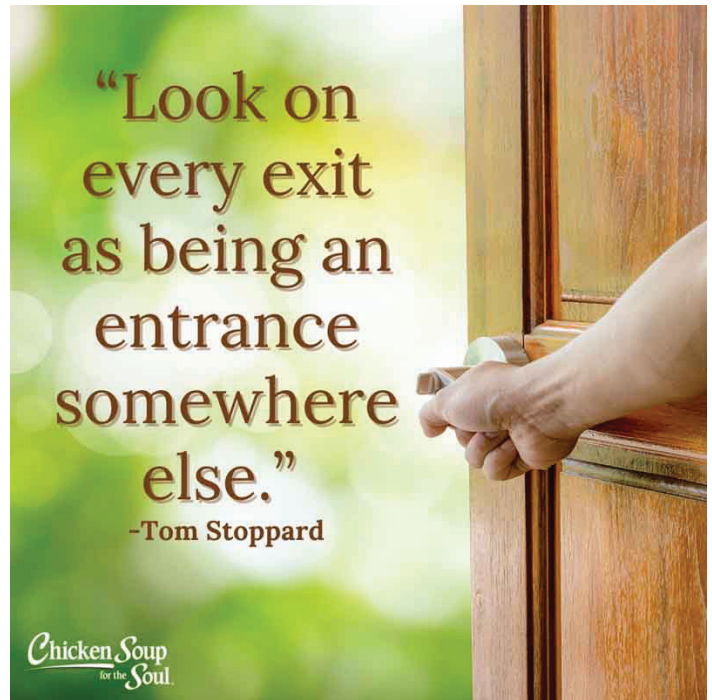


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Upcoming Events

Friday & Saturday, Nov. 12-13

Debate & Oral Interp at SF Washington



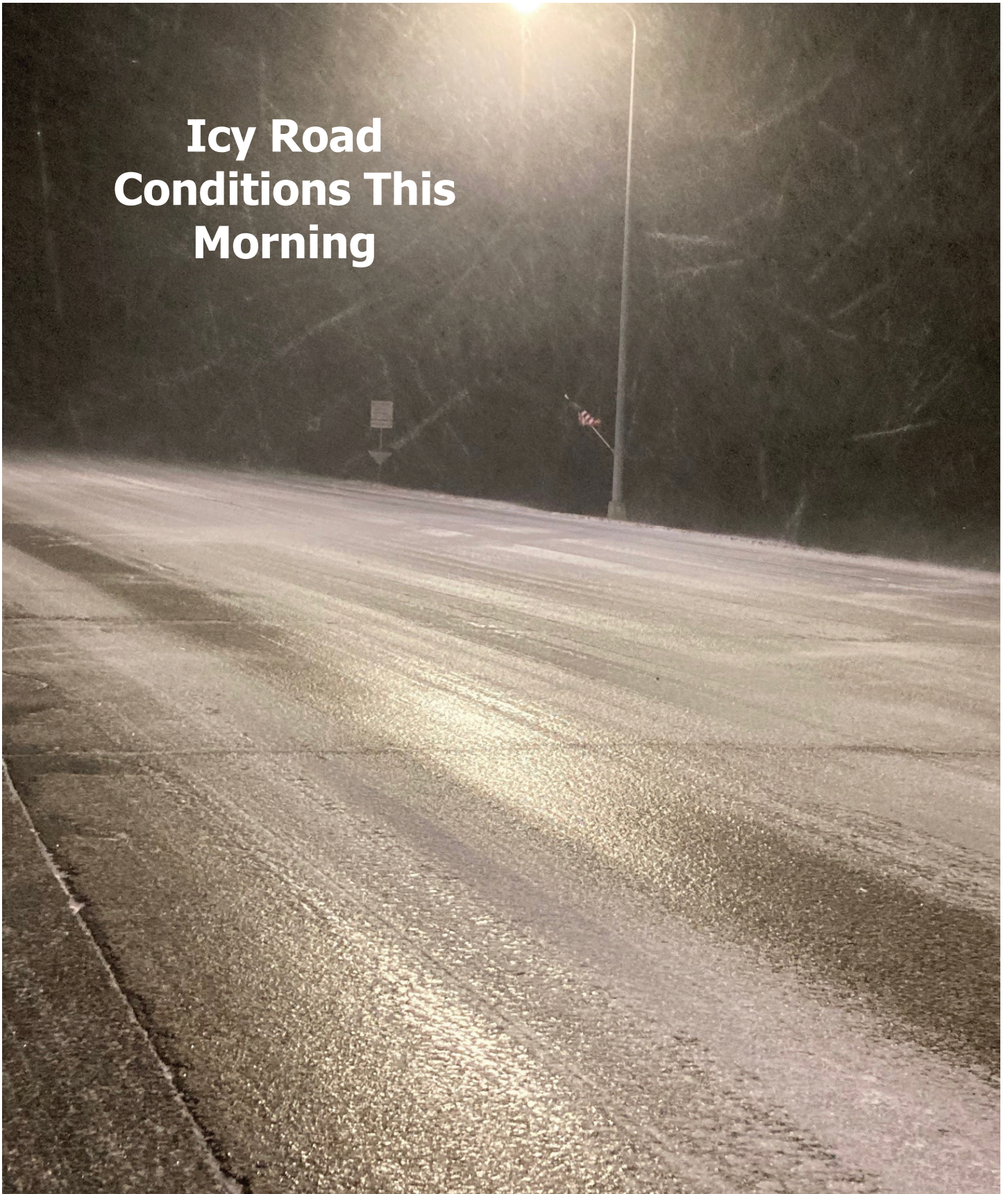
Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

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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Icy Road Conditions This Morning



Groton's Veteran's Day Program



The All State Choir members sang the National Anthem.



The high school choir sang, "Thank You, Soldiers."



The Junior Kindergarten, Kindergarten and First Graders sang, "You're A Grand Old Flag."

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The junior high band performed, "This is My Country."



The high school band performed the service songs.

All photos from the Veteran's Day program were lifted from the GDILIVE.COM video.

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The fourth and fifth graders sang, "A Grateful Nation."



Quilts were given to the recognized Veterans this year. This one was for Dale Kurth. Veterans recognized were Glenn Cooper, Dale Kurth, Donald Pigors, Luverne Strom and Gerald Rossow.

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The Veterans and their families, along with the readers, are pictured above.



Ashtyn Bahr and Alyssa Thaler gave the introductory remarks.



The colors were retired by Doug Hamilton and Bruce Babcock as Sierra Ehresmann played taps at the end of the service.

Groton Post No. 39 American Legion



Annual



Turkey Party

Saturday, Nov. 13, 2021

Starting at 6:30 p.m.

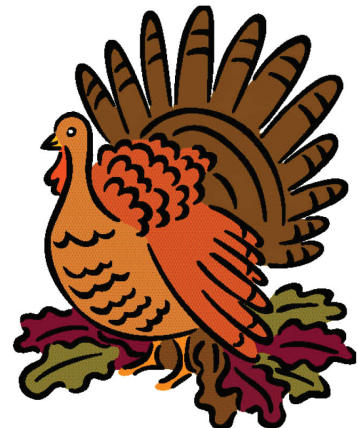
Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

Turkey, Ham and Bacon
to be given away

FREE ADMISSION

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Lunch served
by Auxiliary



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YOU'RE INVITED!



BUILD DAKOTA

ROADSHOW

Please join us to learn about strategies to build your workforce and your future with this full-ride scholarship opportunity.

EVENT DETAILS

DATE: Tuesday, November 30, 2021

TIME: 10:30-11:10am CST

LOCATION: Groton School District
502 N 2nd Street
Groton, SD 57445

CONTACT: Becky Hubsch- 605.397.8381 or Becky.Hubsch@k12.sd.us

CALLING ALL

STUDENTS | PARENTS | INDUSTRY CEOs/HUMAN RESOURCES |
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COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS | HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

For more information about the Build Dakota Scholarship Fund and additional partner programs, visit builddakotascholarships.com.





Groton Residential Development Meeting

Monday, November 15th at 12 noon

At the Groton Community Center

Welcoming Casey Crabtree, Director of Economic Development

The Groton City Council invites you to join our open meeting in effort to add residential development to the Groton Community!





All State Chorus

The Groton Area music department was represented at the All State Chorus and Orchestra event held recently in Rapid City. In back, left to right, Axel Warrington, Carter Barse, Elliana Weismantel, Rebecca Poor, Kayla Duncan (director); and in front, left to right, are Ashtyn Bahr, Cadance Tullis, Camryn Kurtz and Shaylee Peterson. (Courtesy Photo)

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FREE DATE CHANGES



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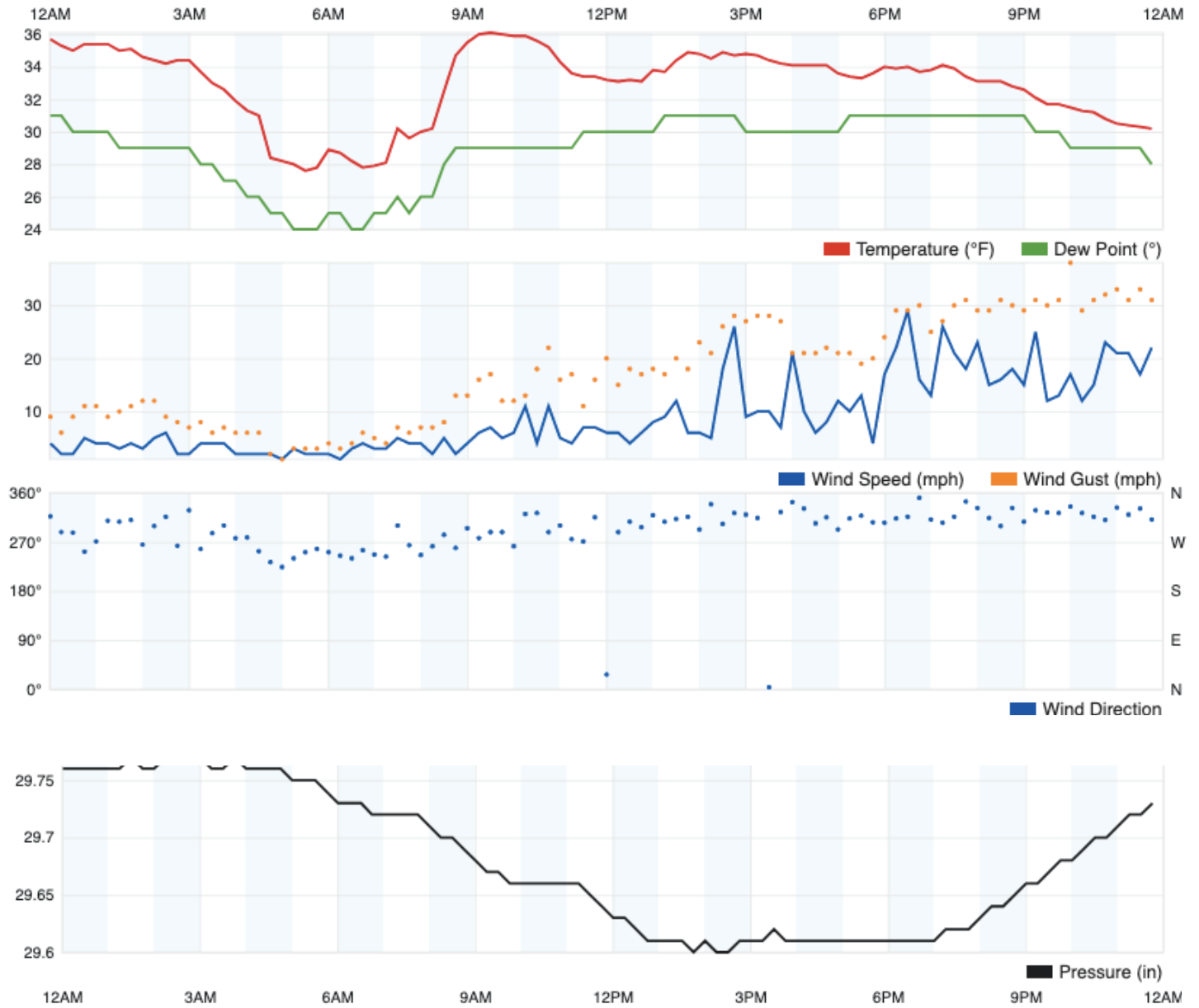
CALL 1-833-581-1380

* Prices are per person based on double occupancy plus up to \$299 in taxes & fees. Single supplement and seasonal surcharges may apply. Add-on airfare available. Free date changes prior to final payment. Deposits and final payments are non-refundable. Onboard Credit requires purchase of Ocean View or Balcony Cabin. Offers apply to new bookings only, made by 12/31/21. Other terms & conditions may apply. Ask your Travel Consultant for details.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
				
30%		40% 40%	30%	
Chance Snow and Windy then Cloudy and Blustery	Mostly Cloudy and Blustery then Partly Cloudy	Chance Snow then Chance Wintry Mix	Chance Rain/Snow then Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 28 °F	Low: 18 °F	High: 39 °F	Low: 23 °F	High: 39 °F



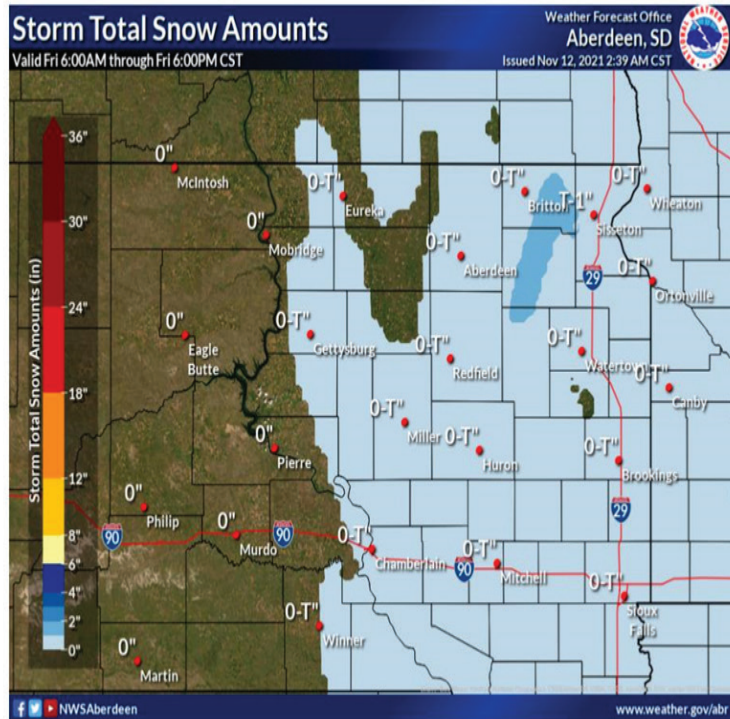
Winter Storm Continues This Morning

November 12, 2021
4:57 AM

Snow gradually tapering off before noon.

Key Messages

- Another 1-2 inches of snow is possible, mainly over the Coteau area of northeast South Dakota this morning.
- Significant visibility reduction is possible yet this morning, with improving conditions this afternoon.
- Northwest winds 25 to 40 mph with gusts of 55 mph this morning, gradually diminishing toward noon and later.



The snow and wind will gradually taper off toward the noon hour and into the afternoon. Before then expect areas of blowing snow and low visibility, especially over the Prairie Coteau. #sdwx #mnwx

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Today in Weather History

November 12, 1993: A winter storm moved through the area on November 12th and 13th. A wintry mix of precipitation in the form of freezing rain, sleet, and snow began during the afternoon on the 12th in western portions of Minnesota, while heavy snow fell in a swath from southwest South Dakota through central and northeast parts of the state, with generally four to eight inches reported. Freezing rain also preceded the snow in south-central South Dakota. Significant accumulation of ice occurred within about a 70-mile wide area from west central Minnesota into the Arrowhead region. Up to five inches of snow fell on top of the ice, making travel extremely hazardous. In South Dakota, locally heavier snowfall amounts included 12 inches at Midland and 10 inches central Hughes County. Several schools and other community events were closed due to the ice and snow. In south central South Dakota, trees were damaged by heavy ice, some of which fell on power lines, causing an outage. Other snowfall amounts include; 8.0 inches in Blunt; 7.0 inches in Murdo and near Victor; and 6.0 inches near Onida, Faulkton, Highmore, and Leola.

November 12, 2003: High winds brought down a 70-foot gas station sign in Kennebec. The sign fell onto a shed, causing considerable damage to the shed. A 25-foot radio tower on the Kennebec courthouse was also knocked down by the winds.

1906 - The mercury soared to 106 degrees at Craftonville, CA, a November record for the U.S. (The Weather Channel)

1959 - Between Noon on the 11th and Noon on the 12th, a winter storm buried Helena, MT, under 21.5 inches of snow, which surpassed their previous 24 hour record by seven inches. (The Weather Channel)

1968 - A severe coastal storm produced high winds and record early snows from Georgia to Maine. Winds reached 90 mph in Massachusetts, and ten inches of snow blanketed interior Maine. (David Ludlum)

1970: The deadliest tropical cyclone ever recorded, and one of the deadliest natural disasters in modern times occurred on this day in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The Bhola Cyclone first formed over the Bay of Bengal on November 8 and traveled north. This cyclone reached peak intensity, Category 3, on the 11, and made landfall on the coast of East Pakistan the following afternoon. The Bhola Cyclone killed an estimated 500,000 people and caused nearly \$90 million in damage (1970 USD).

1974 - A great Alaska storm in the Bering Sea caused the worst coastal flooding of memory at Nome AK with a tide of 13.2 feet. The flooding caused 12 million dollars damage, however no lives are lost. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Heavy snow spread across much of New England. Totals in Massachusetts ranged up to 14 inches in Plymouth County. The seven inch total at the Logan Airport in Boston was their highest of record for so early in the season, and the 9.7 inch total at Providence RI was a record for November. Roads were clogged with traffic and made impassable as snowplow operators were caught unprepared for the early season snowstorm. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather in the Lower Mississippi Valley during the afternoon and early evening hours. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 80 mph at Bovina MS. Morning thunderstorms drenched Atlanta TX with more than four inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thirty-three cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 70s and 80s from the Southern and Central Plains to the Southern and Middle Atlantic Coast Region. The afternoon high of 80 degrees at Scottsbluff NE was a record for November, and highs of 76 degrees at Rapid City SD and 81 degrees at Chattanooga TN were the warmest of record for so late in the season. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - Thunderstorms developed in southern California and produced torrential downpours across parts of the Los Angeles area. More than 5 inches of rain fell in just 2 hours in southern Los Angeles, producing severe urban flooding. Small hail also accompanied the storms, accumulating several inches deep in some areas of the city. Nearly 115,000 electrical customers lost power as the storms affected the area (Associated Press).

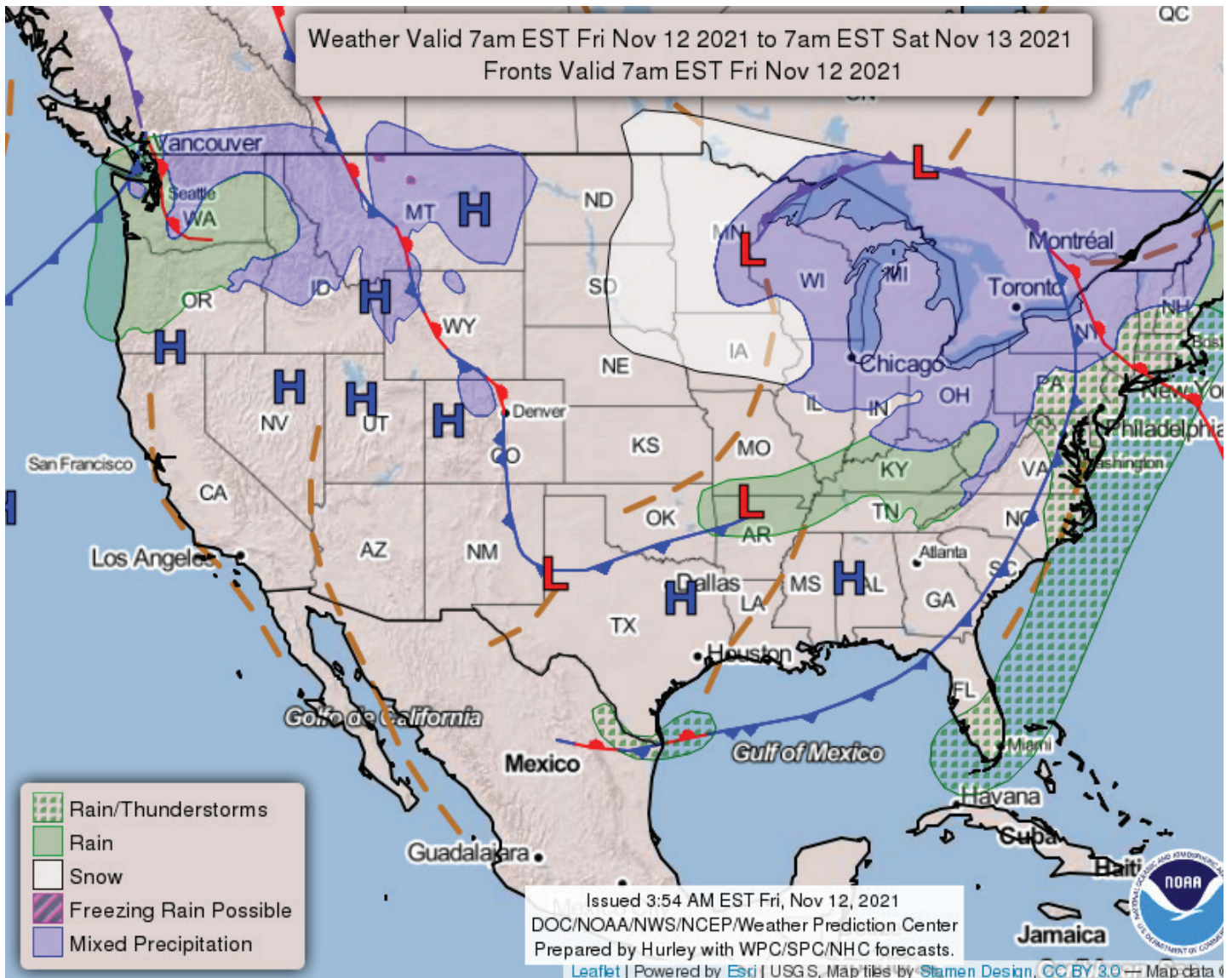
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 36.1 °F at 9:30 AM
Low Temp: 27.6 °F at 5:30 AM
Wind: 38 mph at 10:00 PM
Precip: 0.00

Record High: 68° in 1905
Record Low: -14° in 1896
Average High: 44°F
Average Low: 21°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.36
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.13
Average Precip to date: 20.83
Precip Year to Date: 19.85
Sunset Tonight: 5:06:57 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:27:37 AM



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GUARDED BY GOD

There was a large stag - a red-coated deer - that roamed through the hills of Rome. No one ever came near it or tried to capture or kill it. Caesar protected it, and all were forbidden to disturb it. On its sides were the words, "Touch me not! I belong to Caesar." It was a sign of ownership, and no one dared to harm or hurt that animal.

There is a far more important statement about ownership in Psalm 105. It is a statement about those who belong to God: "Do not touch My anointed ones."

Sometimes the words of God are overlooked by the children of God. This verse is a good example of an "overlooked" rule by the Lord. Few of us will admit to having never spoken evil of a fellow Christian. But...

We often listen carefully while one "saint" criticizes or condemns another "saint." We carefully listen to every detail when a fellow church member ridicules or runs down the person who sits next to us during the worship service. We do not see "for whom Christ died" on the forehead of someone whose marriage is falling apart - so we anxiously listen to the sordid details of an unfaithful spouse. We blame others for "bad parenting skills" when their children become addicts rather than grieve with them over their loss. We carelessly pass on rumors about the honesty of someone who has more than we do. The tongue can easily become a weapon of wickedness and ultimately destroy "the Lord's anointed ones."

We must use our tongues to help and heal, not hurt or harm!

Prayer: Father, may we turn deaf ears to words that harm others and speak kind words about Your anointed ones. Help us to show the value of Your "anointed ones". In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Do not touch my anointed ones. Psalm 105:15a

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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)
11/30/2021 James Valley Telecommunications Holiday Open House 10am-4pm
12/04/2021 Olive Grove Tour of Homes
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

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News from the  Associated Press

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press undefined

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

SDHSAA SoDak 16=

State Qualifier=

Class AA=

Brandon Valley def. Rapid City Stevens, 25-11, 25-20, 27-25

Harrisburg def. Mitchell, 26-24, 25-18, 29-27

Huron def. Sioux Falls Jefferson, 25-15, 11-25, 25-16, 23-25, 15-6

Pierre T.F. Riggs def. Yankton, 25-14, 25-16, 25-15

Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Aberdeen Central, 25-15, 25-12, 14-25, 25-15

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Brookings, 25-17, 25-14, 25-16

Sioux Falls Roosevelt def. Watertown, 25-20, 25-10, 25-20

Sioux Falls Washington def. Sturgis, 25-11, 25-16, 25-11

Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press undefined

PREP FOOTBALL=

SDHSAA State Championship=

Class 9A=

Howard 55, Herreid/Selby Area 18

Class 9AA=

Platte-Geddes 14, Canistota/Freeman Co-op 8

Class 9B=

Dell Rapids St. Mary 44, Potter County 42

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

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

S. Dakota holds off Air Force with 59-53 season-opening win

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Kruz Perrott-Hunt scored 14 points and Hunter Goodrick added 12 points and eight rebounds to help lead South Dakota to a 59-53 win against Air Force Thursday night in a season-opening win for both teams.

The win marked the Coyotes first ever against Air Force in eight attempts. It was the first matchup between the programs since 2018.

South Dakota led 32-22 at halftime and extended the lead to 41-26 on a basket by Perrott-Hunt with 16:29 left. The Falcons proceeded to outscore South Dakota 27-14, and reduced their deficit to 55-53 with 18 seconds to go on a 3-pointer from A.J. Walker.

Mason Archambault and Erik Oliver each made a pair of free throws to seal the win.

Ethan Taylor and A.J. Walker each scored 14 points for Air Force.

More AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-basketball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

South Dakota man charged with killing 3, wounding 2 others

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SCOTLAND, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man has been charged with murder and other counts for allegedly gunning down his ex-girlfriend, her father and another woman and wounding his ex-girlfriend's mother and a young child.

Francis Lange, 42, made an initial appearance Wednesday in Bon Homme County Circuit Court. He faces six charges — three counts of first-degree murder, two counts of aggravated assault and one count of committing of a felony while armed with a gun — in the Tuesday evening attack in Scotland, a small community in the southeast of the state about 60 miles (97 kilometers) southwest of Sioux Falls.

He appeared without a lawyer and asked that a court-appointed attorney be assigned to his case. The judge set his bond at \$2 million cash and scheduled his next court appearance for Nov. 16 in Tyndall, the Yanton Press and Dakotan reported.

Lange went to the home of his ex-girlfriend Angela Monclova and fatally shot her, her father Librado Monclova, and Diane Akins, authorities allege in court documents. He also shot and wounded his ex-girlfriend's mother, Vicki Monclova, and a 5-year-old girl whom authorities haven't publicly identified.

Despite her wounds, Vicki Monclova managed to make it on foot to her son Anthony Monclova's house, authorities said. Another son, Jacob Monclova, went to his sister's home and discovered the crime scene. He found the wounded girl crying in a bedroom, scooped her up and ran from the house.

When law enforcement and paramedics arrived, Librado and Angela Monclova were already dead. Akins was taken to a local hospital and was later pronounced dead from an apparent gunshot wound, authorities said.

Vicki Monclova and the child were taken by helicopter to a Sioux Falls hospital with serious, life-threatening injuries. Their conditions haven't been released.

Lange was arrested without incident at his father's house in Scotland later that night. Investigators said they found a gun believed to have been used in the shooting about a half-block from the crime scene.

Agents with the state's Division of Criminal Investigation said Francis told them he has been living with his father but had dated Angela Monclova and lived with her in the past.

This story was updated to correct the name of Bon Homme County, which had been erroneously referred to as Homme County.

Turkey halts flights for some Mideast citizens to EU's door

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Turkey's Civil Aviation Authority said Friday that the country is halting airline ticket sales to Iraqi, Syrian and Yemeni citizens wanting to travel to Belarus, which in recent months became a route for migrants and refugees trying to enter the European Union.

EU leaders have put increasing pressure on airlines to stop bringing people from the Middle East to Minsk, the capital of Belarus, from where asylum-seekers seeking better lives have traveled by car to the EU's doorstep.

Thousands have managed to cross illegally into EU member nations Poland, Lithuania and Latvia since the summer, though many others have also been kept from entering or pushed back.

Among them are Iraqi Kurds and Syrians fleeing conflict, persecution or poverty. Many aim to reach Germany or other western European countries, sometimes to reunite with relatives already settled there.

In a brief statement posted on Twitter, Turkey's aviation authority said its decision to halt ticket sales was valid until further notice.

Citing the Turkish decision, Belarusian airline Belavia said it also would not transport citizens of Iraq, Syria and Yemen on its Istanbul-Minsk flights starting Friday. Belavia said in a statement that it planned to reimburse the cost of already purchased tickets.

The EU said it also has received confirmation that Iraqi Airlines will not resume flights to Minsk.

EU and Polish officials have accused the longtime leader of Belarus, President Alexander Lukashenko, of facilitating illegal border crossings in retaliation for sanctions the EU imposed on his government for its brutal crackdown on dissent following Lukashenko's disputed reelection last year.

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German federal police reported Wednesday that 1,246 unauthorized entries to Germany "with a connection to Belarus" had been recorded in the first nine days of November. In all, there have been 9,087 such entries so far this year, German police said.

Polish authorities said a large number of people remain just across the border in neighboring Belarus and Polish border guards continue to rebuff attempts to enter Poland illegally each day.

There are now hundreds of people, among them families with children, staying in makeshift camps on the Belarusian side of the border. Attempts to cross have become increasingly dangerous as Poland fortifies its side of the border and pushes people back. Temperatures at the Poland-Belarus border drop to below freezing at night.

A Polish official said the country's ongoing conflict with Belarus' government is not expected to deescalate in the coming days. Paweł Soloch, the head of the National Security Bureau, said Poland was facing a "a psychological, hybrid war, waged consciously by centers that want to weaken or even ultimately destroy our country."

Poland's Border Guards said in the previous day they recorded 223 attempts to illegally cross the Polish border from Belarus, fewer than earlier in the week.

Poland's Defense Ministry said one group crossed a fence at the village of Kuznica but were stopped by officials. The ministry posted a video which it said showed the incident.

The Border Guards agency posted another video on Twitter which it said shows Belarusian personnel using a green laser at the border.

"We assume that these were attempts to blind our officers and soldiers patrolling the border," the post said.

The information was impossible to verify. Independent journalists face limits to their reporting in Belarus, and a state of emergency in Poland's border zone prevents media from entering the area.

Follow AP's coverage of migration at <https://apnews.com/hub/migration>

Pope offers hope to poor in visit to namesake's Assisi home

By ALESSANDRA TARANTINO and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ASSISI, Italy (AP) —

Pope Francis traveled to the hilltop town of his namesake for the fifth time in his pontificate on Friday to honor the poorest and most marginal and urge that they be welcomed and cared for by the church.

In one of his first outings in Italy since the coronavirus pandemic, Francis took his time greeting schoolchildren and some of the 500 people brought by Catholic charity groups to Assisi to join Francis in marking the Catholic Church's world day of the poor.

A refugee gave Francis a pilgrim's walking stick and cloak outside the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels, which hosts the famed Porziuncola chapel, birthplace of the Franciscan order of the pope's namesake, St. Francis of Assisi.

Francis greeted disabled children in the basilica and prayed in the chapel before hearing testimony from a handful of people who offered heartwrenching testimony about their lives on the margins.

One former Spanish drug dealer recounted how he turned his life around after a priest smiled on him and offered him shelter. A Romanian woman wept as she told Francis that she suffers such chronic pain that she cannot work. Two Afghans recounted how they recently fled to Italy after the Taliban takeover of their country, only to feel their souls are still there.

Those offering their testimony choked up and wept openly as they spoke to the pope, who thanked them for their courage in telling their stories and "opening their hearts to give us their richness and heal our wounded hearts."

"The presence of the poor is often seen as an annoyance and is put up with," Francis said from the altar. "Sometimes we hear it said that those responsible for poverty are the poor! So as not to carry out a serious examination of conscience on one's own actions, on the injustice of certain laws and economic

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measures, on the hypocrisy of those who want to enrich themselves excessively, blame is laid at the feet of those who are weakest.”

He said the faithful could learn from the example of Francis and those who offer shelter to the poor and marginalized. “Hospitality means opening the door, the door of our house and the door of our heart, and to allow the person who knocks to come in,” Francis said. “And that they might feel welcome, not ashamed.”

During an off-the-cuff remark, Francis also gave a shout-out to the retired archbishop of Lyon, France, Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, who attended the service. Barbarin stepped down after a French court convicted him of covering up for a pedophile priest, only to have his sentence overturned on appeal.

Francis said Barbarin knew well what it was like to “suffer with dignity the experience of poverty — of abandonment, distrust.”

“He defended himself with silence and prayer,” Francis said, as a clearly moved Barbarin listened from the pews. “Thank you Cardinal Barbarin for your witness that edifies the church.”

The poor were being hosted for a luncheon offered by the archbishop of Assisi, while the pope was due to return home to the Vatican by midday.

The Argentine Jesuit is the first-ever pope to have named himself after the 13th century friar, who renounced a wealthy, dissolute lifestyle to embrace a life of poverty and simplicity. The pope said in the first days of his pontificate that he chose to name himself after St. Francis because he wanted a “poor church, and for the poor.”

Francis was last in Assisi in October 2020, when he signed his latest encyclical “Brothers All” on the tomb of St Francis on the anniversary of the saint’s death.

Winfield reported from Rome.

Taliban: Bomb hits mosque in Afghanistan, wounds at least 15

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — A Taliban provincial spokesman says a bomb exploded in a mosque during Friday prayers, wounding at least 15 people in eastern Afghanistan, where Islamic State group militants have been waging a campaign of violence.

Qari Hanif, the government spokesman for Nangarhar Province, said the bomb appeared to have been planted inside the mosque in the town of Traili, located in the mountainous Spin Ghar area outside the provincial capital Jalalabad.

Photos taken by a resident and circulating in social media showed three dead bodies, and the mosque’s interior strewn with rubble and broken glass. Hanif did not immediately confirm any deaths.

It was the third major mosque bombing in five weeks in Afghanistan. The earlier attacks came on successive Fridays last month, when IS suicide bombers and gunmen blasted worshippers from Afghanistan’s Shiite Muslim minority, first in a mosque in the city of Kunduz, then one in the southern city of Kandahar.

This Friday’s bombing targeted Sunni Muslims in a province that has been a front line in the battle between the Islamic State group and the Taliban. IS militants have been carrying out nearly daily shootings and bombings against Taliban fighters in Nangarhar Province.

Since coming to power in Afghanistan three months ago, the Taliban have been waging a counterinsurgency campaign, vowing to put down the threat from IS.

IS is an enemy of the Taliban. The two groups share a hardline interpretation of Islam and over the years engaged in some of the same violent tactics, such as suicide bombings. However, the Taliban have focused on seizing control of Afghanistan, while IS adheres to global jihad.

On Wednesday, a spokesman for the Taliban intelligence service told reporters in Kabul that the agency has arrested close to 600 IS members, including key figures and financial supporters. The spokesman, Khalil Hamraz, said at least 33 IS members have been killed in gun battles with Taliban security forces.

Climate talks back off from call to end all coal use

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

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GLASGOW, Scotland (AP) — Negotiators at this year's U.N. climate talks in Glasgow appeared to be backing away from a call to end all use of coal and phase out fossil fuel subsidies completely, but gave poor countries hope for more financial support to cope with global warming.

The latest draft proposals from the meeting's chair released Friday call on countries to accelerate "the phaseout of unabated coal power and of inefficient subsidies for fossil fuels."

A previous proposal Wednesday had been stronger, calling on countries to "accelerate the phasing out of coal and subsidies for fossil fuel."

While the chair's proposal is likely to undergo further negotiation at the talks, due to end Friday, the change in wording suggested a shift away from unconditional demands that some fossil fuel exporting nations have objected to.

There was a mixed response from observers at the talks on how significant the addition of the words "unabated" and "inefficient" was.

"Those qualifiers completely undermine the intention," said Alex Rafalowicz, director of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, an environmental campaign group.

"They're loopholes so large you could drive a lorry through them," he said, using the British term for a truck.

Helen Mountford, a senior climate expert at the World Resources Institute, said allowing countries to determine which subsidies they consider inefficient would water down the agreement.

"It definitely weakens it," she said.

Even so, the explicit reference to ending at least some state support for oil, gas and coal offered "a strong hook for phasing out fossil fuels subsidies, so its good to have it in there," she said.

The question of how to address the continued use of fossil fuels responsible for much of global warming has been one of the key sticking points at the two-week talks.

Scientists agree it is necessary to end their use as soon as possible to meet the 2015 Paris accord's ambitious goal of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit). But explicitly including such a call in the overarching declaration is politically sensitive, including for countries, such as Saudi Arabia, that fear oil and gas may be targeted next.

Another crunch issue is the question of financial aid for poor countries to cope with climate change. Rich nations failed to provide them with \$100 billion annually by 2020, as agreed, causing considerable anger among developing countries going into the talks.

The latest draft reflects those concerns, expressing "deep regret" that the \$100 billion goal hasn't been met and urging rich countries to scale up their funding.

It also adds wording that could create a fund to compensate countries for serious destruction resulting from climate change. Rich nations such as the United States, who have historically been the biggest source of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, are opposed to any legal obligation to pay for loss and damage suffered by poor countries.

Negotiators from almost 200 nations gathered in Glasgow on Oct. 31 amid dire warnings from leaders, activists and scientists that not enough is being done to curb global warming.

According to the proposed decision, countries plan to express "alarm and utmost concern" that human activities have already caused around 1.1C (2F) of global warming "and that impacts are already being felt in every region."

While the Paris accord calls for limiting temperature to "well below" 2C (3.6F), ideally no more than 1.5C, by the end of the century compared to pre-industrial times, the draft agreement notes that the lower threshold "would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change" and resolves to aim for that target.

In doing so, it calls for the world to cut carbon dioxide emission by 45% in 2030 compared with 2010 levels, and to add no additional CO2 to the atmosphere by mid-century. So far the world is not on track for that, and developed countries are expected to be asked to submit more ambitious targets for cutting emissions next year.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told The Associated Press this week that the 1.5C-goal "is still in reach but on life support."

If negotiators are unable to reach agreement by Friday's official deadline, it is likely the talks will go into overtime. This has happened at many of the previous 25 meetings as consensus from all 197 countries is required to pass decisions.

Seth Borenstein and Karl Ritter contributed to this report.

Follow AP's coverage of the talks at <http://apnews.com/hub/climate>

Myanmar court sentences US journalist to 11 years in jail

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A court in military-ruled Myanmar on Friday sentenced detained U.S. journalist Danny Fenster to 11 years in prison with hard labor after finding him guilty on several charges, including incitement for allegedly spreading false or inflammatory information.

Fenster, the managing editor of the online magazine Frontier Myanmar, was also found guilty of contacting illegal organizations and violating visa regulations, lawyer Than Zaw Aung said. He was sentenced to the maximum term on each charge and ordered to pay a 100,000 kyat (\$56) fine.

Than Zaw Aung said Fenster wept in court after hearing the sentence and had not yet decided whether to appeal. He is the only foreign journalist to be convicted of a serious offense since the army seized power in February, ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Fenster has been detained since May. He still faces two additional serious charges in a different court for allegedly violating the counterterrorism law and a statute covering treason and sedition.

"Everyone at Frontier is disappointed and frustrated at this decision. We just want to see Danny released as soon as possible so he can go home to his family," Editor-in-Chief Thomas Kean said in a statement after the sentencing. "There is absolutely no basis to convict Danny of these charges."

Fenster was detained at Yangon International Airport on May 24 as he was about to board a flight to go to the Detroit area in the United States to see his family.

The military-installed government has cracked down hard on press freedom, shutting virtually all critical outlets and arresting about 100 journalists, roughly 30 of whom remain in jail. Some of the closed outlets have continued operating without a license, publishing online as their staff members dodge arrest.

The army takeover was met by widespread peaceful protests that were put down with lethal force. The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners has detailed the deaths of more than 1,200 civilians, in addition to about 10,000 arrests. Armed resistance has since spread, and U.N. experts and others observers fear the incipient insurgency can slide into civil war.

Fenster's next challenge is the two additional charges that his lawyer said Monday had been filed in a different court in Yangon.

Than Zaw Aung said that one of the new charges comes under a section of the Counterterrorism Act that is punishable by from 10 years to life in prison. The military-installed government has said it would apply the law harshly in cases involving opposition organizations it has officially deemed "terrorist" groups. Involvement can include contacting such groups, or reporting their statements.

The other charge is under the penal code and is usually referred to as treason or sedition. It carries a penalty of seven to 20 years' imprisonment.

The hearings on the original three charges were held at the court in Yangon's Insein Prison, where Fenster is jailed. They were closed to the press and the public. Accounts of the proceedings have come from Fenster's lawyer.

Despite testimony from more than a dozen prosecution witnesses, it was never clear exactly what Fenster was alleged to have done, and it appeared that he was judged guilty by association.

Much of the prosecution's case appeared to hinge on his being employed by one of the media outlets,

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Myanmar Now, another online news site, that had been ordered closed this year. But Fenster had left his job at Myanmar Now in July last year, joining Frontier Myanmar the following month.

Prosecution witnesses testified that they were informed by a letter from the Information Ministry that its records showed that Fenster continued to be employed this year by Myanmar Now.

Both Myanmar Now and Frontier Myanmar had issued public statements that Fenster had left the former publication last year, and his lawyer said defense testimony, as well as income tax receipts, established that he works for Frontier Myanmar.

Than Zaw Aung also said he was unable to produce a government official to testify, which would be difficult to do under any circumstances, and the judge took into account only the Information Ministry letter.

"Therefore, according to this letter, Danny is responsible for Myanmar Now and the judge said that's why Danny was sentenced," said the lawyer.

He said Fenster told him he despises both the Myanmar police and Swe Win, his boss and editor-in-chief at Myanmar Now, whom he blames for his situation because he apparently forgot to inform the Information Ministry of his resignation last year.

The U.S. government, human rights groups, press freedom associations and Fenster's family had pressed strongly for the 37-year-old journalist's release.

"This long prison sentence against a journalist is a travesty of justice by a kangaroo court operating at the beck and call of the Myanmar military junta," said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch. "Danny Fenster has done nothing that should be considered a crime. This bogus conviction should be quashed, and Fenster should be immediately released and permitted to leave the country if that is what he wants."

Shawn Crispin, Southeast Asia representative of the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, also called for Fenster's immediate and unconditional release.

"Myanmar must stop jailing journalists for merely doing their job of reporting the news," he said.

Japan adding more hospital beds in plan for next virus surge

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The Japanese government's preparations for the next virus surge include adding thousands more hospital beds to avoid a situation like last summer when many COVID-19 patients were forced to stay home, even while dependent on oxygen deliveries.

Even though Japan has a reasonable health insurance system and the world's largest number of beds per capita, COVID-19 patients were admitted to only a fraction of the beds, mostly at public, university and major private hospitals. The government has provided subsidies to lure more hospitals to treat such patients, but progress is slow, triggering calls for tougher measures in an emergency.

Small private hospitals have been reluctant to accept COVID-19 patients, citing insufficient expertise to handle infectious diseases, lack of staff or the cost. Some prefectures have set up systems where those hospitals would accept patients who are no longer infectious and rehabilitating from serious illness after treatment at bigger hospitals.

Virus measures are key to Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's weeks-old government maintaining its grip on power after public dissatisfaction with his predecessor's response — criticized as too little and too slow — precipitated the change in government.

The new roadmap of coronavirus measures, adopted Friday by a meeting of key Cabinet ministers, says the government will have hospitals allocate more beds for COVID-19 treatment by the end of November so that up to 37,000 patients, up from 28,000, can be admitted if infections increase considerably from an earlier wave in the summer.

In mid-August, when new daily cases surged to about 25,000 and health care systems partially collapsed, many patients were unable to find hospital beds and had to get supplemental oxygen and food delivered to their homes. Some died at home.

This prompted the government to set up several medical facilities to accept patients requiring medical

attention while waiting for hospital vacancies. Kishida said the government will nearly double the capacity of makeshift hospitals to 3,400, and increase capacity at hotels, where patients with less serious cases can stay, to 61,000 rooms.

"It is important to anticipate a worst-case scenario and take concrete actions to prepare for a next expansion of the infections," Kishida said at the meeting. "We will promptly secure the medical systems, ensure the process of prevention, detection and early treatment by promoting vaccination, testing and oral pills, in order to reduce the risks of serious cases."

With nearly 75% of the population fully vaccinated and risks of developing serious cases reduced, more patients are likely to have slight symptoms that won't require hospitalization, and more attention should go to patients at home, experts say.

"It seems securing hospital beds is overemphasized," said Koji Wada, a public health professor at the International University of Health and Welfare. "Examples in other countries with vaccination progress suggest patients staying at home are likely to increase, and preparations for that seems lacking."

The government will have 32,000 primary care doctors and medical institutions monitor or provide medical consultations online for patients at home to address their unease, Kishida said.

Kishida pledged to begin booster shots next month for adults who had been fully vaccinated eight months earlier. The roadmap also pledges the government will secure up to 1.6 million doses of oral medicine to treat COVID-19 and get their approval by the end of this year. The pills are largely for patients with slight symptoms who are expected to stay home, though that would require monitoring by medical staff.

The government aims to gradually expand social and economic activities but is still careful about easing border control for foreign tourism.

Communities consider 'managed retreat' from climate change

By DREW COSTLEY and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

ST. HELENA ISLAND, S.C. (AP) — Ricky Wright points to the bank of a creek to show one way his hometown has been affected by climate change. Many banks have eroded or collapsed, and now some favorite fishing spots that were once on solid ground are reachable only by boat.

Wright is part of the Gullah Geechee, a group of Black Americans who descended from slaves and live off the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. The community that has endured for centuries is now imperiled by a combination of rising seas devouring their land, higher temperatures changing how they farm and fish, and destructive storms threatening their way of life.

"I would say (it's) depressing to lose places like that, especially if you grew up there," said the 65-year-old fisherman, who noted other changes, like the great white shark migrating to waters off St. Helena Island. "It's scary."

The risks to the Gullah Geechee and other communities have intensified enough to raise a startling question: Should some populated places simply be abandoned to nature? One strategy gaining traction is so-called managed retreat, which is the planned relocation of vulnerable people.

"This is a huge issue. By my reckoning, there will be 30 million people who are displaced by midcentury, and there will be mass migrations in the United States," said Stephen F. Eisenman, director of strategy for the Anthropocene Alliance, a climate and environmental justice group. The biggest question is whether the retreats are planned and methodical or unplanned and chaotic.

The issue also raises concerns about economic fairness in this landscape that is home to Hilton Head Island, a popular destination for well-heeled tourists visiting its many resorts.

While the Gullah Geechee are told to think about moving, the hotels stay open and industry gets new permits, said Harriet Festing, co-founder of the alliance. "So there's a lot of distrust of government intention and the messages that are coming to them."

Forms of managed retreat have existed in the U.S. since at least 1989, when the Federal Emergency Management Agency began buying properties in flood-prone areas. Parts of Louisiana, Wisconsin and Illinois have used planned relocation to try to save communities from flooding and rising seas.

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With help from government buyouts, some communities simply move to nearby areas that are less prone to disaster. Others migrate to different parts of the country or different countries altogether.

But buyouts aren't the only component. Other strategies include restoring habitats, replacing concrete-laden areas with green space and using zoning laws to limit development in troubled places.

Parts of Florida, California and New York could someday need to use the same strategy.

"Imagine New York City over the next hundred years shifting its density north. It could happen," said A.R. Siders, an assistant professor at the University of Delaware's Disaster Research Center.

One reason why the idea is met with resistance is because of its name. "Managed retreat" is too technical for some and too defeatist for others. Proponents are starting to adopt other language, including planned relocation and climate migration.

But regardless of what it's called, more and more communities have considered some version of the idea, especially, Siders said, in the aftermath of major disasters such as Hurricane Sandy.

The concept "pushes us to do better adaptation," she said. "But it's also a challenge because it scares people. They get scared that they're going to be forced out of their home."

In a study published in *Science Advances* in 2019, Siders and other researchers found that FEMA's buyout program was more likely to help wealthier, more densely populated counties. But even within those communities, FEMA buyouts were concentrated in less affluent, less densely populated areas with lower English proficiency and more racial diversity.

Environmental activist Hilton Kelley has been trying for years to get federal assistance to relocate himself and members of his community from Port Arthur, Texas. Port Arthur is closer to the Gulf Coast than much of Houston, and both communities have been ravaged by hurricanes over the last 20 years. But Houston has received more attention and more money for relocation because of its vastly larger population, he said.

"This town has been devastated," he said. "But we've never gotten our fair shake when it comes to giving support to vulnerable populations, particularly the low-lying communities of color."

Many people in Port Arthur are ready to relocate if help were available and they could take the lead in planning the move, Kelley said. But that's not the case in other cities.

Tiny DeSoto, Missouri, has been hit with destructive flash floods four times in the last eight years. After a particularly bad flood in 2016, Susan Sherrow Lilley started organizing her neighbors to accept buyouts, but they only seemed interested in the immediate aftermath of a flood.

"It hasn't flooded in five years, and people are very comfortable now thinking that it's not going to again. But it will," she said.

Lilley and other concerned residents have organized 22 homes and one business to apply for FEMA money, but that's only about a third of the structures that were recommended for buyouts by the Army Corps of Engineers.

She said they need buyouts for everyone because even when people move to higher ground, their abandoned homes often get bought, fixed up and put back on the market.

"And then the people go through a flood, and it's just this vicious cycle over and over again," she said.

A recent World Bank report predicts that 200 million people around the globe will be forced to move because of climate change by 2050. Other countries have already begun planning massive relocations, including Jakarta and the Marshall Islands.

The process is "extremely complex, and there is a high risk that it leaves communities even worse off than they were before," said Ezekiel Simperingham, global migration lead for the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and Red Crescent Societies.

Among the Gullah Geechee, big storms have become familiar. At least seven named storms have struck the region of the Southeast U.S. where they live, including Hurricane Matthew in 2016, Irma in 2017 and Dorian in 2019.

Thomas Mitchell, a crabber who lives on St. Helena Island, comes from a family that catches fish, shrimp and oysters. But oysters have been hard to come by because they need cold weather to survive, and the warm seasons have become longer.

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"The oysters don't come until it's cold, and it doesn't get cold" anymore, he said.

But the idea of abandoning their historical home is a nonstarter for many of the Gullah Geechee.

"The only way I'm going to relocate is when I meet my demise," Wright said.

Marquetta Goodwine, a community leader on the island known as "Queen Quet," said the Gullah Geechee are inextricably linked to the land.

"I'm not running. I don't come from the stock of people who run," she said. "I come from the stock of people who fight, people who hold on, people who stand for what they believe in. And we are rooted in this soil."

As he waited for a fish to tug on his bait at the creek, Wright echoed those sentiments.

"When we (were) kids, our parents taught us ... if you ever have to run anywhere, don't run away from home. Make sure you run and come home," he said. "And so that's instilled in me, and this is home."

Borenstein reported from Kensington, Maryland. Follow Drew Costley and Seth Borenstein on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/drewcostley> and <https://twitter.com/borenbears>.

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More than 1 million need urgent food aid in south Madagascar

By LAETITIA BEZAIN Associated Press

ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar (AP) — Parched by four years of drought, more than 1.1 million people in southern Madagascar urgently need food aid in a rapidly worsening crisis, experts warn.

About 700,000 people are already receiving food aid and increased emergency assistance is needed, according to WFP which is working with the Malagasy government and other humanitarian agencies.

"Harvests fail constantly, so people don't have anything to harvest and anything to renew their food stocks," Alice Rahmoun, WFP's communications officer in Madagascar said.

More than 90% of the population in Madagascar's "Deep South" region lives below the poverty line, making families extremely vulnerable, according to Amnesty International.

"All aid agencies are working together to try to prevent this crisis from turning into famine," Jean-Benoît Manhes, deputy representative of UNICEF in Madagascar, told The Associated Press.

"But we are witnessing a deterioration which requires increased resources," he said. "To give you an idea, in the months of July and August, 14,000 children were treated for severe acute malnutrition. That is usually the number we treat in an entire year."

The four consecutive years of drought have wiped out crops and exhausted the food reserves of the farming communities of Madagascar's "Grand Sud," or Great South, he said.

Southern Madagascar is used to dry seasons, usually from May through October, known as kere in the Malagasy language when fields are dry and food is short, but this year is much worse, say local farmers.

The ground is so hard that it's difficult to plant crops of corn, rice and cassava that are traditionally started in November.

"It's impossible to cultivate here at the moment," said Nathier Ramanavotse, 68, mayor of Maroalomainty, in the far south of Madagascar.

"It rained a little last week but it's not enough to cultivate. We used to grow a lot of corn here but for four years the crops have failed. It has been getting worse and worse," he said.

"There is no other work to be done here to make money," Ramanavotse said. "We suffer a lot ... many of us have eaten our seeds because it is the only thing left to eat at home. It's an unbearable temptation when you are hungry."

Recently the area has been plagued by intense sand winds, called "tiomena" in Malagasy which means

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red winds. The sandstorms have engulfed and ruined the early crops that were planted, farmers say.

"All the trees have been cut in the area and there is nothing left to hold back the wind," said Ramanavotse. In the landlocked part of the country, many farmers have turned to tree cutting and coal mining to survive, he said.

Desperate, many families have turned to strategies of last resort to survive, say residents.

"When we run out of money, we eat cactus leaves or tubers," said Liafara, who only has one name. "In this kere, we are eating things that we don't even know the names of. To get water, you have to dig in the Mandrare River which is very dry at the moment and it takes a lot of work."

The mother of five children, Liafara, 37, said it's difficult to stretch their food to feed her family.

"If we have a little money, we buy rice to eat in the evening. We cook it with lots of water to share it with all of us," she said. "But often at night, we can't sleep. We just roll around in bed because we're hungry."

The family lives in Amboasary-Atsimo, the epicenter of the extreme food shortages where 14,000 people are in catastrophic conditions, according to the latest statistics from the World Food Program's Integrated Phase Classification.

"My children, like all those in the village, are very weak. At the moment, they no longer go to school because they can't concentrate due to hunger. We sell what we have at home to eat. We have no more furniture. We even sold the door to our house to get some money," she said.

"Last week, when the rain fell a little, I sold my plates so that I could buy seeds," she said. "Goats and zebus (cows), we sold them a long time ago."

More than 500,000 children under the age of five in the far south of Madagascar are likely to suffer from acute malnutrition until April 2022, according to the Integrated Food Security Classification Framework. Of these, more than 110,000 already suffer from severe acute malnutrition and need urgent action.

The Portuguese charity Brotherhood Without Borders has set up 14 nutritional centers in the Androy region to feed and give emergency care to malnourished children.

"The situation is not improving at all," said Felly Zihal, coordinator for the group's program in southern Madagascar. "There are cases of children who have practically no more flesh. There is only the skeleton and the skin."

Murkowski announces reelection bid opposed by Trump

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Lisa Murkowski, who voted to convict Donald Trump in his second impeachment trial and has repeatedly bumped heads with the former president, announced Friday that she will run for reelection.

Trump, who has focused his political efforts on punishing his political opponents, endorsed a leading opponent of Murkowski in June. Kelly Tshibaka was commissioner of Alaska's Department of Administration before resigning to run for the Senate. In July, the Alaska Republican State Central Committee endorsed Tshibaka after Murkowski's impeachment vote.

"My heart is, and always has been, in Alaska, and that's why I am proud to announce my campaign for reelection to the US Senate in 2022," Murkowski said in a statement. She emphasized that she has always made Alaska, its industries and its people her top priority.

The Murkowski reelection bid will be closely watched nationally as Trump seeks to bring down a senator whose name has a rich political history in the state. Her father, Frank Murkowski, was a former governor and a longtime U.S. senator.

Murkowski has been in the U.S. Senate since 2002, when her father selected her to finish his unexpired term after he was elected governor. A Murkowski has represented Alaska in the U.S. Senate since 1981.

She has bucked the Republican Party before. Murkowski lost her 2010 GOP primary, but went on to win the general election with a write-in campaign against a conservative Republican candidate.

Murkowski, often seen as an independent-minded moderate, was one of seven Republican senators who voted to convict Trump, who was acquitted of the sole charge of incitement of insurrection related to the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol. She is the only one of the seven to face reelection this year.

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Murkowski was censured by the Alaska Republican Party in March for her vote to convict Trump during his second impeachment trial. But the National Republican Senatorial Committee endorsed Murkowski, placing its bet on a resilient incumbent.

Tshibaka has tried to take advantage of Trump's popularity in the state, getting backing from his allies and voicing Trump positions, including promotion of his false theories of voter fraud in the 2020 election.

EXPLAINER: How power and ideology define Xi's rise in China

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese leader Xi Jinping emerged from a party conclave this week not only more firmly ensconced in power than ever, but also with a stronger ideological and theoretical grasp on the ruling Communist Party's past, present and future. That lays the groundwork for him to take a third five-year term as party leader at next year's national congress, elevating to the likes of Mao Zedong, who founded the People's Republic in 1949, and Deng Xiaoping, who opened up the economy three decades later.

A look at some of the meaning behind the recent developments.

WHAT'S THE SIGNIFANCE OF XI'S ELEVATION?

Though the rules were unwritten, Xi's two immediate predecessors served just two terms as head of the party in keeping with term limits on the presidency. Xi, 68, had the constitution amended, however, to eliminate presidential term limits and could therefore remain in office until he dies, steps down or is forced out.

Though he is the son of a former high official, a friend to both Mao and Deng, Xi rose to the pinnacle by applying what is now referred to as the hybrid economic theory of "socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era." Though not new, Xi has made it one of his standards, alongside his call for the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" and the "Chinese dream" of relative prosperity.

Key to realizing those goals are the "two centenaries," namely building a "relatively prosperous society" by the party's 2021 centenary, which it claims to have achieved, and a "modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious" by the centenary of the founding of the People's Republic in 1949.

All such terms aim to project the image that the party under Xi has engineered a system that adapts to the times and delivers on its citizens' desire for better quality of life for themselves and their families, and greater respect for China in the international community.

WHAT DID THE MEETING DO FOR XI?

Although already named the "core leader," Xi gains further cachet from such phrases' inclusion in the resolution issued Thursday by the party's Central Committee on historical questions concerning the party over the past 100 years. That was only the third such document issued by the party; the first was in 1945 under Mao, the second in 1981 under Deng. To wield such authority in the eyes of party historians and theoreticians certainly makes Xi one of the most dominant Chinese figures of the century.

Naturally, only positive achievements are mentioned. While extolling the party's successes, the resolution glosses over less flattering periods such as the massive famine and industrial failure of the Great Leap Forward in the late '50s and early '60s, the chaotic 1966-76 Cultural Revolution and the political upheaval of the 1989 student-led pro-democracy movement in Beijing that was crushed by the army.

WHAT WAS THE MEETING'S PURPOSE?

Like all meetings of the 95 million-member party's Central Committee of 400 or so top officials, the gathering aimed to achieve unity of thinking and unity of purpose. Heavy on ceremony it featured Xi seated center stage in an enormous room in the Great Hall of the People in the heart of Beijing. The party holds roughly seven such gatherings between each of its national congresses, which are held once every five years.

"By firmly supporting and upholding General Secretary Xi's core position, the whole party will have an anchor, the entire Chinese people will have a backbone and the giant vessel of China's rejuvenation will have a steady hand on the helm," Jiang Jinqun, director of the Central Committee's Policy Research Office, told reporters at a Friday briefing. "No matter what choppy waves we might encounter, we will

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always be able to stay calm and composed.”

While Xi is almost certain to remain head of the party after next year’s congress, likely to be held around November, it’s not clear how many of the other six members of the Politburo Standing Committee — the apex of political power in China — will stay on. Premier Li Keqiang, the party’s No. 2 after Xi, meets the age criteria to remain, although such rules allow for a certain amount of flexibility.

WHAT CHALLENGES DOES XI FACE NEXT?

Xi faces no political rivals at home, but he does face a difficult economic situation and China’s “zero tolerance” approach toward COVID-19 has yet to stamp-out the outbreak while taking a toll on many people’s personal and financial lives. China’s economy is also heavily dependent on housing sales and construction, and a major slump in the industry is causing jitters, chilling auto and retail sales. Financial markets are on edge about whether one of the biggest developers, Evergrande Group, might be allowed to collapse under 2 trillion yuan (\$310 billion) in debt as a warning to others.

Economic strategy has been sometimes contradictory since Xi took power in 2012. The party promises to make the economy more open and competitive. At the same time, it is building up state-owned “national champions” that dominate banking, oil and other industries while also tightening control over private sector tech giants that are China’s biggest success stories of the past three decades.

Abroad, Xi has pushed a bold line, with the government angrily dismissing complaints about issues from his signature “Belt-and-Road” infrastructure initiative, to human rights, the sharp curtailing of rights in Hong Kong and mass detentions and other abuses against Uyghurs and members of other Muslim minority groups in the northwestern region of Xinjiang. Relations with the U.S. are especially tense amid disputes over trade, technology and China’s threats against Taiwan, the self-governing island that Xi has vowed to bring under Chinese control at a time that some analysts believe is growing increasingly near.

“Under the strong leadership of the party’s central committee with comrade Xi Jinping as the core, we will rally the entire party like a piece of unbreakable iron and march forward in lockstep,” Qu Qingshan, director of the Institute of Party History and Literature, said at Friday’s briefing.

Sponsors asked to defend support for Beijing Winter Olympics

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

Leading sponsors of the Beijing Winter Olympics should explain why they remain largely silent about alleged human rights abuses in China with the Games opening there in just under three months, Human Rights Watch said Friday.

The rights group said in an on-line briefing that it had reached out to all but one of the IOC’s so-called TOP sponsors — and leading broadcast rights holder NBC — in lengthy letters almost six months ago.

The only reply came from sponsor Allianz, which it wrote only last month.

“We stand behind the Olympic Movement and our longstanding support for its ideals will not waver,” Allianz said.

The Beijing Games open Feb. 4.

The letters asked sponsors to be aware of the rights climate in China, and to scrutinize supply chains and other operations to assure they do not “contribute to human rights violations.”

“There are just three months until the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, but corporate sponsors remain silent over how they are using their influence to address China’s appalling human rights record,” Sophie Richardson, China director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement.

The statement said sponsors risk “being associated with an Olympics tainted by censorship and repression.”

The TOP sponsors, at the time of the letter, included: Airbnb, Alibaba, Allianz, Atos, Bridgestone, Coca-Cola, Dow, General Electric, Intel, Omega, Panasonic, Procter & Gamble, Toyota, and Visa.

Two sponsors — Dow and General Electric — have completed contracts with the IOC that ended with the recent Tokyo Olympics.

In total, TOP sponsors paid about \$1 billion in cash and in-kind payments to the IOC in the 2013-2016

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Olympic cycle, a figure that was expected to double when complete figures are released for the 2017-2020 cycle. This cycle has been delayed by the one-year postponement of Tokyo due to the pandemic.

The American network NBC accounted for about 40% of IOC income in the 2013-2016 cycle.

"The time for quiet diplomacy is over," said Minky Worden of Human Rights Watch during the briefing. "It's time for the TOP sponsors to urge the International Olympic Committee to adopt human rights. It's time for them to disclose their own supply chains in China, particularly any products that have the five rings of the Olympics."

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin denounced the sponsor accountability calls from Human Rights Watch.

"To politicize sports by fabricating lies and rumors and undermining the Olympic cause is unpopular and will never succeed," Wang told media at a daily briefing.

The statement from the rights group comes just three days after a global trade union group issued a scathing report that questioned the propriety of China holding the Games in the face of alleged genocide and crimes against humanity reportedly taking place in the Xinjiang in northwestern China.

The report from the International Trade Union Confederation is titled "China: A gold medal for repression."

China has repeatedly denied that a genocide is taking place, terming it the "lie of the century." It has said camps in northwestern China are for education, not arbitrary internment of a reported 1 million Uyghur Muslims and other religious and ethnic minorities.

American and European lawmakers and activist groups have asked the Games be postponed or moved from China. Center Enes Kanter of the NBA's Boston Celtics, a Muslim with roots in Turkey, has criticized China's rights record and called General Secretary Xi Jinping a "brutal dictator."

For its part, the IOC says its only focus is sports and has no remit to act on the policies of a sovereign state. The IOC does, however, hold an observer seat at the United Nations, unlike any other sports business.

"We have a lot of respect for other organizations that have other purposes in life," Juan Antonio Samaranch, the IOC member in charge of Beijing preparations, said earlier this week in responding to the ITUC report. "But we believe that our responsibility is what it is — celebrate the Olympic Games as a celebration of humanity, altogether, despite our differences."

Most of the IOC sponsors have signed on to the so-called United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. They spell out the obligation of states and businesses to "respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms."

However, the IOC did not include these guidelines in its host city contract for the Beijing Olympics, but did add it to the contract for the 2024 Paris Olympics and other future Games.

When the IOC awarded Beijing the 2008 Summer Olympics it said they would improve human rights in China.

"The failure of Chinese authorities to uphold the rights-related commitments they made to win the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, and their deepening repression since that time, make clear that the government cannot be expected to respect human rights around the 2022 Winter Games," Human Rights Watch said.

More AP Winter Olympics: <https://apnews.com/hub/winter-olympics> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

More AP Olympics: <https://apnews.com/hub/olympic-games> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Can world's climate target and India's development coexist?

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL AP Science Writer

GLASGOW, Scotland (AP) — India faces a difficult choice that will have consequences for the world.

No country's energy needs are expected to grow faster in coming decades than India's. Even under the most optimistic projections, a part of the demand must be met by dirty coal power -- a key source of heat trapping carbon emissions.

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India can either compromise on development needed to lift millions from poverty, or it can continue burning coal from the country's vast domestic reserves, said India's top environmental official Rameshwar Prasad Gupta in New Delhi, the week before the United Nations climate summit at Glasgow, known as COP26.

With just days remaining for the crucial talks, a fundamental question remains: Will there be enough "carbon space" in the atmosphere for India's developmental needs to coexist with the global ambition of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times.

Last week, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the country would aim to stop adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere by 2070 -- two decades after the U.S., and at least 10 years later than China. But this will only shave off a tenth of a degree of the world's warming, said climate scientist Niklas Hohne, of the NewClimate Institute and the Climate Action Tracker.

And India's short-term targets for 2030 -- increasing its current capacity of non-fossil fuel electricity to 500 gigawatts and using green energy to meet half of its needs, cutting carbon emissions by a billion tons compared with previous targets, and reducing the carbon intensity of its economy by 45% -- wouldn't have any impact, said Hohne.

But experts said these goals are ambitious for India, considering its developmental status and will be far from easy.

For instance, India will have to triple its non-fossil fuel capacity in less than a decade. And for that, its power sector will have to completely reimagine itself. States, whose entire economies have centered around coal for centuries, will have to diversify. Land, which is in short supply in the crowded subcontinent, will be required for sprawling solar parks.

"It's a humongous task for a country like India," said Sandeep Pai, who studies energy security and climate change at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.

Even then, it may not be enough for the world.

Despite their "net zero" emissions targets, China, the United States and the European Union will take up 90% of the remaining carbon space to limit warming to 1.5 degrees by 2050, according to an analysis by the India think tank Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) released Sunday. But if they were to advance their targets by a decade, more than 110 billion tons of carbon dioxide for developing nations — or a third of the remaining carbon budget — would be available for developing nations.

"You can't develop, if you don't have the carbon space," said Arunabha Ghosh, CEEW's chief executive.

And because of its vast population, India's energy choices have an oversized impact for the world. There are 27 million people without access to electricity. It has roads and homes to build, while extreme heat is driving up the demand for air conditioning. To fulfil these needs, India will need to build a power system the size of the entire European Union's.

Although India accounts for the most annual emissions after China and the U.S., its negotiators in Glasgow have, time and again, pointed out that they have historically contributed a fraction of the world's emissions. Moreover, they say, the typical American uses 12 times more electricity than the average Indian.

Indian environment and climate change minister Bhupender Yadav told the Associated Press in an interview Wednesday it's a matter of "conscience" and said those countries historically responsible for emissions need to keep their unfulfilled promise of providing climate finance.

Modi said earlier at the summit that India expected the world's developed nations to make \$1 trillion available as climate finance. As things stand right now, the climate finance from rich nations to align with the 1.5 degrees Celsius target is "nowhere to be seen," said Chirag Gajjar, a climate expert at the World Resources Institute.

It's possible for the goal of 1.5 degrees and India's development needs to coexist, said climate scientist Hohne. What is key, he said, is not building any new coal-fired power plants anywhere in the world, including India, and shutting "some coal-fired power plants" before their time.

A transition away from coal, especially for coal-dependent regions of the world, would require the assistance of the international community, Hohne added.

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Asked about coal, India environment minister Yadav said the country had no immediate plans to phase it out. "All the issues come and get stuck in climate finance."

For more AP climate coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/climate>

Follow Aniruddha Ghosal on Twitter: @aniruddhg1

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Not out of the woods: COVID cases rising in Western Europe

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Santa won't be getting his traditional welcome in the Dutch city of Utrecht this year. The ceremonial head of Carnival celebrations in Germany's Cologne had to bow out because he tested positive for COVID-19. And Austria is considering imposing a lockdown on unvaccinated people.

Nearly two years into a global health crisis that has killed more than 5 million people, infections are again sweeping across parts of Western Europe, a region with relatively high vaccination rates and good health care systems but where lockdown measures are largely a thing of the past.

The World Health Organization said coronavirus deaths rose by 10% in Europe in the past week, and an agency official declared last week that the continent was "back at the epicenter of the pandemic." Much of that is being driven by spiraling outbreaks in Russia and Eastern Europe — where vaccination rates tend to be low — but countries in the west such as Germany and Britain recorded some of the highest new case tolls in the world.

While nations in Western Europe all have vaccination rates over 60% — and some like Portugal and Spain are much higher — that still leaves a significant portion of their populations without protection.

Dr. Bharat Pankhania, senior clinical lecturer at Exeter University College of Medicine and Health, says that the large number of unvaccinated people combined with a widespread post-lockdown resumption of socializing and a slight decline in immunity for people who got their shots months ago is driving up the pace of infections.

Thanks largely to vaccination, hospitals in Western Europe are not under the same pressure they were earlier in the pandemic, but many are still straining to handle rising numbers of COVID patients while also attempting to clear backlogs of tests and surgeries with exhausted or sick staff. Even the countries experiencing the most serious outbreaks in the region recorded far fewer deaths per person over the past four weeks than the United States did, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

The question now is if countries can tamp down this latest upswing without resorting to stringent shutdowns that devastated economies, disrupted education and weighed on mental health. Experts say probably — but authorities can't avoid all restrictions and must boost vaccination rates.

"I think the era of locking people up in their homes is over because we now have tools to control COVID — the testing, vaccines and therapeutics," said Devi Sridhar, chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh. "So I hope people will do the things they have to do, like put on a mask."

Many European countries now use COVID passes — proof of full vaccination, recovery from the virus or a negative test result — to access venues like bars and restaurants. Pankhania warned that the passes can give a false sense of security since fully vaccinated people can still get infected — though their chances of dying or getting seriously sick are dramatically lower.

But restrictions don't go much further these days, although the Dutch government reportedly is considering a limited two-week lockdown and German lawmakers are mulling legislation that would pave the way for new measures. Austrian Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg said this week that a lockdown for the unvaccinated is "probably unavoidable," but he doesn't want to impose the measure on those who

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got the shot.

Austria is seeing one of the most serious outbreaks in Western Europe, along with Germany, which has reported a string of record-high infections in recent days.

"We have a real emergency situation right now," said Christian Drosten, the head of virology at Berlin's Charite Hospital, which has started canceling scheduled surgeries.

Duesseldorf's university hospital said earlier this week that its ICU is full, though many facilities are struggling more with staff shortages than bed space.

Drosten said Germany must increase its vaccination rate of 67% further — and fast. But officials have balked at ordering vaccine mandates and want to avoid any blanket lockdowns.

Health Minister Jens Spahn indicated that Germany could improve its often lax enforcement of COVID pass requirements.

"If my vaccination certificate is checked more often in one day in Rome than it sometimes is in four weeks in Germany, then I think more can be done," Spahn said recently.

The Netherlands is in a similar bind: The country announced the highest daily tally of new cases since the pandemic began Thursday, hospitals are warning the situation could get worse, but officials are reluctant to clamp down too hard. Amid these concerns, organizers in Utrecht said they couldn't in good conscience bring tens of thousands of people together to greet Santa at the annual Sinterklaas party beloved of children.

Cities in Germany, by contrast, went ahead with outdoor Carnival celebrations this week — but the head of Cologne's party, Carnival Prince Sven I., canceled public appearances after testing positive.

In the United Kingdom, which lifted remaining restrictions in July and has seen big spikes as well as dips in cases since, Prime Minister Boris Johnson insists the country can "live with the virus." The government will only reimpose restrictions if the health service comes under "unsustainable" pressure, he says.

Spain, once one of Europe's hardest hit nations, perhaps offers an example of how the risks can be managed.

It has vaccinated 80% of its population, and while face masks are no longer mandatory outdoors, many people still wear them. While infections have ticked up slightly recently, Rafael Bengoa, one of Spain's leading public health experts, said that given the high vaccination rate, "the virus won't be able to dominate us again."

Several countries are hoping that pushing harder on immunizations will get them there. Germany plans to re-open vaccination centers across the country to speed booster shots. France is also pinning its hopes on booster doses while urging holdouts to get their first shots. Italy is also expanding its booster program as numbers edge higher.

Pankhania says that no single measure will control the pandemic.

"To really control it, it has to be multi-layered ... avoid crowds, avoid poorly ventilated places, be immunized, wear your mask," he said.

Associated Press reporters across Europe contributed.

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

Gaza doctor seeks apology from Israel for daughters' deaths

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Izzeldin Abuelaish captured widespread sympathy in Israel when he lost three daughters and a niece in an Israeli strike during the 2009 war in the Gaza Strip. Now, the Palestinian doctor is seeking justice in Israel's highest court.

Abuelaish is scheduled to appear before the Supreme Court in Jerusalem on Monday in hopes of receiving an apology from Israel and compensation for his loss.

The Harvard-educated doctor, a widower who moved to Canada after the tragedy, says he is hopeful

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that he will prevail. But after a lower court rejected his case in 2018, he knows he might have traveled 9,000 kilometers (6,000 miles) only to lose again.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Abuelaish said that such an outcome would only shine a brighter light on the injustice of his family's pain. Either way, he says, the retelling of the story is a step in itself on the path toward a legacy of peace for his daughters — of "creating life from death and killing."

"If we have a positive answer from the court, this is a great success," Abuelaish said. But whatever the legal result, "I am determined we are not the victims anymore."

Abuelaish, 66, was an obstetrician and peace activist well known in Israel even before the tragedy. He had worked in an Israeli hospital while living in Gaza. And during the war, launched to end Hamas' rocket fire on Israeli border towns, he often gave updates to Israeli media in fluent Hebrew.

But on Jan. 16, 2009, live television broadcast a nightmarish, real-time report from Abuelaish to Israelis watching Channel 10 for news about the war.

"My daughters have been killed," he sobbed into a phone. A journalist listened at the other end of the line as the audio aired live.

The blast from the Israeli strike took the lives of his daughters Aya, 14, Bessan, 21, and Mayar, 15, as well as his niece Noor, 17. Footage from the scene shows Abuelaish directing the evacuation of another daughter, Shatha, 17, who was severely wounded but survived.

For 13 years, Abuelaish has battled in Israeli courts and the public arena to deliver justice to his family for what he says was a terrible mistake by the Israeli army.

The government says the law shields the military from liability for wartime actions. In 2018, a lower court sided with the army. Abuelaish's appeal to that ruling had been delayed by the coronavirus pandemic, until Monday.

There have been bright spots, Abuelaish said. Two weeks ago, he learned that an expectant Israeli mother had read of his journey and decided to name her baby Aya — after his own daughter. Abuelaish says he'll meet the girl, now 8 years old, and her family over the weekend.

"I am so moved," he said, reading from the letter a few days before leaving his home in Toronto for Israel this week. "I didn't know what to do, what to say."

That's rare for the widower and father of five surviving children, who has spoken around the world about the need for facts, truth and equality — and the cost of hate and war. He's been clear about what he wants to make of his daughters' legacy. His book is titled in part, "I Shall Not Hate."

Abuelaish's presence in Israel is an accomplishment in itself. Few Gazans are allowed to enter the country and the success of his cooperation with friends and colleagues in Israel is even rarer.

He has established the Daughters For Life Foundation to give out scholarships, as it did on Thursday to two young women at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

He also wants to establish a college for Middle Eastern women, perhaps in Cyprus, named for the foundation and dedicated to his daughters. On Wednesday in Jerusalem, he lobbied members of the Knesset to support that project.

"My daughters' names now are written on their graves, in the stone," Abuelaish told reporters outside Israel's parliament. "I want to see their names written on an institution that spreads light and hope and wisdom to young women."

He hopes for the validation of Israel's high court on Monday, but the legal outlook is difficult, one expert said. The Supreme Court will consider whether the lower court's finding was correct under Israel's tort law.

The court "won't even get to the question of whether the military acted properly," said Yuval Shany, a senior fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute and a law professor at Hebrew University.

In a statement to the AP on Wednesday, the Israeli Defense Ministry pointed to the lower court ruling that the strike on the Abuelaish home occurred during a war.

It also reiterated expert testimony that shrapnel retrieved from two bodies was traced to equipment used by Palestinian militants. That, the ministry said, supports the contention that the five-story home was thought to have served as a Hamas position.

Abuelaish vociferously denies that. He is adamant that there were no militants and no warning until the

shells struck.

The 2009 conflict was the first of four wars between Israel and Hamas, the Islamic militant group that has controlled Gaza since 2007. The bitter enemies fought their fourth war in May.

Still, there are signs of change in the region — a new diverse coalition of eight parties took office in Israel in June, with Arabs part of the government for the first time. Dovish Jewish-led parties are also part of the government.

Abuelaish says he got an empathetic reception this week from lawmakers in Knesset, an improvement from his last visit to Israel. Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid gave him a hug.

"Maybe," said Shany, "this government will be more open than the previous one to making such a statement" of apology, "just because the composition is more diverse."

Win or lose in court, Abuelaish has plans afterward — in Gaza.

"I want to go to my daughters grave, to say to them: 'I am here. I didn't give up, I didn't forget you,'" he told reporters in Jerusalem. "Until then ... I am educating for your justice."

AP videojournalist Moshe Edri in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

EXPLAINER: Who has the Jan. 6 panel subpoenaed — and why?

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection has issued almost three dozen subpoenas as it aggressively seeks information about the origins of the attack and what former President Donald Trump did — or didn't do — to stop it.

The panel is exploring several paths simultaneously, demanding testimony from Trump's inner circle about his actions that day as well as from outside advisers who organized the rally he spoke at the morning of Jan. 6 and allies who strategized about how to overturn President Joe Biden's victory. They are also turning toward former Vice President Mike Pence's orbit and questioning witnesses about efforts to pressure him to stop the congressional electoral count.

The committee is expected to issue more subpoenas as some witnesses, especially those closest to Trump, have indicated they won't comply or refused to answer questions. But lawmakers on the panel have already talked to more than 150 people, most of them voluntarily, about what led up to the violent siege by Trump's supporters.

While the committee doesn't have the power to charge or otherwise punish anyone for their actions, the seven Democrats and two Republicans on the panel say they hope to build the most comprehensive record yet of what happened when hundreds of Trump's supporters brutally pushed past police and broke into the Capitol, interrupting the certification of Biden's victory.

A look at who the committee has subpoenaed, and what is to come in the panel's investigation:

TRUMP'S INNER CIRCLE

The committee's first subpoenas in late September went to four men who were among his most loyal allies: former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, former White House strategist Steve Bannon, longtime communications aide Daniel Scavino and Kashyap Patel, a White House national security aide who had moved to the Pentagon in the weeks after Trump lost the election.

Bannon immediately told the panel he wouldn't cooperate, citing a letter from Trump's lawyer claiming that his conversations should be privileged and shielded from the public. The committee balked at that reasoning and the House voted to hold Bannon in contempt, referring the case to the Justice Department. No decision has been made yet by prosecutors on whether to pursue criminal charges.

Meadows could also be held in contempt after his lawyer indicated Thursday that he would not testify, saying in a statement that the courts would have to decide, after the White House notified him that Biden would waive Trump's claims of executive privilege over the testimony.

The House has since subpoenaed several other well-known members of Trump's circle, including former press secretary Kayleigh McEnany and top aides Stephen Miller and Jason Miller. The committee said all

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three participated in efforts to spread false information and may have been with Trump as the attack unfolded — a key area of investigation, as little is still known about what he did to try to stop it.

PENCE'S ORBIT

The committee has also moved to find out more about the effort to pressure former Vice President Mike Pence, who presided over the certification and resisted aggressive attempts from Trump and many of his allies to get him to try to upend the official process in Trump's favor.

The panel has subpoenaed Keith Kellogg, who was Pence's national security adviser, writing in the subpoena that he was with Trump as the attack unfolded and may "have direct information about the former president's statements about, and reactions to, the Capitol insurrection." The committee wrote that according to several accounts, Kellogg urged Trump to send out a tweet aimed at helping to control the crowd.

Pence's former spokeswoman Alyssa Farah has spoken to Republican committee members Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger and provided documents, according to a person familiar with the conversations who requested anonymity to discuss the confidential conversations. In a series of tweets on Jan. 6, Farah urged Trump to condemn the riots as they were happening and call on his supporters to stand down. "Condemn this now, @realDonaldTrump," she tweeted. "You are the only one they will listen to. For our country!"

The committee is likely to have interest in talking to more of Pence's aides, many of whom were frustrated at how the vice president was treated as Trump publicly urged him to try to overturn the count — a power he did not legally have — even after the rioting started. Some of the rioters chanted Pence's name as they broke into the Capitol and called for his hanging.

THE STRATEGISTS

The panel on Monday subpoenaed several of Trump's associates who were closely involved in his efforts to overturn the election and who huddled in a so-called "war room" leading up to the siege.

Those Trump allies include lawyer John Eastman; former national security adviser Michael Flynn; Bernard Kerik, who the committee says paid for hotel rooms that served as command centers ahead of Jan. 6; Bill Stepien, manager of Trump's 2020 reelection campaign; and Angela McCallum, national executive assistant to Trump's campaign.

In the letter to Flynn — who twice pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI and was pardoned by Trump — the committee cited a December 2020 meeting at which Flynn and other participants "discussed seizing voting machines, declaring a national emergency, invoking certain national security emergency powers and continuing to spread the message that the Nov. 2020 election had been tainted by widespread fraud."

Eastman, too, strategized about how to overturn Biden's legitimate win and reached out to states.

OTHER WHITE HOUSE AIDES

On Tuesday, the panel subpoenaed multiple White House aides. Some were top aides and others were lower or mid-level staff who may have witnessed Trump's activities as the rioting escalated.

The White House aides subpoenaed were personal assistant Nicholas Luna, who the panel said may have witnessed a phone call from Trump to Pence pressuring him not to certify Biden's win; special assistant Molly Michael, who the committee said sent information about election fraud to "various individuals at the direction of President Trump"; and deputy assistant Ben Williamson, a senior adviser to Meadows.

Also subpoenaed were deputy chief of staff Christopher Liddell, who was in the White House on Jan. 6 and considered resigning, according to reports; and personnel director John McEntee and special assistant Cassidy Hutchinson, who the committee said were also in the White House and at the rally that day.

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

The panel this week also subpoenaed former Justice Department official Kenneth Klukowski, who Thompson said communicated with Jeffrey Clark, a former assistant attorney general, about a letter Clark had drafted urging officials in Georgia to delay certification of the voting results in that state because of purported fraud.

The letter said Clark and Klukowski spoke before a Jan. 3 meeting at the White House in which Trump openly contemplated replacing acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen with Clark. Rosen and other leaders

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at the department had pushed back on the false fraud claims.

The committee subpoenaed Clark in October, and he appeared for a deposition last week but declined to testify, partly based on Trump's claims of executive privilege.

RALLY ORGANIZERS

As part of its probe into the origins of the Jan. 6 riot, one focus of the panel has been the massive Trump rally on the National Mall that was held that morning and went on even after the Capitol breach began.

Included on a list of 11 subpoenas in September were Amy and Kylie Kremer, founders of Women for America First, a group that helped organize the rally; Cynthia Chafian, an organizer who submitted the first permit for the rally; Caroline Wren, who the committee says was listed on permit paperwork for the Jan. 6 rally as a "VIP Advisor"; and Maggie Mulvaney, who the panel says was listed on the permit as "VIP Lead."

Several of those connected to the rally have cooperated.

Associated Press writer Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

70 minutes at Astroworld: A countdown to catastrophe

By MATT SEDENSKY AP National Writer

Anticipation had been building for hours, but never more than now, as the red numerals on the countdown clock disappeared and the first synthesized notes vibrated. An image of an eagle in a fireball hovered above the stage, a neon red tunnel appeared and eight towers of flames rose to the sky. Leaping from darkness into the glow, rapper Travis Scott emerged, the instant for which tens of thousands gathered before him had waited.

In the thrill of the moment, clamoring for an idol, many pushed forward, thrusting revelers into revelers, closer and closer and closer, until it seemed every inch was swallowed. Then, fighting the compression or seeking escape, people pushed from the front to the back, and new ripples came with it.

What followed last Friday in Houston is clouded by unanswered questions and strikingly different experiences based on where someone stood, which swells of movement reached them, and how they handled the crush. But in the 70 minutes the headliner was on stage in a show that left nine dead, one thing was certain: Nearly everyone felt the waves of humanity, borne of excitement but soaked with risk, as they spread.

"You became an organism," said 26-year-old Steven Gutierrez of Ellenville, New York, who is 6-foot-2 and 391 pounds but nonetheless found himself struck by the power of the pushes that sent him drifting from his spot. "We're all one. You're moving with the crowd. The crowd's like water. It's like an ocean."

The enthusiasm of some 50,000 spectators at the sold-out Astroworld festival was evident from the time gates opened seven hours earlier, when some of the earliest arrivals rushed through entrances with such force that metal detectors were toppled as security guards and police on horseback struggled to keep up. Though the concert grounds hosted numerous acts, Scott, a Houston-born musician who founded the festival in 2018 on the heels of his chart-topping album "Astroworld," was undoubtedly the top draw. Some fans made a beeline for the stage built solely for the headliner, staking out positions they would hold for hours under the manufactured peaks of "Utopia Mountain."

As afternoon turned to evening and the countdown clock appeared around 8:30 p.m., the crowd grew denser and denser, attendees said, and the first waves of motion began to ripple.

With five minutes left and latecomers pushing in, it tightened more.

In the final 30 seconds on the clock, the craggy peaks of the stage's mountain turned to a volcano, and when the moment came, the crowd chanted: "Ten, nine, eight, seven, six ..."

Scott appeared. The pushes grew stronger. The first shockwaves of fear emerged.

Eligio Garcia, 18, of Corpus Christi, Texas, figures it was just 40 seconds into Scott's set that he looked at his girlfriend with concern. They felt heat swaddle their bodies. It became hard to breathe.

Screams echoed, begging: "Please, help me!" Behind him, people were falling. It looked to him like a

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human whirlpool. They felt the push and his left arm slipped away from her.

In an instant, both found themselves tangled on the ground in a pile of bodies.

They managed to get up, and Garcia said they screamed to nearby production staff for help but got no response. Every way out seemed impossible, but they eventually made their way to safety.

"We gotta get out of here," he told his girlfriend. "We can't fall back into this pit."

Travis Scott's fans are dubbed "ragers" and are expected to be in constant motion at a show. The rapper, who dreamed of being a wrestler as a child and has said he wants his shows to resemble WWF matches, cheers chaos from the stage and stirs up frantic energy. He even has a gold necklace mimicking a street sign: A jewel-encrusted red circle with a person standing still, a diagonal red slash through the body.

The message is clear: No bystanders at concerts. Ragers only.

And so the show continued, Scott headbanging and shrieking, running through a quick succession of hits.

Some experienced concertgoers in the crowd grabbed whistles around their necks or shouted "Open it up!" to trigger those around them to form mosh pits, circles that were the only voids in the jam-packed horde. Moshers shoved and heaved their bodies against one another in an aggressive ritual toeing the line between dance and violence. Around mosh pits' perimeter, circles of participants rotated and crowd-surfers took flight.

Moshers want their pits to grow as big as possible. Their outward push, combined with the rotations of participants, can create a swirl of motion that moves through the crowd. It was nothing new to many at the show. But, combined with the push toward the stage, others felt the crowd compress in ways they hadn't before.

Billy Nasser, 24, of Indianapolis, noticed it a few songs in. His raised arms no longer had room to come down. People were falling. Some stepped on the lifeless body of a passed-out man with his eyes rolled back in his head.

"I had to let him go .. It was every man for himself," Nasser said. "And that was when I realized how bad it was because I literally had to drop him and no one else would help me."

As flashpoints emerged in some places, the show went on. Lasers springing from the stage's tunnel made it look at times like a prism capturing a blaring sun.

Some 530 Houston Police officers were on the scene and their walkie-talkies crackled with a warning: Don't leave your group. No fewer than 10 officers together. Danger looms.

"We're having some structural issues that could be catastrophic," a voice cautioned.

About 22 minutes into his set, Scott seemed to see something in the crowd.

"Make sure he good," he said. "Walk with him. Take him."

Around the same time, over police radio, a voice advised: "Folks are coming out of the crowd complaining of difficulty breathing, crushing type injuries. It seems like the crowd is compressing."

The mass of people continued to tighten in spots, but escape paths remained.

Kevin Perez, a 19-year-old from Davenport, Florida, saw a mosh pit collapse behind him and realized he no longer was controlling his own movement. His forearms felt bound to his chest, his hands clenched in fists near his neck. He tipped his chin toward the sky for shallow breaths.

"It went from like excited to scared," he said. "People were trying to get out."

Perez followed a snake of people cutting through the crowd. Others climbed barricades.

In the hindsight of their escapes, the moments of this night would take new meaning.

An opening song entitled "Escape Plan." T-shirts brandished with "See you on the other side." A man in the crowd holding a white sign that asked "Will we survive."

The situation appeared to be worsening, the waves growing stronger, the opportunities to break free fewer.

"It got to the point," said 21-year-old Jason Rodriguez of Texas City, Texas, "where nobody could move."

About 28 minutes into Scott's set, a golf cart with flashing blue and red lights barely inched through the sea.

"There's an ambulance in the crowd," the rapper said. "Whoa, whoa, whoa."

He paused for about a minute. Scott told the audience to raise their hands to the sky. "You all know

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what you came here to do," he said, a cue for two men who were picked from the crowd to launch into stagedives.

Scott finished "Upper Echelon" as he hit the 30-minute mark onstage. Houston Police Chief Troy Finner later said this was the point his department noticed attendees "going down."

At the medical tent, where the capacity was just 10 people, according to permit filings, concern grew. On police radio, word was broadcast: "There's a lot of people trampled and they're passed out."

On the perimeter of the concert area, people were being thrust against metal barricades. Some began to bend.

During the next song, a young woman was captured on video climbing a platform with a cameraman.

"There is someone dying!" she cried. "There is someone dead!"

A young man joined her on the camera platform, screaming: "Stop the show! Stop the show!"

The show went on.

What the rapper could see remains unknown. He soon had a new vantage atop an elevated platform at center stage and said at one point he could see "all the way in the back." But in videos looking out at the spectators, thousands of glowing phones look like a sky of glittering stars. His attorneys said later he didn't know about the deaths or injuries until after the show.

As Scott sang from the platform, security guards were seen responding in the crowd, saying "He's not having a pulse" and "There's like four people out here without a pulse." Police say the festival's promoter, Live Nation, agreed to cut the show short around this time. Inexplicably, though, the concert continued.

Forty minutes had passed since Scott took the stage, and again he briefly stopped.

"We need somebody help. Somebody passed out right here," he said.

He returned to work shortly, singing lyrics that speak of "standing in the ocean." Before him, the real-life sea of humanity bubbled with problems. Panic spread.

"I gotta get out! I gotta get out!" Ariel Little cried, her chest throbbing under the crowd's crush.

"You're going to get trampled!" Michael Suarez told himself, struggling not to fall.

"I'm going to die in here!" Stacey Sarmiento thought as she tried to escape.

One woman bit a man to make her way through. A man said humans turned to animals as the situation spiraled.

It felt to some as if it couldn't get worse, but another rush was coming. Fifty-two minutes into Scott's set, superstar rapper Drake appeared on stage, a surprise that sent the crowd again pushing.

Gutierrez, a hulking former lifeguard, had returned to the crowd after a brief retreat after guiding two people to safety. Now, he was back among them, overwhelmed by the joy of seeing Drake before him.

"You felt the rush to the stage and there was a big push," he said. "The Drake effect."

Scott and Drake shared the stage for 14 minutes until, alone again, Scott delivered a final song as the mountain behind him burst with color and fireworks rocketed overhead.

"Make it home safe!" he yelled before jogging offstage.

The ocean receded, baring ground littered with shoes and clothes and trash. A field hospital bloated with the injured. And, from the lips of concertgoers, word of tragedy spread.

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Contributing to this report were Associated Press writers Juan Lozano, Jamie Stengle and Robert Busted in Houston; Ryan Pearson in Los Angeles; and David Sharp in Portland, Maine.

Next battleground at Rittenhouse trial: Jury instructions

By SCOTT BAUER, MICHAEL TARM and AMY FORLITI Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — Prosecutors and defense attorneys for Kyle Rittenhouse will return to the courthouse without the jury present on Friday to finalize how jurors will be instructed when they get the case next week.

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Jurors will soon begin deliberating in a case that left Americans divided over whether Rittenhouse was a patriot taking a stand against lawlessness or a vigilante.

Rittenhouse's lawyers rested their case Thursday, putting on about 2 1/2 days of testimony to the prosecution's five, with the most riveting moment coming when the 18-year-old told the jury that he was defending himself from attack when he used his rifle to kill two men and wound a third on the streets of Kenosha in the summer of 2020.

Prosecutors have sought to portray Rittenhouse as the instigator of the bloodshed, which took place during a tumultuous night of protests against racial injustice.

He faces a mandatory sentence of life in prison if convicted of the most serious charge against him.

Jury instructions will be worked out on Friday, and closing arguments are expected on Monday. After closing arguments, names will be drawn to decide which 12 jurors will deliberate and which ones will be dismissed as alternates. Eighteen people have been hearing the case. The panel appeared overwhelmingly white.

The protests in Kenosha were set off by the wounding of Jacob Blake, a Black man, by a white police officer. Rittenhouse, then 17, went to Kenosha from his home in Antioch, Illinois, with a rifle and a medical kit in what the former police and fire youth cadet said was an effort to protect property after rioters set fires and ransacked businesses on previous nights.

Rittenhouse fatally shot Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, in an initial confrontation and just moments later fatally shot Anthony Huber, 26, and wounded Gaige Grosskreutz, 27. Rittenhouse is white, as were those he shot.

The case has stirred fierce debate over vigilantism, self-defense, the Second Amendment right to bear arms and the unrest that erupted around the U.S. over the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis and other police violence against Black people.

Rittenhouse is charged with first-degree intentional homicide, which is Wisconsin's murder count; attempted first-degree intentional homicide; first-degree reckless homicide; reckless endangering; and illegal possession of a weapon by a person under 18.

Prosecutors said they will ask Circuit Judge Bruce Schroeder to allow the jury to consider possible lesser charges on some of the counts — potentially the intentional homicide and attempted intentional homicide charges.

One of the final witnesses for the defense was a use-of-force expert, John Black, who testified that less than three seconds passed between the time somebody fired a bullet in the air and Rittenhouse opened fire on the first man he shot, Rosenbaum.

Black took the stand as part of an effort by Rittenhouse's lawyers to show that he had reason to fear for his life and acted in self-defense.

Rittenhouse, in his own turn on the stand Wednesday, testified that he heard a gunshot directly behind him as he was being chased by Rosenbaum. Authorities said the shot was fired by someone else in the crowd.

The account Rittenhouse gave has largely been corroborated by a wealth of video and the prosecution's own witnesses: Rittenhouse said that Rosenbaum cornered him and put his hand on the barrel of his rifle, the second man hit him with a skateboard and the third man came at him with a gun of his own.

At one point Wednesday, his lawyers angrily demanded the judge declare a mistrial and bar Rittenhouse from being retried — essentially asking that the whole case be thrown out. They accused the chief prosecutor of asking Rittenhouse out-of-bounds questions.

The judge lambasted the prosecutor but pressed on with the case.

Bauer reported from Madison, Wisconsin; Forliti from Minneapolis; Associated Press writers Tammy Webber from Fenton, Michigan; Todd Richmond in Madison, Wisconsin; and Kathleen Foody in Chicago contributed.

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

Missouri man who buried wife's body convicted of her murder

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — A Missouri man who admitted to burying his wife's body and misleading authorities for more than a year about her whereabouts was convicted Thursday of second-degree murder.

After deliberating for almost seven hours, a jury found Joseph Elledge guilty in the killing of 28-year-old Mengqi Ji, whom he married after she moved to the U.S. from China to study at the University of Missouri.

Elledge reported Ji missing in October 2019, prompting months of extensive searches. Her remains were found in a park near Columbia, Missouri, in March.

Elledge was charged with first-degree murder, but Circuit Judge J. Hasbrouck Jacobs told jurors they could consider charges of second-degree murder, voluntary manslaughter and first-degree or second-degree involuntary manslaughter. Elledge was acquitted of the first-degree murder charge.

First-degree murder requires the state to prove that Elledge killed Ji intentionally after deliberating about it, and Elledge's intent was central to arguments throughout the trial.

The jury will hear evidence from both sides and recommend a sentence to the judge, according to KMIZ-TV. Boone County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Knight has asked for life in prison, while Elledge's attorney, Scott Rosenblum, is asking for 10 years, the news station reported. The judge's sentence can't exceed what the jury recommends.

An attorney for Ji's family told the Columbia Daily Tribune before the trial started that they didn't plan to provide a statement, but said on Wednesday they're pleased with Knight's efforts.

During closing arguments on Thursday, Knight told the jury that Elledge was a "stone cold killer" who was guilty of first-degree murder because he intentionally killed his wife.

Rosenblum argued that his client was awkward and made "unbelievably dumb" decisions after she died. But he said Elledge never intended to kill his wife and should never have been charged with murder.

During his trial, Elledge said Ji's death was accidental. He said she fell and hit her head on Oct. 8, 2019, after he pushed her during an argument and he found her dead in bed the next morning. He said he panicked, put her body in the trunk of her car and did not report what happened while he tried to decide what to do.

He did not tell anyone, including Ji's mother, about her disappearance.

On Oct. 10, with the couple's young daughter in the car, Elledge drove to Rock Bridge State Park about 5 miles (8 kilometers) south of Columbia, where they lived. There, he dug a grave and buried Ji at a site a half-mile from where he proposed to her. He then returned home and reported her missing.

Prosecutors used social media posts, audio tapes and a journal Elledge kept to document the couple's volatile relationship. The evidence showed them frequently yelling at each other and arguing, with Elledge often criticizing his wife for her appearance and for how she treated him.

Elledge said that in the days before her death, he discovered Ji had been exchanging sexually suggestive messages with a man from China via social media. He also testified that the couple's relationship suffered because of tension caused by her parents who moved from China to live with them after their daughter was born on Oct. 3, 2018.

The couple met in 2015 at Nanova, a company that makes dental products, where Ji was Elledge's supervisor. They began dating the following year and eventually traveled to China, where he asked Ji's parents for permission to marry her. The couple married in 2017.

Ji earned a master's degree in mechanical and aerospace engineering from the University of Missouri in December 2014. Elledge was a student at the university when his wife died.

GOP leaders say little to condemn violent political rhetoric

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In the past week, Republican Rep. Paul Gosar tweeted a video showing a character with his face killing a figure with Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's face. Several of the 13 House Republicans who backed a bipartisan infrastructure bill said they faced threats after their vote. In one profanity-laced voicemail, a caller labeled Rep. Fred Upton a "traitor" and wished death for the Michigan Republican, his

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family and staff.

The response from Republican leaders? Silence.

Less than a year after former President Donald Trump's supporters staged a violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol in an effort to halt the peaceful transition of power, the GOP's refusal to broadly and forcefully condemn more recent examples of disturbing rhetoric and behavior suggests an unsettling shift. One of the nation's two major political parties appears increasingly tolerant of at least some persistent level of violence in American discourse, or at least willing to turn a blind eye to it.

In an interview, GOP Rep. Liz Cheney, who has emerged as a top Trump critic in her party, said Gosar should be censured "for his continued indefensible activities." And she blasted House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy for his silence on the matter.

"It's a real symbol of his lack of strength, the lack of leadership in our conference right now, and the extent to which he and other leaders seem to have lost their moral compass," said Cheney, who was ousted from her leadership post after voting in favor of Trump's impeachment. "In a moment where you've got an avowed white nationalist in Rep. Gosar who has posted a video advocating the killing of another member, the idea that our leader will not stand against that but that he's somehow going after and allowing attacks against 13 members who are conducting themselves in a serious and substantive way is really outrageous."

Representatives for McCarthy did not respond to requests for comment.

Pressed on violent rhetoric in their own ranks, Republicans often point to protests in Portland involving left-wing antifa activists. But President Joe Biden has said those engaged in violence should be prosecuted. And in 2018, then-House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi criticized fellow California Democratic Rep. Maxine Waters for calling on supporters to harass Trump administration officials.

The GOP's reluctance to crack down on — or even mildly criticize — violent rhetoric in its own ranks is part of a broader pattern in which the party tries to minimize such behavior. Gosar removed the tweet aimed at Ocasio-Cortez, but the Arizona congressman and his digital director said those offended by his tweet should "relax." Trump, meanwhile, has attempted to divert attention from the Jan. 6 violence at the U.S. Capitol by saying that last year's Election Day was the "real insurrection."

There was no insurrection on Election Day. There was a free and fair election won by Biden.

While threats and violent political imagery are nothing new in American politics, they became increasingly normalized under Trump. The former president embraced violence as a political tactic from the earliest days of his 2016 campaign, egging on his supporters to rough up protesters who interrupted his rallies. At one point during a speech, he called on them to "knock the crap out of" potential disruptors, and even promised to pay their legal bills.

In office, Trump mulled having U.S. officials shoot at people trying to cross the border illegally and spoke of the good old days when he said police could rough up suspects without impunity. He labeled the press the "enemy of the state," and praised as "my type" the now Montana governor who physically assaulted a reporter.

In 2017, Trump tweeted a doctored World Wrestling Entertainment video that depicted him body-slammng and pummeling wrestling promoter Vince McMahon, whose face had been replaced by a CNN logo. The video quickly became the former president's then most-shared post on the site.

And he spent months convincing his supporters the 2020 election had been stolen, culminating in the violent storming of the Capitol building in an effort to halt the certification of Biden's win.

Trump "seems to have wanted to promote opponents as being intimidated by wielding violent rhetoric," creating a culture, especially in the Republican Party, of "violent threats as being excused as offbeat humor," said presidential historian Douglas Brinkley, of the precedent Trump had established.

Nonetheless, he said that having a congressman threaten somebody, "whether it's in a cartoon or words," puts a target on her back.

"Knowing that AOC is facing serious death threats and then to turn it into a meme or a dark twisted fantasy joke is reprehensible. And it's hard to imagine that somebody in 2021 would feel that that kind of

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behavior was acceptable in a civil society," he said, calling for criminal prosecution. "We cannot go around and threaten people's lives and call it humor."

Former Democratic Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, who suffered extensive brain damage during a 2011 assassination attempt, said threats against political figures "have no place in our democracy."

"Not only do they threaten the personal safety of our public servants, their staff, and their families — they undermine the very foundation of our democracy," she said in a statement. "All leaders must decisively condemn violent rhetoric and threats in our politics, and recognize the danger to our democratic process posed by armed threats, harassment, and intimidation."

Charlie Dent, a former Republican congressman from Pennsylvania, said: "I do think GOP leadership has to step up and address issues of members who step out of line as it related to misconduct or incendiary comments. ... They should be very forceful to those who are bringing discredit to the institution."

Ocasio-Cortez spokesperson Lauren Hitt declined to comment on the volume of threats against her, citing security advice.

Lilliana Hall Mason is a professor at Johns Hopkins University and co-author of the upcoming book "Radical American Partisanship," which examines Americans' attitudes toward political violence. She said that, in general, around 10-20% of self-identified Democrats and Republicans tell researchers they support the use of violence for accomplishing political goals.

But their studies found those attitudes can be strongly influenced by messages they hear from political leaders. When politicians use pacifying rhetoric, she said, people from both parties respond by becoming less approving of violence. But when Democrats hear violent rhetoric from Republicans, and vice versa, it feeds into perceptions that the opposite party is more approving of violence than it really is, and encourages them to respond with the same.

"It seems that people respond to violence events by increasing their approval to violence," she said of their findings. "Violence begets violence" in what she described as a "vicious cycle" that make using violent rhetoric "a really dangerous game."

"It's just so irresponsible," she added.

Associated Press writer Alan Fram contributed to this report from Washington.

SpaceX delivers new crew of 4 to station, 'glorious sight'

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A SpaceX capsule carrying four astronauts pulled up Thursday at the International Space Station, their new home until spring.

It took 21 hours for the flight from NASA's Kennedy Space Center to the glittering outpost.

The one German and three U.S. astronauts said it was an emotional moment when they first spotted the space station 20 miles (30 kilometers) distant — "a pretty glorious sight," according to Raja Chari, commander of the Dragon capsule.

"Floating in space and shining like a diamond," noted German astronaut Matthias Maurer. "We're all very thrilled, very excited."

The Dragon's entire flight was automated, with Chari and pilot Tom Marshburn monitoring the capsule systems, ready to take control if necessary. At one point, they reported what looked like a "gnarled knob" or possibly a small mechanical nut floating past their camera's field of view, but SpaceX Mission Control said it posed no concern. The docking occurred 263 miles (423 kilometers) above the eastern Caribbean.

The station's welcoming committee consisted of three astronauts instead of the originally planned seven. That's because SpaceX returned four of the station residents on Monday, after the new arrivals' launch kept getting delayed.

"I can't tell you how happy I am to see these smiling faces," NASA astronaut Mark Vande Hei said after embracing each of the newcomers. "Every one of us, all seven of us, are friends, and we're going to become even better friends as time goes on."

Vande Hei and one of the two Russians on board are midway through a one-year mission that won't end until March.

While Chari, Marshburn, Maurer and NASA astronaut Kayla Barron were adapting to weightlessness — all but Marshburn are space rookies — the previous crew was adjusting to life back on Earth. "Gravity sucks, but getting used to it slowly," Japanese astronaut Akihiko Hoshide tweeted.

The new crew will spend the next six months at the space station and, during that time, host two groups of visiting tourists. Russia will launch the first bunch in December and SpaceX the second in February.

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Videos of Ahmaud Arbery roaming vacant home shown to jury

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Ga. (AP) — Jurors in the trial of three white men charged in Ahmaud Arbery's killing watched security camera videos Thursday that show other people entering a home under construction in the months before the 25-year-old Black man was chased and gunned down after running from the site.

They saw two white boys with bicycles walk into the open garage to drag away plywood. They watched a clip of a white man and woman strolling into the home at night, the man carrying a small bag in one hand.

And jurors saw Arbery himself wandering between the home's exposed beams and along its backyard boat dock on five different occasions between Oct. 25, 2019, and Feb. 23, 2020 — the last time mere minutes before he was shot dead in the street on a Sunday afternoon.

Greg McMichael, 65, and his son Travis McMichael, 35, armed themselves and pursued Arbery in a pickup truck after he ran past their yard, five doors down from the unfinished house with no doors or windows. A neighbor, 52-year-old William "Roddie" Bryan, joined the chase and recorded cellphone video of Travis McMichael shooting Arbery three times at close range.

The three men are standing trial on murder and other charges at the Glynn County courthouse in coastal Georgia, where Arbery's killing broadened a national outcry over racial injustice. The McMichaels told police they suspected Arbery was a burglar, and Travis McMichael shot him in self-defense after Arbery attacked with his fists.

Prosecutors say there's no evidence of Arbery committing crimes in the men's neighborhood to justify a pursuit by armed men.

On Thursday, the jury heard prerecorded testimony from Larry English, who had installed security cameras inside the home he was building on the McMichaels' street. English said he put cameras behind the house after learning children had been playing on his dock. He added more out front and inside when he discovered fishing gear and a cooler missing from a boat in the home's large garage.

"Was it common in your experience as a general contractor to have people coming in and out of construction sites?" prosecutor Paul Camarillo asked English, who agreed to be questioned under oath by attorneys on Sept. 24.

"Frequently during the daytime," said English, noting neighbors and even other contractors often are curious to see inside homes in progress.

He said two boys had taken plywood from the site, but he didn't mind because they took scraps and used them to build a bike ramp.

Jurors watched video of English's testimony after his attorney objected to him taking the witness stand in person, saying he has an illness that would put him at serious risk if he contracted COVID-19.

Meanwhile, the judge heard from Bryan's attorney that he doesn't want "any more Black pastors" in the courtroom after the Rev. Al Sharpton sat with the slain man's family on Wednesday.

The trial began Nov. 5 following more than two weeks of jury selection. Proceedings are expected to continue at least through next week.

English was building his retirement home just outside the port city of Brunswick, about 90 miles (145

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kilometers) from his current home in rural Coffee County. The security system he installed would alert his cellphone and show him video whenever motion triggered the cameras.

Arbery first shows up on Oct. 25, 2019, walking along the boat dock. He's got nothing in his hands and seems to ignore a toolbox and English's boat. Still, English called 911.

"I've got a trespasser there," English said in the 911 audio played in court. He said the trespasser was a Black man with curly hair. "He's tattooed down both arms. He's plundering around."

English told Camarillo the man was gone by the time police arrived. He said he'd hoped that "maybe they would find him and talk to him, tell him not to be there anymore."

Arbery showed up again on English's property Nov. 18, 2019 — the night after a white man and woman were recorded entering the garage. English called 911 both nights.

On the night of Dec. 17, 2019, Arbery can be seen in a T-shirt and shorts walking out of the structure and then jogging down the road. He appeared on camera two more times, the night of Feb. 11, 2020, and then a final time 12 days later on the afternoon he was killed.

The deadly chase began after Arbery ran from the home while a different neighbor across the street was on the phone with police.

"Was anything ever taken from the structure itself, from the construction site itself?" Camarillo asked.

"Not that I know of," English replied.

English also told the prosecutor he barely knew the McMichaels and had never met Bryan. He testified he'd never asked any of them to keep an eye on his property.

Robert Rubin, an attorney for Travis McMichael, pressed English on his concerns that Arbery kept coming into his unfinished house at night.

"You don't know what this guy's doing in the neighborhood, right? You don't recognize him. You don't know why he's in a dark house at night," Rubin said. He added: "It doesn't feel good to have this guy lurking around."

English agreed he wanted Arbery to stop entering his house but insisted that was all.

"Did you wish any harm on him?" asked Camarillo, the prosecutor.

English replied: "No."

Attorney: No more 'Black pastors' in court for Arbery case

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

BRUNSWICK, Ga. (AP) — An attorney for one of the white men standing trial in the death of Ahmaud Arbery told the judge Thursday he doesn't want "any more Black pastors" in the courtroom after the Rev. Al Sharpton sat with the slain man's family.

Kevin Gough represents William "Roddie" Bryan, who along with father and son Greg and Travis McMichael is charged with murder and other crimes in Arbery's Feb. 23, 2020, killing. The 25-year-old Black man was chased and fatally shot after the defendants spotted him running in their neighborhood outside the Georgia port city of Brunswick.

Gough told Superior Court Judge Timothy Walmsley that he was concerned Sharpton's presence in court Wednesday was an attempt to intimidate the disproportionately white jury hearing the case. The jury was not in the courtroom when he made the remarks.

"Obviously there's only so many pastors they can have," Gough said. "And if their pastor's Al Sharpton right now that's fine, but then that's it. We don't want any more Black pastors coming in here ... sitting with the victim's family, trying to influence the jurors in this case."

Jason Sheffield, one of Travis McMichael's lawyers, told the judge he didn't notice any distractions caused by Sharpton, who sat in the back row of the courtroom gallery wearing a mask.

Gough said he didn't realize Sharpton had been there until after court had adjourned for the day.

"You weren't even aware of it until later?" the judge said. "I'm not sure what we're doing."

Sharpton held a prayer vigil and news conference outside the Glynn County courthouse Wednesday afternoon to show support for Arbery's family. Afterward he joined Arbery's parents and their lawyers to

listen to portions of the trial testimony.

Sharpton said in a statement that Gough's remarks showed "arrogant insensitivity."

"I respect the defense attorney doing his job," Sharpton said, "but this is beyond defending your client, it is insulting the family of the victim."

Defense rests its case at murder trial of Kyle Rittenhouse

By MICHAEL TARM, SCOTT BAUER and TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — The defense rested its case Thursday at the murder trial of Kyle Rittenhouse, setting the stage for closing arguments Monday in the shootings that left Americans divided over whether he was a patriot taking a stand against lawlessness or a vigilante.

Rittenhouse's lawyers put on about 2 1/2 days of testimony to the prosecution's five, with the most riveting moment coming when the 18-year-old told the jury that he was defending himself from attack when he used his rifle to kill two men and wound a third on the streets of Kenosha in the summer of 2020.

Prosecutors have sought to portray Rittenhouse as the instigator of the bloodshed, which took place during a tumultuous night of protests against racial injustice.

He faces a mandatory sentence of life in prison if convicted of the most serious charge against him.

After closing arguments, names will be drawn from an old, brown lottery tumbler to decide which 12 jurors will deliberate and which ones will be dismissed as alternates. Eighteen people have been hearing the case. The panel appeared overwhelmingly white.

The protests in Kenosha were set off by the wounding of Jacob Blake, a Black man, by a white police officer. Rittenhouse, then 17, went to Kenosha from his home in Antioch, Illinois, with a rifle and a medical kit in what the former police and fire youth cadet said was an effort to protect property after rioters set fires and ransacked businesses on previous nights.

Rittenhouse fatally shot Joseph Rosenbaum, 36, in an initial confrontation and just moments later shot and killed Anthony Huber, 26, and wounded Gaije Grosskreutz, 27. Rittenhouse is white, as were those he shot.

The case has stirred fierce debate over vigilantism, self-defense, the Second Amendment right to bear arms, and the unrest that erupted around the U.S. over the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis and other police violence against Black people.

Rittenhouse is charged with first-degree intentional homicide, which is Wisconsin's murder count; attempted first-degree intentional homicide; first-degree reckless homicide; reckless endangering; and illegal possession of a weapon by a person under 18.

Prosecutors said they will ask Circuit Judge Bruce Schroeder to allow the jury to consider possible lesser charges on some of the counts.

One of the final witnesses for the defense was a use-of-force expert, John Black, who testified that less than three seconds elapsed between the time somebody fired a bullet in the air and Rittenhouse opened fire on the first man he shot, Joseph Rosenbaum.

Black took the stand as part of an effort by Rittenhouse's lawyers to show that he had reason to fear for his life and acted in self-defense.

Rittenhouse, in his own turn on the stand Wednesday, testified that he heard a gunshot directly behind him as he was being chased by Rosenbaum. Authorities said the shot was fired by someone else in the crowd.

The account Rittenhouse gave has largely been corroborated by a wealth of video and the prosecution's own witnesses: Rittenhouse said that Rosenbaum cornered him and put his hand on the barrel of his rifle, the second man hit him with a skateboard, and the third man came at him with a gun of his own.

At one point Wednesday, his lawyers angrily demanded the judge declare mistrial and bar Rittenhouse from being retried — essentially asking that the whole case be thrown out. They accused the chief prosecutor of asking Rittenhouse out-of-bounds questions.

The judge lambasted the prosecutor but pressed on with the case.

Bauer reported from Madison, Wisconsin; Webber from Fenton, Michigan. Associated Press writers Amy Forliti in Minneapolis; Todd Richmond in Madison, Wisconsin; and Kathleen Foody in Chicago contributed.

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

Blow-up at Rittenhouse trial over enlarging photos and video

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Attorneys in Kyle Rittenhouse's murder trial sparred for a second day Thursday over the technology used to zoom in on video and create enlarged images, with prosecutors alleging the defense was taking advantage of the 75-year-old judge's admitted lack of understanding about current technology.

"I will tell you that I totally agree with your comment about my lack of familiarity with these concepts," Judge Bruce Schroeder told the attorneys without the jury present. "This is a difficult concept for me, yes."

In both cases, prosecutors were arguing for enlarging key images on the night last summer that Rittenhouse shot and killed two protesters and injured a third on the streets of Kenosha. Much of the action that night was captured on sometimes hard-to-decipher cellphone video, as well as by a drone.

The defense rested its case Thursday, but not before arguing with prosecutors about whether an enlarged image taken from a drone video could be admitted into evidence. Schroeder, following arguments held without the jury present, said he would allow the image, while admitting he didn't understand the technology used by a state crime lab employee to enlarge it.

"With all due respect to your honor, I think the defense is trying to take advantage of your lack of knowledge about technology," Kenosha County Assistant District Attorney James Kraus said.

Kraus argued that the way the images were enlarged was the "industry standard" and for the defense to "then try to pretend this is all voodoo magic is preposterous." He said the defense attempt to get the evidence tossed out because it shows "their client is lying ... they are stooping to this level to try to keep it out."

Prosecutors wanted to use the image to rebut Rittenhouse's testimony that he didn't point his gun at protesters just before he was chased by Joseph Rosenbaum, whom Rittenhouse shot and killed. Rittenhouse argues he shot him in self-defense.

Wisconsin crime lab employee James Armstrong testified, under questioning from defense attorney Corey Chirafisi, that the software program adds pixels to the image and he cannot say with certainty what color the added pixels are.

"If it is not the same as the original and colors were added to that, that is a distortion of what, in fact, the original photograph was," Chirafisi said in arguing to keep out the image.

Kraus called that a "canard" and a "dishonest argument."

"This is just not the age we're in," Kraus argued. "We are in an age where software is able to enlarge and do things."

Schroeder used a magnifying glass to examine the image in question and also walked right up to a large screen to get a better look. He ultimately allowed the image to be admitted, but Rittenhouse's defense attorney was also permitted to question the crime lab analyst about the software used to enlarge it with the jury present.

The judge said he was leaving it up to the jury to decide how much weight to give the image.

"The fact that I can blow something up on my phone and it's accurate on my phone doesn't mean that the particular program used by the crime lab is doing an accurate job of increasing the size of the image," he told attorneys.

That disagreement came the day after Schroeder told prosecutors they would have to introduce an expert to prove that images taken from a drone were not distorted if they used the pinch-to-zoom function on an iPad to make them easier to see. Prosecutors opted to show the jury the footage as it was

originally taken, with no zoom.

That led almost immediately to a moment in which lead prosecutor Thomas Binger stopped the action at one point and asked Rittenhouse to confirm that his gun was raised. Rittenhouse responded: "I can't see it."

A spokeswoman for Apple did not immediately return a message seeking comment about whether pinch-to-zoom alters an image.

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

Rittenhouse judge's nod to veterans includes defense witness

By KATHLEEN FOODY Associated Press

As jurors in Kyle Rittenhouse's murder trial settled into their courtroom seats, Judge Bruce Schroeder welcomed them and noted the Veterans Day holiday.

The longtime judge then asked if any of the jurors or others in the courtroom had served. Only one person indicated he had: The man about to testify in support of Rittenhouse's defense.

"What branch?" Schroeder asked use-of-force expert John Black.

"Army, sir," Black said.

"I think we give a round of applause to the people who've served our country," Schroeder said, leading the room including jurors in clapping.

Black then took the stand, testifying that less than three seconds elapsed between the time a protester fired a shot in the air and Rittenhouse opened fire with his rifle.

For some trial observers, Schroeder's opening was a clear mistake that could have swayed jurors' opinion of a defense witness at the expense of prosecutors' already shaky case.

But other watchers shrugged it off, suggesting prosecutors were best served letting the moment pass without objection.

Steven Wright, a professor at the University of Wisconsin School of Law, characterized the moment as a mistake. Schroeder making Black's military service clear to the jury risked making him more credible in their eyes, Wright said.

But the issue is unlikely to be scrutinized, whatever the outcome of this trial.

If jurors find Rittenhouse not guilty, there's likely no appeal. If they find him guilty, Schroeder's mistake could only be seen as an aid to Rittenhouse rather than a point of argument on appeal, Wright said.

Rittenhouse's attorney also asked Black questions about his professional background during his testimony, and Black briefly discussed his military service.

Rittenhouse's trial has featured testimony from at least two other veterans, Ryan Balch and Jason Lackowski, who both were among the armed citizens in Rittenhouse's group the night of the shootings.

Schroeder, who wore a tie Thursday emblazoned with American flags and whose phone ringtone heard in court was the Lee Greenwood ode to patriotism "God Bless the U.S.A.," has singled out veterans before. He called for a round of applause for veterans last week during jury selection, when he compared the solemnity of jury duty to the seriousness of being drafted. He also thanked the Marines during Wednesday's court session, and when an officer in the courtroom said he was a Marine, Schroeder called for more applause.

High public interest in Rittenhouse case has meant more scrutiny for Schroeder, a colorful judge who killed time before jury selection by testing jurors' trivia knowledge, shouted at the prosecutor this week over a line of questioning and often pokes fun at himself on the bench.

He raised more eyebrows at the lunch break Thursday with a remark as he was setting a time for court to resume, when he said: "Let's hope for 1 o'clock, I don't know, the uh, hope the Asian food isn't coming, it isn't on one of those boats in Long Beach Harbor."

Observers seized on the remark, an apparent reference to a cargo ship backlog seen on the West Coast, as questionable at best and racist at worst.

Schroeder didn't immediately respond to an emailed request for comment Thursday afternoon.

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

'Rust' tragedy, labor climate frame Hollywood contract vote

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In weighing his vote on a proposed union contract with Hollywood producers, veteran stagehand Matthew "Doc" Brashear looked closely at the agreement and beyond, to the now-closed New Mexico film set where a cinematographer died.

For crew member Brandy Tannahill, the fatal "Rust" shooting of Halyna Hutchins and the resurgence of labor actions, such as the strikes at John Deere and Kellogg, are bolstering her decision.

When voting starts Friday on a tentative three-year agreement reached by the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and a trade group representing producers, Brashear and Tannahill say they will vote no.

With forces from the pandemic to the economy also framing union members' views, bread-and-butter issues of wages and pensions remain important. But long-entrenched concerns about danger on the job have taken on increased urgency.

"I think the elected (union) leaders gave their all," Brashear said of the proposed deal that averted the union's first-ever national strike. While it's generally "a win of a contract," it falls short on a majority of safety-related issues, he said.

"Most of what we are fighting for is to just be able to spend time with our family and, if we work a 16-hour day, to make it home safe to our families," said Brashear, a lighting programmer in Southern California.

While some point to the "Rust" shooting that injured director Joel Souza and killed cinematographer Hutchins as an outlier -- Alec Baldwin, the film's star-producer who fired the gun, called it a "one-in-a-trillion event" — Tannahill said it's emblematic of the industry's critical flaws.

"There has been an understandable emotional response to what occurred," she said. "But the underlying issue that screams to me, as someone in this business, is that the production got to the point where it was because of the producers cutting corners."

The burdens that union members point to include long workdays that may lack breaks or lunch, and the debilitating fatigue that causes both on and off the job. A 1997 tragedy remains vivid: Brent Hershman, 35, an assistant cameraman on the film "Pleasantville," died in a crash while driving home after a 19-hour workday.

"Those are the things that make the news," said Tannahill, but she knows four people who dozed off at the wheel and either narrowly avoided or survived an accident. She's been working since 2011 as a grip, with duties including setting up lighting.

According to the union, core safety and economic issues are addressed in the proposed agreements covering workers on film and TV productions.

"This is a Hollywood ending," IATSE International President Matthew Loeb said in announcing a deal last month. "We went toe-to-toe with some of the most powerful entertainment and tech companies in the world" to achieve a contract that "meets our members' needs."

The bargaining committees of all 36 local unions have unanimously recommended ratification. Electronic voting concludes Sunday and the result is expected Monday. The union and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers didn't make officials available for interviews.

IATSE represents about 150,000 behind-the-scenes workers, including stagehands, cinematographers, costumers and others employed in all forms of entertainment, from movies and TV to theater, concerts, trade shows and broadcasting.

Two proposed contracts are at stake for 60,000 union members. One primarily covers film and TV production on the West Coast and applies to about two-thirds of those members; the other is for production hubs including New Mexico and Georgia.

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The agreements include across-the board wage increases and increased compensation paid by streaming services, Loeb said in a statement, a reference to Amazon, Netflix and others originally dubbed "new media" and cut financial slack.

Loeb also said that "quality of life issues were at the top of our priority list," with the proposed contracts establishing a defined weekend rest period and imposing "stiff" penalties if meals and breaks aren't provided.

It's not enough, some workers contend.

"This is a version of the same deal that we're offered every three years," said veteran stagehand Jason Fitzgerald. "If we do not take a stand now to try to change the culture of the industry, we will continue to be treated more like disposable parts of a machine and less like human beings."

The 98% strike-vote approval is credited by the union with building urgency for studios to reach a deal. The union had threatened to strike on Oct. 18 if the sides failed to reach an agreement, which was reached Oct. 16.

That activist spirit stoked by the strike authorization campaign remains unabated for some, even as the union encourages a "yes" vote.

"People are being more critical of contract language, especially younger workers who are really engaged in social media and using the internet for fact-finding," said Tannahill. Last weekend, a town hall she organized for union members to discuss the contract drew more than 500 in person or online, she estimated.

Producer Tom Nunan, whose credits include the Oscar-winning "Crash," said there's more heightened debate this year than in the past. But he expects ratification, citing precedent and workers' eagerness for rules addressing safety.

"This is going to get approved by the membership. They've never balked in the face of leadership recommending (approval) and I don't see that this will be the exception," said Nunan, a lecturer at the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Theater, Film and Television. "The progress that the team made on behalf of IATSE is spectacular by any measure."

This story corrects that the year of fatal crash was 1997, not 1987.

Court temporarily delays release of Trump's Jan. 6 records

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal appeals court on Thursday temporarily blocked the release of White House records sought by a U.S. House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection, granting — for now — a request from former President Donald Trump.

The administrative injunction issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit effectively bars until the end of this month the release of records that were to be turned over Friday. The appeals court set oral arguments in the case for Nov. 30.

The stay gives the court time to consider arguments in a momentous clash between the former president, whose supporters stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, and President Joe Biden and Congress, who have pushed for a thorough investigation of the riot. It delays the House committee from reviewing records that lawmakers say could shed light on the events leading up to the insurrection and Trump's efforts to delegitimize an election he lost.

The National Archives, which holds the documents, says they include call logs, handwritten notes and a draft executive order on "election integrity."

Biden waived executive privilege on the documents. Trump then went to court arguing that as a former president, he still had the right to exert privilege over the records and releasing them would damage the presidency in the future.

U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan on Tuesday rejected those arguments, noting in part, "Presidents are not kings, and Plaintiff is not President." She again denied an emergency motion by Trump on Wednesday.

In their emergency filing to the appeals court, Trump's lawyers wrote that without a stay, Trump would

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"suffer irreparable harm through the effective denial of a constitutional and statutory right to be fully heard on a serious disagreement between the former and incumbent President."

The Nov. 30 arguments will take place before three judges nominated by Democratic presidents: Patricia Millett and Robert Wilkins, nominated by former President Barack Obama, and Ketanji Brown Jackson, an appointee of Biden.

Given the case's magnitude, whichever side loses before the circuit court is likely to eventually appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The White House on Thursday also notified a lawyer for Mark Meadows, Trump's former chief of staff, that Biden would waive any executive privilege that would prevent Meadows from cooperating with the committee, according to a letter obtained by The Associated Press. The committee has subpoenaed Meadows and more than two dozen other people as part of its investigation.

His lawyer, George Terwilliger, issued a statement in response saying Meadows "remains under the instructions of former President Trump to respect longstanding principles of executive privilege."

"It now appears the courts will have to resolve this conflict," Terwilliger said.

The committee late Thursday threatened to begin contempt proceedings against Meadows if he doesn't change course and comply.

"Simply put, there is no valid legal basis for Mr. Meadows's continued resistance to the Select Committee's subpoena," the committee wrote to Terwilliger, saying it would view Meadows' failure to turn over documents or appear at a scheduled deposition on Friday as "willful non-compliance."

The House has already referred former Trump adviser Steve Bannon to the Justice Department for potential criminal prosecution for contempt of Congress.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Mark Sherman contributed to this report.

Texas A&M student hurt at Astroworld dies; death toll at 9

By JUAN LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A 22-year-old college student who was critically injured in the crush of fans at the Astroworld festival in Houston has died, the family's lawyer said Thursday, bringing the death toll to nine.

Bharti Shahani, who was set to graduate from Texas A&M University in the spring, died Wednesday night, attorney James Lassiter said during a news conference. All of the concertgoers who died following the Friday night show were between the ages of 14 and 27, underscoring how the tragedy unfolded in a mostly younger crowd.

A 9-year-old boy who was also injured at the sold-out festival of 50,000 people remained in a medically induced coma, according to family.

"For the first time in her life she just wanted to have fun, and that was taken from her," said Namrata Shahani, her sister, who attended the concert with Bharti and their cousin.

Namrata Shahani said her sister's last words to her were, "Are you OK?"

Concertgoers have described the packed crowd growing dangerous even before headliner Travis Scott appeared on stage, and seeing people collapse while the rapper performed. Scott's attorneys have said he did not know about the deaths and injuries until after the show.

On Thursday, Scott's representatives said in a statement that he was distraught and has been trying to connect with the affected families to share condolences and provide them aid.

Hundreds of people were injured in the intensifying surge. A criminal investigation into the deaths at Astroworld is underway. Thursday was the last day attorneys who have filed more than 50 lawsuits to date were allowed access to the concert site at NRG Park, where the stage where Scott performed and surrounding crowd barricades have remained standing.

John Duff, whose clients include the family of the 9-year-old boy who remains hospitalized, said concertgoers in a section to the right of the stage would have had to go through thousands of people to access the main medical tent. He said the festival grounds are still littered with piles of bloody clothes,

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shoes, cellphone cases and bags.

"There was probably 1,000 pairs of shoes out there. It seems like a lot (of) people left barefoot or without clothes," he said. "You kind of felt a heavy presence out there."

Scott was only minutes into his set when at least one Houston officer radioed over a police channel that the main stage had been compromised by a massive crowd surge.

Recordings of police radio traffic, obtained by the Houston Chronicle, reveal how quickly law enforcement became aware of the rising danger in the throng of concertgoers shortly after the star rapper began performing at the sold-out music festival, which drew about 50,000 people.

Scott took the stage in his hometown of Houston shortly after 9 p.m.

"Looks like folks are coming out of the crowd complaining of difficulty breathing, crushing-type injuries," one official said over the police radio around 9:21 p.m., according to the audio obtained by the newspaper. "Seems like the crowd is compressing on itself."

Scott kept performing his set, which lasted about an hour. The newspaper reported that officers spotted people leaving the crowd but that their voices remained calm through the first half hour.

"I'm at the medical tent," one officer radioed in around 9:30 p.m. "There's a lot of people trampled and they're passed out at the front stage."

Later, another officer says: "We're getting multiple reports of people getting injured. We have another report of cardiac situation with CPR by the stage."

Houston Police Chief Troy Finner said during a news conference Wednesday that police told organizers to shut down the performance when fans in the crowd were administered CPR. Authorities gave word around 10:03 p.m. that the concert was in the process of shutting down, but witnesses say Scott and Drake, the superstar rapper who came on toward the end of Scott's set as a special guest, kept performing.

Finner repeatedly refused to provide timelines, saying the case was still under investigation. He said more than 500 officers were working the festival, more than double the number assigned in 2019 when the festival was last held.

But Finner said festival organizers had not provided clear records of how many private security guards were working the show, describing what they turned over as "just not good." It was up to Live Nation Entertainment, the show's promoter, to secure two mosh pits in front of the stage, Finner said.

Scott's attorneys on Wednesday pointed to an operational plan for the event that states only the festival director and executive producers have the authority to stop the show, "neither of which is part of Travis's crew."

"Investigations should start proceeding over finger-pointing so that together, we can identify exactly what transpired and how we can prevent anything like this from happening again," attorney Edwin F. McPherson said in a statement.

For more AP stories on Astroworld: <https://apnews.com/hub/astroworld-festival-deaths>

COVID-19 hot spots offer sign of what could be ahead for US

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

The contagious delta variant is driving up COVID-19 hospitalizations in the Mountain West and fueling disruptive outbreaks in the North, a worrisome sign of what could be ahead this winter in the U.S.

While trends are improving in Florida, Texas and other Southern states that bore the worst of the summer surge, it's clear that delta isn't done with the United States. COVID-19 is moving north and west for the winter as people head indoors, close their windows and breathe stagnant air.

"We're going to see a lot of outbreaks in unvaccinated people that will result in serious illness, and it will be tragic," said Dr. Donald Milton of the University of Maryland School of Public Health.

In recent days, a Vermont college suspended social gatherings after a spike in cases tied to Halloween parties. Boston officials shut down an elementary school to control an outbreak. Hospitals in New Mexico and Colorado are overwhelmed.

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In Michigan, the three-county metro Detroit area is again becoming a hot spot for transmissions, with one hospital system reporting nearly 400 COVID-19 patients. Mask-wearing in Michigan has declined to about 25% of people, according to a combination of surveys tracked by an influential modeling group at the University of Washington.

"Concern over COVID in general is pretty much gone, which is unfortunate," said Dr. Jennifer Morse, medical director at health departments in 20 central and northern Michigan counties. "I feel strange going into a store masked. I'm a minority. It's very different. It's just a really unusual atmosphere right now."

New Mexico is running out of intensive care beds despite the state's above-average vaccination rate. Waning immunity may be playing a role. People who were vaccinated early and have not yet received booster shots may be driving up infection numbers, even if they still have some protection from the most dire consequences of the virus.

"Delta and waning immunity — the combination of these two have set us back," said Ali Mokdad, a professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington. "This virus is going to stick with us for a long, long time."

The delta variant dominates infections across the U.S., accounting for more than 99% of the samples analyzed.

No state has achieved a high enough vaccination rate, even when combined with infection-induced immunity, to avoid the type of outbreaks happening now, Mokdad said.

In a deviation from national recommendations, Colorado Gov. Jared Polis signed an executive order Thursday that allows any resident 18 or older access to a COVID-19 booster shot, another step to prevent hospitals and health care workers from being overwhelmed by the state's surge in delta infections.

Progress on vaccination continues, yet nearly 60 million Americans age 12 and older remain unvaccinated. That's an improvement since July, when 100 million were unvaccinated, said White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients.

First shots are averaging about 300,000 per day, and the effort to vaccinate children ages 5 to 11 is off to a strong start, Zients said at a briefing Wednesday.

Virginia Tech's Linsey Marr, a leading researcher on the airborne spread of the coronavirus, predicted the northward spread of the virus in a Twitter post Sept. 15. The virus spreads in the air and can build up in enclosed rooms with poor ventilation. Colder weather means more people are indoors breathing the same air, Marr said.

Imagine that everyone you spend time with is a smoker and you want to breathe as little of their smoke as possible, she said.

"The closer you are to a smoker the more exposure you have to that smoke," Marr said. "And if you're in a poorly ventilated room, the smoke builds up over time."

Marr said she and her vaccinated family will use rapid tests before gathering for Christmas to check for infection.

"It's hard to know what's coming next with this virus," Marr said. "We thought we knew, but delta really surprised us. We thought the vaccine would help end this, but things are still dragging on. It's hard to know what's going to happen next."

Associated Press writers Ed White in Detroit and Corey Williams in West Bloomfield, Michigan, contributed to this report.

Big Bird backlash: Vax lands even Muppet in political flap

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Smokey Bear taught kids the importance of preventing wildfires. McGruff the Crime Dog warned them not to talk to strangers. And in 1972, Big Bird lined up on "Sesame Street" to receive a measles vaccine as part of a campaign to get more youngsters inoculated against the disease.

But when that same iconic, 8-foot-tall children's character tweeted last weekend that he had been vaccinated against COVID-19, conservative politicians immediately pushed back.

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Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, a Republican, grilled Big Bird for what he called "government propaganda." Fox News contributor Lisa Boothe described it as "brainwashing children" and "twisted."

"My wing is feeling a little sore, but it'll give my body an extra protective boost that keeps me and others healthy," Big Bird tweeted.

"Sesame Street" has long faced grumbles from conservatives unhappy with its connections to U.S. public broadcasting, which receives federal funding. Yet this latest fallout marked a new contentious flashpoint that has plagued previous rollouts of the vaccine, just as the shot becomes available to children between the ages of 5 and 11.

Nearly 50 years ago, when the show was in its third season, "Sesame Street" encouraged kids to get the measles vaccine by showing Big Bird and other children getting the injection. The move was similar to other public service campaigns that used beloved characters to help teach children life lessons, including discouraging littering, wearing seatbelts and looking both ways before crossing the street.

"What Big Bird is doing is part of a long tradition. But what's different now, of course, is that everything is political and everything is contentious," said Thomas Doherty, an American studies professor at Brandeis University. "Something that we all wanted a year ago, the vaccine, is now this matter of great contention."

Controversy at the intersection of TV and politics has popped up here and there for decades. In 1952, "I Love Lucy" didn't use the word pregnant once in an episode that focused on the title character, Lucy Ricardo, having a baby after executives determined that doing so would be too scandalous.

The 1970s TV series "Maude," a spinoff show of "All in the Family," which explored all manner of political and racial issues in the household of a bigoted man from the New York City borough of Queens, showed the character Maude opting to get an abortion. The storyline was aired a year before the U.S. Supreme Court made Roe vs. Wade the law of the land. Multiple affiliates refused to air reruns of the episode.

In the early 1990s, the sitcom "Murphy Brown" found itself in a high-profile tiff during the 1992 presidential campaign when Dan Quayle, vice president to George H.W. Bush, lambasted the unmarried Murphy's pregnancy as a mockery of fatherhood and American morality.

In "The Puppy Episode" of "Ellen" that aired in 1997, Ellen DeGeneres made history as the first prime-time lead on network TV to come out as gay. It was a huge cultural moment, but it also sparked attacks from religious groups. ABC later placed a warning about "adult content" when DeGeneres' character kissed another woman in a separate episode.

Nearly 15 years ago, PBS was denounced by the nation's education secretary after it spent money on a cartoon with lesbian characters. The episode of "Postcards From Buster" featured two lesbian couples while the title character, an animated bunny, was on a trip to Vermont — a state at the time that was known for recognizing same-sex civil unions when many others did not. PBS later decided not to distribute the episode to its stations.

"When you get a mass medium as dominant and powerful as television ... that's always going to be a battleground over what messages get out there," said Robert Thompson, director of the Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture at Syracuse University.

Big Bird's tweet ruffled others' feathers at a time when educational messages directed toward children are under increased scrutiny. Schools have seen an uptick in heated debates from frustrated parents and elected officials over how racial and social justice issues are handled in classrooms and instructional materials. Most recently, Republican Glenn Youngkin won the Virginia governor's race after seizing on conservatives' frustrations with schools.

Meanwhile, education officials have faced multiple conflicts on how they should handle mask and testing requirements during a pandemic. Some Republicans have pushed back against marketing the COVID-19 vaccine directly to minors.

"The whole 'Sesame Street' embrace of diversity, inclusion, being nice, paying attention to people of poverty and of different colors, that is all a form of education directed at kids that most people would think is a really good thing and a great contribution. Then comes the vaccines," Thompson said. "And now, this idea of getting a vaccine is no longer a celebration. It's become something else."

In Tennessee, the state briefly halted its vaccine outreach to children and fired its top vaccination director after GOP leaders threatened to dissolve the health agency over marketing efforts to get children vaccinated against the disease. During a meeting with department heads, Republican Rep. Scott Cepicky held up a printout of the ad featuring a smiling teen with a Band-Aid who had recently been vaccinated and called it "reprehensible."

The GOP-controlled General Assembly later passed legislation banning certain minors as young as 14 from getting the shot without parental consent — an option that was previously available, albeit used infrequently. The measure, which Republican Gov. Bill Lee promised to sign this week, has only a handful of exceptions.

"It's not surprising that the pandemic, vaccination and following public health advice might fall into this cultural battle or effort to leverage emotive issues to your political advantage if you're a senator or a political candidate," said Colin Woodard, author of "American Character: The History of the Epic Struggle Between Individual Liberty and the Common Good."

"The flashpoints in our culture wars," Woodard said, "are often flashpoints between an individual liberty and a common good perspective."

This story has been corrected to show that the abortion storyline occurred on the show "Maude," not "All in the Family."

Kimberlee Kruesi covers politics and the coronavirus pandemic for The Associated Press. Follow her on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/kkruesi>

Sudanese general tightens grip on power, 2 weeks after coup

By FAY ABUELGASIM and NOHA ELHENNAWY Associated Press

KHARTOUM, Sudan (AP) — Sudan's top general reappointed himself as head of the army-run interim governing body on Thursday, a sign that he's tightening his grip on the country two weeks after he led a coup against civilian leaders.

The move by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan — along with other appointments he announced for the Sovereign Council — was expected to anger Sudan's pro-democracy protest movement, sidelined in the coup. Since the Oct. 25 takeover, pro-democracy leaders have demanded the military relinquish power and refuse to be part of any administration in which a military maintains a role.

Thursday's development, announced in a bulletin by Sudan's state television, comes amid repeated promises from the military rulers that they will hand over power to civilian authorities. Since the coup, more than 100 government officials and political leaders have been detained, along with a large number of protesters and activists. Almost all remain in custody.

At least 14 anti-coup protesters have been killed due to excessive force used by the country's security forces, according to Sudanese doctors and the United Nations. The military removed Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok who has since been under house arrest in the capital, Khartoum, as Western powers and U.N. diplomats try to mediate a resolution to the crisis.

Sudan's culture and information minister, Hamza Baloul, who was arrested during the coup and later released, condemned the appointments. He described Thursday's announcement of the new council as "an extension of the coup" and said pro-democracy protesters are right to refuse to negotiate with military leaders. Along with rejecting internationally backed initiatives to return to a power-sharing arrangement with the military, the protest movement has also called for a nationwide strike.

"We're obviously taking a look at these developments. I would say they're very concerning," U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said later Thursday. "We want to see a return to the transition as quickly as possible. We want to see the release from house arrest of Prime Minister Hamdok as well as all other politicians and leaders that have been detained."

Sudan has been in the midst of a fragile transition since a 2019 pro-democracy uprising led to the

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removal of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir. The 11-member Sovereign Council was first formed in the summer of 2019, after the military signed a power-sharing deal with pro-democracy forces.

A number of other members of the body sat on the previous council that Burhan headed before he dissolved it in the coup. Also reappointed to the body Thursday was the powerful paramilitary leader Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, as vice-president. And Burhan reappointed as council members another three generals who had served in the previous council.

Three others on the council are leaders of rebel groups who fought Bashir's government for years, but who have moved towards peace with the transitional government. They all also served on the previous council. One of them, Malik Agar, a prominent leader of the Sudan Revolutionary Front, a rebel movement in Sudan's southern Blue Nile States, was one of signees to a historic peace accord with the transitional government in Juba, South Sudan last year.

Five of the members are civilians, only one of whom — Raja Nicola, a Christian lawyer — served on the previous body. She is one of two women appointees.

The agreement under which the council was formed after Bashir's ouster stipulated that the council should include five civilians chosen by activists, five military representatives chosen by the armed forces and one civilian member to be chosen in agreement between civilians and the generals.

The make-up of the new council falls short of the demands of key pro-democracy groups in the African county. The Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change, the main group that spearheaded the uprising that culminated in the overthrow of al-Bashir, has said that it would oppose the reappointment of Burhan to the top decision-making position.

Before the coup, the Sovereign Council held ultimate power while Hamdok's government oversaw day-to-day matters.

The coup has been condemned by the United Nations, the United States and the European Union — all of which have urged the generals to restore a military-civilian transitional government. Mediation efforts are ongoing to resolve the crisis.

Dujarric said that U.N. Special Representative for Sudan Volker Perthes met Tuesday with Burhan and also that U.N. Secretary General António Guterres spoke with Hamdok earlier in the week.

Perthes gave the Security Council a closed-door briefing on the situation later Thursday. Britain's U.N. Ambassador Barbara Woodward said he "was very frank in his assessment that the window now is closing for dialogue and for peaceful resolution."

Woodward said the Security Council is clear that "it is important to resume dialogue, that dialogue is the way forward."

"We want to see important freedoms reinstated in Sudan," she said. "So we repeat our call for the military to engage in good faith to deliver a settlement that is based on the principle of genuine military-civilian partnership."

Meanwhile, an advocacy group said earlier Thursday that internet access remains largely disrupted in Sudan since last month's military coup, despite a court order for providers to restore services.

According to a tweet by NetBlocks, the disruption is now in its eighteenth day and represents an "ongoing impediment" to democracy and human rights. A Sudanese court ruled on Wednesday, ordering the country's three main telecommunications providers to restore internet access. However, authorities have not shown any sign yet of carrying out that order.

ElHennawy reported from Cairo. Associated Press writer Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

Man earns Ph.D., fulfills dream of being physicist — at 89

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press
EAST PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — An 89-year-old Rhode Island man has achieved a goal he spent two decades working toward and nearly a lifetime thinking about — earning his Ph.D. and becoming a physicist.

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Manfred Steiner recently defended his dissertation successfully at Brown University in Providence. Steiner cherishes this degree because it's what he always wanted — and because he overcame health problems that could have derailed his studies.

"But I made it, and this was the most gratifying point in my life, to finish it," he said Wednesday at his home in East Providence.

As a teenager in Vienna, Steiner was inspired to become a physicist after reading about Albert Einstein and Max Planck. He admired the precision of physics.

But after World War II, his mother and uncle advised him that studying medicine would be a better choice in turbulent times. He earned his medical degree from the University of Vienna in 1955 and moved to the United States just a few weeks later, where he had a successful career studying blood and blood disorders.

Steiner studied hematology at Tufts University and biochemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before becoming a hematologist at Brown University. He became a full professor and led the hematology section of the medical school at Brown from 1985 to 1994.

Steiner helped establish a research program in hematology at the University of North Carolina, which he directed until he retired from medicine in 2000 and returned to Rhode Island.

Steiner and his wife, Sheila, who is 93, have been married since 1960. They have two children and six grandchildren. He'll celebrate his 90th birthday this month.

Steiner found medical research satisfying, but it wasn't quite the same as his fascination with physics.

"It was something like a wish that was never fulfilled, that always stuck in the back of my head," he said. "I always thought, you know, once I'm finished with medicine, I really don't want to spend my life just sitting around and maybe doing a little golfing or doing something like that. I wanted to keep active."

At age 70, he started taking undergraduate classes at Brown, one of the Ivy League universities. He was planning to take a few courses that interested him, but by 2007, he accumulated enough credits to enroll in the Ph.D. program.

Physics Professor Brad Marston was skeptical when Steiner entered his quantum mechanics class. Marston had taught graduate students in their 40s, but never in their 70s. Then he realized how serious Steiner was about the subject and how hard he worked.

Marston became Steiner's adviser for his dissertation.

"He has written many papers in medical science, more papers than I've written in physics. He already had a scientific way of thinking that younger students have to develop," Marston said this week. "And any research problem that's worth its salt, you're going to run into roadblocks. If you let obstacles discourage you, you won't get anywhere. One thing that's really true about Manfred is he perseveres."

Steiner defended his dissertation in September after recovering from a serious medical condition.

In his dissertation, he explores how electrons within conducting metals behave quantum mechanically and how fermions can be changed into bosons in their behavior. He is working with Marston on a paper on bosonization that they aim to publish.

Steiner now hopes to help, with their research, professors he befriended during his studies.

"I'm not looking for a paid job. I'm past that," he said, laughing.

Guinness World Records says a 97-year-old man in Germany in 2008 was the oldest person to earn a doctorate, while news reports describe even older people pursuing such degrees.

Though he's not the oldest, attention has been intense. Brown University featured Steiner on its website after he earned his Ph.D., and people across the country contacted him to ask for advice on pursuing their dreams later in life. Steiner told a 57-year-old aspiring mathematician, "You're still a youngster, by all means do math."

He said his advice is: Do what you love to do.

"Do pursue it because later in life you maybe regret it, that you didn't do that," he said. "You wish you could've followed this dream."

Biden salutes troops as 'spine of America' on Veterans Day

By COLLEEN LONG and ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden saluted the nation's military veterans as "the spine of America" on Thursday as he marked his first Veterans Day as president in a wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery.

"There's nothing low risk or low cost about war for the women and men who fight it," said Biden, whose administration earlier in the day announced a federal effort to better understand, identify and treat medical conditions suffered by troops deployed to toxic environments.

That expanded effort centers on lung problems suffered by troops who breathe in toxins and the potential connection between rare cancers and time spent overseas breathing poor air, according to the White House. Federal officials plan to start by examining lung and breathing problems but say they will expand the effort as science identifies potential new connections.

Biden's son Beau served in Iraq, and the president has suggested a potential link between Beau's death from an aggressive brain cancer and his exposure to toxins in the air, particularly around massive pits where the military disposes of waste by burning. There's no scientific evidence to establish that link.

This year's Veterans Day commemoration comes just two months after Biden ordered the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. It was a chaotic ending to America's longest war, which killed 2,461 American service members over the nearly 20-year conflict.

In his remarks at Arlington, Biden praised generations who have served, declaring they've "endured and survived challenges most Americans will never know."

He also paused to remember three high-profile veterans who recently died: Colin Powell, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and secretary of state; Gen. Ray Odierno, an Army chief of staff and top general in Iraq; and Sen. Max Cleland, a Georgia Democrat who lost three limbs while serving in Vietnam.

"You are the very spine of America," Biden said of the nation's veterans.

The new federal effort on toxic exposure is designed to make it easier for veterans to make claims based on their symptoms, to collect more data from troops who are suffering and to give veterans more time to make medical claims after symptoms such as asthma and sinus problems develop.

"We're discovering there is a whole host of lung conditions related to deployment," said Dr. Richard Meehan, an immunologist and rheumatologist. The retired U.S. Naval Reserve officer, who served in the Mideast during the 1990s and again in 2008, is co-director of the Denver-based National Jewish Health Center of Excellence on Deployment-Related Lung Disease.

Beau Biden's death was a defining moment for Joe Biden, one he said affected his decision to sit out the 2016 presidential race. The younger Biden deployed from October 2008 until September 2009 as a captain in the Delaware Army National Guard. In 2013, he was diagnosed with glioblastoma, and he died two years later at age 46.

Meehan, who along with his colleagues is investigating the role of inhalation exposures among military personnel who were deployed to Southwest Asia, said it isn't only burn pits that are the issue — the air quality in some countries is so poor that troops would not be allowed to work there under civilian federal workplace guidelines. The center receives funding from the Department of Defense, along with private donors.

Meehan has worried that troops who came back with breathing problems are being compared with other Americans to determine whether there is a higher rate of lung illness. But those deployed with the U.S. military are in peak physical condition, stronger and more fit than average Americans. To come back unable to make it up stairs without getting winded or unable to lift anything without breathing heavily is highly unusual.

"When you compare them to another group, you have to compare them to another healthy, fit group," Meehan said. "That's one of the problems overlooked in surveys that have shown no higher incidence of cancer."

The new rules will allow veterans to make claims within 10 years of service, and the government has

changed how it determines what symptoms count and why.

The U.S. military has been aware for years of health risks associated with open-air burn pits. In 2013, federal investigators found a military camp in Afghanistan was operating a pit for more than five years, nearly four times longer than Pentagon rules allowed. The Defense Department has said burn pits should be used only as a temporary last resort when no other alternative trash disposal method is feasible.

Also in marking Veterans Day, a group of Democratic U.S. members were reviving an effort to pay the families of Black World War II service members for benefits they were denied or prevented from taking full advantage of when they returned home.

A similar Senate bill is to be introduced later this month.

This story has been corrected to show that name of hospital is National Jewish Health, not National Jewish Hospital.

UN chief says global warming goal on 'life support'

By SETH BORENSTEIN and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

GLASGOW, Scotland (AP) — United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday warned that a key temperature goal in climate talks is “on life support” but he still hopes that world governments will step up their pledges to slash emissions of greenhouse gases.

In an exclusive interview with The Associated Press, Guterres said the negotiations set to end Friday in Glasgow, Scotland, will “very probably” not yield the carbon-cutting pledges he has said are needed to keep the planet from warming beyond the 1.5-degree threshold.

Still, the U.N. chief wouldn't say at what point he thinks that goal would have to be abandoned.

“When you are on the verge of the abyss,” it's not important to think too far into the future, he said. “What's important to discuss is what will be your first step. Because if your first step is the wrong step, you will not have the chance to ... make a second or third one.”

So far, the talks have not come close to achieving any of the U.N.'s three announced priorities for the annual conference, called COP26. One is cutting carbon emissions by about half by 2030 to reach the goal Guterres alluded to.

The other two are getting rich countries to fulfill a 12-year-old pledge of providing \$100 billion a year in financial climate aid to poor nations and ensuring that half of that amount goes to helping them adapt to the worst effects of climate change.

Guterres said the Glasgow talks “are in a crucial moment” and need to accomplish more than securing a weak deal that participating nations agree to support.

“The worst thing would be to reach an agreement at all costs by a minimum common denominator that would not respond to the huge challenges we face,” Guterres said.

That's because the overarching goal of limiting warming since pre-industrial times to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 F) by the end of the century “is still in reach but on life support,” Guterres said. The world has already warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit).

Less than 36 hours from the scheduled close of the negotiations, Guterres said that if negotiators can't reach ambitious carbon-cutting goals — “and very probably it will not happen” — then national leaders would need to come up with new pledges next year and in 2023 during high-level meetings.

Guterres later told climate negotiators that “promises ring hollow when the fossil fuels industry still receives trillions in subsidies ... or when countries are still building coal plants.”

In a separate interview late Thursday, former Irish president Mary Robinson accused Saudi Arabia and Russia of trying to cut out or water down language in a draft agreement that would call for a phase-out of coal and an end to fossil fuel subsidies.

She also blasted British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the host of the climate talks, for not taking them seriously enough, not being in “crisis mode” and sticking around — unlike his French counterpart in 2015.

Guterres said he agreed with youth climate activists — who have been a daily presence protesting in

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large numbers outside the climate talks, and at times inside — who called for the U.N. to term global warming a “climate emergency” of a high level.

“For me, it is clear it is a climate emergency,” Guterres said.

As terrible and tragic as the COVID-19 pandemic is, there’s a way climate change is more of an emergency, Guterres said.

“The pandemic is reversible. We have the tools and the instruments to stop it,” he said. “Climate change is a global threat to the planet and to humankind. And for the moment, we have not yet all the tools and the instruments that we need to defeat it.”

And much of that comes down to money.

The lack of movement on financial aid to poorer countries troubles Guterres, who later told negotiators the gap was a “glaring injustice.” He said if he were the leader of a vulnerable small island or other endangered country he would be upset with what’s not happening in Glasgow.

Peter Liese, a senior member of the European Parliament, said on Thursday he and fellow lawmakers would push for the \$100 billion to be delivered “definitely next year.”

And that rich-poor split kept cropping up Thursday.

Talks are now at the point where two pathways were possible: one that was good for people and the planet, and the other that led to “carbon colonialism,” said Bolivia’s chief negotiator, Diego Pacheco Balanz. “We need to fight the developed countries against the carbon colonialism.”

Balanz was speaking on behalf of the negotiating block of developing nations that include countries from Africa, Latin America and Asia — with China and India among the latter.

Guterres praised a Wednesday evening agreement between the United States and China to cut emissions this decade as a reason why he still hopes for some semblance of success in Glasgow.

“This agreement paves the way for other agreements,” Guterres said in a 25-minute AP interview.

The U.N. chief said he hoped that two sticky issues that defied resolution for six years can be solved in Glasgow: creating workable markets for trading carbon credits and transparency that shows that promised pollution-reducing actions are real.

Fresh drafts of the documents on regulating international cooperation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including the carbon markets section, were released overnight, as were new proposals containing various options for assessing and tracking financial aid for developing countries.

The chair of this year’s U.N. climate meeting called on negotiators from almost 200 countries to engage in “another gear shift” as they try to reach agreement on outstanding issues a day before the talks are scheduled to end.

British official Alok Sharma said he was “under no illusion” that the texts being considered would wholly satisfy all countries at this stage, adding “we are not there yet.”

Associated Press writer Aniruddha Ghosal contributed from Glasgow.

Follow AP’s climate coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate>

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears and Frank Jordans at @wirereporter

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Saudi Arabia denies playing climate saboteur at Glasgow

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and HELENA ALVES Associated Press

GLASGOW, Scotland (AP) — The tightest of smiles on his face and the fabric of his traditional thobe swirling about him as he strides through a hallway at U.N. climate talks, Saudi Arabia’s energy minister expresses shock at repeated complaints that the world’s largest oil producer is working behind the scenes

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to sabotage negotiations.

"What you have been hearing is a false allegation and a cheat and a lie," Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman al Saud said this week at the talks in Glasgow, Scotland. He was responding to journalists pressing for a response to claims that Saudi Arabia's negotiators have been working to block climate measures that would threaten demand for oil.

"We have been working well" with the head of the U.N. climate talks and others, Prince Abdulaziz said. Negotiators from about 200 countries are coming up against a weekend deadline to find consensus on next steps to cut the world's fossil fuel emissions and otherwise combat climate change.

Saudi Arabia's participation in climate talks itself can seem incongruous — a kingdom that has become wealthy and powerful because of oil involved in negotiations where a core issue is reducing consumption of oil and other fossil fuels. While pledging to join emission-cutting efforts at home, Saudi leaders have made clear they intend to pump and sell their oil as long as demand lasts.

Saudi Arabia's team in Glasgow has introduced proposals ranging from a call to quit negotiations — they often stretch into early morning hours — at 6 p.m. every day to what climate negotiation veterans allege are complex efforts to play country factions against one another with the aim of blocking agreement on tough steps to wrench the world away from coal, gas and oil.

That is the "Saudis' proposal, by the way. They're like, 'Let's just not work at nights and just accept that this is not going to be ambitious'" when it comes to fast cuts in fossil fuel pollution that is wrecking the climate, said Jennifer Tollmann, an analyst at E3G, a European climate think tank.

And then "if other countries want to agree with Saudi, they can blame Saudi Arabia," Tollmann said.

Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland and head of a group of senior political leaders on climate, told The Associated Press on Thursday that Russia and Saudi Arabia "are pushing back hard" to block any mention in the final deal out of Glasgow of working to phase out coal, or to reduce government subsidies to fossil fuels.

Saudi Arabia long has been accused of playing a spoiler in the climate talks, and this year it is the main country singled out so far by negotiators, speaking privately, and observers, speaking publicly. Russia and Australia are also lumped in with Saudi Arabia at the talks as countries that see their futures as dependent on coal, natural gas or oil and as working for a Glasgow climate deal that doesn't threaten that.

Despite efforts to diversify the economy, oil accounts for more than half of Saudi Arabia's revenue, keeping the kingdom and royal family afloat and stable. About half of Saudi employees still work for the public sector, their salary paid in large part by oil.

And there's China, whose dependence on coal makes it the world's current biggest climate polluter. It argues it can't switch to cleaner energy as fast as the West says it must, although the United States and China did jointly pledge to speed up their efforts to cut emissions.

A core issue in the talks: Scientists and the United Nations say the world has less than a decade to cut its fossil fuel and agricultural emissions roughly in half if it wants to avoid more catastrophic scenarios of global warming.

Not surprisingly, island nations that would disappear under the rising oceans at a higher level of warming are the bloc at Glasgow pushing hardest for the most stringent deal out of this summit.

Meanwhile, climate advocates accuse the United States and European Union of so far failing to throw their weight behind the demands of the island nations, although the U.S. and the E.U. often wait until the last few days of climate talks to take hard stands on debated points.

The United States — the world's worst climate polluter historically and a major oil and gas producer — gets plenty of criticism in its own right. The Climate Action Network dishonored the Biden administration with its "Fossil of the Day" award to President Joe Biden for coming to Glasgow last week with ambitious climate talk but failing to join a pledge to wean his nation off coal or to rein in U.S. oil production.

Jennifer Morgan, executive director of the Greenpeace environmental group, said other governments need "to isolate the Saudi delegation" if they want the climate conference to succeed.

Saudi Arabia was fine with joining in governments' climate-pledge fever before the talks. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced in the runup to Glasgow that the kingdom would zero out its

carbon emissions by 2060.

But Saudi leaders for years have vowed to pump the last molecule of oil from their kingdom before world demand ends — an objective that a fast global switch from fossil fuels would frustrate.

“Naked and cynical,” says Alden Meyer, a senior associate at the E3G climate research group, of Saudi Arabia’s role in global climate discussions.

Associated Press writers Frank Jordans, Annirudha Ghosal and Seth Borenstein contributed to this report.

South Africa’s last apartheid president, F.W. de Klerk, dies

By ANDREW MELDRUM and CARA ANNA Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — F.W. de Klerk, who shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Nelson Mandela and as South Africa’s last apartheid president oversaw the end of the country’s white minority rule, has died aged 85.

Frederik Willem de Klerk died after a battle against cancer at his home in the Fresnaye area of Cape Town, a spokesman for his foundation confirmed Thursday.

De Klerk was a controversial figure in South Africa where many blamed him for violence against Black South Africans and anti-apartheid activists during his time in power, while some white South Africans saw his efforts to end apartheid as a betrayal.

“De Klerk’s legacy is a big one. It is also an uneven one, something South Africans are called to reckon with in this moment,” the Mandela Foundation said of his death.

Retired Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, another towering anti-apartheid activist, issued a similarly guarded statement about de Klerk’s death.

De Klerk “played an important role in South Africa’s history ... he recognized the moment for change and demonstrated the will to act on it,” said Tutu’s foundation.

However, de Klerk tried to avoid responsibility for the enormity of the abuses of apartheid, including in his testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was chaired by Tutu. At that time, Tutu expressed disappointment that de Klerk did not fully apologize for the evils of apartheid, the statement noted.

Even posthumously, de Klerk sought to address this criticism in a video message in which he said he was sorry for his role in apartheid. His foundation released the video after announcing his death.

“Let me today, in the last message repeat: I, without qualification, apologize for the pain and the hurt, and the indignity, and the damage, to Black, brown and Indians in South Africa,” said a visibly gaunt and frail de Klerk.

He said his view of apartheid had changed since the early 1980s.

“It was as if I had a conversion. And in my heart of hearts, I realized that apartheid was wrong. I realized that we have arrived at a place which was morally unjustifiable.”

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said that de Klerk “played a vital role in our transition to democracy in the 1990s ... He took the courageous decision to unban political parties, release political prisoners and enter into negotiations with the liberation movement amid severe pressure to the contrary from many in his political constituency.”

It was de Klerk who in a speech to South Africa’s parliament on Feb. 2, 1990, announced that Mandela would be released from prison after 27 years. The announcement electrified a country that for decades had been scorned and sanctioned by much of the world for its brutal system of racial discrimination known as apartheid.

With South Africa’s isolation deepening and its once-solid economy deteriorating, de Klerk, who had been elected president just five months earlier, also announced in the same speech the lifting of a ban on the African National Congress and other anti-apartheid political groups.

Amid gasps, several members of parliament left the chamber as he spoke.

Nine days later, Mandela walked free.

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Four years after that, Mandela was elected the country's first Black president as Black South Africans voted for the first time.

By then, de Klerk and Mandela had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 for their often-tense cooperation in moving South Africa away from institutionalized racism and toward democracy.

The country would be, de Klerk told the media after his fateful speech, "a new South Africa." But Mandela's release was just the beginning of intense political negotiations on the way forward. Power would shift. A new constitution would be written. Ways of life would be upended.

"There is an element of uncertainty, obviously, with regard to everything which lies in the future," de Klerk calmly told reporters on Feb. 10, 1990, after announcing that Mandela would be released the following day.

The toll of the transition was high. As de Klerk said in his Nobel lecture in December 1993, more than 3,000 died in political violence in South Africa that year alone. As he reminded his Nobel audience, he and fellow laureate Mandela remained political opponents, with strong disagreements. But they would move forward "because there is no other road to peace and prosperity for the people of our country."

After Mandela became president, de Klerk served as deputy president until 1996, when his party withdrew from the Cabinet. In making history, de Klerk acknowledged that Mandela's release was the culmination of what his predecessor, former President P.W. Botha, had begun by meeting secretly with Mandela shortly before leaving office. In the late 1980s, as protests inside and outside the country continued, the ruling party had begun making some reforms, getting rid of some apartheid laws.

De Klerk also met secretly with Mandela before his release. He later said of their first meeting that Mandela was taller than expected, and he was impressed by his posture and dignity. De Klerk would say he knew he could "do business with this man." But not easily. They argued bitterly. Mandela accused de Klerk of allowing the killings of Black South Africans during the political transition. De Klerk said Mandela could be extremely stubborn and unreasonable.

Later in life, after South Africa's wrenching political transition, de Klerk said there was no longer any animosity between him and Mandela and that they were friends, having visited each other's homes. De Klerk did not seem to fit easily into the role of a Nobel laureate. He remained a target of anger for some white South Africans who saw his actions as a betrayal. Though he publicly apologized for the pain and humiliation that apartheid caused, he was never cheered and embraced as an icon, as Mandela was.

Despite his role in South Africa's transformation, de Klerk would continue to defend what his National Party decades ago had declared as the goal of apartheid, the separate development of white and Black South Africans. In practice, however, apartheid forced millions of the country's Black majority into nominally independent "homelands" where poverty was widespread, while the white minority held most of South Africa's land. Apartheid starved the Black South African education system of resources, criminalized interracial relations, created black slums on the edges of white cities and tore apart families.

De Klerk late in life would acknowledge that "separate but equal failed."

F.W. de Klerk was born in Johannesburg in 1936. He earned a law degree and practiced law before turning to politics and being elected to parliament. In 1978, he was appointed to the first of a series of ministerial posts, including Internal Affairs. In the late 1970s and 1980s, South Africa faced violent unrest as the government tried modest reforms to cultivate a Black South African middle class and allow limited political power to the country's other marginalized groups, mixed race people classified as "coloreds" and those of Asian and Indian backgrounds.

The moves only increased bitterness over apartheid, while international pressure for more fundamental changes increased. In February 1989, de Klerk was elected the National Party leader and in his first speech called for "a South Africa free of domination or oppression in whatever form." He was elected president in September of that year.

After leaving office, de Klerk ran a foundation that promoted his presidential heritage, and he spoke out in concern about white Afrikaaner culture and language as English became dominant among the new South Africa's 11 official languages. He also criticized South Africa's current ruling party, the African National Congress, telling the Guardian newspaper in a 2010 interview that the ANC, once the champion for

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racial equality, "has regressed into dividing South Africa again along the basis of race and class."

In a speech in Cape Town in early 2016, de Klerk warned that many white South Africans were "oblivious of the plight of less advantaged communities" and that "the attitude of many Blacks toward white South Africans is becoming harsher and more uncompromising." South Africans once again were seeing people as racial stereotypes instead of human beings, de Klerk said, adding: "We need to hear Nelson Mandela's call for reconciliation and nation-building again."

His leadership of the apartheid regime dogged de Klerk throughout his life, even though he helped negotiate its end.

Human rights activists and legal experts pointed to documents that they said showed de Klerk being present at meetings where extrajudicial killings of anti-apartheid leaders were ordered.

His assertion in 2020 that apartheid was not a crime against humanity stirred up a furor in South Africa. When de Klerk attended President Cyril Ramaphosa's State of the Nation Address in the South African Parliament that year, opposition members shouted at him and demanded that he leave.

"We have a murderer in the House," declared Julius Malema, firebrand leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters party, denouncing de Klerk as an "apartheid apologist ... with blood on his hands."

Later de Klerk said he accepted that apartheid was a crime against humanity and apologized, but the damage had been done. He was viewed by many in South Africa as the last apartheid ruler, not the leader who helped steer the country away from violent racial oppression.

Dispute continued to swirl around de Klerk upon the news of his death. Opposition leader Malema castigated media reports that said de Klerk was a former president of South Africa. "He is a former apartheid President," said Malema in a tweet. Others on social media said de Klerk should not be accorded a state burial.

De Klerk is survived by his wife, Elita, and two children.

Program to kill Grand Canyon bison nets 4 animals, criticism

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Day three and the shooters were waiting under the cover of pine trees for the rain to let up. Thirty minutes later, a single branch snapped, revealing a small herd of bison in the distance.

Before a young cow was identified as the target, the massive animals disappeared into a thicket at the Grand Canyon's North Rim.

"No shots and no bison," said Charles Gorecki, one of about a dozen volunteers selected to participate in a highly anticipated and highly criticized lethal removal program at the Grand Canyon.

Gorecki and the rest of his crew came up empty-handed after a week that required shooting proficiency tests, safety training and walking at least 30 miles (48 kilometers) in elevations that can leave flat-landers short-winded. Three other groups fared better, shooting and field dressing a total of four bison.

Up to 500 bison are roaming the far northern reaches of Grand Canyon National Park, trampling archaeological and other resources and spoiling the water, park officials say. Hunting pressure on the adjacent national forest has pushed most of the animals into the park.

Critics say rather than killing the bison, the animals should be relocated to other areas or given to Native American tribes under an existing effort.

Lethal removal was one of the tools outlined in a 2017 plan approved after an environmental review, but the guidelines weren't established until more recently with the pilot program this fall.

More than 45,000 people applied in a lottery for 12 spots to help cull the herd and make bison less comfortable at the park. One person backed out and another failed the shooting proficiency test, leaving 10 volunteers from around the U.S. working to kill up to 10 bison.

"We were following bison and trying to find bison and disturbing bison by the mere fact of trying to remove them," said Grand Canyon wildlife biologist Greg Holm, who was among most of the crews. "So they had some activity this fall that I don't think they've ever experienced in the park."

As big as they are, they skillfully evaded most of the shooters.

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"It was still a learning experience for all of us involved," said Gorecki, a military veteran who works at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. "We got an appreciation that they are very quiet and cunning. These animals, if they catch wind of us from hundreds of yards (away) in thick forest, you'll never see them. These are not big, fluffy forest cows."

Each volunteer selected up to three people who were on standby to help cut up the bison and pack the meat out. The groups that shot a bison divided the meat and donated parts of the animals to the Navajo and Zuni tribes in Arizona and New Mexico, Holm said.

A crew led by the National Park Service killed one bison in a trial run in August. The meat was given to the Kaibab Band of Paiute Indians, Holm said.

Officials at the Grand Canyon haven't put a price tag yet on the program, but Holm said some of the cost is for overtime pay for park employees. They'll meet soon to determine whether to do it again, he said.

Various groups pushed the park service to call off what they argued is a hunt and suggested relocating the bison to southern Colorado instead. Hunting is prohibited within national parks, but the agency has authority to kill animals that harm resources using park staff or volunteers.

Olympic National Park in Washington state turned to volunteers to reduce the number of mountain goats, and Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado and Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota used volunteers for help with elk.

Bison were introduced to northern Arizona in the early 1900s as part of a crossbreeding experiment. The state manages the animals that can be hunted nearby in the Kaibab National Forest.

The main tool in reducing the population at the Grand Canyon has been to corral them near the North Rim entrance and ship them to Native American tribes through the Intertribal Buffalo Council. The park has relocated 124 over the past three years — enough to start seeing the reproductive rate slow, Holm said. The goal population is around 200.

"Ideally, the more females we can ship out, the better," he said. "But we also do the dance around not wanting to shift away a bunch of females because they have the knowledge to teach the younger generation."

The Modoc Nation in Oklahoma received 16 of the bison last year.

"It's great for us, it's great for our heritage, and they're beautiful animals," said Charlie Cheek, assistant to tribal Chief Bill Follis. "We enjoy working with them, and they're good for our tribe."

The Santee Sioux Nation in Nebraska received 23 bison from the Grand Canyon this year. The Cherokee Nation got 13 that boosted the herd at a tribal ranch in Kenwood, Oklahoma, to more than 200, said Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. Bison have been an essential source of food, clothing, shelter and tools for tribes and used in ceremonies, he said.

"These newly acquired bison will help revive some ancient cultural traditions, as well as provide expanded economic opportunities for future generations of Cherokee," he said Wednesday.

Frustration, defiance in village to be abandoned to the sea

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

FAIRBOURNE, Wales (AP) — Like many others who came to Fairbourne, Stuart Eves decided the coastal village in northern Wales would be home for life when he moved here 26 years ago. He fell in love with the peaceful, slow pace of small village life in this community of about 700 residents, nestled between the rugged mountains and the Irish Sea.

"I wanted somewhere my children can have the same upbringing as I had, so they can run free," said Eves, 72, who built a caravan park in the village that he still runs with his son. "You've got the sea, you've got the mountains. It's just a stunning place to live."

That changed suddenly in 2014, when authorities identified Fairbourne as the first coastal community in the U.K. to be at high risk of flooding due to climate change.

Predicting faster sea level rises and more frequent and extreme storms due to global warming, the government said it could only afford to keep defending the village for another 40 years. Officials said that

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by 2054, it would no longer be safe or sustainable to live in Fairbourne.

Authorities have been working with villagers on the process of so-called "managed realignment" -- essentially, to move them away and abandon the village to the encroaching sea.

Overnight, house prices in Fairbourne nosedived. Residents were dubbed the U.K.'s first "climate refugees." Many were left shocked and angry by national headlines declaring their whole village would be "decommissioned." Seven years on, most of their questions about their future remain unanswered.

"They've doomed the village, and now they've got to try to rehome the people. That's 450 houses," said Eves, who serves as chair of the local community council. "If they want us out by 2054, then they've got to have the accommodation to put us in."

No one here wants to leave. While many are retirees, there are also young families raising a next generation. Locals speak proudly of their tight-knit community. And although the village center only consists of a grocer's, a fish and chip shop and a couple of restaurants, residents say the pebbly beach and a small steam train draw bustling crowds in the summer.

Natural Resources Wales, the government-sponsored organization responsible for the sea defenses in Fairbourne, said the village is particularly vulnerable because it faces multiple flooding risks. Built in the 1850s on a low-lying saltmarsh, Fairbourne already lies beneath sea level at high spring tide. During storms, the tidal level is more than 1.5 meters (5 feet) above the level of the village.

Scientists say U.K. sea levels have risen about 10 centimeters (4 inches) in the past century. Depending on greenhouse gas emissions and actions that governments take, the predicted rise is 70 centimeters to 1 meter by 2100.

Fairbourne is also at the mouth of an estuary, with additional risks of flash floods from the river running behind it. Officials have spent millions of pounds in strengthening a sea wall and almost 2 miles of tidal defenses.

While there are flood risks in many other villages along the Welsh coast, decisions on which areas to protect ultimately boil down to cost. Officials say that in the case of Fairbourne, the cost of maintaining flood defenses will become higher than "the value of what we're protecting."

The effects of climate change that negotiators at the United Nations climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, are working to mitigate already are a reality here.

Catrin Wager, a cabinet member of Gwynedd Council, the local authority overseeing Fairbourne, stressed that while Fairbourne may be the first Welsh coastal village to be designated unviable due to climate change, it certainly won't be the only one. There's no precedent for how to develop policies for helping the villagers adapt, she said.

"We need more answers from the Welsh and U.K. governments, that's my message going into this (U.N. summit)," Wager said. "We really need to get some guidance on not only mitigating the effects of climate change, but about how we adapt for things that are already happening."

Across the U.K., half a million properties are at risk of coastal flooding -- and that risk figure will jump to 1.5 million by the end of the 2080s, according to the Climate Change Committee, an independent advisory body set up under climate change laws.

Britain's government, which is hosting the U.N. climate summit, needs to be much more upfront about such risks, said Richard Dawson, a member of the committee and professor of engineering at Newcastle University.

Ultimately, "difficult decisions" need to be made about many coastal settlements with disproportionately high numbers of older and poorer residents, he said, and officials need to prepare people for moving inland.

"Whatever happens at COP the sea level will continue to rise around the U.K., that's something we absolutely need to prepare for," Dawson said. "We have to be realistic. We can't afford to protect everywhere. The challenge for government is that the problem is not being confronted with the urgency or openness that we need."

In Fairbourne, a continuing standoff between villagers and officials underlines that challenge. Residents feel they have been unfairly singled out, and aren't convinced there is a clear timeframe on how quickly sea levels will rise enough to threaten their homes. When and how will evacuation take place? Will they

be compensated, and if so how much should it be?

There are no answers. The village vicar, Ruth Hansford, said many residents suffered "emotional fatigue" from years of uncertainty and negativity. Others simply decided to carry on with their lives.

Becky Offland and her husband recently took on the lease of the Glan Y Mor Hotel, going against the grain and investing in the village's future. They're hopeful their business will bring more visitors and financial support to Fairbourne.

"It's like a big family, this place. It's not a village, it's a family," said Offland, 36. "We'll all fight to keep it where it is."

Down the street, Fairbourne Chippy owner Alan Jones, 64, also said he has no plans to go anywhere.

"Until water actually comes in here, 'til we physically can't work, we'll carry on," he said.

Eves said he and his son believe that "what will be, will be." But he will mourn the inevitable disintegration of the village he loves.

"You can't sort of take this village here, and put it over there and expect it to work again," he said. "What you have here is a human catastrophe, albeit on a small scale."

Read stories on climate issues by The Associated Press at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate>

Veterans Day legislation targets GI Bill racial inequities

By AARON MORRISON and KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

In honor of Veterans Day, a group of Democratic lawmakers is reviving an effort to pay the families of Black service members who fought on behalf of the nation during World War II for benefits they were denied or prevented from taking full advantage of when they returned home from war.

The new legislative effort would benefit surviving spouses and all living descendants of Black WWII veterans whose families were denied the opportunity to build wealth with housing and educational benefits through the GI Bill.

Since 1944, those benefits have been offered to millions of veterans transitioning to civilian life. But due to racism and discrimination in how they were granted through local Veterans Affairs offices, many Black WWII veterans received substantially less money toward purchasing a home or continuing their education.

A House version was introduced by Rep. Jim Clyburn of South Carolina, the Democratic majority whip, and Rep. Seth Moulton of Massachusetts.

"This is an opportunity for America to repair an egregious fault," said Clyburn of the bill introduced last week. "Hopefully it can also begin to lay a foundation that will help break the cycle of poverty among those people who are the descendants of those who made sacrifices to preserve this democracy."

Moulton, a Marine veteran who served four tours during the Iraq War, said: "There are a lot of Black Americans who are feeling the effects of this injustice today, even though it was originally perpetrated 70 years ago."

"I think that restoring GI Bill benefits is one of the greatest racial justice issues of our time," he said.

A Senate bill was to be introduced later this month by Sen. Rev. Raphael Warnock of Georgia, the son of a WWII veteran.

"We've all seen how these inequities have trickled down over time," Warnock said, adding that the bill "represents a major step toward righting this injustice."

The legislation, authored by Moulton, would extend the VA Loan Guaranty Program and GI Bill educational assistance to Black WWII veterans and their descendants who are alive at the time of the bill's enactment. It would also create a panel of independent experts to study inequities in how benefits are administered to women and people of color.

Lawrence Brooks, who at 112 years old is the oldest living U.S. veteran, was drafted to serve during WWII and assigned to the mostly-Black 91st Engineer General Service Regiment.

The Louisiana native, who has 12 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren, always believed that serving his country was the only way he could leave behind his life as the son of sharecroppers, said his daughter,

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Vanessa Brooks.

But after he was discharged in August 1945 as a private first class, he did not realize his dream of going to college, working instead as a forklift driver before retiring in his 60s. "He always wanted to go to school," his daughter said.

And when he bought his home, he used his retirement fund, not GI Bill benefits, she said .

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act into law in 1944, making generous financial subsidies available to 16 million WWII veterans pursuing higher education and buying their first homes. Irrespective of race, veterans who served more than 90 days during the war and had been honorably discharged were entitled to the benefits.

But after returning from the war, Black and white veterans faced two very different realities.

Because the GI Bill benefits had to be approved by local VA officers, few of whom were Black, the process created problems for veterans. This was particularly acute in the Deep South where Jim Crow segregation imposed racist barriers to homeownership and education.

Local VA officers there either made it difficult for Black veterans to access their benefits or lessened their value by steering them away from predominantly white four-year colleges and toward vocational and other non-degree programs. Meanwhile, the nation's historically Black colleges and universities saw such a significant increase of enrollment among Black veterans that the schools were forced to turn away tens of thousands of prospective students.

Sgt. Joseph Maddox, one of two WWII veterans Moulton and Clyburn named their bill after, was denied tuition assistance by his local VA office despite being accepted into a master's degree program at Harvard University.

"When it came time to pay the bill, the government just said no," said Moulton, who himself attended Harvard on the GI Bill. "It actually is pretty emotional for vets who have gone through this themselves and, like myself, know what a difference the GI Bill made in our lives."

The bill is also named for Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr., a WWII veteran from Winnsboro, South Carolina, who was brutally beaten and blinded by a small-town police chief in 1946 after returning home from the war. The acquittal of his attacker by an all-white jury helped spur the integration of the U.S. armed services in 1948.

In contrast to the treatment of Black veterans, the GI Bill helped home ownership rates soar among white veterans in a post-war housing boom that created a ripple effect their children and grandchildren continue to benefit from today.

Of the more than 3,000 VA home loans that had been issued to veterans in Mississippi in the summer of 1947, only two went to Black veterans, according to an Ebony magazine survey at the time.

The Federal Housing Administration's racist housing policies also impacted Black WWII veterans, undoubtedly fueling today's racial wealth gap. Typically referred to as redlining, realtors and banks would refuse to show homes or offer mortgages to qualified homebuyers in certain neighborhoods because of their race or ethnicity.

Preliminary analysis of historical data suggests Black and white veterans accessed their benefits at similar rates, according to Maria Madison, director of the Institute for Economic and Racial Equity at Brandeis University, who has researched the impact of racial inequities in the administration of GI Bill benefits.

However, because of institutional racism and other barriers, Black veterans were more limited in the ways in which they could use their benefits. As a result, the cash equivalent of their benefits was only 40% of what white veterans received.

After adjusting for inflation and for market returns, that amounts to a difference in value of \$170,000 per veteran, according to Madison. Her ongoing research seeks to put a dollar amount on the wealth loss to Black families caused by racism and GI Bill inequities.

Black WWII veterans who were lucky enough to have gained full access to GI Bill benefits succeeded at building good lives for themselves and their families, said Matthew Delmont, a history professor at Dartmouth College. It's a clear argument, he said, for why the new legislation is necessary.

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"Because the GI benefits weren't distributed more evenly among Black veterans, we lost an entire generation of Black wealth builders," Delmont said. "After the war, we could have had even more doctors, lawyers, teachers and architects."

Dovey Johnson Roundtree, a Black woman who was a WWII veteran, attended Howard University's law school with GI Bill benefits. She then became a nationally known Washington criminal defense attorney who played a pivotal role in the desegregation of bus travel.

And WWII veteran Robert Madison, who served as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, credited his GI benefits for his success as a renowned architect.

Morrison reported from New York City. Stafford reported from Detroit. Both are members of the AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow Morrison on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/aaronlmorison>. Follow Stafford on Twitter: https://www.twitter.com/@kat__stafford.

Death threats, tweets jolt GOP infrastructure supporters

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The last time Congress approved a major renewal of federal highway and other transportation programs, the votes were 359-65 in the House and 83-16 in the Senate. It was backed by nearly every Democrat and robust majorities of Republicans.

This year's \$1 trillion infrastructure bill easily cleared the Senate 69-13 with GOP support, but crawled through the House last week by 228-206 with just 13 Republican votes. Those defectors were savaged afterward by former President Donald Trump, hard-right Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., called them "traitors" while tweeting their names and office telephone numbers, and one of the 13 says he received a death threat.

The votes, six years apart, and the harsh blowback against Republican mavericks illustrate a GOP in which conservative voices have grown louder and more militant, fanned by Trump's bellicose four years in office. Growing numbers of progressives have made Democrats more liberal too, with both shifts fueling a sharpening of partisanship in Washington.

"This madness has to stop," said Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich., an 18-term moderate, who said his offices received dozens of threatening calls following his yes vote. That included one obscenity-laced rant that aides provided in which the caller repeatedly called Upton a "traitor" and expressed hope that the lawmaker, his family and aides would die.

Upton closed his two Michigan offices for a day and reopened them after increasing their security.

This year's bill, triple the size of the 2015 measure, is a keystone of President Joe Biden's push to create jobs and build out the nation's roads, water systems, broadband coverage and other projects. A compromise between Senate Democrats and Republicans, it will send money into every state and is the kind of bill that politicians have loved promoting back home for decades. Biden plans to sign it Monday.

Democrats say GOP opposition to the bill is indefensible on policy and political grounds.

"It's a sad statement of how the other party has lost its way," said Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney, D-N.Y., who's leading the House Democratic political arm into a 2022 campaign in which Republicans have solid chances of capturing congressional control. "If you want our country to fail so you can say things are bad and win power for yourself, you act like the House Republicans are."

But for many Republicans, infrastructure projects — once an issue the two parties would reflexively work together on for mutual and national benefit — now offer a complex political calculation.

"When it comes to policy these days, we're basically divided into two tribes. And you stick with your tribe and you don't try to help the other tribe," said Glen Bolger, a GOP pollster and strategist.

As president, Trump repeatedly promised his own massive infrastructure plan but never produced one, making the phrase "infrastructure week" a Washington synonym for "pipe dream." But he opposes the current package, and his ability to rally his conservative supporters against those who cross him was a factor as GOP lawmakers decided how to vote.

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Even so, hard-right cries for retaliation against the 13 pro-infrastructure Republicans, largely moderates from the Northeast and Midwest, have prompted their own pushback.

"This notion that we're going to have people that are on the fringe, in terms of the Marjorie Taylor Greenes of the world and others, imposing some kind of a purity test on substance is lunacy," said Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo. Cheney has been at war with Trump and the party's far right ever since backing his impeachment early this year.

Cheney opposed the bill, saying it contained clean energy and other provisions that would hurt Wyoming. She said the 13 Republicans who backed it are "among some of our very best members" who did it "because it was the right thing for their districts."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., an unabashed partisan warrior, was among 19 Senate Republicans who voted for the bill in August. McConnell, who doesn't have to worry about being reelected until 2026, said this week he was "delighted" the measure was heading to Biden.

A day earlier, McConnell had already drawn Trump's wrath.

Trump issued a statement denigrating GOP senators who'd backed the bill for "thinking that helping the Democrats is such a wonderful thing to do." Those Republicans "should be ashamed of themselves, in particular Mitch McConnell," Trump wrote.

That was just the tip of the iceberg for the attacks.

In an interview, the leader of the conservative House Freedom Caucus said GOP lawmakers should consider removing from their posts the 10 of the 13 defectors who are the senior Republican on committees and subcommittees. "I respect their right to vote their districts and their conscience. But that doesn't mean that they should get the privilege of leading" House Republicans, said Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz.

At a private Florida dinner Monday to bolster House GOP campaign prospects, Trump said he loves House Republicans but not the 13 who voted for the bill, according to an attendee who described Trump's remarks on condition of anonymity.

Earlier, House GOP leaders tweeted, and then deleted, that "Americans won't forget" a vote for the "socialist" infrastructure bill. "Time to name names and hold these fake republicans accountable," tweeted Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colo.

Before last week's vote, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said it would be "very difficult" for Republicans to promote backing the infrastructure bill during their campaigns because it is so closely linked to Democrats' accompanying \$1.85 trillion social and climate measure, which the GOP has solidly opposed.

Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-N.J., who switched parties in 2019, said he supported the infrastructure bill because his state would receive over \$20 billion "we desperately need." Van Drew, who said he had heard "some cranky things" from some people, scoffed at the notion that the bill would "catapult the president" politically.

"If Marjorie Taylor Greene wants to be mean to me, that's fine," he said of the colleague who labeled him and 12 others traitors. "I love America very much. I would never ever do anything to hurt this country."

Associated Press writer Jill Colvin in New York contributed to this report.

Disappearing shorts: As stocks soar, skeptics surrender

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The skeptics on Wall Street have gone missing.

As the stock market has surged to records — unbowed by recession, pandemic or warnings of a dangerous bubble — activity has dwindled to a nearly two-decade low for the traders known as short sellers, who make their money betting stocks will fall.

This saddens nearly no one. From small-fry investors to members of Congress, critics paint short sellers as merchants of pain. People around the world celebrated early this year when GameStop's stock suddenly hurtled higher, causing billions of dollars in losses for short sellers. Many called it a long-due

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comeuppance.

But academics and short sellers themselves say they provide an important service suited for just this moment: pushing back against stock prices that may be rising too high, too fast. Despite concerns about the pace of the economic recovery and high inflation, the S&P 500 has set 65 all-time highs so far this year, with the latest coming on Monday.

Some critics say stocks look overly expensive, with some broad measures of value close to historical highs. Fewer short sellers in the market means there's less selling pressure tugging downward on those prices. It can also mean fewer investors looking for overvalued stocks or ferreting out fraud.

"This is the thing that short sellers do, they lean against the wind," said Charles Jones, a finance professor at Columbia University's business school, who has researched short selling. "If you have short sellers who are not afraid to do that, you will not get prices that are too high or too low, which is what I think we want when we are allocating capital."

Jones' research of Wall Street in the late 1920s and early 1930s, for example, looked at a group of stocks that were particularly expensive to short, which discouraged short sellers from targeting them. They went on to have returns that were 1% to 2% lower per month than other stocks of similar size, suggesting that they had been overvalued.

When investors short a stock, they borrow the shares from someone else and sell them. Later, if the stock falls as the short seller expects, they can buy the shares, return them to the lender and pocket the difference in price.

So it's no surprise that short sellers regularly get blamed for driving stock prices artificially low. During the 2008 financial crisis, a few days after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, U.S. regulators temporarily banned the shorting of financial stocks, fearing short sellers would undermine already weak trust in them and trigger a run on the system.

Nearly four years later, though, a study by a New York Fed economist and professors at Notre Dame suggested the ban did little to slow the decline in bank stocks, which fell anyway. The restrictions also gummed up trading for bank stocks, raising trading costs in the stock and options markets by more than an estimated \$1 billion.

Shorting activity has been trending down since July 2008, a few months before that temporary ban. Then, it was nearly twice the force it is now, accounting for 2.61% of all the shares in S&P 500 companies. Just 1.35% of all the shares in S&P 500 companies were sold short in August, according to data compiled by FactSet.

The stock market's mostly relentless rise since 2009 has prompted investors to pull dollars out of short-selling funds, helping to thin the ranks of the contrarians. Why go short when everything is rising?

"You have to look at what is causing the market to reach all-time highs," said Carson Block, founder of Muddy Waters Research and one of the industry's best-known short-sellers. "It is most definitely not that humanity is at our all-time greatest state."

Instead, he said a big reason is the ultralow interest rates set by the Federal Reserve to resuscitate the economy. Those low rates have sent waves of cash into the stock market, and critics say they're pushing up prices indiscriminately and allowing weak companies to hold on.

Block specializes in rooting out fraud, and one of his earliest victories came with Sino-Forest, a company that was once Canada's most valuable publicly traded forestry business. Block released a report in 2011 calling the company a "multi-billion dollar ponzi scheme" that was overstating how much it had in timber investments.

Its shares quickly fell as the report reverberated, and the company pushed back on the accusations. But it ultimately collapsed in what an Ontario securities regulator called "one of the largest corporate frauds in Canadian history."

Short sellers have also been credited with helping to publicize financial practices at Enron and Tyco International, two of the biggest U.S. corporate fraud cases, in the early 2000s.

Of course, short sellers also get it wrong sometimes. Tesla was a favorite target for years, with short

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sellers betting founder Elon Musk's visions for the electric-vehicle company were overly grandiose. Tesla recently posted a record quarterly profit and is one of the few companies in the world worth \$1 trillion.

Not all short investors are betting only on stocks to fall.

Consider Marc Regenbaum, a portfolio manager at the Neuberger Berman Long Short fund. Most of the mutual fund's investments do well when stock prices rise, but it reserves some of its holdings for shorter-term short sales.

Regenbaum acknowledges the frustration that comes after identifying seemingly good candidates to short and then watching their prices climb. A rising tide has sent nearly 90% of S&P 500 stocks higher over the last year. But he said he still believes shorting some stocks can help manage the fund's risk and offer steadier returns during turbulent markets.

"Everyone thinks of shorting as this element of speculation and making absolute returns, as opposed to hedging things out and offering a smoother ride for the underlying investors," he said.

Doug Ramsey, chief investment officer of the Leuthold Group, says the average stock in the market recently looked more expensive than it did at the height of the 2000 dot-com bubble, based on several measures. The Leuthold Grizzly Short fund has roughly halved in size in three years, down to \$51.3 million in assets at the end of June.

Ramsey said the stock performance between good companies and bad ones could separate once again, offering better rewards for short sellers, after the Federal Reserve pulls back on its support for markets.

Short sellers need the help. The average stock mutual fund that reserves some of its portfolio for shorting has returned an annualized 7.2% over the last five years, less than half the return of an S&P 500 fund, according to Morningstar. The year-to-year difference can be even more stark. Consider 2013, when the S&P 500 returned 32.4%. Hedge funds with a bias for shorting lost 18.6% that year, according to research firm HFR.

But the Fed earlier this month announced it's paring back on its monthly purchases of bonds. Many investors expect it to begin raising short-term interest rates, which would be the more momentous move, next year.

Block, the activist short seller at Muddy Waters who sometimes spars with his critics and haters on Twitter, said he's not anticipating quitting. At least, not as long as he thinks he sees the economy and markets being mismanaged by people he considers fraudsters.

"I think this is the right thing for me," he said. "It's a way to try to monetize my constant state of alarm, my constant state of dissatisfaction at the dystopia unfolding all around us."

Chinese leaders issue official history to elevate Xi

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Leaders of China's ruling Communist Party on Thursday set the stage for President Xi Jinping to extend his rule next year, praising his role in the country's rise as an economic and strategic power and approving a political history that gives him status alongside the most important party figures.

Central Committee members declared Xi's ideology the "essence of Chinese culture" as they wrapped up a leadership meeting. In unusually effusive language even for a Chinese leader, a party statement said it was "of decisive significance" for "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

Xi, who has amassed more personal authority than any leader since at least Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s, has widely been expected to pursue a third five-year term as party general secretary. That would break with a two-decade-old party tradition that would require the 68-year-old leader to step down next year.

The party leadership's resolution on its history is only the third since its founding 100 years ago, following one under Mao Zedong, the first leader of the Communist government, and another under Deng, who launched reforms that turned China into an economic powerhouse. The decision to issue one under Xi symbolically raises him to their status.

The party removed term limits on Xi's post as president in 2018, indicating his intention to stay in power. Then, officials told reporters Xi might need more time to make sure economic and other reforms were

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carried out.

Xi, the son of one of Mao's generals, faces no obvious rivals, but a bid to say in power has the potential to alienate younger party figures who might see their chances for promotion diminished.

Also, political scientists point to the experience of other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America and warn that long periods of one-person rule lead to poor official decisions and economic performance.

Thursday's party statement emphasized its successes in overseeing China's emergence as the world's second-biggest economy, glossing over deadly political violence in its early decades in power and growing complaints about human rights abuses.

The statement affirmed Beijing's handling of Hong Kong, where it is trying to crush pro-democracy activism, and relations with Taiwan. The party claims the island democracy is part of its territory and is trying to intimidate the Taiwanese public by sending growing numbers of fighter jets and bombers to fly near its coast.

The party "firmly implemented 'patriots ruling Hong Kong'" and "resolutely opposed Taiwan separatists," the statement said.

Xi has overseen an assertive foreign policy and expansion of the party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army. It has the world's second-largest military budget after the United States and is developing submarines, stealth aircraft and ballistic missiles that can carry nuclear warheads to extend China's power beyond its shores.

On economic matters, the ruling party under Xi has pursued a sometimes contradictory strategy of promising to give market forces a dominant role while tightening state control over industry. Tech companies are under pressure to invest their own money to promote party development ambitions.

China was the first major economy to rebound from the coronavirus pandemic but in the longer term faces steadily declining growth and a shrinking workforce at a time when Chinese incomes still are below the world average.

Xi is leading a "Common Prosperity" initiative that calls for narrowing income and wealth gaps between China's billionaire elite and the poor majority. Companies are under pressure to share their wealth with workers and the public by raising wages and paying for rural job creation and other development efforts.

The party has tightened control over society, suppressing independent religious groups and human rights activists.

More than 1 million members of mostly Muslim ethnic minority groups in the Xinjiang region in the northwest have been detained and subjected to political indoctrination. Government spokespeople reject reports of abuses including forced abortions and say detention camps are for job training and to combat extremism.

Xi has used his control of the party's vast propaganda apparatus to promote his image.

State media associate him with national successes including fighting the coronavirus, China's rise as a technology creator and last year's successful lunar mission to bring back moon rocks.

The 1981 assessment under Deng distanced the party from the violent upheaval of the ultra-radical 1966-76 Cultural Revolution.

By contrast, Xi has promoted a positive image of the party's early decades in power and called for it to revive its "original mission" as China's leading economic, political and cultural force.

Thursday's statement cited Xi's ideology initiative, "Xi Jinping Thought for a New Era of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," by its full name seven times and referred to the "New Era" 21 times.

Democrats sell infrastructure bill, push for Biden backup

By WILL WEISSERT, THOMAS BEAUMONT and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press
STILWELL, Kan. (AP) — Traffic whizzing behind her, Rep. Sharice Davids gathered reporters at a transportation facility along U.S. 69 in eastern Kansas this week to celebrate the surge of federal money headed in her state's direction.

The massive infrastructure package passed last week means \$2.6 billion for Kansas roads — some of

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the largest investments in them since President Dwight D. Eisenhower, once a Kansan himself, supported the construction of the national highway system in the 1950s.

"I think that a lot of us recognize, just like President Eisenhower did, that infrastructure is a key to long-term economic growth," said Davids, who proudly declared herself a "born-again transportation enthusiast."

Davids is hardly the only member of her party celebrating. With their narrow control of Congress at stake in 2022, Democrats across the country are donning hard hats and staging photo ops near bridges to highlight long-neglected public works projects set to spring to life thanks to the more than \$1 trillion plan.

It's an attempt to move past months of infighting between progressives and moderates and unite around a shovel-ready approach to kicking the post-coronavirus pandemic economy into high gear.

For Democrats like Davids, facing tough reelection fights, the public works bonanza may be their ticket out of political peril — a potential boon with moderate and independent voters who turned against the party in last week's elections in New Jersey and Virginia and who will decide races in most swing districts next year.

"Now is the time to turn the corner," said New York Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney, Democratic Congressional Committee chairman. "There's enough blame to go around, but we have achieved a huge win for working and middle-class people."

Among those Maloney blames for the current climate is President Joe Biden, who Maloney says has failed to properly promote what's already been achieved.

"I think my colleagues on Capitol Hill are desperate to follow the president, but we need him to lead and he needs to use that extraordinary voice that he has," Maloney said, recalling Biden channeling his working-class Pennsylvania roots on his way to winning that state and the presidency last year. "We want Scranton Joe out there explaining this blue-collar blueprint to grow the American economy and we will follow him."

The White House says Biden will aggressively sell his party's legislative accomplishment. The president traveled to the Port of Baltimore on Wednesday to tout the package, though he acknowledged it would not quickly ease the rising inflation or supply chain issues weighing on the economy: "We still face challenges and we have to tackle them," he said.

Maloney said he wants more. He called for Biden to use a nationally televised address to cheer the measure, coupled with 25 visits around the country for himself and an equal number for Vice President Kamala Harris to promote popular public works projects it will fund. Maloney also wants to see House Democrats stage more than 1,000 of their own events to do the same, backed by a \$10 million Democratic National Committee advertising buy to explain the plan to the public.

The goal isn't just detailing the package, but wielding it as a cudgel over congressional Republicans — all but 13 of whom voted against it. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee says it plans to "weaponize" the infrastructure plan — praising it while attacking Republicans facing their own close reelection fights next year for opposing it.

Infrastructure spending has broad bipartisan support in polling, but House Republicans argued the bill was packed with Democratic priorities beyond road repairs and bridges.

Still, former President Donald Trump seemed to acknowledge the political potential for Democrats this week when he blamed Republicans who backed the measure for voting "for Democrat longevity." Many who did have faced sharp criticism from constituents; Michigan Rep. Fred Upton said he and his family had received death threats.

Democrats report that the reaction back home has been the opposite. In New Jersey, Rep. Josh Gottheimer said he received a high-five when he walked into a diner Monday.

Gottheimer, a top GOP target next year, led an effort by House moderates to ensure the infrastructure bill passed even as his progressive colleagues pushed for more immediate action on a separate, larger social spending plan dubbed "Build Back Better." Now he's pushing colleagues to promote the pieces voters can relate to — expanding a tunnel known as Gateway, a commuter rail line under the Hudson River that links his state and New York City, or fixing the state's roads.

"You actually have to explain it to people. It can't be a number. It has to be about how it affects their

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lives," he said. He added with a laugh, "If you talk to anyone who's from Jersey, you get the tire insurance because you're always getting flat tires from hitting potholes."

Rep. Jennifer Wexton, D-Va., said the legislation "is going to be huge" for "the daily commutes and the daily lives" of her constituents, noting that the package could help further expand Metro train service in her exurban territory west of Washington. It could also bolster internet service in areas where families sometimes had to drive to libraries to access broadband — despite being only around 50 miles (80 kilometers) from the nation's capital.

Republican Glenn Youngkin won Virginia's governorship in an upset last week, and his party could take control of the state House depending on the outcomes of two races apparently headed to recounts. Youngkin's Democratic opponent, Terry McAuliffe, had suggested in vain that Democrats should act more quickly to pass the infrastructure bill.

"I don't know what it would have done," Wexton said of whether that would have changed the results. "Obviously, it was not ideal not to have it passed."

Now at home on recess, vulnerable Democrats are emphasizing the local projects that could mean improved quality of life — and jobs. In Michigan, Democratic Rep. Elissa Slotkin praised the plan alongside labor union members this week, noting that \$1.3 billion can be used to replace pipes in a state that has seen communities struggle with lead in tap water.

Even as they sell the bill, some Democrats remain focused on the next priority. They want approval of Biden's even bigger \$1.85 trillion measure, which is designed to dramatically expand federal spending for social programs, child care and climate change mitigation — but has yet to clear Congress.

That was part of Rep. Cindy Axne's message to renewable fuel advocates at a western Iowa ethanol plant this week. The Democratic congresswoman has secured funding for renewable fuels, a major industry in her district, in the second spending package.

"If we do not support the human infrastructure, which is truly what's driving this country, we aren't supporting infrastructure," she said.

In Minnesota, Rep. Angie Craig, a Democrat representing swing suburbs outside the Twin Cities, described the infrastructure plan as equally a jobs and public projects plan. But she, like Axne, noted that Biden's broader proposal might register more with voters.

"There is so much in Build Back Better that people are going to actually feel in their daily lives," Craig said. "Build Back Better is going to change the way people can function in their daily lives, and that it's at least as important as infrastructure."

Weissert reported from Washington, Beaumont from Atlantic, Iowa. Associated Press writer Steve Karnowski in St. Paul, Minnesota, contributed to this report.

AP analysis: Exposure to extreme heat has tripled since 1983

By DREW COSTLEY and NICKY FORSTER Associated Press

World leaders have committed to limiting Earth's rising temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial times.

But what does that feel like?

It's difficult to convey, because you may not notice changes in average temperature. But, depending on where you live, you might notice when it's extremely hot.

To better understand the issue, Columbia University's climate school recently published a global dataset with estimates of both population and temperature. The Associated Press analyzed the data — spanning 1983 to 2016 — and found that exposure to extreme heat has tripled and now affects about a quarter of the world's population.

HOW HEAT IS MEASURED

As the global average temperature rises, so do the hottest daily temperatures. And, in some places, the hottest days can be dangerous to human health, causing heat stress.

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Heat stress can create a host of health problems, including rashes, cramps and heat stroke. Hot air is not the only risk factor for it. Other factors include humidity, wind speed and the amount of shade.

You may be familiar with the heat index, which takes into consideration temperature and humidity to suggest what it feels like in the shade on a hot day. But even the heat index doesn't tell you what it's like to be working in the full sun on an extremely hot windless day.

Increasingly, climate scientists and meteorologists are advocating for the use of a different metric for understanding extreme heat. It's called wet-bulb globe temperature and it takes into account temperature, humidity, wind speed, sun angle and cloud cover.

The new dataset uses estimates of both population and wet-bulb globe temperature to better understand how many people are affected by dangerously hot temperatures and where they live.

When the wet-bulb globe temperature exceeds 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit), people are advised to start taking rests if they're working outdoors.

HEAT EXPOSURE IS RISING

To match heat measures with population estimates, the researchers averaged temperature data over 13,115 urban centers identified in a dataset produced by the European Union.

Out of those urban centers around the world, nearly half experienced an increasing trend in heat exposure.

In 2016, just under 1.7 billion people lived in those areas, with the majority in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

The most affected region, by far, was southern Asia, where India alone accounted for 37% of the population living in areas with an increasing extreme heat trend.

With population growth from 1983 to 2016 for each city and estimates for the year-to-year increase in annual counts of dangerously hot days, the AP was able to identify the cities in the world where exposure to extreme heat is increasing most.

NOTABLE HEAT EXPOSURE INCREASES

In Dhaka, Bangladesh, the population more than tripled from about 7.7 million in 1983 to 24 million in 2016. While the city grew by more than 16 million people, the number of extreme heat days also increased by 1.5 days a year, until Dhaka experienced about 50 more dangerously hot days a year than it did in 1983.

This large population growth, along with the warming trend for the area, reveals that Dhaka had the biggest increase in heat exposure in the world.

Population growth and increasing temperature both contribute to exposure trends. In some cases, these have an equal effect. That was the case in Kolkata, India, where the population grew by 6 million people and the number of hot days grew by 1.76 each year. Both of these increases contributed to a steep exposure trend.

Meanwhile, New Delhi added nearly 14 million people. While the city added 1.12 additional hot days each year, the population increase is what made Delhi's exposure trend the steepest in India.

INDONESIA'S CAPITAL

This dataset focuses on the past, but could help world leaders make more informed decisions in the future. Indonesia is planning to move the country's capital from Jakarta — a city that is sinking below sea level — to Kalimantan. The development site is in an area of jungle between two cities, Samarinda and Balikpapan. Both cities have increasing heat exposure trends.

People in Balikpapan, located at the mouth of the Bakpapan Bay, could expect 10 more days of extreme heat in 2016 compared with 1983.

Samarinda, situated on the humid Mahakam River delta, could expect 19 more days. Jakarta, although sinking, did not register a significant increasing exposure trend in the dataset.

AFRICA'S GROWING CITIES

Many cities that already experience extreme heat are growing rapidly.

Douala, Cameroon, grew from roughly 760,000 people in 1983 to nearly 3 million in 2016. United Nations population projections suggest that count will double by 2035. Douala's citizens endured 76 days

of extreme heat in 2016.

Douala is representative of sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. According to the 2019 U.N. World Population Prospects, most of the world's population growth will come from this region in the coming years, and it's growing rapidly at a time when warming trends are increasing in cities across the area. Whether world leaders are able to limit the rise in the global average temperature, people in this part of the world will likely feel the difference in the resulting heat exposure most.

Dim Coumou, a climate professor at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, said the combination of growth in African cities and climate change presents a serious risk.

"As the population increases in these megacities, you have more buildings, more concrete and an increased heat-island effect, making the heat waves worse," Coumou said. "I think it's a dangerous combination."

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EXPLAINER: Why US inflation is so high, and when it may ease

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Inflation is starting to look like that unexpected — and unwanted — houseguest who just won't leave.

For months, many economists had sounded a reassuring message that a spike in consumer prices, something that had been missing in action in the U.S. for a generation, wouldn't stay long. It would prove "transitory," in the soothing words of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell and White House officials, as the economy shifted from virus-related chaos to something closer to normalcy.

Yet as any American who has bought a carton of milk, a gallon of gas or a used car could tell you, inflation has settled in. And economists are now voicing a more discouraging message: Higher prices will likely last well into next year, if not beyond.

On Wednesday, the government said its consumer price index soared 6.2% from a year ago — the biggest 12-month jump since 1990.

"It's a large blow against the transitory narrative," said Jason Furman, who served as the top economic adviser in the Obama administration. "Inflation is not slowing. It's maintaining a red-hot pace."

And the sticker shock is hitting where families tend to feel it most. At the breakfast table, for instance: Bacon prices are up 20% over the past year, egg prices nearly 12%. Gasoline has surged 50%. Buying a washing machine or a dryer will set you back 15% more than it would have a year ago. Used cars? 26% more.

Although pay is up sharply for many workers, it isn't nearly enough to keep up with prices. Last month, average hourly wages in the United States, after accounting for inflation, actually fell 1.2% compared with October 2020.

Economists at Wells Fargo joke grimly that the Labor Department's CPI — the Consumer Price Index — should stand for "Consumer Pain Index." Unfortunately for consumers, especially lower-wage households, it's all coinciding with their higher spending needs right before the holiday season.

The price squeeze is escalating pressure on the Fed to shift more quickly away from years of easy-money policies. And it poses a threat to President Joe Biden, congressional Democrats and their ambitious spending plans.

WHAT CAUSED THE PRICE SPIKES?

Much of it is the flipside of very good news. Slammed by COVID-19, the U.S. economy collapsed in the spring of 2020 as lockdowns took effect, businesses closed or cut hours and consumers stayed home as a health precaution. Employers slashed 22 million jobs. Economic output plunged at a record-shattering 31% annual rate in last year's April-June quarter.

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Everyone braced for more misery. Companies cut investment. Restocking was put off. And a brutal recession ensued.

Yet instead of sinking into a prolonged downturn, the economy staged an unexpectedly rousing recovery, fueled by massive government spending and a bevy of emergency moves by the Fed. By spring, the rollout of vaccines had emboldened consumers to return to restaurants, bars and shops.

Suddenly, businesses had to scramble to meet demand. They couldn't hire fast enough to plug job openings — a near record 10.4 million in August — or buy enough supplies to fill customer orders. As business roared back, ports and freight yards couldn't handle the traffic. Global supply chains became snarled.

Costs rose. And companies found that they could pass along those higher costs in the form of higher prices to consumers, many of whom had managed to sock away a ton of savings during the pandemic.

"A sizeable chunk of the inflation we're seeing is the inevitable result of coming out of the pandemic," said Furman, now an economist at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Furman suggested, though, that misguided policy played a role, too. Policymakers were so intent on staving off an economic collapse that they "systematically underestimated inflation," he said.

"They poured kerosene on the fire."

A flood of government spending — including President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package, with its \$1,400 checks to most households in March — overstimulated the economy, Furman said.

"Inflation is a lot higher in the United States than it is in Europe," he noted. "Europe is going through the same supply shocks as the United States is, the same supply chain issues. But they didn't do nearly as much stimulus."

In a statement Wednesday, Biden acknowledged that "inflation hurts Americans' pocketbooks, and reversing this trend is a top priority for me." But he said his \$1 trillion infrastructure package, including spending on roads, bridges and ports, would help ease supply bottlenecks.

HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

Consumer price inflation will likely endure as long as companies struggle to keep up with consumers' prodigious demand for goods and services. A resurgent job market — employers have added 5.8 million jobs this year — means that Americans can continue to splurge on everything from lawn furniture to new cars. And the supply chain bottlenecks show no sign of clearing.

"The demand side of the U.S. economy will continue to be something to behold," says Rick Rieder, chief investment officer for global fixed income at Blackrock, "and companies will continue to have the luxury of passing through prices."

Megan Greene, chief economist at the Kroll Institute, suggested that inflation and the overall economy will eventually return to something closer to normal.

"I think it will be 'transitory,'" she said of inflation. "But economists have to be very honest about defining transitory, and I think this could last another year easily."

"We need a lot of humility talking about how long this lasts," Furman said. "I think it's with us for a while. The inflation rate is going to come down from this year's blistering pace, but it's still going to be very, very high compared to the historical norms we have been used to."

WILL WE SUFFER A RETURN OF 1970'S-STYLE 'STAGFLATION'?

The run-up in consumer prices has raised the specter of a return to the "stagflation" of the 1970s. That was when higher prices coincided with high unemployment in defiance of what conventional economists thought was possible.

Yet today's situation looks very different. Unemployment is relatively low, and households overall are in good shape financially. The Conference Board, a business research group, found that consumers' inflation expectations last month were the highest they'd been since July 2008. But consumers didn't seem all that worried: The board's confidence index rose anyway, on optimism about the job market.

"For the time being, at least, they feel that the benefits are outweighing the negatives," said Lynn Franco,

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the Conference Board's senior director of economic indicators.

Economic growth, after slowing from July through September in response to the highly contagious delta variant, is thought to be bouncing back in the final quarter of 2021.

"Most economists are expecting growth to accelerate in the fourth quarter," Greene said. "So it doesn't suggest that we're facing both a tanking of growth and higher inflation. We're just facing higher inflation."

WHAT SHOULD POLICYMAKERS DO?

The pressure is on the Fed, which is charged with keeping a lid on inflation, to control prices.

"They need to stop telling us that inflation is transitory, start becoming more worried about inflation, then act in a manner consistent with being worried," Furman said. "We've seen a little bit of that, but only a little bit."

Powell has announced that the Fed will start reducing the monthly bond purchases it began last year as an emergency measure to try to boost the economy. In September, Fed officials also forecast that they would raise the Fed's benchmark interest rate from its record low near zero by the end of 2022 — much earlier than they had predicted a few months earlier.

But sharply higher inflation, should it persist, might compel the Fed to accelerate that timetable; investors expect at least two Fed rate hikes next year.

"We've been fighting non-existent inflation since the 1990s," said Diane Swonk, chief economist at the accounting and consulting firm Grant Thornton, "and now we're talking about fighting an inflation that is real."

AP Economics Writer Christopher Rugaber contributed to this report.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Nov. 12, the 316th day of 2021. There are 49 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 12, 1942, the World War II naval Battle of Guadalcanal began. (The Allies ended up winning a major victory over Japanese forces.)

On this date:

In 1920, baseball got its first "czar" as Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis was elected commissioner of the American and National Leagues.

In 1927, Josef Stalin became the undisputed ruler of the Soviet Union as Leon Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party.

In 1936, the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge opened as President Franklin D. Roosevelt pressed a telegraph key in Washington, D.C., giving the green light to traffic.

In 1948, former Japanese premier Hideki Tojo and several other World War II Japanese leaders were sentenced to death by a war crimes tribunal.

In 1969, news of the My Lai (mee ly) Massacre carried out by U.S. forces in South Vietnam in March 1968 was broken by investigative reporter Seymour Hersh.

In 1975, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas retired because of failing health, ending a record 36-year term.

In 1982, Yuri V. Andropov (ahn-DROH'-pawf) was elected to succeed the late Leonid I. Brezhnev as general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee.

In 1987, the American Medical Association issued a policy statement saying it was unethical for a doctor to refuse to treat someone solely because that person had AIDS or was HIV-positive.

In 1996, a Saudi Boeing 747 jetliner collided shortly after takeoff from New Delhi, India, with a Kazak Ilyushin (il-YOO'-shin)-76 cargo plane, killing 349 people.

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In 2001, American Airlines Flight 587, an Airbus A300 headed to the Dominican Republic, crashed after takeoff from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, killing all 260 people on board and five people on the ground.

In 2009, Army psychiatrist Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan (nih-DAHL' mah-LEEK' hah-SAHN') was charged with 13 counts of premeditated murder in the Fort Hood, Texas, shooting rampage. (Hasan was later convicted and sentenced to death; no execution date has been set.)

In 2019, Venice saw its worst flooding in more than 50 years, with the water reaching 6.14 feet above average sea level; damage was estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama met separately with the leaders of Russia and China on the sidelines of a Pacific Rim economic summit in his native Hawaii. Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi resigned, ending a political era and setting in motion a transition aimed at bringing the country back from the brink of economic crisis. In a surprisingly sharp move, the Arab League voted to suspend Syria over the country's bloody crackdown on protesters and stepped up calls on the army to stop killing civilians.

Five years ago: Tens of thousands of people marched in streets across the United States, staging the fourth day of protests against Donald Trump's surprise victory as president. Hundreds of thousands of people flooded the streets of Seoul (sohl), South Korea, demanding the resignation of President Park Geun-hye (goon-hay) amid an explosive political scandal.

One year ago: The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, a broad coalition of top government and industry officials, rejected President Donald Trump's claims of election fraud, saying that the election was "the most secure in American history" and that there was "no evidence that any voting system deleted or lost votes, changed votes or was in any way compromised." Federal health officials reached an agreement with pharmacies across the U.S. to distribute free coronavirus vaccines once the vaccines were approved and available. Atlanta Braves first baseman Freddie Freeman easily won the National League MVP award, while Chicago White Sox slugger José Abreu was chosen as the AL MVP.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Brian Hyland is 78. Actor-playwright Wallace Shawn is 78. Rock musician Booker T. Jones (Booker T. & the MGs) is 77. Sportscaster Al Michaels is 77. Singer-songwriter Neil Young is 76. Rock musician Donald "Buck Dharma" Roeser (Blue Oyster Cult) is 74. Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., is 72. Country/gospel singer Barbara Fairchild is 71. Actor Megan Mullally is 63. Actor Vincent Irizarry is 62. Olympic gold medal gymnast Nadia Comaneci (koh-muh-NEECH') is 60. Rock musician David Ellefson is 57. Retired MLB All-Star Sammy Sosa is 53. Figure skater Tonya Harding is 51. Actor Rebecca Wisocky is 50. Actor Radha Mitchell is 48. Actor Lourdes Benedicto is 47. Actor Tamala Jones is 47. Actor Angela Watson is 47. Singer Tevin Campbell is 45. Actor Ashley Williams is 43. Actor Cote de Pablo is 42. Actor Ryan Gosling is 41. Contemporary Christian musician Chris Huffman is 41. Actor Anne Hathaway is 39. Pop singer Omarion is 37. NBA All-Star Russell Westbrook is 33. Folk-rock musician Griffin Goldsmith (Dawes) is 31. Actor Macey Cruthird is 29.