib Ahl al-Haq militia, addressing al-Kadhimi in recorded comments to supporters. He blamed him for election fraud.

In the strongest criticism of the prime minister, Abu Ali al-Askari, a senior leader with one of the hardline pro-Iran militias, Kataib Hezbollah, questioned whether the assassination attempt was really al-Kadhimi's effort to "play the role of the victim."

"According to our confirmed information no one in Iraq has the desire to lose a drone on the residence" of al-Kadhimi, al-Askari wrote in a Twitter post. "If anyone wants to harm this Facebook creature there are many ways that are less costly and more effective to realize that."

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh condemned the assassination attempt on al-Khadimi and indirectly blamed the U.S.

The escalation also reveals a level of nervousness among Iran and its allies as they realize that political results don't always translate into control, said Joseph Bahout, a director of research at the American University of Beirut.

"This is an act depicting fear of loss of control. Al-Khadimi is being now perceived as a Trojan horse for more erosion of Iran's grip on the country," Bahout said.

Al-Kadhimi, 54, was Iraq's former intelligence chief before becoming prime minister in May last year. He is considered by the militias to be close to the U.S., and has tried to balance between Iraq's alliances with both the U.S. and Iran.

Prior to the elections, he hosted several rounds of talks between regional foes Iran and Saudi Arabia in Baghdad in a bid to ease regional tensions.

Marsin Alshamary, an Iraqi-American research fellow with the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center, said the attack resurfaced the long-term challenge of how to curb the powers of the militias without trig-



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gering a civil war.

For al-Kadhmi, the stakes are now higher if he is to remain as prime minister.

"He doesn't have a political party and so he is susceptible to direct attack with no party to negotiate or protect him," she added.

Iraq's election commission has yet to announce the final results. The parliament could then convene, elect a president and form a government.

The U.S., the U.N. Security Council and others have praised the election, which was mostly violence-free and without major technical glitches.

But the unsubstantiated fraud claims have cast a shadow over the vote. The standoff with the militia supporters has increased tensions among rival Shiite factions that could spill into violence and threaten Iraq's newfound relative stability.

Influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, who won the largest number of parliament seats in the Oct. 10 elections, denounced the "terrorist attack," which he said seeks to return Iraq to the lawlessness and chaos of the past. While al-Sadr maintains good relations with Iran, he publicly opposes external interference in Iraq's affairs.

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Associated Press writers Zeina Karam in Vienna, Sarah El Deeb in Beirut, Jon Gambrell and Aya Batrawy in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed.

## **Biden vaccine mandates face first test with federal workers**

By COLLEEN LONG and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is pushing forward with a massive plan to require millions of private sector employees to get vaccinated by early next year. But first, he has to make sure workers in his own federal government get the shot.

About 4 million federal workers are to be vaccinated by Nov. 22 under the president's executive order. Some employees, like those at the White House, are nearly all vaccinated. But the rates are lower at other federal agencies, particularly those related to law enforcement and intelligence, according to the agencies and union leaders. And some resistant workers are digging in, filing lawsuits and protesting what they say is unfair overreach by the White House.

The upcoming deadline is the first test of Biden's push to compel people to get vaccinated. Beyond the federal worker rule, another mandate will take effect in January aimed at around 84 million private sector workers, according to guidelines put out this past week.

On Saturday, a federal appeals court in Louisiana temporarily halted the vaccine requirement for businesses with 100 or more workers. The administration says it is confident that the requirement will withstand legal challenges in part because its safety rules preempt state laws.

"The president and the administration wouldn't have put these requirements in place if they didn't think that they were appropriate and necessary," Surgeon General Vivek Murthy said Sunday on ABC's "This Week." "And the administration is certainly prepared to defend them."

If the mandates are a success, they could make the most serious dent in new coronavirus cases since the vaccine first became available, especially with the news this past week that children ages 5-11 can get the shot making an additional 64 million people eligible. But with two weeks remaining until the federal worker deadline, some leaders of unions representing the employees say that convincing the unvaccinated to change their mind is increasingly challenging.

"I got the vaccine in February, it was my own choice and I thought it would stop the virus," said Corey Trammel, a Bureau of Prisons correctional officer and local union president in Louisiana. "But it hasn't. And now I have people resigning because they are tired of the government overreach on this, they do not want to get the shot. People just don't trust the government, and they just don't trust this vaccine."

Vaccines have a proven track record of safety, backed by clinical trials and independent reviews showing them overwhelmingly effective at preventing serious illness and death from COVID-19. More than 222

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million Americans have received at least one vaccine dose and more than 193 million are fully vaccinated. More than half of the world population has also received a shot.

Scientists have been battling anxiety over the vaccine since it was first authorized; an AP-NORC poll earlier this year found one-third of adults in the U.S. were skeptical, despite assurances the vaccine was safe and effective and few instances of serious side effects. About 70% of American adults are fully vaccinated and 80% have received at least one dose of a vaccine.

Vaccinations have unfolded at uneven rates across the federal government.

Officials at Health and Human Services, U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Housing and Urban Development said they were working on getting their employees vaccinated but had no figures yet.

Several intelligence agencies had at least 20% of their workforce unvaccinated as of late October, said U.S. Rep. Chris Stewart, a Utah Republican who is a member of the House Intelligence Committee.

Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association President Larry Cosme said there are about 31,000 members from 65 federal law enforcement agencies in the association and he estimated 60% of them have been vaccinated.

Homeland Security, a giant government department with more than 240,000 employees, was about 64% fully vaccinated by the end of last month. U.S. Customs and Border Protection has received at least 6,000 requests for medical or religious exemptions, according to the union that represents Border Patrol agents.

Federal agencies are warning employees about the upcoming mandate, offering time off to get the vaccine and encouraging workers to comply. But they won't be fired if they don't make the Nov. 22 deadline. They would receive "counseling" and be given five days to start the vaccination process. They could then be suspended for 14 days and eventually could be terminated, but that process would take months.

Republicans have argued the mandate goes too far. House Oversight Committee Republicans sent a letter in late October suggesting the president's "authoritarian and extreme mandates infringe upon American freedoms, are unprecedented, and may ultimately be deemed unlawful."

In their letter, Reps. James Comer of Kentucky and Jody Hice of Georgia said they worried about a large number of government vacancies should thousands of workers refuse and get fired. That concern was also felt by those in the already-understaffed Bureau of Prisons.

A federal corrections officers union in Florida filed a lawsuit this past week over the mandate, saying it was a violation of civil rights. Some prison workers say they're torn about the vaccine, not wanting to lose their livelihoods but also unwilling to sacrifice their personal beliefs. Officers near retirement age are contemplating leaving rather than go through with the vaccine.

One prison worker in West Virginia texted a colleague that the worker wasn't willing to be a guinea pig, writing: "It would be different if it wasn't new. But it is. And I don't wanna be your experiment."

The worker, describing how agonizing the decision had been, said: "I've cried and puked so much my eyes and stomach hurts." The worker wondered if it was wrong to stand firm against the vaccine.

Border Patrol employees have been directed to confirm their vaccination status by Tuesday, according to union President Brandon Judd. As of Thursday, 49% of Border Patrol agents responded to say they are fully vaccinated and about 7% reported not being vaccinated, Judd said.

It's unclear at this point how many will continue to refuse if they aren't granted an exemption and face losing their job as a result.

"When it comes down to losing your livelihood or getting vaccinated, I think the vast majority are going to ultimately get vaccinated," Judd said. "We are going to lose people. How many? I really couldn't predict that."

Sisak reported from New York. Associated Press Writers Zeke Miller, Ben Fox, Gary Fields, Hope Yen and Ashraf Khalil contributed to this report.

## After drinking water crisis, Newark is winning war on lead

By DAVID PORTER Associated Press

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NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — On a recent sun-drenched morning, the staccato rhythms of a jackhammer ricocheted off buildings as a work crew dug into a Newark street to remove an aging pipe that carried water — and potentially a poison — to a small apartment building.

The new pipe is copper. The old one was lined with lead, which can be harmful to human health even at minute levels.

The water service line was one of more than 20,000 made with the toxic metal the city began replacing in 2019 amid public outrage over revelations about high lead levels in the tap water in schools and homes across the city.

Less than three years after the work began, the replacement project, initially projected to take up to 10 years, is nearly complete.

City residents who switched to bottled water during the crisis are breathing — and drinking — easier. Newark, once castigated and sued over its sluggish response to the problem, is being held up as a potential national model.

"I'm just happy that it's happening and that it's finally getting taken care of so we finally get to drink tap water again," Newark resident Cesar Velarde said as he watched the crew work. "I have three cases of bottled water right now. I don't drink faucet water no more because of this."

The pipe replacement project has been a vindication of sorts for Mayor Ras Baraka, who faced mounting public pressure in 2018 after the Natural Resources Defense Council, a nonprofit environmental advocacy group, sued, claiming New Jersey's largest city had failed to adequately monitor lead levels and had downplayed the problem to residents.

Deteriorating lead-lined pipes, some a century old, are a problem in many older U.S. cities, a recent example being Benton Harbor, Michigan. But Newark's replacement project proceeded faster than expected, thanks to an infusion of state and local funds and an amendment to state law to protect homeowners from having to bear the cost.

"I'll feel better when we're completely finished, but I'm excited that we're at the end of this thing. It'll be a huge milestone for us," Baraka said last week.

Newark's efforts led to the lawsuit being settled last January, and drew praise from the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"It's a pretty significant turnaround from the early days when the city was denying they had a lead problem," Erik Olson, NRDC senior strategic director for health, said. "We are pointing to it as a model for other cities to follow. They're doing it much faster than other cities have even tried to do."

The NRDC estimated recently that there are as many as 12 million lead service lines in the U.S. Nearly half of all states don't even track the number of lead lines within their borders, they found.

Lead in drinking water has been linked to developmental delays in children and can damage the brain, red blood cells and kidneys.

The challenge of removing lead from drinking water in the U.S. came into sharp focus after the Flint, Michigan, scandal in which city leaders switched water sources in 2014 to save money. That led to criminal charges, though many later were dropped, and a \$641 million settlement for the residents of the poor, majority Black city.

The \$1 trillion infrastructure plan passed by the House on Friday night and now awaiting President Joe Biden's signature includes \$15 billion to replace lead pipes.

Several hundred lead lines remain to be replaced in Newark, many connected to buildings that were not accessible earlier in the project.

The process can take up to five hours, though many replacements take less time because they involve smaller pipes that can be pulled out and replaced by making a smaller cut in the curbside, said Mark Wleklik, foreperson for Underground Utilities, a company that has done thousands of pipe replacements in Newark.

More than 70% of Newark residents are renters, and many of the buildings are owned by limited-liability corporations based elsewhere that can be hard to track down, said Kareem Adeem, director of the city's water and sewer department.

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"It's hard to chase an LLC down to Texas or Missouri or Louisiana or California," Adeem said. "The renters always want the line to be replaced, but they don't own the property."

That led the Newark City Council to pass an ordinance allowing tenants to provide access to buildings. An amendment to a state law paved the way for public money to be used for the replacements — which can cost thousands of dollars per home — and Newark was able to borrow \$120 million. All those efforts allowed the city of more than 310,000 people to accelerate its line replacements to as many as 120 per day.

The city also created a program that trained about 75 unemployed and underemployed residents to work on the line replacement crews, Adeem said.

Looking back, Baraka described the confrontation with the Natural Resources Defense Council as "tough, tense, with no love lost," but he admitted learning some lessons.

"We were so busy trying to fight the NRDC, we were having conversations with them and not with the residents," he said. "We thought they were wrong and wanted to oversee the city, and we already had oversight. So we were trying to fight that as opposed to being on the offensive and saying, 'We have this problem, let's go out and fix this.'"

For some, praise for the Newark's accomplishment needs to be taken in context. Yvette Jordan, a teacher and chairperson of the Newark Education Workers Caucus, which joined the lawsuit brought by the resources council, said it was no coincidence that many of the city's actions came at a time when Baraka was seeking reelection and Newark was in the running to become home to Amazon's second headquarters.

"This showed us that the community must rise up and say something," said Jordan, whose own home showed high levels of lead in its drinking water at one point.

"Without the community screaming and yelling and saying, 'We need this,' nothing is going to happen. The state and federal government also have to say, 'We're going to do this' and have the political will to do it. Without that political will, without the stars aligning, I don't think you would see Newark as this national model."

\_\_\_ This story has been corrected to show that the name of the organization that sued Newark is the Natural Resources Defense Council, not the National Resources Defense Council.

## AP FACT CHECK: Biden hypes \$1T bill impact on electric cars

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Boasting about his \$1 trillion infrastructure package, President Joe Biden overstated its reach by claiming it would result in 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations and meet his pledge to nudge half of U.S. drivers into EVs by decade's end.

The measure receiving final congressional passage late Friday cuts in half the money that Biden had said was needed for the charging stations. Money could start flowing to the states within a month after the bill is signed, although construction can't begin until the Transportation Department approves their spending plans.

While a step forward, automakers have made clear they won't meet White House targets that half of all new car sales be electric by 2030 based on federal investment in that legislation alone.

A look at the claims vs. the facts:

BIDEN: "We're going to build out the first-ever national network of charging stations all across the country — over 500,000 of them. ... So, you'll be able to go across the whole darn country, from East Coast to West Coast, just like you'd stop at a gas station now. These charging stations will be available." — remarks Saturday.

THE FACTS: Not so much.

The legislation, which awaits Biden's signature, provides \$7.5 billion in federal grants to build a national network of charging stations. That's less than the \$15 billion originally cited by Biden to pay for the half a million charging stations he promised during the presidential campaign.

Analysts say the money is a good start but isn't enough to spur widespread electric vehicle adoption.

The International Council on Clean Transportation, a research group, for instance, says the United States



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would need 2.4 million electric vehicle charging stations by 2030 if about 36% of new car sales were electric. In 2020, there were about 216,000.

New chargers should be located based on models that predict where they will be needed, such as along travel corridors for people going long distances, as well as in areas where people spend lots of time, such as hotels, apartment building parking lots and even along public streets, says Jessika Trancik, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who studies EV charging.

Direct current fast chargers, which can charge a car up to 80% of its battery capacity in 20 to 45 minutes, are quite expensive, costing \$40,000 to \$100,000. So those should be placed where people need to charge quickly and get back on the road.

Chargers that run on 240-volt electricity similar to what powers a clothes dryer are far cheaper, around \$2,000. But they take around eight hours to fully recharge a car, which won't be as feasible along a highway.

The White House has acknowledged the infrastructure bill alone will not be enough and has said it will use "all the tools and resources available" to cover Biden's half-million target, such as with existing loan and investment programs at the Energy and Transportation departments.

But striving toward a goal is not the same as a promise that Biden reaffirmed Saturday.

**BIDEN:** "Auto companies made a commitment they were going to make 50% of vehicles electric by 2030." — remarks Saturday.

**JENNIFER GRANHOLM,** secretary of energy: "The auto industry itself has said that they want half of their fleet to be electric, new vehicles sold by 2030." — interview Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union."

**THE FACTS:** That's overstating it.

While Biden in August did sign an executive order setting the nonbinding target, major automakers actually only agreed to a goal of 40% to 50% of new car sales being electric, depending on the amount of federal investment.

The automakers including the "Big Three" — Ford, General Motors and Stellantis, formerly Fiat Chrysler — say a substantial shift to EVs by 2030 can only happen with incentives for electric vehicle purchases, adequate government funding for charging stations and money to expand electric vehicle manufacturing and the parts supply chain.

While the infrastructure bill provides for EV charging stations, automakers are also banking on passage of a \$2 trillion, Democrat-only spending bill that was put on hold Friday in the House as progressives and centrists work out issues over cost. That measure also is expected to face changes in the Senate.

The spending bill would provide up to \$12,500 in credits to consumers off the price of an electric vehicle, including \$4,500 if the vehicle is made at a unionized factory such as General Motors and Ford. That provision has drawn protests from Tesla and non-domestic automakers like Toyota and Honda, which produce many of their cars in the U.S. but have workforces not represented by a union, saying it will make it harder for them to sell EV vehicles.

Only 2.2% of new vehicle sales were fully electric vehicles through June, according to Edmunds.com estimates. That's up from 1.4% at the same time last year.

**BIDEN:** "They'll see the effects of the bill — this bill — probably starting within the next two to three months. As we get things — shovels in grounds and — in the ground — and people being told they're going to be working doing the following things. And things are going to move. It is a bill that's paid out over a number of years."

**THE FACTS:** He's in the ballpark.

Once the bill is signed into law, for instance, about \$1 billion — the first year of \$5 billion of the \$7.5 billion in EV funding over five years — is to be distributed right away to states based on a federal formula, which should happen within two to four weeks, said Jeff Davis, a senior fellow at the Eno Center for Transportation.

Still, under the legislation, states won't be able to spend the money until the Transportation Department sets out its criteria for EV buildout plans and approves plans submitted by states — a process that could take up to six months.

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According to that Federal Highway Administration formula, larger states will be the big winners of the \$5 billion federal payout. Texas would get \$407 million, California would get \$383 million, Florida \$198 million, New York \$175 million, and Illinois \$148 million. In contrast, Vermont's allocation is \$21 million, and Puerto Rico's \$13 million.

Separately, there is a \$2.5 billion competitive grant program over five years that will give the federal government discretion to award money based on strategic needs in building out an EV network. The first of that money could take up to a year to be distributed as the program is set up.

"We want to fill that out, so rural areas, poorer areas have access to the (electric) fuel that's necessary," Granholm said Sunday.

Davis said in terms of infrastructure projects more broadly, "starting in April 2022 or so, you will begin seeing many, many formal announcements of significant new grant announcements selected by the transportation secretary from a pool of competitive applicants — highways, transit, railroad, port, airport, gas pipeline, etc.."

"Most of these won't be able to break ground immediately, but those are signs of progress," he said.

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

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## 'Eternals' opens with \$71M but audience response is mixed

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "Eternals," one of Marvel's most ambitious efforts to expand its superhero universe, arrived in theaters with about \$71 million in ticket sales over the weekend, according to studio estimates.

By most studios' box-office standards, the opening was enviable. Only three other films have debuted better during the pandemic: "Black Widow" (\$80.3 million), "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings" (\$75.3 million) and "Venom: Let There Be Carnage" (\$90 million). But for Marvel's well-oiled blockbuster machine, the "Eternals" launch in some ways constituted a bump in the road in an unparalleled 26-film streak.

Going into the weekend, forecasts had been only slightly higher at about \$75 million domestically. More concerning for the Walt Disney Co. was the mixed audience response to Chloé Zhao's 157-minute movie about an immortal race of superheroes. The film is the first in the Marvel "cinematic universe" to rank "rotten" in Rotten Tomatoes' aggregate critic score, with only 47% of reviews considered positive. Audiences also gave it a lower grade — a "B" CinemaScore — than any previous MCU entry.

But from the start, "Eternals" was a less charted direction for Marvel. By enlisting Zhao, whose "Nomadland" earlier this year won best picture and best director at the Academy Awards, the comic-book factory tapped a lauded filmmaker more associated with arthouse realism than computer-generated spectacle. The story, too, introduces a lesser-known alien class of superheroes, whose existence spans all of human history. With a teeming, diverse cast including Gemma Chan, Richard Madden, Angelina Jolie and Kumail Nanjiani, "Eternals" dared numerous introductions — including the MCU's first deaf superhero in Lauren Ridloff and the first superhero sex scene — not tried before in the franchise.

David A. Gross, who runs the movie consultancy Franchise Entertainment Research, estimates the negative reception to "Eternals" cost it a modest 10% in box office. He still sees superhero films as driving the recovery of theaters. Marvel movies account for the the top four openings of the pandemic.

"Eternals' is by no means a problem," Gross said in an email. "The film isn't connecting the way every other Marvel film has, but the box office performance is solid and it maintains October's level of business."

"Eternals," which cost about \$200 million to produce, opened strongly overseas, grossing \$90.7 million in 46 international territories. The film, however, didn't open in China and isn't expected to be granted a release in the future despite being directed by a China-born filmmaker. The previous Marvel release,

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"Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings," the studio's first Asian superhero movie, also hasn't received permission to open in China.

The reasons for the refusal aren't clear, but China heavily censors the films it clears for release. U.S.-China relations have grown more tense in recent years. It's also been widely noted that Zhao said in a 2013 interview that China is "where there are lies everywhere." In April, her Oscar wins went unreported by China state-run media outlets and mentions of them were scrubbed from the internet in China.

The weekend's other major new release was "Spencer," starring Kristen Stewart as Princess Diana. The acclaimed drama, which is expected to land Stewart her first Oscar nomination, launched in 996 locations and grossed \$2.1 million for Neon.

The rest of the weekend's top draws were holdovers.

In its third weekend of release, Denis Villeneuve's sci-fi epic "Dune" took in \$7.6 million for a cumulative total of \$83.9 million. Warner Bros., which has announced a sequel to "Dune," released the film simultaneously on HBO Max.

MGM and United Artists Releasing's James Bond entry "No Time to Die" grossed \$6.1 million in its fifth weekend of release, bringing its domestic haul to \$143.2 million. After 31 days exclusively in theaters — much shorter than the three months most Bond films have had on the big screen before being available in the home — "No Time To Die" will be released on video-on-demand Tuesday for \$20 rentals.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Eternals," \$71 million.
2. "Dune," \$7.6 million.
3. "No Time to Die," \$6.2 million.
4. "Venom: Let There Be Carnage," \$4.5 million.
5. "Ron's Gone Wrong," \$3.6 million.
6. "The French Dispatch," \$2.6 million.
7. "Halloween Kills," \$2.4 million.
8. "Spencer," \$2.1 million.
9. "Antlers," \$2 million.
10. "Last Night in Soho," \$1.8 million

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

## Comeback story: Korir wins NYC Marathon 2 years after 2nd

By JAKE SEINER AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — New York sought a comeback story for its 50th marathon, and Albert Korir delivered. And for a city whose sports fans don't accept second best, Peres Jepchirchir came through with a memorable first.

Korir and Jepchirchir made it a Kenyan sweep at Sunday's New York City Marathon, with Korir winning the men's race two years after finishing second and Jepchirchir becoming the only woman to take a marathon major in the fall after earning an Olympic gold medal.

The second oldest of the world's marathon majors returned after canceling in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. In a city where over 34,000 have died of COVID-19, organizers hoped for an uplifting celebration akin to the marathon staged two months after the 9/11 attacks.

"It was fantastic," Korir said.

On streets emptied 21 months ago except for ambulances rushing to aid a city paralyzed by the coronavirus — and later filled with anguish and frustration in the days after George Floyd's murder — there was simply joy Sunday as around 30,000 runners made their way through the city's five boroughs.

Brooklynites cheered for the early rising wheelchair competitors between sips of coffee. Throngs on Manhattan's First Avenue welcomed runners off the Queensboro Bridge. Cowbell-swinging supporters in

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the Bronx waved runners into the final stretch.

They clapped and hollered for the elite and the every-runner.

Shalane Flanagan, the 2017 champion, ran her sixth marathon major in six weeks — a first made possible because the Boston, London and Tokyo Marathons were pushed from spring to fall by of the pandemic. The 40-year-old American is calling her journey Project Eclipse because of how rare the opportunity was.

"I thought the fans were a whole other level today," she said. "The enthusiasm was so infectious. I felt like everyone had this deep sense of gratitude."

Also on the course: Dr. Jose Alfredo Jimenez Gaxiola, a Mexican ICU doctor who worked through the pandemic and survived his own bout with COVID-19; Kellie Roe Kenny from Califon, New Jersey, a survivor of the 9/11 attacks who first ran in 2001 in memory of co-workers who died; and Chris Nikic, the first athlete with Down syndrome to complete a full Ironman Triathlon.

Molly Seidel finished fourth in her first race since taking bronze at the Tokyo Games, becoming the first American woman since Deena Kastor in 2004 to earn an Olympic medal.

She revealed Sunday that she broke two ribs about a month ago, but she still finished in 2 hours, 24 minutes and 42 seconds, the fastest time ever by an American woman in New York.

"Every build up has challenges," Seidel said. "This was an interesting one."

Seidel said she was motivated to run New York because it would be the first time her family could see her race since the 2020 Olympic trials — international travelers were banned from attending the Tokyo Olympics.

"I hope there's a beer waiting for me at the hotel," Seidel said. "We will be going crazy tonight."

In the men's pro race, Korir overtook Morocco's Mohamed El Aaraby and Italy's Eyob Faniel around the 18th mile and quickly took out any drama. He won in 2:08:22.

"It was not an easy race," Korir said. "But I enjoyed it."

It was Korir's first victory in one of the World Marathon Majors and his first time atop any podium since winning the Ottawa Race Weekend Marathon in 2019. The 27-year-old Korir finished second to Geoffrey Kamworor in 2019 by 23 seconds and didn't race again until this June because of the pandemic.

El Aaraby held on for an improbable second-place finish after coming in 11th at the Tokyo Olympics. Faniel was third.

Jepchirchir was side by side with countrywoman Viola Cheptoo and Ethiopia's Ababel Yeshaneh from the time they entered the Bronx until they got to Central Park's entrance.

Moments after guzzling two energy gel packets, Jepchirchir turned on the jets and pulled away, winning in 2:22:39 for the third fastest time by a woman in NYC Marathon history.

"It's not easy," she said of the New York course. "Toward the finishing line, I felt something I've never felt before to finish a marathon."

Jepchirchir, 28, took gold at the Tokyo Olympics marathon in August and came back on a short recovery to win a race once dominated by her hero Mary Keitany, a four-time winner in New York who recently retired from the sport.

Cheptoo finished second in her marathon debut and quickly found her brother, Bernard Lagat, who was broadcasting the race on ESPN. Yeshaneh was third.

Marcel Hug of Switzerland won the men's wheelchair race for the fourth time, finishing more than 6 1/2 minutes ahead of the next racer for his first title since 2017. Australia's Madison de Rozario won the women's wheelchair event, holding off past champions Tatyana McFadden and Manuela Schär for her first Big Apple victory.

The field was shrunk by about 40% this year to help keep runners distanced, and participants had to provide proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test within 48 hours of race day. Runners registered for the 2020 race that was wiped out were given the option of a full refund or entry into the 2021, '22 or '23 races.

The non-competitive field had its share of famous athletes, too, including U.S. women's national soccer team alumni Abby Wambach, Lauren Holiday, Kate Markgraf and Leslie Osborne. Former New York Giants runner back Tiki Barber raced for the seventh time.



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Tony Award-winning actress Kelli O'Hara was slated to perform the national anthem before testing her lungs on the course, while two members of British rock band Mumford & Sons also were signed up to run. The entrants also included "The Bachelor" and "The Bachelorette" contestants Matt James, Tyler Cameron, Tayshia Adams and Zac Clark.

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## Proof of vax required as strict mandate takes effect in LA

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Yoga studio owner David Gross felt relieved after Los Angeles passed a vaccine mandate that is among the strictest in the country, a measure taking effect Monday that requires proof of shots for everyone entering a wide variety of businesses from restaurants to shopping malls and theaters to nail and hair salons.

For Gross, the relief came from knowing he and his co-owner don't have to unilaterally decide whether to verify their customers are vaccinated. In another part of town, the manager of a struggling nail salon feels trepidation and expects to lose customers. "This is going to be hard for us," Lucila Vazquez said.

Los Angeles is among a growing number of cities across the U.S., including San Francisco and New York City, requiring people show proof of vaccination to enter various types of businesses and venues. But rules in the nation's second-most-populous city, called SafePassLA, apply to more types of businesses and other indoor locations including museums and convention centers.

They are being implemented as new cases have started inching up following a sharp decline from an August peak driven by the delta variant.

This was the time of year in 2020 when the worst spike of the pandemic was just beginning in California, which by January saw an average of 500 people die every day. Los Angeles became the state's epicenter and its hospitals were so overloaded with patients that ambulances idled outside with people struggling to breathe, waiting for beds to open.

So many people died that morgues reached capacity and refrigerated trucks were brought in to handle the overflow. That stark scene played out as coronavirus vaccines arrived and California and Los Angeles moved aggressively to inoculate people.

Among LA county's roughly 10 million people, 80% of eligible residents now have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose and 71% of those eligible are fully vaccinated, according to public health officials.

To guard against anything resembling the January carnage, the LA City Council voted 11-2 last month for the ordinance that requires people 12 and older to be fully vaccinated to enter indoor public spaces including sports arenas, museums, spas, indoor city facilities and other locations.

Negative coronavirus tests within 72 hours of entry to those establishments would be required for people with religious or medical exemptions for vaccinations. Customers without proof can still use outdoor facilities and can briefly enter a business to use a restroom or pick up a food order.

While the order takes effect Monday, city officials say they won't start enforcing it until Nov. 29 to give businesses time to adjust. A first offense will bring a warning but subsequent ones could produce fines running from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, who tested positive for the coronavirus last week while attending the United Nations climate change conference in Scotland, said the mandate will encourage more people to get shots and make businesses safer for employees and customers.

"Vaccinating more Angelenos is our only way out of this pandemic, and we must do everything in our power to keep pushing those numbers up," Garcetti said.

Business trade groups say the mandate will sow confusion because Los Angeles County's own vaccine rules — which apply to dozens of surrounding communities — are less sweeping. Cities are allowed to pass

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rules more stringent than the county's.

"There's a tremendous lack of clarity," said Sarah Wiltfong, senior policy manager at the Los Angeles County Business Federation. For example, most retail shops are exempt. "But shopping malls and shopping centers are included, which of course includes retail shops," she said.

Harassment of workers who are tasked with verifying vaccination is the top concern of the business federation's members, Wiltfong said.

"This puts employees in a potential position of conflict, when they're not necessarily trained to handle situations like that," she said.

Salons were especially hard hit during the pandemic and were among the last businesses to reopen indoors. Before COVID, Lynda Nail Salon in the Los Feliz neighborhood was regularly filled with clients for hair and nail appointments. On Wednesday morning, only one woman waited for her hair to set.

Vazquez, who manages the business, said she will follow the new rules even though many of her hair clients have said they won't come in if it requires being vaccinated.

Gyms and yoga studio like the one co-owned by Gross also fall under the order. He doesn't relish having his employees play the role of enforcer, checking every customer's vaccination status. But now that the rule is on the books, it's one less decision he and his partner Lydia Stone have to make as they navigate Highland Park Yoga back to in-person classes.

In anticipation of the new rules, the studio last month started encouraging its regular customers to submit their vaccine cards online so they don't have to show them at the start of every class. Gross and Stone said it would be heartbreaking to turn away anyone.

"You know, the City Council decided, the mayor signed it, and we we have no choice but to comply with the law," Gross said, adding that the possibility of being punished for violating the law "would be hugely detrimental" to a yoga business that is barely surviving after being shut down for the bulk of the pandemic.

## **EXPLAINER: Prosecutors play up Rittenhouse inexperience**

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Prosecutors trying to convict Kyle Rittenhouse of murder have been working to paint him as an inexperienced teenager who misrepresented his age and medical training to other armed civilians in his group on the night he shot three men during a protest against police brutality in Wisconsin last year.

Assistant District Attorney Thomas Binger has drawn out testimony during the first week of Rittenhouse's trial from several witnesses, including two military veterans, saying the Illinois teen appeared inexperienced, that he falsely claimed that he was old enough to possess a gun and that he was a certified medic when he was really just a lifeguard.

Phil Turner, a former federal prosecutor and attorney in Chicago who isn't involved in the case, said Binger is trying to show jurors that Rittenhouse didn't know what he was doing and that they shouldn't believe his self-defense claims.

"In terms of how he reacted, they want to show it in context that he's young and he's not experienced and would be more likely to perceive (the protest) as a more threatening situation (than an older person)," Turner said. "A younger guy is going to think this guy is going to hurt me when really it's not true."

Rittenhouse brought a semi-automatic rifle to the protest in Kenosha in August 2020. The city on the Wisconsin-Illinois border was in the throes of several nights of chaotic demonstrations after a white police officer shot Jacob Blake, a Black man, who was resisting arrest during a domestic dispute. Rittenhouse was 17 years old at the time and said he had gone to Kenosha to protect downtown businesses from looters.

Just before midnight, he shot Joseph Rosenbaum, killing him, after Rosenbaum chased him into a parking lot. Bystander video shows a crowd chasing Rittenhouse down the street. In a matter of seconds an unidentified man tried to kick him in the head, Anthony Huber hit him in the head with a skateboard and Gage Grosskreutz charged him with a pistol. Rittenhouse fired at the man who kicked him but missed, shot and killed Huber and wounded Grosskreutz in the arm.

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Prosecutors have charged Rittenhouse with multiple counts, including homicide and being a minor in possession of a firearm. Rittenhouse has argued that he shot the men in self-defense. That means his attorneys must persuade jurors that he reasonably believed his life was in danger and that the amount of force he used was reasonable. Binger maintains that Rittenhouse was the aggressor and overreacted to the situation.

Ryan Balch, a former U.S. Army soldier who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, testified Thursday that he traveled to Kenosha on the night of the shootings armed with a semi-automatic rifle and a pistol to help protect businesses, and that he met Rittenhouse there.

Balch later told FBI investigators that Rittenhouse seemed very interested in him and his military deployments. He said Rittenhouse told him that he was 19 and a certified emergency medical technician; he was actually a lifeguard at a recreational complex in nearby Pleasant Prairie, which is between Kenosha and Rittenhouse's hometown of Antioch, Illinois.

"He seemed like a young and impressionable kid," Balch said. "He seemed a little under-equipped and under-experienced as well, which is one of the reasons we kind of stayed with him." Balch did not say why he felt Rittenhouse was under-equipped.

Balch said he kept an eye on Rittenhouse throughout the evening, protecting him as Rittenhouse walked around shouting that he was a medic and could help anyone who was injured. Balch recounted one protester insulting Rittenhouse with profanity and Rittenhouse yelling back "I love you, too, ma'am." Balch said he told him not to respond because it would only antagonize the crowd further.

"That's when I told him, 'hey, don't say that,'" Balch testified. "It can cause somebody to escalate the situation if they feel like you're making fun of them a little bit. So, just wasn't needed."

Former Marine Jason Lackowski testified Friday that he also traveled to Kenosha armed with a semi-automatic rifle and a knife to protect businesses.

He said Rittenhouse introduced himself and said he was an emergency medical technician. Rittenhouse didn't say how old he was, but Lackowski testified that he thought Rittenhouse was at least 18 because minors can't possess firearms in Wisconsin and he thought a person had to be 18 to get an EMT license.

He went on to testify that Rosenbaum was acting "belligerently," tried to start fights with Lackowski's group and asked members of the group to shoot him. He said he didn't consider Rosenbaum a threat to him or anyone else, however.

Richie McGinniss, a videographer for the conservative website The Daily Caller, testified Thursday that he met Rittenhouse while documenting the protest and asked him how old he was.

"I believe the response was something along the lines of 'I'm an adult,'" McGinniss said. "I actually told police the night of that I believe that he was in his mid-20s. But I believe I said exactly that he had a baby face."

Rittenhouse's attorneys pushed back at any suggestion that Rittenhouse overreacted to a non-threat. They noted that Lackowski's encounter with Rosenbaum occurred in a group setting and that he never faced Rosenbaum one-on-one like Rittenhouse did. When defense attorney Corey Chirafisi asked Lackowski if he would feel threatened if Rosenbaum charged him at full speed and tried to take his gun, Lackowski responded, "Yes."

But Rittenhouse's team left unchallenged the testimony that Rittenhouse had lied about his age and his medical certification and that he appeared inexperienced.

Turner, the Chicago attorney, said the defense may be content to let jurors believe Rittenhouse is basically just a kid.

"If I was defending this case, I would be happy with that because it's true. He's young and inexperienced and that goes to your intent to kill because you perceive a situation as being dangerous," Turner said. "His youth actually helps him. If it's an older person, then they think 'this guy knows better.'"

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Associated Press reporter Amy Forliti in Minneapolis contributed to this report.

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Find AP's full coverage on the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse at: <https://apnews.com/hub/kyle-rittenhouse>

## Plenty of pitfalls await Zuckerberg's 'metaverse' plan

By MATT O'BRIEN and BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writers

When Mark Zuckerberg announced ambitious plans to build the "metaverse" — a virtual reality construct intended to supplant the internet, merge virtual life with real life and create endless new playgrounds for everyone — he promised that "you're going to be able to do almost anything you can imagine."

That might not be such a great idea.

Zuckerberg, CEO of the company formerly known as Facebook, even renamed it Meta to underscore the significance of the effort. During his late October presentation, he effused about going to virtual concerts with your friends, fencing with holograms of Olympic athletes and — best of all — joining mixed-reality business meetings where some participants are physically present while others beam in from the metaverse as cartoony avatars.

But it's just as easy to imagine dystopian downsides. Suppose the metaverse also enables a vastly larger, yet more personal version of the harassment and hate that Facebook has been slow to deal with on today's internet? Or ends up with the same big tech companies that have tried to control the current internet serving as gatekeepers to its virtual-reality edition? Or evolves into a vast collection of virtual gated communities where every visitor is constantly monitored, analyzed and barraged with advertisements? Or foregoes any attempt to curtail user freedom, allowing scammers, human traffickers and cybergangs to commit crimes with impunity?

Picture an online troll campaign — but one in which the barrage of nasty words you might see on social media is instead a group of angry avatars yelling at you, with your only escape being to switch off the machine, said Amie Stepanovich, executive director of Silicon Flatirons at the University of Colorado.

"We approach that differently — having somebody scream at us than having somebody type at us," she said. "There is a potential for that harm to be really ramped up."

That's one reason Meta might not be the best institution to lead us into the metaverse, said Philip Rosedale, founder of the virtual escape Second Life, which was an internet craze 15 years ago and still attracts hundreds of thousands of online inhabitants.

The danger is creating online public spaces that appeal only to a "polarized, homogenous group of people," said Rosedale, describing Meta's flagship VR product, Horizon, as filled with "presumptively male participants" and a bullying tone. In a safety tutorial, Meta has advised Horizon users to treat fellow avatars kindly and offers tips for blocking, muting or reporting those who don't, but Rosedale said it's going to take more than a "schoolyard monitor" approach to avoid a situation that rewards the loudest shouters.

"Nobody's going to come to that party, thank goodness," he said. "We're not going to move the human creative engine into that sphere."

A better goal, he said, would be to create systems that are welcoming and flexible enough to allow people who don't know each other to get along as well as they might in a real place like New York's Central Park. Part of that could rely on systems that help someone build a good reputation and network of trusted acquaintances they can carry across different worlds, he said. In the current web environment, such reputation systems have had a mixed record in curbing toxic behavior.

It's not clear how long it will take Meta, or anyone else investing in the metaverse, to consider such issues. So far, tech giants from Microsoft and Apple to video game makers are still largely focused on debating the metaverse's plumbing.

To make the metaverse work, some developers say they are going to have to form a set of industry standards similar to those that coalesced around HTML, the open "markup language" that's been used to structure websites since the 1990s.

"You don't think about that when you go to a website. You just click on the link," said Richard Kerris, who leads the Omniverse platform for graphics chipmaker Nvidia. "We're going to get to the same point in the metaverse where going from one world to another world and experiencing things, you won't have to think about, 'Do I have the right setup?'"



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Nvidia's vision for an open standard involves a structure for 3D worlds built by movie-making studio Pixar, which is also used by Apple. Among the basic questions being resolved are how physics will work in the metaverse — will virtual gravity cause someone's glass to smash into pieces if they drop it? Will those rules change as you move from place to place?

Bigger disagreements will center on questions of privacy and identity, said Timoni West, vice president of augmented and virtual reality at Unity Technologies, which builds an engine for video game worlds.

"Being able to share some things but not share other things" is important when you're showing off art in a virtual home but don't want to share the details of your calendar, she said. "There's a whole set of permission layers for digital spaces that the internet could avoid but you really need to have to make this whole thing work."

Some metaverse enthusiasts who've been working on the concept for years welcome the spotlight that could attract curious newcomers, but they also want to make sure Meta doesn't ruin their vision for how this new internet gets built.

"The open metaverse is created and owned by all of us," said Ryan Gill, founder and CEO of metaverse-focused startup Crucible. "The metaverse that Mark Zuckerberg and his company want is created by everybody but owned by them."

Gill said Meta's big splash is a reaction to ideas circulating in grassroots developer communities centered around "decentralized" technologies like blockchain and non-fungible tokens, or NFTs, that can help people establish and protect their online identity and credentials.

Central to this tech movement, nicknamed Web 3, for a third wave of internet innovation, is that what people create in these online communities belongs to them, a shift away from the Big Tech model of "accumulating energy and attention and optimizing it for buying behavior," Gill said.

Evan Greer, an activist with Fight for the Future, said it's easy to see Facebook's Meta announcement as a cynical attempt to distance itself from all the scandals the company is facing. But she says Meta's push is actually even scarier.

"This is Mark Zuckerberg revealing his end game, which is not just to dominate the internet of today but to control and define the internet that we leave to our children and our children's children," she said.

The company recently abandoned its use of facial recognition on its Facebook app, but metaverse gadgetry relies on new forms of tracking people's gaits, body movements and expressions to animate their avatars with real-world emotions. And with both Facebook and Microsoft pitching metaverse apps as important work tools, there's a potential for even more invasive workplace monitoring and exhaustion.

Activists are calling for the U.S. to pass a national digital privacy act that would apply not just to today's platforms like Facebook but also those that might exist in the metaverse. Outside of a few such laws in states such as California and Illinois, though, actual online privacy laws remain rare in the U.S.

## 'Stop the show!' Houston concertgoers describe chaos

By JUAN LOZANO, RYAN PEARSON and SALLY HO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Screaming. Suffocating. Panicked. Unconscious.

The concertgoers at a highly anticipated Houston music festival Friday night say they were shocked to witness how the event brewed into pandemonium that left at least eight people dead.

Rapper Travis Scott was the headliner for the sold-out Astroworld Festival in NRG Park, which was attended by an estimated 50,000 people.

Here, some of them describe the chaos they're still trying to understand.

Ariel Little of New York was in the middle of the crowd in a prime viewing spot with her husband for only a brief minute before she started to struggle.

It was in trying to escape the increasingly packed venue that the couple realized how dangerous it was becoming.

Little's voice quivered with emotion as she described how small she felt gasping for air as she was battered by the crowd.

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"My chest is in so much pain from people pushing and crushing — literally crushing — my chest and in my lungs. And all I can remember is just screaming for him. 'I gotta get out! I gotta get out!' And people weren't moving," Little said. "They thought it was a joke but it was like literally people dying."

Her husband, Shawn, surveyed the scene quickly to find a way out.

"There was a lot of people in my section that were kind of like screaming and having panic attacks just because it felt almost as if you were under an elevator and the elevator was coming down on you and there was nothing you could do about it," Shawn Little said. "No one in my section at the time was moving because I think everyone was just in shock of how crazy and how panicked that everyone was. There was a lot of fear in people's eyes."

Madeline Eskins is an intensive care unit nurse who said she was one of the festivalgoers who passed out as the mass of people pressed closer to the stage. She was taken to a slightly less crowded area for medical attention, where she woke up.

Eskins, 23, of Houston, said she then saw someone nearby who needed medical help, and she told them she was a nurse. When a security guard overheard her, he asked if she could start helping others, Eskins said.

"There was three people on the ground getting CPR and the most disorganized chaos that I have ever seen in my life," Eskins said.

Eskins said she tried to guide medical staff and volunteers on how to use a defibrillator, and she also helped to check for pulses and do CPR compressions on several people.

"When the main performer came out — like Travis — people got, like, compressed cause they just wanted to see him," said Sal Salinas. "It was like you were suffocated in there. If you weren't on the side or anything, you were getting suffocated."

Niaara Goods, 28, of New York, said the crowd surged as a timer clicked down to the start of the performance.

"As soon as he jumped out on the stage, it was like an energy took over and everything went haywire. All of a sudden, your ribs are being crushed. You have someone's arm in your neck. You're trying to breathe but you can't," said Goods, who traveled to Texas to see friends and to celebrate a birthday.

She said she and her friends, one of whom was punched on the head and jaw, were quickly separated from each other but all escaped. Goods said she was so desperate to get out that she bit a man on the shoulder to get him to move.

"Some people are laughing at us — those who are screaming to get out. Because they thought it was funny. They didn't realize it was terror," she said.

Later, after getting to safety, she saw the injured streaming to safety in gurneys or in wheelchairs.

"It was literally the scariest night of my life. I literally thought I was going to die trying to get out. That's just not what you pay for," she said.

Gary Gaston, 52, of Houston said he went to the concert with his ex-wife, their 14-year-old son and the teen's friend.

They felt so threatened after only a few of Scott's songs that they decided to leave and meet outside by the medical tent.

When Gaston and his ex-wife arrived shortly after 10 p.m., he said they saw medical personnel start to bring at least eight people into the tent on gurneys, most of whom appeared unresponsive.

"It was surreal because you see these people being pulled out on these gurneys and people running into the medical tent, but the music is still going," Gaston said. "People in the arena were unaware of it."

Gavyn Flores said people kept trying to scoot into spaces where there was none to spare, while others tried to will their way toward the barricades to jump over to safety.

"They couldn't get there because there were people like blocking them so those people like they had to just deal with it like because they couldn't get out of the show," Flores said. "They were like chanting 'Stop the show!' and there was a guy in the back getting CPR. So many people were getting CPR, like it was absurd."

Julian Ponce said there were signs of injuries but he didn't realize there were deaths until he got home. "It was kind of mind-blowing, like we kept hearing people say, 'Stop the show. Stop the show,' but we didn't know what was going on. We heard somebody was bleeding. We heard a lot of stuff and we weren't too sure," Ponce said. "I don't even know how to feel. It's just breathtaking."

Associated Press reporter Acacia Coronado contributed from Austin, Texas.

## Schools take lead role in promoting vaccines for youngsters

By PAT EATON-ROBB Associated Press

With the approval of the COVID-19 vaccine for younger children, many elementary schools around the U.S. are preparing to offer the shots, which educators see as key to keeping students learning in person and making the classroom experience closer to what it once was.

Some district leaders say offering vaccine clinics on campus, with the involvement of trusted school staff, is key to improving access and helping overcome hesitancy — particularly in communities with low overall vaccination rates.

Still, many school systems are choosing not to offer elementary schools as hosts for vaccination sites after some middle and high schools that offered shots received pushback.

More than 250 families signed up for vaccinations that began Thursday at elementary schools in Duluth, Minnesota, which organized clinics immediately after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gave the final signoff to Pfizer's kid-size COVID-19 shot for children ages 5 to 11. Superintendent John Magas called the vaccines a "game changer."

"This brings us one step closer to moving from pandemic to endemic," Magas said. "It allows us to reconsider things like social distancing and masking and things like that as safety permits."

The Biden administration plans to send a letter to U.S. elementary schools in the next week asking them to host clinics. The Education Department is also urging schools to host town halls and webinars at which parents can talk to doctors about the vaccine.

Districts that have held or are planning clinics for younger children span Alaska to Vermont, said Hayley Meadvin, an Education Department senior adviser. Where schools choose not to host clinics, families can turn to doctor's offices, hospitals and other sites.

"There are many points of access, and there's no wrong door, honestly," Meadvin said.

In Ohio, some school districts offered on-site clinics for older students, but Rick Lewis, director of the Ohio School Boards Association, said they haven't heard from any districts planning them for younger students. He noted the CDC encourages districts to consider factors like local needs for school clinics and adequate community support.

School vaccine drives have faced pushback and protests in Ohio and elsewhere, and some opponents say they plan to keep up pressure as the focus of the vaccination effort shifts to younger students.

Sarah Kenney, who represents the group Mainers for Health and Parental Rights, argues that schools should not be getting involved or even talking to young children about the vaccine. She worries about its newness and potential for long-term side effects.

A Pfizer study of 2,268 children found the vaccine was almost 91% effective at preventing symptomatic COVID-19 infections. The FDA examined 3,100 vaccinated kids in concluding the shots are safe.

Kenney also expressed concern about stigma against children who do not get vaccinated.

"These conversations and personal decisions have been difficult enough to navigate for adults, we shouldn't be putting this on our kids," she said.

Parents are required to give authorization for their children's shots. The vaccines are typically adminis-

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tered before or after school in partnerships with local hospitals and government health officials.

Chicago Public Schools, the country's third-largest district, canceled school Nov. 12 to give parents an opportunity to get their children vaccinated by a healthcare provider or at a school-based site.

In Portland, Oregon, vaccines will be offered in eight elementary schools starting next week in high poverty districts, where families are more likely to face barriers such as access to health care or transportation, Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero said.

On the heels of California's decision to make vaccines for children mandatory, Portland is among districts considering the same. A recent board of education meeting to discuss that possibility was disrupted by a group of protesters. For that reason, security will be present at the vaccine clinics, and their times and dates won't be publicized outside the local community, said Courtney Westling, the district's director of government relations.

"Schools are a trusted community hub," she said. "Families, in general, feel very safe at these school sites. We're also not asking for identification or insurance cards. We don't want people to fear ICE showing up or something. We are just trying to get people vaccinated so we can get some of this behind us and get back to some semblance of normalcy."

In Hartford, Connecticut, schools superintendent Leslie Torres-Rodriguez said the vaccination clinics it is planning along with local hospitals will include school nurses, trusted by families. Only a third of the district's students 12 and older are vaccinated.

"We take an equity stance here and think about the access and removing any barriers that our families might have," she said.

In nearby Tolland, Connecticut, school superintendent Walter Willett said his district also is teaming with health providers, including UConn Health, to offer vaccines at school sites to younger students. He said vaccines are important, not just for keeping kids in school, but for teachers, janitors and other staff who tend to be more at risk.

"They can more effectively do their job when kids aren't bouncing in and out of the classroom in quarantine," he said.

Liz Hamel, the vice president of opinion and survey research at KFF, a nonprofit that studies health care issues, said their recent surveys show parents are more likely to accept vaccine information from their pediatrician than from government or educational sources.

"And one thing we found with teens is that most parents didn't want their school to require the vaccine, but if their school provided information or encouraged students to get vaccinated, those parents were more likely to say that their child was getting the vaccine," she said.

Sam Valle, a 9-year-old in Old Saybrook, Connecticut, said he's been bugging his parents for months, asking when he can get the vaccine.

"Right now, I can't go into a restaurant without it," he said. "I can't go into a store without wearing a mask. I can't do a lot of things."

Sam's quest will soon be over. His mother says his shot is now scheduled for Wednesday.

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Associated Press writers Collin Binkley in Boston and Michael Melia in Hartford, Connecticut, contributed to this report.

## Democrats facing tough slog in 2022 governor's races

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans are increasingly optimistic about flipping governor's offices in key battleground states next year, buoyed by President Joe Biden's sagging approval ratings, Democratic infighting in Congress and better-than-expected results in elections in Virginia and New Jersey.

Democrats were already steeled for tough races, but the upset loss in Virginia's governor's race and a close win in deeply blue New Jersey's confirmed the difficult conditions ahead. In both places, the party was largely caught off guard by the potency of culture-war debates over schools and struggled to stop



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voters once turned off by former President Donald Trump from migrating back to Republicans.

"Biden's approval is pulling down Democrats everywhere," said Charles Franklin, the pollster at Marquette Law School, which released a survey this week showing Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers' approval rating had slid even more. "There's no question national forces are playing a big role."

Democratic incumbents will be playing defense in much-watched Michigan and Wisconsin, and trying to hold an open seat in Pennsylvania. The three governorships are seen as Democrats' best chance to slow the GOP's ascendancy in the Rust Belt. The GOP currently holds the governor's office in 27 states, compared with Democrats' 23. Thirty-six are up next year nationwide.

Those races are poised to become expensive and intense contests, as voters and political parties have increasingly relied on state leaders to advance — or block — consequential policy. Evers and Democratic Govs. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan and Tom Wolf of Pennsylvania have emerged as major national figures, credited with stymieing Republican-controlled legislatures' efforts to add restrictions on voting and to curb precautions during the coronavirus pandemic.

Democrats see added urgency in holding the three governorships, in part because of their role in presidential elections. Trump and his backers last year pushed swing-state governors to name electors who would cast votes for Trump in the Electoral College, even though Biden won their states. All refused, but a new crop of more Trump-friendly governors could act differently should the next presidential race's results be similarly disputed.

Flipping Michigan and Wisconsin and winning Pennsylvania — Wolf is term limited and can't run again — would also likely give Republicans a boost heading into 2024 whether that year's election's results be ultimately challenged or not.

"Having Republican governors in key presidential battlegrounds like Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan can be worth a point or two on the presidential ballot," said Phil Cox, former executive director for the Republican Governors Association, who is advising GOP gubernatorial candidates for 2022. "Republican governors can be difference makers in 2024."

Republican strategists say Wisconsin and Michigan are among their best pickup chances next year, along with Kansas — a normally deep-red state where Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly narrowly won a three-way 2018 race. Nevada, Maine and perhaps New Mexico could be within reach, they say.

GOP candidates across the country will likely try to energize conservative parents by denouncing schools adhering to "critical race theory," an academic framework about systemic racism that has become a catch-all phrase for teaching about race in U.S. history. Defending "parents' rights" to push back against school districts' efforts to teach about things like institutional racism helped Republican Glenn Youngkin win the governor's race in Virginia, a state Biden carried by 10 percentage points just last year, and could further resonate in toss-up states.

"When you're talking about governors, you're talking about people who are actually in charge of what's going to wind up in our kids' schools," said Rick Hess, director of education programs for the conservative American Enterprise Institute. "For senators and members of Congress, it's a little more difficult. But this is such a gut-level, values-driven conversation, it will absolutely still motivate."

Democrats, meanwhile, see pickup opportunities in open governorships in Maryland and in Arizona, where Biden last year became just the second Democratic presidential candidate to win since 1948.

Marshall Cohen, the Democratic Governors Association's political director, said the party is also eyeing Ohio and Texas, where former Senate and presidential candidate Beto O'Rourke is expected to challenge Republican Gov. Greg Abbott.

Both parties, meanwhile, are also focused on Georgia, which narrowly went for Biden in 2020 and elected two Democratic senators in January. Incumbent GOP Gov. Brian Kemp faces the potential of a primary challenge from a Trump-backed Republican.

"No one knows what the environment's going to be like in the fall of 2022," Cohen said. "These races are not being held tomorrow."

For now, though, Biden's approval rating has slumped since the early months of his presidency, falling to 48% in an October AP-NORC poll from 59% in July.

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That, plus the party being slow to pass its domestic agenda, may be a drag on governors' in-state accomplishments. Congress approved a White House-backed \$1 trillion infrastructure package late Friday, but it came too late to help the party during elections in Virginia and New Jersey.

"Many of the things that we are seeing and hearing about in the Build Back Better infrastructure are things that Democratic governors have already been doing in their states," Wendi Wallace, deputy executive director of the Democratic Governors Association, said, referencing a spending bill endorsed by the White House which has yet to clear Congress. "Our in-state efforts are sometimes overshadowed by what's happening in Washington."

Biden's trouble, meanwhile, could increase pressure on Democratic governors facing tough reelection fights to distance themselves from the White House in coming months. That's mostly not happened, though reactions to Biden's vaccine mandate for all Americans who work at companies of more than 100 employees could offer some hints that schisms are possible.

Polls show that such requirements are popular among Democrats and unpopular among staunch Republicans — but governor's races are likely to be decided by independent and swing voters.

In Kansas, Kelly argued that mandates like the Biden administration's vaccine requirements for larger businesses "tend not to work." Whitmer and Evers have said little about the policy.

A former Wisconsin state school superintendent, Evers beat two-term Republican Gov. Scott Walker by fewer than 30,000 votes in 2018.

The Marquette Law School poll taken last week showed 45% of respondents approve of Evers' performance, a metric weighed down by approval among independents and in line with pessimism among roughly half of registered voters about the direction the state is headed. Still, a majority of registered Wisconsin voters approve of the job Evers has done handling the COVID-19 pandemic, the poll found.

Whitmer won her first term comfortably in 2018 and became a national face of imposing restrictions to slow the pandemic's spread last year. But she's softened some in recent months.

Democratic strategist Amy Chapman said Whitmer has long known that, given the backlash she and other Democratic governors have faced over efforts to control the spread of COVID-19, 2022 would be a challenge. Whitmer was the subject of multiple threats and a kidnapping plot foiled by federal authorities.

"I don't think there was ever a presumption in Michigan that this was going to be easy," said Chapman, who was Barack Obama's state director in 2008 and a senior adviser in 2012. "The governor has known that she really has to be vigilant about this."

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Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa.

## Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Nov. 8, the 312th day of 2021. There are 53 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 8, 2000, a statewide recount began in Florida, which emerged as critical in deciding the winner of the 2000 presidential election. Earlier that day, Vice President Al Gore had telephoned Texas Gov. George W. Bush to concede, but called back about an hour later to retract his concession.

On this date:

In 1793, the Louvre began admitting the public, even though the French museum had been officially open since August.

In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln won re-election as he defeated Democratic challenger George B. McClellan.

In 1889, Montana became the 41st state.

In 1923, Adolf Hitler launched his first attempt at seizing power in Germany with a failed coup in Munich that came to be known as the "Beer-Hall Putsch."

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In 1950, during the Korean War, the first jet-plane battle took place as U.S. Air Force Lt. Russell J. Brown shot down a North Korean MiG-15.

In 1960, Massachusetts Sen. John F. Kennedy defeated Vice President Richard M. Nixon for the presidency.

In 1966, Republican Ronald Reagan was elected governor of California, defeating Democratic incumbent Pat Brown.

In 1972, the premium cable TV network HBO (Home Box Office) made its debut with a showing of the movie "Sometimes a Great Notion."

In 1974, a federal judge in Cleveland dismissed charges against eight Ohio National Guardsmen accused of violating the civil rights of students who were killed or wounded in the 1970 Kent State shootings.

In 2002, the U.N. Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 1441, aimed at forcing Saddam Hussein to disarm or face "serious consequences." President George W. Bush said the new resolution presented the Iraqi regime "with a final test."

In 2010, former kidnap victim Elizabeth Smart took the stand in Salt Lake City on the first day of testimony in the trial of Brian David Mitchell, the man accused of abducting her in June 2002 when she was 14.

In 2012, Jared Lee Loughner was sentenced to life in prison without parole for the January 2011 shootings in Tucson, Arizona, that killed six people and wounded 13 others, including Rep. Gabrielle Giffords.

Ten years ago: An asteroid as big as an aircraft carrier zipped by Earth in the closest encounter by such a massive space rock in more than three decades. Voters re-elected Kentucky's Democratic governor, Steve Beshear, and picked a new governor in Mississippi, Republican Lt. Gov. Phil Bryant. Bil Keane, 89, creator of the comic strip "Family Circus," died in Paradise Valley, Arizona. Rapper Heavy D, 44, died in Los Angeles.

Five years ago: Republican Donald Trump was elected America's 45th president, defeating Democrat Hillary Clinton in an astonishing victory for a celebrity businessman and political novice. Republicans kept their majorities in the Senate and House.

One year ago: World leaders cheered Joe Biden's election as U.S. president as a chance to enhance cooperation on climate change, the coronavirus and other problems after four years of President Donald Trump's rejection of international alliances. Utah Gov. Gary Herbert declared a state of emergency and ordered a statewide mask mandate in an attempt to stem a surge in coronavirus patient hospitalizations that tested the state's hospital capacity. Jeopardy! host Alex Trebek died at his Los Angeles home after battling pancreatic cancer for nearly two years; he was 80.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Alain Delon is 86. Singer-actor Bonnie Bramlett is 77. Singer Bonnie Raitt is 72. TV personality Mary Hart is 71. Former Playboy Enterprises chairman and chief executive Christie Hefner is 69. Actor Alfre Woodard is 69. Singer-songwriter Rickie Lee Jones is 67. Nobel Prize-winning author Kazuo Ishiguro is 67. Rock musician Pearl Thompson (The Cure) is 64. Singer-actor Leif Garrett is 60. Chef and TV personality Gordon Ramsay is 55. Actor Courtney Thorne-Smith is 54. Actor Parker Posey is 53. Actor Roxana Zal is 52. Singer Diana King is 51. Actor Gonzalo Menendez is 50. Rock musician Scott Devendorf (The National) is 49. Actor Gretchen Mol is 49. ABC News anchor David Muir is 48. Actor Matthew Rhys is 47. Actor Tara Reid is 46. Country singer Bucky Covington is 44. Actor Dania Ramirez is 42. Actor Azura Skye is 40. Actor Chris Rankin is 38. TV personality Jack Osbourne is 36. Actor Jessica Lowndes is 33. R&B singer SZA is 32. New York Yankees outfielder and designated hitter Giancarlo Stanton is 32. Singer-actor Riker Lynch is 30. Country singer Lauren Alaina is 27. Actor Van Crosby (TV: "Splitting Up Together") is 19.