

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 1 of 84

1- Upcoming Events

1- Truss Pros Help Wanted

2- City Council Meeting Agenda

3- Construction to Begin on U.S. Highway 12 from Aberdeen to Ipswich

3- Ken's Help Wanted

4- Work to Begin on U.S. Highway 212 in Watertown

5- The B 103 All Star game was held in Summit on Saturday

6- Kurtz, Zak to continue playing basketball

7- That's Life by Tony Bender

8- Weather Pages

13- Daily Devotional

14- 2022 Community Events

15- Subscription Form

16- News from the Associated Press

UpComing Events

Tuesday, April 5

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.: Pastor Brandon Lent Study in Conde, 6 p.m.

Catholic: Turton Mass, 5 p.m.

7 p.m.: City Council Meeting

St. John's: 1 p.m.: Ladies Aid LWML

School Breakfast: French toast sticks.

School Lunch: Tangereine chicken, rice.

Senior Menu: Hamburger with bun, oven roasted potatoes, mixed vegetables, fruit, ice cream sundae.

Wednesday, April 6

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Emmanuel: 6 p.m. Soup Supper (Nigeria Circle is host), 7 p.m. Lenten Service

St. John's: Lenten Service, 7 p.m.

School Breakfast: Egg omelets.

School Lunch: Hamburgers, fries.

Senior Menu: Scalloped potatoes with ham, peas, sunset salad, cookie, whole wheat bread.

Thursday, April 7

8:34 a.m. to 3 p.m.: FFA CDE in Groton

6 p.m.: FFA Banquet

Friday, April 8

11:30 a.m.: Track meet in Miller

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



Saturday, April 9

Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park

Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm

Monday, April 11

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

Tuesday, April 12

ELECTION DAY IN GROTON

11 a.m.: Track meet in Groton

Wednesday, April 13

7 p.m.: "Way of the Cross" at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church

Truss Pros Help Wanted

Truss Pros in Britton is looking to hire a CDL driver to deliver trusses in the tri-state area. Home every night. Competitive wage! Full benefit package!

To apply call 605-277-4937 or go to www.uslbm.com/careers and search for jobs in Britton, SD.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 2 of 84

Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

April 5, 2022 – 7:00pm
City Hall – 120 N Main Street

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

1. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
2. Opening of Sealed 2022 Street Resurfacing Bids
3. Opening of Sealed Garbage Bids
4. Darrell Hillestad – Airport Discussion
5. Minutes
6. Bills
7. Department Reports
8. Opening of Sealed Community Center Surplus Bids
9. Baseball Foundation Discussion – Bathroom/Concessions Project
10. 2022 Spring City Wide Clean Up: 4/30/2022 – 5/6/2022
11. Approval of Special Event Alcoholic Beverage License – Groton Fireman's Fun Night – April 23, 2022
12. 2022-2023 Malt Beverage License Renewals:
Ken's Food Fair
Olde Bank N Café
MJ's Sinclair
Dollar General
13. Donation of 4 Season Baseball Passes for Dueling Duo on April 9th, 2022
14. The Pantry (Food Bank) Opening Date/Time.
15. Announcement – Softball, Baseball, T-Ball Sign up are Open – Deadline: April 15, 2022
16. Announcement – City Offices to be closed April 15th and 18th for Easter
17. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
18. Hiring of Groton Police Officer
19. Discussion Regarding Local Resident's Parking Ticket Debt
20. Hiring of Summer Baseball Employees
21. Adjournment

Construction to Begin on U.S. Highway 12 from Aberdeen to Ipswich

ABERDEEN, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) will begin construction on U.S. Highway 12 from Aberdeen to Ipswich on Monday, April 11, 2022. The project consists of modifying intersections, constructing passing lanes, bridge end approach slabs and pavement, lighting, and guardrail. The construction operations will reduce traffic to one lane with a 12-foot width restriction. Traffic will be controlled with flaggers and pilot car at earthwork locations and with a traffic signal for the bridge work.

Motorists should be prepared for suddenly slowing and stopped traffic and be aware of construction equipment and workers adjacent to the roadway.

The contractor on this \$13.2 project is Bituminous Paving, Inc. of Ortonville, Minnesota. The completion date for this construction project on Highway 12 is Oct. 29, 2022.

About SDDOT:

The mission of the South Dakota Department of Transportation is to efficiently provide a safe and effective public transportation system.

For the latest on road and weather conditions, road closures, construction work zones, commercial vehicle restrictions, and traffic incidents, please visit <https://sd511.org> or dial 511.

Read more about the innovative work of the SDDOT at <https://dot.sd.gov>.



**Part time deli clerk and part
time cashier and stocker.**
Apply at Ken's Food Fair, Groton

Work to Begin on U.S. Highway 212 in Watertown

WATERTOWN, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) states that construction is scheduled to begin on U.S. Highway 212, from just east of U.S. Highway 81 to just east of 19th Street East, on Monday, April 11, 2022. Work will initially begin off the roadway to prepare the business detour route for traffic prior to closure of the roadway. Depending on weather, U.S. Highway 212 between U.S. Highway 81 and 11th Street East is anticipated to be closed to traffic by Wednesday, April 20, 2022.

The project (including city utility projects) will reconstruct approximately one mile of Highway 212 from Highway 81 thru 19th Street East. The project includes utility work, grading, storm sewer, curb and gutter, sidewalk, PCC pavement, lighting, and signal upgrades.

A public open house for the Highway 212 project will be held at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, April 5, 2022, at the Watertown Event Center, located at 1901 9th Ave. SW. Impacted businesses are invited to attend to review details of the anticipated project schedule.

Public meetings for the project will be held weekly throughout construction on Thursdays at 10 a.m. in the conference room at the Watertown Wastewater Treatment Facility, located at 1300 11th St. SE in Watertown. The public meetings, which will begin on Thursday, April 21, 2022, are open to the public.

Thru truck traffic is being advised to use the signed truck route along the south connector route due to anticipated traffic volumes and narrowed lanes. All local traffic will be directed to use the signed detour along 11th Street East, 4th Avenue South, and Highway 81.

The prime contractor on this \$12.7 million project is J&J Earthworks Inc., of Milbank. The overall project completion date is Oct. 28, 2022.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 5 of 84

The B 103 All Star game was held in Summit on Saturday



Alyssa Thaler and Allyssa Locke
(Courtesy Photo)



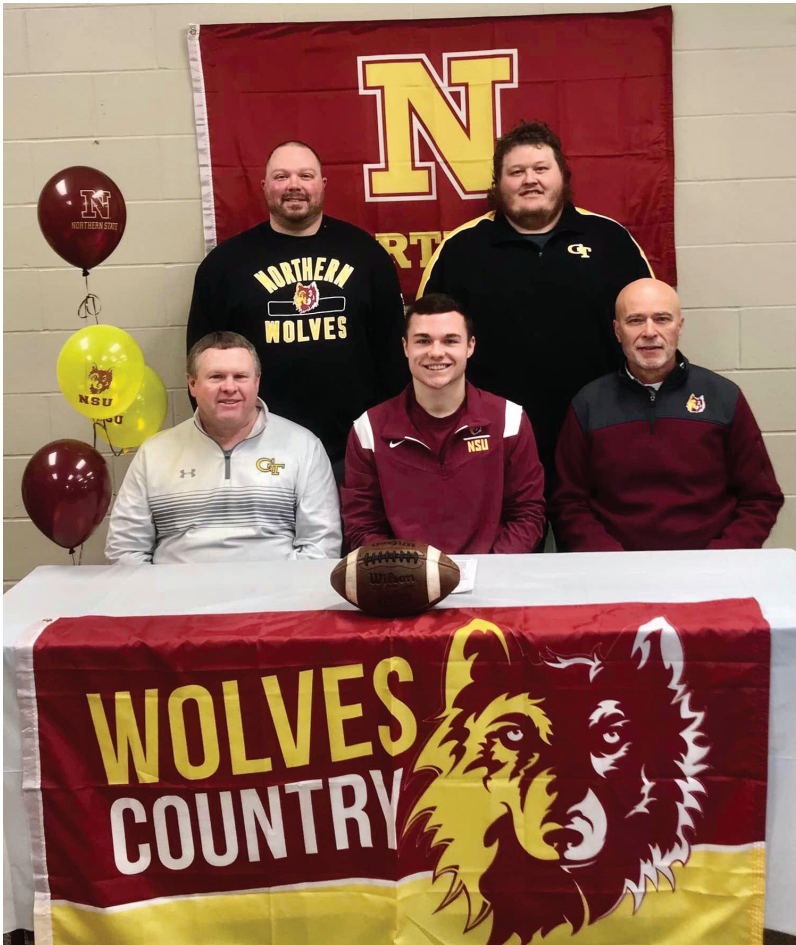
Alyssa Thaler – Girls game MVP
Jaden Zak – Boys 3 Point Shootout Champ
(Courtesy Photo)



Kaden Kurtz and Jayden Zak
(Courtesy Photo)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 6 of 84



Kurtz, Zak to continue playing basketball

Two Groton Area basketball players have signed up to play basketball on the college level. On the left, there was a signing ceremony with Kaden Kurtz. In that photo are Groton Area Assistant Football Coaches Seth Erickson and Dalton Locke in back, and in front are Travis Kurth, Kaden Kurtz and Groton Area Head Coach Shaun Wanner.

In the bottom photo, Jayden Zak is featured where he will be playing basketball at Dakota State University in Madison.

(Courtesy Photos)

Jayden Zak
Groton High School
Class of 2022
5'9" Guard

NAIA
NorthStar
DAKOTA STATE TROJANS
COMMITTED

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 7 of 84

That's Life by Tony Bender

Potpourri

At least no one got punched out

Well, they held the Grammys last weekend and by most measures, it was a success. At least no one punched anyone out. Americans are still scratching their heads over Will Smith, who once portrayed Muhammad Ali, whacking comedian Chris Rock onstage for disrespecting Jada Pinkett Smith at the Oscars. Rock gives up four inches and 40 pounds to Smith who at first laughed at Rock's bald joke but then decided to smack Rock a good one in defense of his wife's honor. I suppose you could call it a teachable moment because until that moment, I'd wager that few people knew what alopecia was. It was also kind of weird in that Smith may be the biggest cuckold in Hollywood. In their open marriage, Jada gets more action than the Fast & Furious franchise, and who's to judge, but it seems to me that honor, like Elvis, left the building long ago.

Suddenly, people are interested in women's swimming

Until a couple of weeks ago, most Americans couldn't have named a woman swimmer, but that all changed when Lia Thomas, a transgender athlete, won a national title in the 500-yard freestyle. I'm not going to pretend to know all the answers as to what's fair or whether being born a biological male gives Thomas an insurmountable advantage despite undergoing hormone replacement therapy. We should note that her time in the race was nine seconds off the record. Nine seconds. It does seem mean-spirited and disingenuous, though, for otherwise disinterested Americans to suddenly have expert opinions on the matter. After all, it's sports. Is it that important? I say live and let live.

Ashley, ND, man remains imprisoned in Ukraine

Friends and family of Kurt Groszhans of Ashley, ND, continue to hold their collective breath as Russia's relentless invasion of Ukraine continues. Groszhans remains behind bars and is accused of being involved in a conspiracy to kill Ag Minister Roman Leshchenko, a former business partner who Groszhans claims stole money from him. Leshchenko recently resigned. While I don't know Kurt more than in passing, I do know his family, and I have to say the charges, emerging from a country where corruption is rampant, strains credulity. Despite the efforts of North Dakota senators John Hoeven and Kevin Cramer, Groszhans remains trapped in a country under siege. One hopes Groszhans can be removed to a safe, neutral country where the charges against him can be sorted out. The circumstances are both harrowing and bizarre.

Hope springs eternal

While professional football has arguably eclipsed baseball as America's game, the pastoral elegance of baseball still tugs at the romantic within us. This season marks the 75th since Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier. It took until 1956 for the U.S. Supreme Court to declare bus segregation unconstitutional. More than any game, baseball has been tied to American society's freedoms and shortcomings. It took until 1975 for Major League Baseball to hire its first black manager—Frank Robinson. One wonders what records Josh Gibson and Satchel Page, who barnstormed around North Dakota, might have set had they been allowed to play. Meanwhile, in this neck of the woods, Minnesota Twins fans abound, and if you've been following the offseason trades and minor league shuffling, the team should be a contender. In baseball, hope springs eternal.

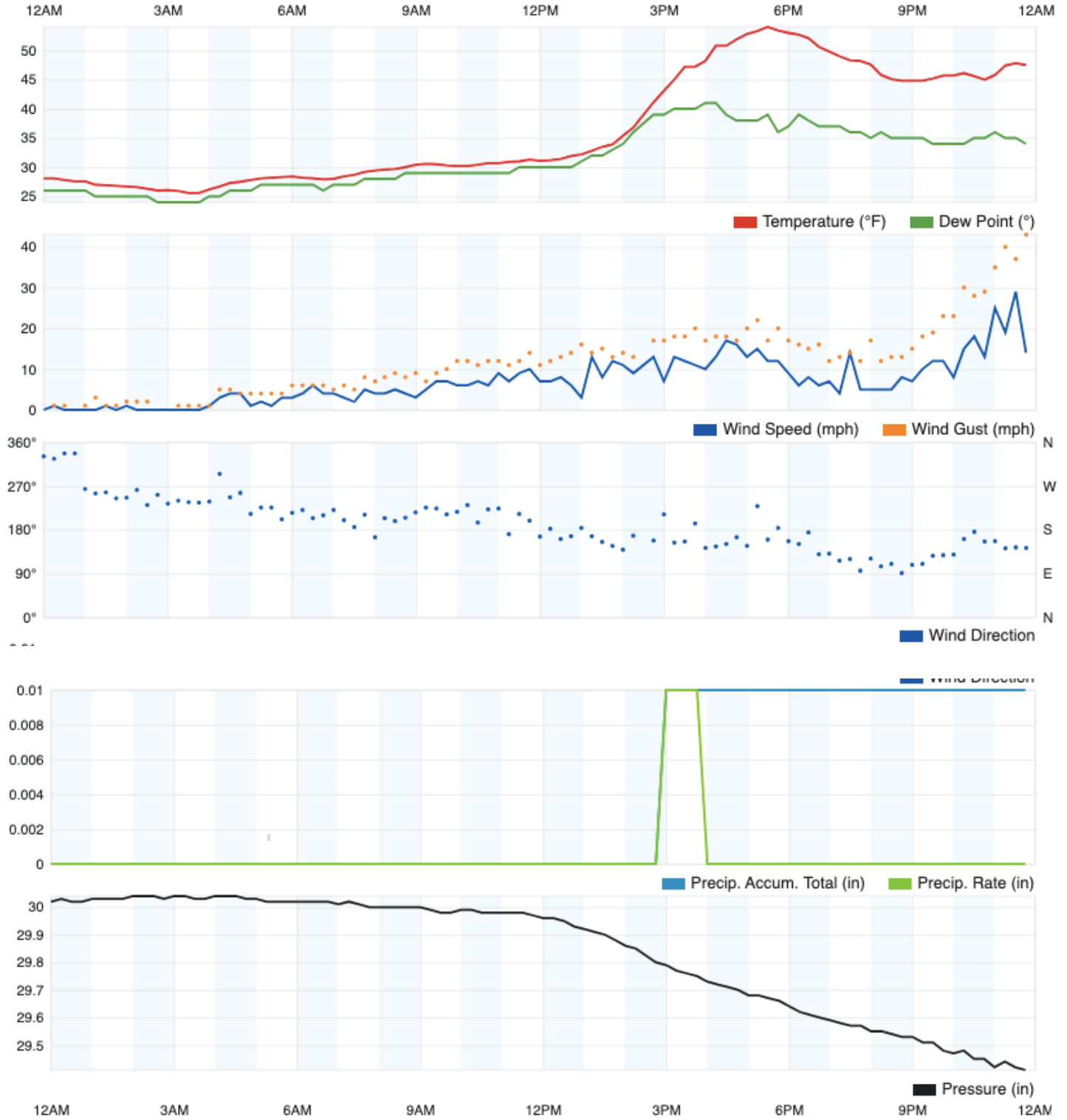
He's the boss of me

Theoretically, we own our pets, but anyone with a cat knows we are at best indentured servants terrorized by 10 pounds of fur and attitude. The running gag at my house is that I lost the custody battle and had to keep the cat—Squirrel, the World's Grumpiest Cat. Until spring decides exactly what it's going to do, cat owners are relegated to doorman duty. Our job is to hold the door open while the cat sniffs and contemplates actually going outside. This isn't likely to happen until June, but you're required to stand at the door while the inside temperature falls five degrees just in case today is the day. Ah well, Squirrel is 18-years-old. Age has its privileges.

Groton Daily Independent

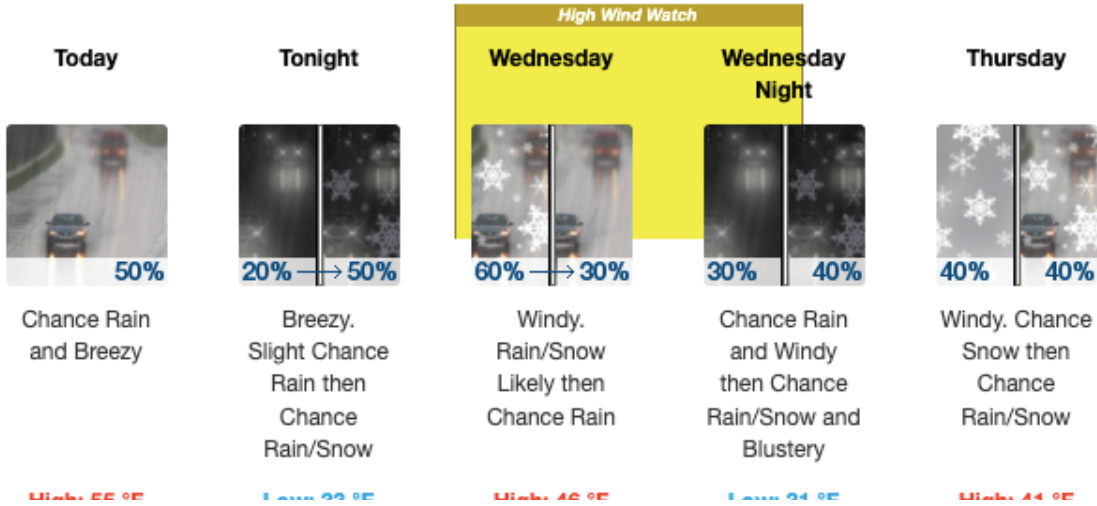
Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 8 of 84

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 9 of 84



Gusty Winds and Very High Fire Danger Today

- High temperatures in the 40s and 50s for most of the area.
- Dry fuels.
- Low humidity and gusty northwest winds into the early evening hours.

Red Flag Warning

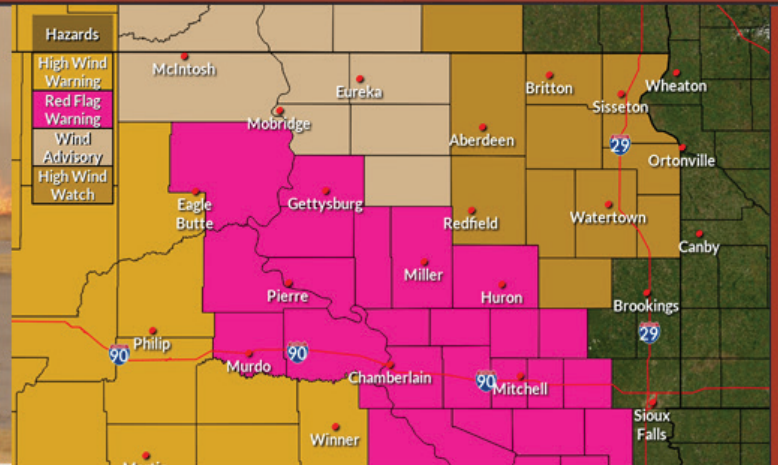
Be extremely careful with open flames.

The NWS issues a Red Flag Warning, in conjunction with land management agencies, to alert land managers to an ongoing or imminent **critical fire weather** pattern.

Critical fire conditions are ongoing/expected to occur within the **next 24 hours**.

Take action.

weather.gov/fire



WILDFIRE SAFETY

- Know your wildfire risk & prepare an emergency plan in advance
- Don't drive your vehicle onto dry grass or brush
- Practice safe towing
- Avoid power equipment that creates sparks
- Properly discard cigarettes
- Obey burn bans
- Evacuate if ordered to do so by local officials



weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Strong and gusty winds today will promote very high to extreme grassland fire danger today. Use extreme caution with incendiary devices. #sdwx #mnwx

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 10 of 84

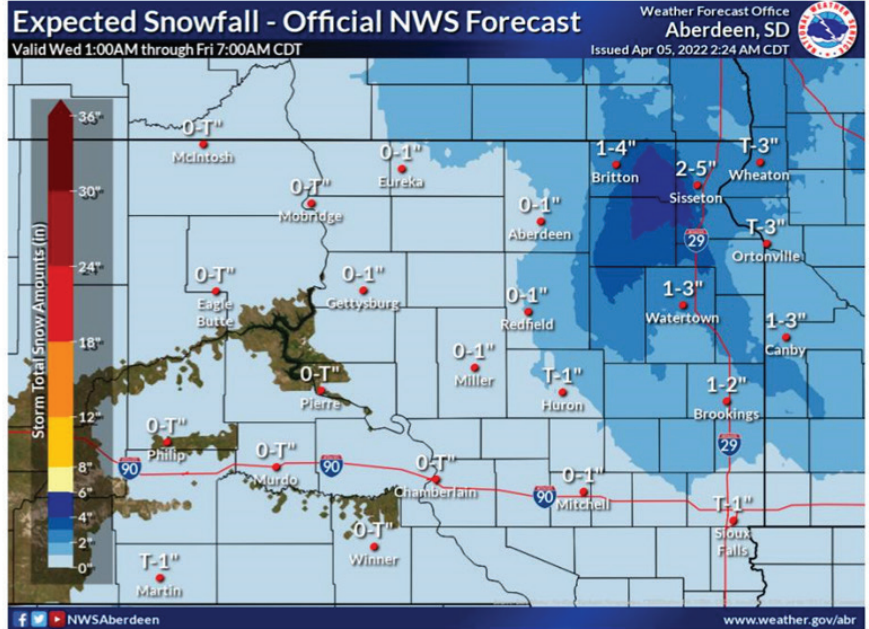


Snow Potential Tonight - Thursday

April 5, 2022
4:40 AM

Overview

- Accumulating snow possible Tonight-Thu
- Strong winds and snowfall may cause travel related impacts
- Graphic indicates forecast snowfall Tue night - Thursday night



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Snow accumulations possible mid to late week, especially over the Prairie Coteau. #sdwx #mnwx

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 11 of 84

Today in Weather History

April 5, 2000: High winds of 35 to 50 mph gusting to around 70 mph blew across central and north central South Dakota from the late morning to the late afternoon hours. As a result, several trees and many tree branches were downed, many structures, roofs, billboards, and road signs were damaged, a few mobile homes were overturned, and some power outages occurred. Not only did the high winds make driving challenging, but at some locations, they stirred up dirt causing visibilities to drop to near zero at times. Some detours and traffic collisions resulted due to the low visibility in blowing dirt. Airborne objects broke some windows across the area. One house had all of the windows on the front porch blown out. Also, a few semi tractor-trailers were tipped over by the high winds. Wind gusts included 60 mph at Pierre, 63 mph at Kennebec, 64 mph at Mobridge, 65 mph at Pollock, and 71 mph at McLaughlin. The high winds and extremely dry conditions combined with downed and arcing electrical lines, out of control burns, and smoldering embers from previous fires resulted in several grassfires across central and north central South Dakota. Several thousand acres of grassland, hundreds of hay bales and haystacks, along with some trees and fences were burned. Also, the smoke from some of these fires created low visibilities and difficult driving conditions on some roads.

1815: The Tambora Volcano in Java began erupting on this day. A few days later on the 10, Tambora produced the largest eruption known on the planet in the last 10,000 years. Ash from the volcano would circle the globe, blocking sunlight and leading to the unusually cold summer in 1816. On 6/6/1816, snow would fall as far south of Connecticut with some places in New England picking up 10 inches. On July 4th, 1816, the temperature at Savannah GA plunged to 46 degrees. Eastern North America and Europe had freezing nighttime temperatures in August.

1936: Approximately 454 people were killed in the second-deadliest tornado outbreak ever in U.S. More than 12 twisters struck Arkansas to South Carolina. An estimated F5 tornado cut a path 400 yards wide through the residential section of Tupelo, Mississippi. At least 216 people were killed, and 700 were injured. The tornado had a 15-mile long path and did \$3 million in damage. One of the survivors in Tupelo was a baby of an economically strapped family who had an infant they'd recently named Elvis Aaron Presley. Gainesville, Georgia had at least 203 fatalities and 934 injuries from an estimated F4 tornado that occurred early the following morning.

1945 - The temperature at Eagles Nest, NM, plunged to 45 degrees below zero to establish an April record for the United States. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1955 - The Northern Rockies and the Northern High Plains were in the midst of a four day storm which produced 52 inches of snow at Lead, located in the Black Hills of western South Dakota. (David Ludlum)

1972: An F3 tornado, touched down at a marina on the Oregon side of the Columbia River, and then tore through Vancouver, Washington. The tornado killed six people, injuring 300 others, and causing more than five million dollars damage. It was the deadliest tornado of the year and the worst on record for Washington.

1982 - An unprecedented April blizzard began in the northeastern U.S. One to two feet of snow fell across Massachusetts and Connecticut, and up to 26 inches was reported in Maine. New York City received a foot of snow. Winds reached 70 to 80 mph during the storm, and the storm also produced numerous thunderstorms, which contributed to the heavy snow. (Storm Data)

1987 - A storm produced unprecedented April snows in the central Appalachians. Mount Mitchell NC received 35 inches of snow, and up to 60 inches (six feet) of snow was reported in the mountains along the border of North Carolina and Tennessee. The total of 25 inches at Charleston WV easily surpassed their previous record for the entire month of April of 5.9 inches. The 20.6 inch total at Akron OH established an all-time record for that location. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the southwestern U.S. Afternoon highs of 100 degrees at Santa Maria CA and 105 degrees in Downtown Los Angeles established records for the month of April. (The National Weather Summary)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 12 of 84

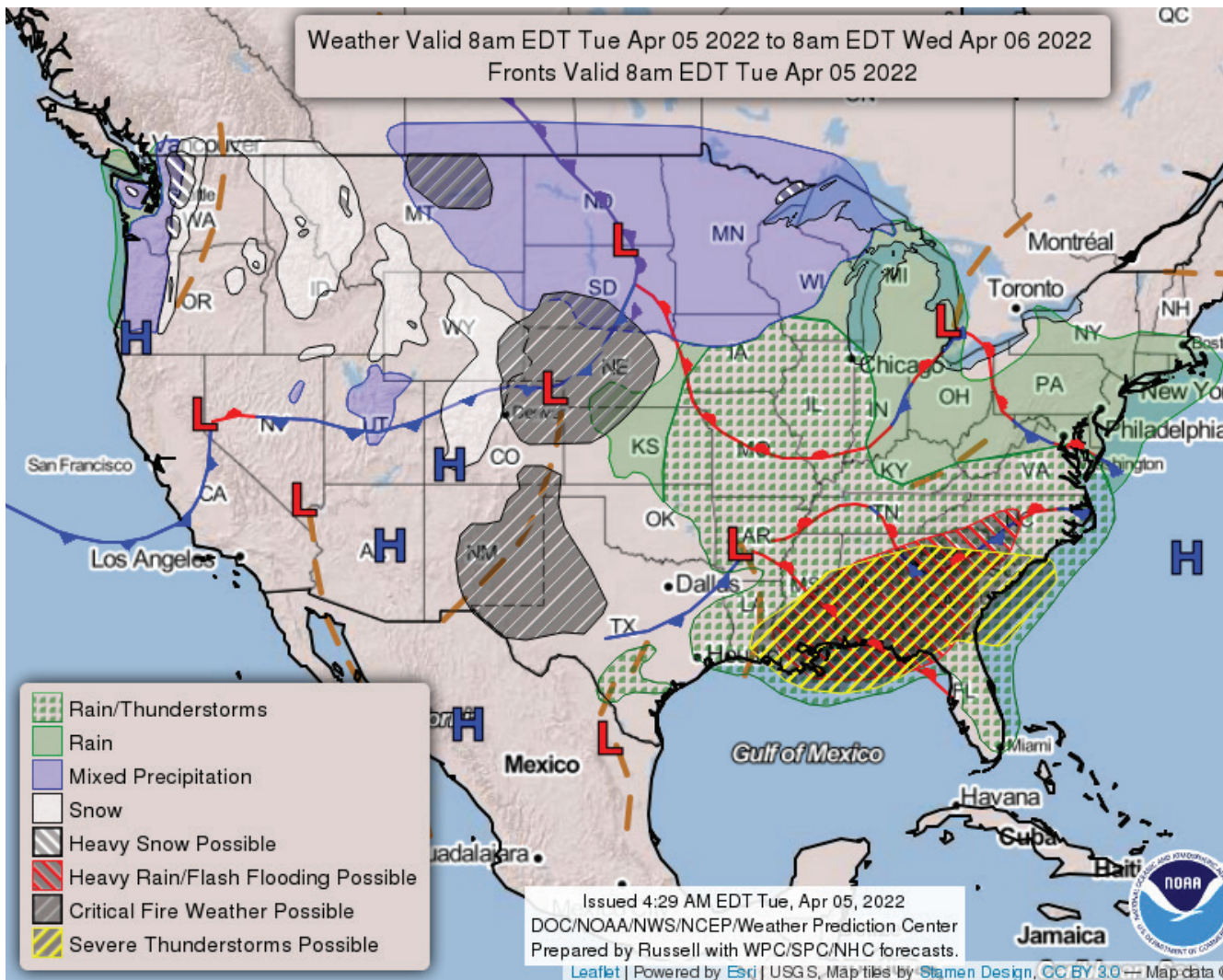
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 54 °F at 5:30 PM
Low Temp: 26 °F at 3:38 AM
Wind: 43 mph at 11:35 PM
Precip: 0.01

Day length: 13 hours, 04 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 86 in 1991
Record Low: 6 in 2007
Average High: 53°F
Average Low: 28°F
Average Precip in April.: 0.21
Precip to date in April.: 0.05
Average Precip to date: 2.27
Precip Year to Date: 1.85
Sunset Tonight: 8:07:02 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:07:02 PM



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 13 of 84



WHAT TO DO WITH TROUBLE

A young businessman, deeply troubled, went to his pastor. After a deep sigh, he said, "I have some huge problems. I don't know what to do, and I need your help. Will you pray with me?"

What a great way to look at problems: through the eyes of prayer. That was what David did. "I pour out my complaints before Him; before Him, I tell my trouble."

Whatever may have been troubling David was not as important as going to God in prayer. He did not go to his friends and complain. He did not go to the leaders of his army and gripe. Nor was he paralyzed in confusion or fear. He did what every godly person does: he went to God and prayed. And it was not an insincere prayer or a prayer that was meaningless. David "poured out" his complaints and troubles. He left his troubles, so to speak, "on the floor." He kept nothing inside of himself. He put it where God could see what was troubling him.

Far too often we go to others and complain about our troubles knowing that they can do no more than listen or offer us sympathy. Sometimes we sit and sulk and feel sorry for ourselves. Other times we climb into bed and try to hide from them by falling asleep - only to awaken and see them before us on the ceiling.

David did the most sensible thing that any of us can do: Go to God and "pour out" our "troubles" and look to God for His wisdom, guidance, and solutions. God knows the answer before we even identify the problem. So, it makes good sense to go to Him first!

Prayer: Please forgive us, Lord, for looking to others for help rather than You. Teach us to look to You first. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I pour out my complaints before Him; before Him, I tell my trouble. Psalm 142:2

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 14 of 84

2022 Community Events

- 01/30/2022 84th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
01/30/2022 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am – 1pm, Groton Community Center, 109 N 3rd St, Groton,
04/07/2022 Groton CDE
04/09/2022 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
04/09/2022 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/23/2022 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/24/2022 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/07/2022 Lions Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
St John's Lutheran Church VBS 9-11am
05/30/2022 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
Transit Fundraiser at the Community Center 4-7pm (Thursday Mid-June)
06/17/2022 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm Start
06/18/2022 Groton Triathlon
Ladies Invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration 10am Start
07/04/2022 Firecracker Couples Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start
(4th of July)
07/10/2022 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar 11am-1pm at the Groton Legion
Baseball Tourney
07/21/2022 Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
How can we... "Love Groton"? United Methodist Church 9:30am
Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20
Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm
08/05/2022 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
08/12/2022 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
United Methodist Church VBS 5-8pm
Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot
09/10/2022 Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm
09/11/2022 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm
Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/14/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am (2nd Friday in October)
10/01/2022 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/12/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course
Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm
01/29/2023 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 15 of 84

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$81 million

Powerball

02-32-39-46-69, Powerball: 6, Power Play: 2

(two, thirty-two, thirty-nine, forty-six, sixty-nine; Powerball: six; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$231 million

Mississippi joins states limiting outside election funding

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Mississippi is the latest Republican-led state to ban election offices from accepting donations from private groups for voting operations — a movement fueled by conservatives' suspicion of donations by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg in 2020.

Mississippi Republican Gov. Tate Reeves signed House Bill 1365 on Friday, and it will become law July 1. It says state or local officials who conduct elections cannot solicit or accept donations from any private group for "voter education, voter outreach or voter registration programs."

Reeves said in a video posted to Facebook on Monday that he was "deeply disturbed by big tech's attempt to influence the 2020 elections."

"Whether it was their attempt to silence conservative voices or suppress information they don't agree with, California's technology elites will stop at nothing to push their woke ideology on the American people," Reeves said. "Our elections cannot be left up to billionaires like Mark Zuckerberg, especially when groups like Facebook systematically silence conservative voices on their platforms."

Republicans control the Mississippi House and Senate. The final version of the bill passed the Senate 49-2 with bipartisan support. It passed the House 78-38 with opposition from Democrats.

Jessica Anderson is executive director of the conservative Heritage Action For America, which has pushed for such bans. She said in a statement Monday that the new law will prohibit the use of "Zuck Bucks."

"Mississippians deserve to have fair elections free from the outside influence of Big Tech billionaires," Anderson said.

Zuckerberg and his wife, Patricia Chan, donated \$400 million for elections operations across the U.S. in 2020 as officials were trying to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, the nonprofit Center for Tech and Civic Life distributed grants to 2,500 election offices nationwide. The money was spent in a wide variety of ways — protective gear for poll workers, public education campaigns promoting new methods to vote during the pandemic, and new trucks to haul voting equipment.

Louisiana's Republican attorney general in 2020 ordered his state's election offices to reject grants from the Center for Tech and Civic Life, which distributed \$350 million of the Zuckerberg money.

By 2021, at least eight Republican-led states had passed bans on private donations to elections offices. South Dakota Republican Gov. Kristi Noem signed a ban in March.

South Dakota AG had 2 close calls with police before crash

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravensborg's errant driving in 2020 twice caused police officers to hit their brakes to avoid collisions, records released by the state's Highway Patrol showed Monday, but he just received warnings until he struck and killed a pedestrian on the shoulder of

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 17 of 84

a highway.

The Highway Patrol's scrutiny of the attorney general's driving record is coming to light ahead of the state House meeting next week. Lawmakers will consider a majority report from a Republican-controlled impeachment investigation committee that recommended he not be impeached. However, Gov. Kristi Noem is pushing for Ravensborg's ouster, and the Highway Patrol is offering a public briefing for lawmakers on Wednesday.

The Highway Patrol records showed that a week before the Republican attorney general hit a man, Joseph Boever, walking on the shoulder of state Highway 14, he had been pulled over on the same highway for illegally pulling in front of a police car at an intersection in the city of Huron, roughly 70 miles from where the fatal accident happened. Ravensborg displayed his badge identifying himself as the state's top law enforcement officer and later told Huron police Officer Tanner Dornacher that he thought the intersection had a four-way stop sign.

Dornacher gave Ravensborg a verbal warning. But he also noted in a written account roughly seven weeks later that Ravensborg seemed unsure about the highway's driving lanes, stopping his vehicle in a "weird" spot inside one of the lanes. Before driving away, Ravensborg asked Dornacher if the highway had two lanes and whether he could drive in either of them. Dornacher told him he could.

As the attorney general has recounted the fatal crash to the public and criminal investigators, he has been unable to explain how his car came to hit Boever on the shoulder of Highway 14, in a spot where the highway narrows to a single driving lane in either direction.

Ravnsborg last year pleaded no contest to a pair of misdemeanors in the crash, including making an illegal lane change. He has cast the crash as a tragic accident, insisting he did not realize he hit a man until he returned to the scene the next day and found his body. A spokesman for Ravensborg did not immediately respond to a request for comment on his driving record.

Ravnsborg had also been issued a warning for making an improper lane change less than two months before the crash. Highway Patrol Trooper Nathan Moore wrote in an account of a July traffic stop that Ravensborg drove out of his lane on a road in Sioux Falls, nearly causing a collision.

"I had to hit my brakes and swerve to avoid being struck by the SUV," Moore stated in his account.

Ravnsborg racked up eight traffic stops, mostly for speeding, between taking office in 2019 and the crash, but had only been issued warnings. In five of those stops, Ravensborg either identified himself as the attorney general or displayed his badge, the Highway Patrol found.

Those traffic stops came on top of a long history of driving violations. Ravensborg had been pulled over more than 25 times, crash investigators found. However, he was in no danger of having his license suspended in South Dakota, where accumulated speeding tickets do not count against a driver's record.

The attorney general's driving record may also not matter much to lawmakers deciding whether to impeach him. The South Dakota House tasked the impeachment investigation committee with looking at Ravensborg's conduct specifically "surrounding" Boever's death. Republicans on the committee last week all voted for a majority report that argued his actions in the crash did not rise to the level of impeachment because they were not done as part of his official duty as attorney general.

Woman freed after less than 3 months for newborn's '81 death

A South Dakota woman who entered an Alford plea last year in the 1981 death of her newborn son was released on parole after serving less than three months in prison, as stipulated by the judge, state corrections officials said Monday.

Theresa Bentaas, 60, was granted parole March 17 but was not immediately released. In a notice Monday, corrections officials said Bentaas had been freed.

A passerby found Bentaas' newborn son wrapped in blankets in a Sioux Falls ditch that winter. An autopsy found that he likely died from exposure and a failure to assist in maintaining his airway during his birth.

The boy's death wasn't solved until 2019, when advances in DNA technology led investigators to charge Bentaas, who entered the Alford plea to a first-degree manslaughter charge last October. The plea means

she maintained her innocence but acknowledged that the evidence could lead a judge or jury to convict her.

South Dakota Circuit Judge Bradley Zell sentenced Bentaas in December to 10 years in prison but suspended nine of those years and said she should serve only two months. She also spent 73 days in jail before she went to prison.

Zell said during her sentencing hearing that it was unclear whether her son died from complications during birth or from her abandoning him outside during the winter.

Bentaas gave birth to the baby when she was 19, but defense attorneys told the court that she didn't know she was pregnant until the baby was born, when she found he wasn't breathing.

Ravnsborg impeachment probe to cost taxpayers at least \$87K

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The leader of the South Dakota House says impeachment proceedings into Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg will cost state taxpayers at least \$87,000.

Republican South Dakota House Speaker Spencer Gosch said Friday the House Select Committee on Investigation racked up the bills on attorney fees while it looked into the events surrounding a fatal crash with a pedestrian in 2020, the Argus Leader reported.

The committee this week issued a formal recommendation that Ravnsborg, 45, should not face impeachment. Before its decision, a special counsel directed the nine representatives through 10 separate meetings and hundreds of documents, videos, recordings and other materials.

Rapid City attorney Sara Frankenstein, the special prosecutor, said an email Saturday that she personally logged 208 hours working with the House Select Committee on Investigation. A paralegal working under her also billed 84 hours. Additional clerical work not reflected in those hours, Frankenstein said.

"That file was over 10,000 pages, not to mention how many hours of video and audio recordings," said Gosch, who also served as committee chairman. "Her and her team did a thorough and meticulous job."

A House committee concluded its monthslong inquiry last week by voting 6-2 on party lines to recommend that Ravnsborg, a Republican, be cleared in the death of Joseph Boever, who was walking near a rural highway. The attorney general last year pleaded no contest to a pair of misdemeanors and was required to pay fines.

Battle heats up over remaining federal rental assistance

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

In her office at a nonprofit in central Nebraska, Karen Rathke routinely encounters residents still stung by the pandemic and hoping to get help with their rent.

Rathke, president of the Heartland United Way, was hoping to tap into an additional \$120 million in federal Emergency Rental Assistance to help them. But that money, part of what's known as ERA2, is at risk after Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts said he doesn't want it.

Many other states have in recent months returned tens of millions of dollars in unused rental assistance because they have so few renters — but only Nebraska has flat out refused the aid.

"I'm very concerned about not having anything," Rathke said of the federal money, which can be allocated over the next three years for everything from rent to services preventing eviction to affordable housing activities.

"All these nonprofits, when people come to them asking for help, the bucket will be empty," she said. "It is hard to tell people no, to tell people that we don't have the funds to help them."

The debate is playing out across the country as the Treasury Department begins reallocating some of the \$46.5 billion in rental assistance from places slow to spend to others that are running out of funds.

States and localities have until September to spend their share of the first \$25 billion allocated, known as ERA1, and the second \$21.55 billion, known as ERA2, by 2025. So far, Treasury says \$30 billion has been spent or allocated through February.

Treasury announced earlier this month that over \$1 billion of ERA1 funds would be moved, for a total of \$2.3 billion reallocated this year. Larger states like California, New York, New Jersey and Texas are get-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 19 of 84

ting hundreds of millions of dollars in additional money. Native American tribes, including the Oglala Sioux Lakota in South Dakota and Chippewa Cree in Montana, are also receiving tens of millions of dollars in additional help.

Those losing money are almost all smaller Republican states with large rural populations and fewer renters. Many were slow to spend their share as required by program rules, so they either voluntarily returned money or had it taken. Some, like South Dakota, Wyoming and New Hampshire, unsuccessfully pitched to use the money for other things like affordable housing.

Treasury officials, housing advocates and many Republican governors argue there is still plenty of money to help renters in these states and that the reallocation gets money where it's most needed. Montana, for example, returned \$54.6 million but still has \$224.5 million. West Virginia returned more than \$42.4 million but still has \$224.7 million, according to Treasury.

"We are trying to reallocate the best we can," said Gene Sperling, who is charged with overseeing implementation of President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus rescue package. "This is a balancing act, but one that is rooted in commitment to getting the most funds to the most people in need as possible."

North Dakota returned \$150 million of its \$352 million, saying it couldn't effectively spend all the money by the deadline. The state believes the remaining funds are sufficient to meet the needs of those who are eligible.

Some Democratic lawmakers disagree.

"Outrageous and unacceptable: turning back rental assistance funds when applications are piling up and people are being evicted," tweeted Democratic Rep. Karla Rose Hanson, of Fargo.

South Dakota was forced to return more than \$81 million — though more than \$9 million went to Native American tribes in the state. Gov. Kristi Noem suggested the money was not necessary, adding: "Our renters enjoy something even better than government hand-outs: a job."

But Democratic Sen. Reynold Nesiba said there was a lack of awareness about the rental assistance and criticized the state for not doing more to promote it. He pointed to a \$5 million tourism advertising campaign that was paid for with coronavirus relief funds and questioned why that level of promotion didn't happen for pandemic relief programs.

Meanwhile, organizations that are helping administer the rental assistance still available expect a continued need. The state has long faced a run on affordable housing, which has only been exacerbated during the pandemic.

"Housing costs are just too high," said Sandy Miller, who coordinates the rental assistance program for an organization called Community Action in the western half of South Dakota. "It's harder for them to get in a home, it's harder for them to stay in their home."

Several states argued the reallocation addresses a flaw in the program, which created a funding formula based on population, not the number of renters in a state.

"Congress ... did not take into consideration Wyoming's small population, income levels, actual renters' needs, and that the majority of Wyoming households — 70% — are owner occupied," said Rachel Girt, the state's rental assistance communication coordinator, after the state returned \$164 million out of \$352 million. Another \$2.8 million was shifted to the Northern Arapaho Tribal Housing Program and Eastern Shoshone Housing Authority.

Josh Hanford, commissioner of the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, noted that the \$352 million it received far surpassed the \$25 million given to Memphis, which has a similar population.

"As long as we're able to serve all our eligible households, hopefully folks will see that there is greater need in other parts of the country that have received a lot less assistance per household," Hanford said when asked about the state returning \$31 million.

In Nebraska, the loss of funds is projected to hit rural areas hardest.

The state program already reallocated \$85 million of its \$158 million in ERA1 to its biggest cities of Omaha and Lincoln and their respective counties. It still has nearly \$30 million. Without the additional \$120 mil-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 20 of 84

lion in ERA2 money, an analysis by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Center on Children, Families and the Law found that tenants in Omaha and Lincoln will still have help after September, but those in other counties will not.

Ricketts, the Nebraska governor, defended the decision not to take the additional money.

The state "has received and distributed an unprecedented amount of federal funding to help Nebraskans weather the storm over these past two years," he wrote in an opinion column. "But at a certain point, we must acknowledge that the storm has passed and get back to the Nebraska Way. We must guard against becoming a welfare state where people are incentivized not to work and encouraged to rely on government handouts well after an emergency is over."

But housing advocates say his decision will leave many vulnerable tenants without a lifeline. Tenants in rural areas often have access to fewer resources, including affordable housing, internet access and reliable transport.

Lawmakers passed a bill last month requiring the state to apply for the money. But Ricketts vetoed the bill, saying the state "must guard against big government socialism." If lawmakers don't override his veto, the money is likely to be reallocated by Treasury to other states.

"We know from communities across Nebraska that the need is not only there, but is fairly severe," said Erin Feichtinger, director of policy and advocacy for the social service agency Together.

"There is really no good reason to pass up these funds. It's money that is allocated to Nebraskans," she said. "Nothing bad will happen if we accept this funding, but lots of bad things can if we don't."

Stacey Abrams reaches millionaire status before 2nd campaign

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — When Democrat Stacey Abrams first ran for Georgia governor in 2018, her lackluster personal finances and a hefty bill from the IRS gave Republicans fodder to question how she could manage a state budget when she struggled with her own debts.

As she launches a second bid this year, that's no longer an issue.

Abrams now says she's worth \$3.17 million, according to state disclosures filed in March. That's compared with a net worth of \$109,000 when she first ran four years ago.

Her rapid ascent into millionaire status corresponds with her rise in national politics. Since her 2018 defeat to Republican Brian Kemp, Abrams has become a leading voting rights activist. She was considered as a potential running mate to President Joe Biden and is widely credited with organizing voters in Georgia to help him become the first Democrat to carry the state in the presidential vote in 28 years. Along the way, she has earned \$6 million, mostly driven by \$5 million in payments for books and speeches.

That wealth has exposed her to a different line of criticism from Republicans, who hope to portray Abrams this year as an elitist out of touch with average Georgians. Garrison Douglas, a spokesperson for the national Republican Party, accused Abrams of using her campaign "as a platform for her own financial gain." During a rally in the state last month, former President Donald Trump knocked her for "living in these gorgeous multi-multi-million-dollar houses."

Abrams hasn't purchased a home for a price tag exceeding \$1 million, and Trump spends much of his year living at his lavish Mar-a-Lago resort. The leading Republicans seeking the nomination for governor — incumbent Brian Kemp and challenger David Perdue — are far wealthier than she is.

In an interview, Abrams said it was ironic for Republicans to criticize her financial success, something the party often praises as the result of hard work.

"It is remarkable to me that success is now being demonized by the Republicans," she said. "I believe in success. I believe that every person should have the opportunity to thrive. And because I had three years where I was in the private sector, I leveraged all three years, and in that time, I've done my best to not only be successful personally, but to do what I can to help Georgians."

Many politicians build their wealth after they reach high office. That's not the case for Abrams, whose loss vaulted her to a level of celebrity unusual for someone whose highest office so far is minority leader

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 21 of 84

of the Georgia House of Representatives. She particularly cashed in on her status in 2021 before announcing her second bid for governor, with her income spiking to \$3.65 million.

Seth Bringman, an Abrams campaign spokesperson, said she gave 37 paid speeches in 2021, including a 12-stop fall tour of stand-alone appearances. She's written, co-written or reissued six books since 2019, with another reissue on the way later this year.

Abrams was also paid more than \$700,000 over three years as executive director of the Southern Economic Advancement Project, an affiliate of the Roosevelt Institute that seeks to improve economic equity in the South. Abrams has reported no income from Fair Fight Action, the voting rights group she founded and formerly chaired.

Abrams, who last year released a business book with a longtime business partner, also reports investments in a number of companies. Some are longtime holdings including Now Account Network Corp., which finances businesses by buying invoices. Abrams in November joined the board of Heliogen, a California company that seeks to use sunlight to concentrate heat for industrial processes, electricity generation and hydrogen fuel production. Abrams reported \$65,000 in Heliogen stock.

Kemp has a net worth of about \$8.5 million, with assets mostly in real estate he developed before running for governor. Perdue is even wealthier, reporting a net worth of \$50 million after a career in which he was CEO of corporations including Dollar General and Reebok. Kemp had an income of \$551,000 in 2021, while Perdue had an income of \$9.3 million.

Kemp criticized Abrams in 2018 for owing \$54,000 to the IRS, self-employment taxes she didn't pay on time. Abrams said then that she skipped the payments because her parents needed financial help with raising a granddaughter and medical bills.

"You can delay IRS payments. You can't delay cancer treatments," Abrams said at the time.

Abrams also had \$96,000 in student loan debt and \$83,000 in accumulated credit card debt in 2018. She only had a positive net worth because a publisher had paid a \$150,000 advance on her first nonfiction book. In that book, "Minority Leader," Abrams wrote that she borrowed at a time when "my understanding of personal finance barely scratched the surface."

She paid off her student loans and credit card debt in 2019. When she first ran for governor, Abrams had a paltry retirement account of less than \$5,000. Now she has more than \$725,000 in stocks and bonds.

As her financial picture has brightened, Abrams has also traded up from her old townhouse to a larger new house.

The \$975,000 property she bought just outside the Atlanta city limits near Emory University in 2020 is financed by a \$760,000 mortgage, according to Abrams' financial disclosure. She bought her parents a \$370,000, 3,300-square-foot house in suburban Atlanta in 2019, owing more than \$280,000 on a mortgage, records and disclosures show.

It's unclear how much Abrams is paying in taxes or how much she is donating to charity, although her assets include \$560,000 set aside in a "tax account." Bringman said Abrams would release her returns later this year after she files her 2021 taxes.

Kemp spokesperson Tate Mitchell said the incumbent believes the state financial disclosure is sufficient, but will provide further documentation later "if necessary." Perdue spokesperson Jenni Sweat said Perdue filled out state and federal disclosure forms and has been "transparent about his finances," but didn't directly answer whether he would release his tax returns.

Marko Klasnja, a Georgetown University professor who has studied the causes and consequences of politicians' wealth, said that "in the U.S., people don't care about wealth per se, and I don't think that they would think that's a negative, necessarily."

"I don't think this is going to hurt Abrams that much, and I think, if people know this is coming from things like book deals, they're going to be thinking about this differently than, 'She's lining her pockets because she's on boards of corporations and things like that.'"

France: EU could target Russian oil, coal in new sanctions

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 22 of 84

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Tuesday that there is a “total determination” from all 27 European Union countries for sanctions against Russia that could target oil and coal over evidence its troops deliberately killed Ukrainian civilians.

Europe’s dependence on Russian oil, natural gas and coal means finding unanimity on energy measures is a tall order, but the reports of the killings outside Kyiv have increased pressure for tougher EU sanctions.

So far, Europe has not been willing to target Russian energy over fears that it would plunge the European economy into recession. In some ways, it would be easier for Europe to cut off Russian oil than natural gas because most oil supplies come by tanker and could be purchased from others. But talk of a possible boycott of Russian oil already has helped push up global oil prices this week.

Asked whether there was a political willingness to impose sanctions on Russian oil and coal — a move suggested this week by French President Emmanuel Macron — Le Maire said: “We will see what the position of the other member states will be, but I think there is a possibility to have unity on the 27 member states on these new sanctions.”

He did not mention natural gas, and a consensus on targeting the fuel that is used to generate electricity and heat homes would be even more difficult to secure. The EU gets about 40% of its natural gas from Russia and many EU countries, including Germany — the bloc’s largest economy — are opposed to cutting off gas imports.

France holds the presidency of the EU Council, and Le Maire spoke ahead of a meeting of EU finance ministers in Luxembourg, where they will discuss possible new measures to punish the Kremlin.

While the EU has stayed away from sanctioning Russian energy so far, individual countries have announced efforts to draw down their reliance: Poland said it plans to block imports of coal and oil from Russia, while Lithuania said it’s no longer using Russian natural gas.

The European Union gets about 25% of its oil from Russia, while the EU imported 53% of hard coal from the country in 2020, which accounted for 30% of the EU’s hard coal consumption.

While coal and oil may be up for discussion, Teresa Ribera, Spain’s Minister for Ecological Transition, said Tuesday that it is “very hard” for the EU to sanction Russian natural gas because some of the bloc’s countries are dependent on it for their energy supply and that the EU’s strength lies in its unity.

“It is very difficult to explain to European public opinion and Ukrainian society that we are still importing Russian energy that finances this war,” she said, adding that energy imports create “obvious moral tension.”

European importers pay about \$850 million per day for Russian oil and natural gas.

Russian natural gas mostly comes by fixed pipeline and would be harder to replace suddenly with shipments of expensive and scarce liquefied natural gas. While oil might be easier to cut off than gas, ditching it would not be without consequences.

For one, the resulting price increases for other oil could increase the incentive for India and China, who aren’t taking part in Western sanctions, to buy cheaper Russian crude. Russia is also a major supplier of diesel fuel; if that supply were lost, operating diesel-powered trucks and farm equipment could quickly become more expensive, fueling already high inflation in Europe.

Oil prices rose as buyers seeking to avoid Russian oil bid for limited supply from other producers like Saudi Arabia, commodities analysts at German bank Commerzbank said.

International benchmark Brent rose 3% on Monday and traded Tuesday above \$108 per barrel, up another 1%. US crude rose 1.1% to \$104.37 on Tuesday. Crude prices had fallen after U.S. President Joe Biden last week announced the release of 180 million barrels of oil over six months from strategic reserves. Higher oil prices mean more expensive gasoline for U.S. drivers.

The next package of EU sanctions will be prepared by the EU’s executive arm, the European Commission, which will then present it to EU countries for approval.

Democratic, GOP Senate bargainers reach \$10B COVID agreement

By ALAN FRAM and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 23 of 84

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate bargainers have reached agreement on a slimmed-down \$10 billion package for countering COVID-19 with treatments, vaccines and other steps, the top Democratic and Republican negotiators said, but ended up dropping all funding to help nations abroad combat the pandemic.

The compromise drew quick support Monday from President Joe Biden, who initially pushed for a \$22.5 billion package. In a setback, he ended up settling for much less despite administration warnings that the government was running out of money to keep pace with the disease's continued — though diminished — spread in the U.S.

"Every dollar we requested is essential and we will continue to work with Congress to get all of the funding we need," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki. "But time is of the essence. We urge Congress to move promptly on this \$10 billion package because it can begin to fund the most immediate needs."

Biden and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., his party's lead bargainer, abandoned Biden's request to include \$5 billion to help countries — especially poorer ones — where the disease is still running rampant.

The inability of Biden and top Democrats to protect the additional spending they wanted came after the two parties gridlocked over GOP demands to pay for it by pulling back unspent aid from earlier pandemic measures. It also reflected the diminished political force that battling COVID-19 has this election year, two years into a pandemic that began with bipartisan support for throwing trillions of dollars at it.

Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah, the lead GOP bargainer, hailed the accord as one that would address "urgent COVID needs." He also trumpeted the measure's savings, which he said meant it "will not cost the American people a single additional dollar."

Still uncertain Monday was whether objections by some Republicans might prevent the Senate from considering the bill this week, as Biden wants, before Congress begins a two-week spring recess. It was also not yet certain there would be the minimum 10 GOP votes needed for passage in the 50-50 chamber.

In the House, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and many liberals have criticized the ejection of global assistance. But leaders signaled they were ready to accept compromise.

While short of Biden's agreement full request, "this package will fulfill immediate needs to secure more vaccines, boosters, testing and therapeutics to keep the pandemic at bay — and it must be enacted as quickly as possible," Pelosi set in a statement released overnight.

Schumer said the agreement would provide "the tools we need" to help the country recover from the economic and public health blows that COVID-19 has inflicted. But he said while the \$10 billion "is absolutely necessary, it is well short of what is truly needed to keep up safe" over time.

He said members of both parties want to craft a second spending measure this spring that could include funds to battle COVID-19 and hunger overseas and more assistance for Ukraine as it continues battling the Russian invasion. The fate of such a measure is uncertain.

Romney also suggested an openness to considering future money. "While this agreement does not include funding for the U.S. global vaccination program, I am willing to explore a fiscally responsible solution to support global efforts in the weeks ahead," he said.

The agreement comes with BA.2, the new omicron variant, expected to spark a fresh increase in U.S. cases. Around 980,000 Americans and over 6 million people worldwide have died from COVID-19.

At least half the agreement's \$10 billion would be used to research and produce therapeutics to treat the disease, according to fact sheets from Schumer and Romney.

The money would also be used to buy vaccines and tests. At least \$750 million would be used to research new COVID-19 variants and to expand vaccine production, the descriptions said.

Administration officials have said the government has run out of money to finance COVID-19 testing and treatments for people without insurance. They've also said funds are running low for boosters, vaccines focused on specific variants, free monoclonal antibody treatments and care for people with immune system weaknesses.

The deal is also a reduction from a \$15 billion version that both parties' leaders negotiated last month. Pelosi abandoned that plan after Democratic lawmakers rejected proposed cuts in state pandemic aid to help pay for the package.

Democrats from both chambers complained about the eliminated global spending.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., leader of the House Progressive Caucus, said it is "a big problem" to erase the international assistance and "not spend money on making sure this virus is contained around the world."

Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., a leading foreign policy voice, said he would back the bill but called it a "grave mistake" to not help other countries' efforts. He called it "fiscally foolish" to not send tens of millions of unused U.S. vaccines abroad to the 2.8 billion unvaccinated people worldwide.

The measure is fully paid for by pulling back unspent funds from previous pandemic relief bills that have been enacted, bargainers said.

Romney's fact sheet says that includes \$2.3 billion from a fund protecting aviation manufacturing jobs; \$1.9 billion from money for helping entertainment venues shuttered by the pandemic; another \$1.9 billion from a program that helps states extend credit to small businesses; and \$1.6 billion from agriculture assistance programs.

Ukraine's leader to brief top UN body on alleged massacres

By OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI Associated Press

BUCHA, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's president planned to address the U.N.'s most powerful body on Tuesday after even more grisly evidence emerged of civilian massacres in areas that Russian forces recently left. Western nations expelled dozens more of Moscow's diplomats and weighed further sanctions as they expressed their revulsion at what they say are war crimes.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's speech to the Security Council will be rich with symbolism, but the invite and other displays of Western support are unlikely to alter the situation on the ground. He says his forces desperately need more powerful weaponry, some of which the West has been reluctant to give. Russia's veto guarantees the body will take no action, and it was unclear whether its representatives would even remain in the chamber for the video address.

Ukrainian officials said the bodies of at least 410 civilians have been found in towns around Kyiv that were recaptured from Russian forces and that a "torture chamber" was discovered in the town called Bucha, from which some of the grimmest details have emerged.

Associated Press journalists in Bucha have counted dozens of corpses in civilian clothes. Many appeared to have been shot at close range, and some had their hands bound or their flesh burned. A mass grave in a churchyard held bodies wrapped in plastic. The Ukrainian prosecutor-general's office said the bodies of five men with their hands bound were found in the basement of a children's sanatorium where civilians were tortured and killed.

High-resolution satellite imagery by commercial provider Maxar Technologies showed that many of the bodies had been lying in the open for weeks, during the time that Russian forces were in the town. The New York Times first reported on the images showing the dead.

Russia has repeatedly rejected the allegations, with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov dismissing the scenes outside Kyiv as a "stage-managed anti-Russian provocation."

Russia has sought to refute similar accusations against its forces in the past by accusing its enemies of forging photos and video, and of using so-called crisis actors. Western officials and independent reporters say Russia spreads disinformation to mask its actions.

As Western leaders condemned the killings in Bucha, Germany, France, Italy and Denmark expelled dozens of Russian diplomats on Monday and Tuesday, saying they were spies. U.S. President Joe Biden said Russian President Vladimir Putin should be tried for war crimes.

In another show of support, European Union Commission President Ursula von der Leyen plans to travel to Kyiv to meet with Zelenskyy this week. The 27-nation EU has been a steadfast backer of Ukraine since the Russian invasion began on Feb. 24 and has already pushed through four rounds of sanctions. A fifth round is being considered this week.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 25 of 84

But Western nations are divided over how far to go. Some are calling for a boycott of Russian oil and gas imports, while Germany and others fear that such a move could plunge the continent into a severe economic crisis. And countries from the NATO alliance have refused to hand over some of the most powerful weaponry Zelenskyy has asked for, like fighter jets.

Their provision of other weapons and equipment has been credited with helping Ukraine mount a stiffer than expected resistance to Russia's superior firepower.

That resistance stopped Russian forces from overrunning the capital, and their troops are now in retreat from areas around Kyiv. About two-thirds of the Russian troops around the city have left and are either in Belarus or on their way there, said a U.S. defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an intelligence assessment.

The official said they were probably getting more supplies and reinforcements. Other Western and Ukrainian officials have warned many are merely regrouping. Some are already redeploying to the east, where Russian-backed separatists have been battling Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region since 2014.

Zelenskyy appealed again Monday for more weaponry to face down this coming offensive.

"If we had already got what we needed — all these planes, tanks, artillery, anti-missile and anti-ship weapons — we could have saved thousands of people," he said.

The president's video addresses to European capitals have become near daily affairs and have helped to rally military, financial and diplomatic support for his country — but the speech to the Security Council could be even more dramatic, with all eyes the reaction of any Russian representatives present.

The Ukrainian military says that, in the Donbas, Russia is focused on seizing the cities of Popasna and Rubizhne in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and the Azov Sea port of Mariupol, which has seen weeks of heavy fighting at a staggering cost to the city and its residents.

"The enemy is regrouping troops and concentrating its efforts on preparing an offensive operation in the east of our country," it said in a statement. "The goal is to establish full control over the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions," which Russia has recognized as independent.

Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said seven humanitarian corridors will be open on Tuesday, including from besieged Mariupol, where 1,500 civilians were able to escape in private vehicles on Monday, as well as the Russian-controlled Berdyansk.

But it was not immediately clear whether Russia has agreed to halt the fighting along the corridors. Previous efforts to bring civilians to safety through humanitarian corridors have failed because of renewed fighting.

An international Red Cross team gave up on entering Mariupol at least for Tuesday, after several days of trying to deliver aid to the besieged city and help escort civilians out.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said the team was held overnight held by police in Manhush, west of Mariupol, but later released. It did not identify the nationality of the police, but Manhush has been under Russian control for weeks.

Amazon's first US union overcomes hurdles, faces new ones

By HALELUYA HADERO and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — When a scrappy group of former and current warehouse workers on Staten Island, New York went head-to-head with Amazon in a union election, many compared it to a David and Goliath battle.

David won. And the stunning upset on Friday brought sudden exposure to the organizers and worker advocates who realized victory for the nascent Amazon Labor Union when so many other more established labor groups had failed before them, including most recently in Bessemer, Alabama.

Initial results in that election show the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union down by 118 votes, with the majority of Amazon warehouse workers in Bessemer rejecting a bid to form a union. The final outcome is still up in the air with 416 outstanding challenged ballots hanging in the balance. A hearing to review the ballots is expected to begin in the coming weeks.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 26 of 84

Chris Smalls, a fired Amazon worker who heads the ALU, has been critical of the RWDSU's campaign, saying it didn't have enough local support. Instead, he chose an independent path, believing workers organizing themselves would be more effective and undercut Amazon's narrative that "third party" groups were driving union efforts.

"They were not perceived as outsiders, so that's important," said Ruth Milkman, a sociologist of labor and labor movements at the City University of New York.

While the odds were stacked against both union drives, with organizers facing off against a deep-pocketed retailer with an uninterrupted track record of keeping unions out of its U.S. operations, ALU was decidedly underfunded and understaffed compared with the RWDSU. Smalls said as of early March, ALU had raised and spent about \$100,000 and was operating on a week-to-week budget. The group doesn't have its own office space, and was relying on community groups and two unions to lend a hand. Legal help came from a lawyer offering pro-bono assistance.

Meanwhile, Amazon exercised all its might to fend off the organizing efforts, routinely holding mandatory meetings with workers to argue why unions are a bad idea. In a filing released last week, the company disclosed it spent about \$4.2 million last year on labor consultants, who organizers say Amazon hired to persuade workers not to unionize.

Outmatched financially, Smalls and others relied on their ability to reach workers more personally by making TikTok videos, giving out free marijuana and holding barbecues and cookouts. A few weeks before the election, Smalls' aunt cooked up soul food for a union potluck, including macaroni and cheese, collard greens, ham and baked chicken. Another pro-union worker got her neighbor to prepare Jollof rice, a West African dish organizers believed would help them make inroads with immigrant employees at the warehouse.

Kate Andrias, professor of law at Columbia University and an expert in labor law, noted a successful union — whether it is local or national — always has to be built by the workers themselves.

"This was a clearer illustration of this," Andrias said. "The workers did this on their own."

Amazon's own missteps may have also contributed to the election outcome on Staten Island. Bert Flickinger III, a managing director at the consulting firm Strategic Resource Group, said derogatory comments by a company executive leaked from an internal meeting calling Smalls "not smart or articulate" and wanting to make him "the face of the entire union/organizing movement" backfired.

"It came out as condescending and it helped to galvanize workers," said Flickinger, who consults with big labor unions.

In another example, Smalls and two organizers were arrested in February after authorities got a complaint about him trespassing at the Staten Island warehouse. The ALU used the arrests to its advantage days before the union election, teaming up with an art collective to project "THEY ARRESTED YOUR CO-WORKERS" in white letters on top of the warehouse. "THEY FIRED SOMEONE YOU KNOW," another projection said.

"A lot of workers that were on the fence, or even against the union, flipped because of that situation," Smalls said.

Experts note it's difficult to know how much of ALU's grassroots nature contributed to its victory when compared with the RWDSU. Unlike New York, Alabama is a right-to-work state that prohibits a company and a union from signing a contract that requires workers to pay dues to the union that represents them.

There was also a grassroots element to the union drive in Bessemer, which began when a group of Amazon workers there approached the RWDSU about organizing.

At a virtual press conference Thursday held by the RWDSU following the preliminary results in Alabama, president Stuart Appelbaum said he believed the election in New York benefited because it was held in a union-friendly state and Amazon workers on Staten Island voted in person, not by mail as was done in Alabama.

Despite some friction in the leadup to the elections, the two labor groups have had a friendlier public relationship in the past few days Appelbaum praised Smalls during Thursday's press conference, calling him a "charismatic, smart, dedicated leader." Likewise, Smalls offered the RWDSU words of encourage-

ment after their initial election loss.

For now, ALU is focusing on its win. Organizers say Amazon workers from more than 20 states have reached out to them to ask about organizing their warehouses. But they have their hands full with their own warehouse, and a neighboring facility slated to have a separate union election later this month.

Organizers are also preparing for a challenging negotiation process for a labor contract. The group has demanded Amazon officials to come to the table in early May. But experts say the retail giant, which has signaled plans to challenge the election results, will likely drag its feet.

"The number one thing is going to be fighting for the contract," Smalls said. "We have to start that process right away because we know the longer drawn out the contract is, workers will lose hope and interest."

Meanwhile, some workers are waiting to see what happens.

Tinea Greenway, a warehouse worker from Brooklyn, said before the election, she felt pressured by the messages she kept hearing both from Amazon and ALU organizers, and just wanted to make the decision herself. When the time came, she voted against the union because of a bad experience she's had in the past with another union who she says didn't fight for her.

"They won," she said of the ALU. "So let's see if they live up to the agreement of what they said they were going to do."

Biden-Obama: White House reunion to celebrate health law

By ZEKE MILLER and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The last time President Barack Obama was in the White House was on Jan. 20, 2017, when he left to escort his successor — bent on overturning "Obamacare" — to the Capitol to be inaugurated.

Obama returns to the White House on Tuesday for a moment he can savor. His signature Affordable Care Act is now part of the fabric of the American health care system, and President Joe Biden is looking to extend its reach. Sign-ups under the health law have increased under Biden's stewardship, and more generous taxpayer subsidies have cut costs for enrollees, albeit temporarily.

Biden and Obama are marking the 12th anniversary of the law that back in 2010 the then-vice president had memorably called a "big (expletive) deal." Its staying power has been enhanced by three Supreme Court victories and an emphatic thumbs-down vote by the late Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., which took the wind out of President Donald Trump's efforts to repeal and replace it.

The law was such a bugaboo in 2010 that Democrats rarely invoked it as they went into a midterm election that turned out to be, in Obama's own words, a "shellacking." Now, Democrats are hoping the political equation will work to their advantage, and that a focus on shoring up the tween-age health law can help them avoid a debacle at the polls this November.

In addition to talking health care at the White House, Biden and Obama plan to meet for lunch, recalling their weekly ritual when Biden served as Obama's vice president.

"They are real friends, not just Washington friends," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki. She indicated that the two presidents would also discuss Russia's invasion of Ukraine and other world events.

Obama likes to refer to his health care law as a "starter home" that Americans can build upon, gradually reducing the 9% share of the population that remains uninsured. The rate was nearly 15% in 2013, before the coverage provisions of the law took effect. Between the health law's Medicaid expansion and its health insurance markets, more than 30 million people are now estimated to be getting coverage.

Shortly after taking office, Biden opened up the health insurance markets to anyone seeking coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic, and his coronavirus relief bill provided a significant, though temporary, increase in financial assistance. The result was a record 14.5 million people signed up for subsidized private coverage.

When it comes to how to keep that trend going, Obama and Biden have no shortage of options to discuss.

The Biden administration has been working on a fix to what's known as the law's family glitch, a quirk estimated to be keeping about 5 million people from getting coverage under the law. The White House

announced the new policy proposal Tuesday.

People tripped up by the family glitch are dependents of workers who have an offer of employer coverage that the government interprets as being affordable. As a rule, people with affordable employer coverage are not eligible for taxpayer-subsidized ACA plans.

But the issue with the current interpretation is that affordability is determined by the cost for employee-only coverage, and not more expensive family policies. Workers able to afford their own share may not be able to cover premiums for the entire family. So the family is cut out of ACA coverage.

A Biden administration regulation addressing the issue recently cleared White House review. The intent of the original policy was to prevent people with employer coverage from going into the health law's subsidized markets, but advocates say it has proven too restrictive.

The White House estimates that the fix would help 200,000 people get insurance and bring costs down for nearly 1 million more.

There are more fundamental issues for the two presidents to consider as well, both policy-wise and politically.

Unless Democrats in Congress finally coalesce around a version of Biden's social legislation, his enhanced financial assistance for millions purchasing ACA plans will expire at the end of this year. A return to higher premiums would likely trigger an increase in the number of uninsured people, a political embarrassment for Democrats committed to expanding coverage.

The Biden legislation, which passed the House but sputtered in the Senate, also includes a mechanism for providing coverage to as many as 4 million uninsured low-income adults in states that have refused the health law's Medicaid expansion. It would deliver on Biden's campaign promise to build on existing government programs to move the U.S. closer to coverage for all.

Sarajevans mark siege anniversary with thoughts of Ukraine

By SABINA NIKSIC Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — Sarajevo was paying a subdued tribute this week to the resilience of its citizens who survived the longest military siege in modern history, and commemorating thousands of others who did not.

Many of the survivors said they found the 30th anniversary of the start of the siege of the Bosnian capital particularly hard because they were marking it against the backdrop of what they described as similar suffering being inflicted on civilians in Ukraine by Russia's occupying army.

Bosnian Serb forces, armed and backed by neighboring Serbia, laid siege to Sarajevo on April 6, 1992, during the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia. For the next 46 months, about 350,000 residents remained trapped in their multiethnic city, subjected to daily shelling and sniper attacks and cut off from regular access to electricity, food, water, medicine and the outside world. They survived on limited humanitarian supplies provided by the United Nations, drank from wells and foraged for food.

"The world used to watch us suffer and now we just watch (Ukrainians) suffer and there is nothing we can do to help them," said Arijana Djideliija, a 52-year-old primary school teacher. "It is a very strange and difficult feeling," she added.

Djideliija was a newly employed, young teacher when the siege of Sarajevo began, and she immediately joined a local volunteer effort to educate tens of thousands of children who remained trapped in the city.

As Serb gunners took positions on the hills surrounding Sarajevo and trained their guns at its schools, hospitals, markets and residential buildings for nearly four years, Djideliija and her colleagues held classes in improvised classrooms, set up in basements and abandoned shops or apartments around the city, risking their lives for education.

In the winter of 1993, a mortar slammed into one of Djideliija's school's improvised classrooms in the Sarajevo suburb of Dobrinja, killing her colleague Fatima Gunic and three children, all under 10.

But the war schools, classroom friends and teachers were the only "semblance of a normal life" Sarajevo children had at the time, Djideliija said, so "after crying and honoring our dead, we continued to teach,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 29 of 84

such was our will to protect the sanity of our young, to give them an education.”

Similar acts of defiance are being honored this week in numerous exhibitions, art installations, concerts and performances in Sarajevo. At the start of the week, a large piece of white cloth was suspended by local artists between the residential buildings flanking one of the busiest street crossings in downtown Sarajevo. A similar cloth stood there and in other urban intersections during the siege to hide terrified Sarajevans from Serb snipers and gunners deployed around their city. This week, the fabric is being used to project wartime photographs of Sarajevo civilians running for cover from or falling victims to Serb snipers.

More than 11,000 people, including over 1,000 children, were killed by snipers and mortars as they went about their daily lives in Sarajevo during the siege. Countless others were wounded.

When the war began, most Sarajevo men of fighting age abandoned their jobs to join a ragtag volunteer army controlled by the country’s multiethnic government which defended the city against the takeover by Bosnian Serb rebels. Others offered their special skills for the defense of their city.

“I could have left, but I never regretted the decision to stay in Sarajevo and help it survive,” said Dr. Dragan Stevanovic, a recently retired internist, who spent the war years treating hundreds of sick and injured civilians and soldiers in one of the city’s two main hospitals.

“We had no electricity nor most other things that a modern hospital and normal operating theaters need to function. There was no light, no heating, we could not properly sterilize medical instruments, we had no elevators, we had nothing” Stevanovic recalled, his voice trailing off.

“But we improvised, and we did it well,” he quickly added. Surgeons, he said, performed surgeries in the windowless basement of his hospital — one of the Serbs’ favorite targets during the siege — sometimes under candlelight, doctors and nurses boiled surgical instruments and bedding in large barrels of water to sterilize them.

Being a direct witness to the physical suffering of his city’s residents, Stevanovic said, was a painful, but also a pride-inspiring experience.

“It proved to me that what we were told in school was true, that everything a man wills is possible, that medicine is much more than what one can find in textbooks and the rules of the medical profession,” he added.

Still, it makes the ongoing struggle of Ukrainian health care professionals to do their jobs under Russian bombardment “all too familiar and thus very painful,” Stevanovic said.

Similar sentiment was echoed by Mirsad Palic, 58, as he waited Monday evening to be served a small plate of pasta boiled in hot water, without spices or sauce, under a tent erected in central Sarajevo for a commemorative presentation of the city’s wartime cuisine.

Palic recalled how in May 1993 his wife gave birth to their first child, a son, in a makeshift clinic set up in the basement of a local administration building in their Sarajevo neighborhood. “I panicked because I could not believe that my first child would be born in a dark basement, on top of a wooden desk, but it was all over in 20 minutes and we were sent back home with our baby.”

In 1995, in the final months of the war which he had spent as a Bosnian army soldier, witnessing many of his brothers in arms getting killed or mutilated inside the city and on the front lines around it, Palic’s wife gave birth to his second child — a daughter.

“I am afraid that the war did not affect only those of us who remember it well, but that we are also transferring our traumas onto our kids,” Palic said.

He added that these days he is doing his best to shield his now-adult children from the television images of Ukrainian civilians brutally killed in their cities by Russian soldiers, “to allow them to have a more cheerful, less frightening life than mine.”

“They do not have to share my fear that this new, familiarly brutal war in Europe will spread out, reach us and send us back to where we were,” three decades ago, he added.

Murkowski, Romney back Jackson, all but assure confirmation

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, BECKY BOHRER and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 30 of 84

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Mitt Romney say they will vote to confirm Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson's historic elevation to the Supreme Court, giving President Joe Biden's nominee a burst of bipartisan support and all but assuring she'll become the first Black female justice.

The senators from Alaska and Utah announced their decisions Monday night ahead of a procedural vote to advance the nomination and as Democrats pressed to confirm Jackson by the end of the week. GOP Sen. Susan Collins of Maine announced last week that she would back Jackson, noting her "stellar qualifications" as a federal judge, public defender and member of the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

All three Republicans said they did not expect to agree with all of Jackson's decisions, but they found her extremely well qualified. Romney said Jackson "more than meets the standard of excellence and integrity." Murkowski said she will "bring to the Supreme Court a range of experience from the courtroom that few can match given her background in litigation."

With three Republicans supporting her in the 50-50 split Senate, Jackson is on a glide path to confirmation and on the brink of making history as the third Black justice and only the sixth woman in the court's more than 200-year history. Beyond the historic element, Democrats have cited her deep experience in nine years on the federal bench and the chance for her to become the first former public defender on the court.

Both Collins and Murkowski said they believed that the Senate nomination process has become broken as it has become more partisan in the past several decades.

Murkowski, who is up for reelection this year, said her decision partly rests "on my rejection of the corrosive politicization of the review process for Supreme Court nominees, which, on both sides of the aisle, is growing worse and more detached from reality by the year."

After the vote, Murkowski said she had "assumed a level of risk" but "there's three of us that found ourselves in this place where I believe the strength, qualifications of the candidate are such that are appropriate for the court."

Biden nominated Jackson to replace retiring Justice Stephen Breyer, who will step down after the court's session ends this summer. Biden has sought bipartisan backing for his pick, making repeated calls to senators and inviting Republicans to the White House. White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday that administration officials would work the phones until the last minute to maximize support.

"Judge Jackson will bring extraordinary qualifications, deep experience and intellect, and a rigorous judicial record to the Supreme Court," Biden tweeted earlier Monday. "She deserves to be confirmed as the next justice."

The Senate's 53-47 vote Monday evening was to "discharge" Jackson's nomination from the Senate Judiciary Committee after the panel deadlocked, 11-11, on whether to send the nomination to the Senate floor.

The committee vote, split along party lines, was the first deadlock on a Supreme Court nomination in three decades.

The Judiciary committee's top Republican, Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley, said he opposed Jackson's nomination because "she and I have fundamental, different views on the role of judges and the role that they should play in our system of government."

The committee hadn't deadlocked since 1991, when Biden was chairman and a motion to send the nomination of current Justice Clarence Thomas to the floor with a "favorable" recommendation failed on a 7-7 vote. The committee then voted to send the nomination to the floor without a recommendation, meaning it could still be brought up for a vote.

Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky set the tone for most of his party last week when he said he "cannot and will not" support Jackson, citing GOP concerns raised in hearings about her sentencing record and her backing from liberal advocacy groups.

Republicans on the Judiciary panel continued their push Monday to paint Jackson as soft on crime, defending their repeated questions about her sentencing on sex crimes.

"Questions are not attacks," said Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee, one of several GOP senators on the panel who hammered the point in the hearings two weeks ago.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 31 of 84

Jackson pushed back on the GOP narrative, declaring that “nothing could be further from the truth” and explaining her reasoning in detail. Democrats said she was in line with other judges in her decisions. And on Monday they criticized their GOP counterparts’ questioning.

“You could try and create a straw man here, but it does not hold,” said New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker.

The questioning was filled with “absurdities of disrespect,” said Booker, who also is Black. He said he will “rejoice” when Jackson is confirmed.

Derrick Johnson, president and chief executive officer of the NAACP, expressed disappointment with the committee tie, even as he noted that Jackson had cleared an important hurdle. He said “history will be watching” during the full Senate vote later this week.

Jayhawks rally, rock North Carolina 72-69 to win NCAA title

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Best. Comeback. Ever. Sounds pretty good next to Rock Chalk, Jayhawk.

What looked like a lost cause turned into one of the sweetest wins ever for Kansas.

The Jayhawks brought their fourth NCAA title back to Allen Fieldhouse on Monday thanks to a second-half flurry that erased a 16-point deficit and eventually overcame North Carolina 72-69 in an epic battle of power programs.

It was the largest comeback in national championship history, surpassing the 1963 title game when Loyola overcame a 15-point deficit to beat Cincinnati at the buzzer, 60-58.

“We just locked in as a family, as a team, and that’s what we do,” said Kansas big man David McCormack, after making last two baskets of the game. “We overcome the odds. We overcome adversity. We’re just built for this.”

McCormack scored the go-ahead bucket from close range with 1:21 left, then another at the 22-second mark to put the Jayhawks ahead by three.

North Carolina missed its final four shots, including Caleb Love’s desperation 3 at the buzzer. His heave came up short after officials ruled that Kansas guard DaJuan Harris Jr., stepped out on an inbounds pass with 4.3 seconds left.

The Tar Heels went scoreless over the final 1:41. They couldn’t find an answer for KU over the final 20 minutes.

“They were penetrating and doing whatever they wanted,” Love said.

After McCormack’s go-ahead bucket, Love drove to the basket but his shot got blocked. North Carolina grabbed an offensive rebound and got the ball to Armando Bacot under the bucket. But he lost his footing and turned it over, then limped off the court, unable to return.

“I thought I really got the angle that I wanted and then I just rolled my ankle,” Bacot said.

That put Brady Manek, not as good a defender, on McCormack, and the Kansas big man backed in Manek for the shot that put the Jayhawks ahead by three.

“When we had to have a basket, we went to Big Dave, and he delivered,” said Kansas coach Bill Self, who has two of the program’s four championships.

McCormack and Jalen Wilson led KU with 15 points each. Christian Braun scored 10 of his 12 in the second half and transfer Remy Martin had 11 of his 14 over the final 20 minutes. The Jayhawks outscored Carolina 47-29 in the second half.

“When we saw our own blood, we didn’t panic and we came out the second half coming in hot,” Self said. “I was thinking at the 14-minute mark, ‘There’s no way these guys can play for 20 minutes defense like this,’ but they did.”

The Tar Heels shot 11 for 40 in the second half.

But it was Kansas that couldn’t buy a basket late in the first half, as Carolina ran over and around the Jayhawks during a 16-0 run. The Tar Heels led 40-25 at the break. Then, top-seeded KU (34-6) started trapping and pressing more, moving the ball around on offense, and Carolina started getting a taste of what everyone else has this season: You can’t stop ‘em all.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 32 of 84

The Jayhawks went on a 31-10 run to take a six-point lead at the 10-minute mark and set up a fantastic finish.

Bacot had 15 points and 15 rebounds to become the first player to record double-doubles in all six tournament games. He finished the season with 31 double-doubles, but it was not enough. Carolina was trying to join 1985 Villanova as only the second 8 seed to win March Madness.

Instead, the Tar Heels (29-10) fell one win short and dropped to 6-6 all-time in title games. This was their record 21st — and possibly most unlikely — trip to the Final Four. They made it to the final by beating Duke in a back-and-forth thriller and sending Blue Devils coach Mike Krzyzewski into retirement.

"I can't remember a time in my life where I should be disappointed," said rookie UNC coach Hubert Davis, who was trying to become the first person to lead a team to a title in his first full year as head coach. "But I am filled with so much pride."

A great season — but the banner will hang in Lawrence.

And McCormack, thanks to his late-game heroics, will go down in KU lore, along with Mario Chalmers (2008), Danny Manning (and the miracles in 1988) and the rest of the Kansas greats.

This title was three years in the making. KU was 28-3 and the odds-on favorite heading into March of 2020. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and stopped both the Jayhawks, and the season, in their tracks.

Seven players from that roster are on this one, as well. In some of their minds there were no "what-might-have-beens" about 2020 -- they knew they would have won it. They won this one instead, and showed, once again, it's never good to count them out.

While this wasn't quite the 47-15 beatdown they put on Miami over the final 20 minutes in the Elite Eight, it was still darn impressive given the circumstances.

Ochai Agbaji, who was named the Final Four's most outstanding player, finished with 12 points and found breathing room after UNC's lockdown guard, Leaky Black, got his fourth foul 6 minutes into the second half.

"This is a special group of guys," Agbaji said. "We're going down in history. All I got to say is, 'Rock Chalk, baby.'"

Shooters still at large following mass killing in Sacramento

By ADAM BEAM and KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A suspect believed connected to the mass shooting in Sacramento was arrested, but the multiple shooters police believe fatally shot six people and wounded 12 on a crowded street in California's capital are still on the loose.

More than 100 shots were fired early Sunday in downtown Sacramento, creating a chaotic scene with hundreds of people trying desperately to get to safety. A day later police announced the arrest of Dandrae Martin, 26, as a "related suspect" on charges of assault with a deadly weapon and being a convict carrying a loaded gun. A court appearance was set for Tuesday.

Detectives and SWAT team members found one handgun during searches of three area homes.

The arrest came as the three women and three men killed were identified. The shooting occurred at about 2 a.m. Sunday as bars were closing and patrons filled the streets near the state Capitol. The fallen included a father of four, a young woman who wanted to be a social worker, a man described as the life of the party, and a woman who lived on the streets nearby and was looking for housing.

The Sacramento County coroner identified the women killed as Johntaya Alexander, 21; Melinda Davis, 57; and Yamile Martinez-Andrade, 21. The three men were Sergio Harris, 38; Joshua Hoye-Lucchesi, 32; and De'vazia Turner, 29.

Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg read their names during a vigil Monday evening attended by grieving relatives, friends and community members.

"So we gather here to remember the victims and to commit ourselves to doing all we can to ending the stain of violence, not only in our community but throughout the state, throughout the country, and throughout the world," Steinberg said.

Turner, who had three daughters and a son, was a "protector" who worked as the night manager at an

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 33 of 84

inventory company, his mother, Penelope Scott, told The Associated Press. He rarely went out, and she had no reason to believe he would be in harm's way when he left her house after he visited Saturday night.

"My son was walking down the street and somebody started shooting, and he got shot. Why is that to happen?" Scott said. "I feel like I've got a hole in my heart."

The burst of gunshots sent people running in terror in the neighborhood just a few blocks from the arena where the NBA's Sacramento Kings play.

Police were investigating whether the shooting was connected with a street fight that broke out just before gunfire erupted. Several people could be seen in videos scrapping on a street lined with an upscale hotel, nightclubs and bars when gunshots sent people scattering.

Detectives also were trying to determine if a stolen handgun found at the crime scene was connected to the shooting, Police Chief Kathy Lester said. Witnesses answered her plea for help by providing more than 100 videos and photos of evidence.

District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert noted Martin was not arrested on suspicion of homicide, but suggested investigators were making progress.

"The investigation is highly complex involving many witnesses, videos of numerous types and significant physical evidence," Schubert said in a statement. "This is an ongoing investigation and we anticipate more arrests in this case."

Martin was held without bail and was scheduled to appear in Sacramento County Superior Court on Tuesday, according to jail records.

Martin was freed from an Arizona prison in 2020 after serving just over 1 1/2 years for violating probation in separate cases involving a felony conviction for aggravated assault in 2016 and a conviction on a marijuana charge in 2018. Court records show he pleaded guilty to punching, kicking and choking a woman in a hotel room when she refused to work for him as a prostitute.

It was not immediately clear whether Martin had an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

Of the 12 wounded, at least four suffered critical injuries, the Sacramento Fire Department said. At least seven of the victims had been released from hospitals by Monday.

At the scene where the chaos erupted, memorials with candles and flowers began to grow on the same sidewalks where video showed people screaming and running for shelter as others lay on the ground writhing in pain.

A small bouquet of purple roses was dedicated to Melinda Davis, who lived on the streets for years, with a note saying "Melinda Rest In Peace."

Politicians decried the shooting, and some Democrats, including President Joe Biden, called for tougher action against gun violence.

California has some of the nation's toughest restrictions on firearms, requiring background checks to buy guns and ammunition, limiting magazines to 10 bullets, and banning firearms that fall into its definition of assault weapons.

But state lawmakers plan to go further. A bill getting its first hearing Tuesday would allow citizens to sue those who possess illegal weapons, a measure patterned after a controversial Texas bill aimed at abortions.

Other proposed California legislation this year would make it easier for people to sue gun companies and target unregistered "ghost guns," firearms made from build-it-yourself kits.

The California Assembly held a moment of silence Monday in honor of the victims. Assemblymember Kevin McCarty, a Democrat who represents Sacramento, noted lawmakers could see the crime scene from the building's balcony.

"Tragic is too small of a word to describe what occurred just two nights ago as a devastating loss for our city," McCarty said.

Sudanese go hungry as prices spiral upward in wake of coup

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Each day brings new financial burdens for Ikhlas Zakaria, a single mother of six who sells

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 34 of 84

cups of tea at a roadside stand in a provincial town in Sudan. Prices for basic goods have skyrocketed, and at times she can only provide one meal a day for her children.

The cost of the water she boils for tea has doubled. Two of her children dropped out of school a few months ago to work in the fields, but their earnings are shrinking as dry spells hurt harvests.

"The situation has become impossible," said Zakaria who lives in the war-ravaged Darfur region and whose husband left several years ago.

Across Sudan, living conditions have rapidly deteriorated since an October military coup sent an already fragile economy into free-fall. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and currency devaluations have compounded the economic pain.

The Oct. 25 military takeover upended Sudan's transition to democratic rule after three decades of repression and international isolation under autocratic President Omar al-Bashir. The African nation has been on a fragile path to democracy since a popular uprising forced the military to remove al-Bashir and his Islamist government in April 2019.

The coup also stalled two years of efforts by the deposed government of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok to overhaul the economy with billions of dollars in loans and aid from major Western governments and international financial institutions. Such support was suspended after the coup.

The previous government also floated its currency to stop black market trading.

"The economy has been shrinking since the revaluation and this has been exacerbated after the coup," said Sabna Imam, a Sudanese economics researcher at Erasmus University Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

But a more recent devaluation has pushed prices higher: In March, the Sudanese pound slipped further, at one point trading at 800 to the dollar. It recovered some value but by then the damage was already done.

It triggered dramatic price increases for bread, fuel, electricity, medicine, health care and public transportation. In February, inflation reached nearly 260%, according to the country's census agency. Such figures are expected to be even greater for March.

Volker Perthes, the U.N. envoy to Sudan, warned last month that the country is now at risk of missing critical World Bank and International Monetary Fund deadlines and the prospect of some \$50 billion in debt relief is no longer secure.

"The combined effects of conflict, economic crisis and poor harvests will likely double the number of people facing acute hunger to about 18 million people by the end of this year," he told the U.N. Security Council.

Many of Sudan's more than 45 million people are already living in poverty.

In Nyala, West Darfur's provincial capital, where Zakaria lives, the price of sugar and petrol is twice what it was weeks ago. To make ends meet, Zakaria raised the price of a cup of tea by 50%. Some of her customers can't afford that now.

In the capital of Khartoum, relentless anti-coup protests have paralyzed the city as protesters barricade streets to pressure the generals. With the latest bout of inflation, people were forced to cut their consumption by half, according to Ahmed al-Tayeb, who sells groceries in one of the city's main markets.

He said he's seen significant shortages in basic goods partly because of the closure of main highways linking the capital to Red Sea ports and the Egyptian border to the north.

Two U.N. agencies — the World Food Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization — are warning that the worst is yet to come.

The FAO said 5.6 million people are affected by the dry spells in addition to the 9.8 million people who are food insecure due to the economic crisis. It said this season's rain level in most provinces is less than normal, with lengthy dry spells expected into the summer.

The two agencies said recent bouts of violence in the Darfur and Kordofan regions have damaged farms and left many jobless.

"In Sudan, we are currently sailing into the perfect storm," said Carl Paulson, the WFP's head of program in the country. He said a number of factors are to blame, most recently Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The invasion has driven up prices of fuel and food worldwide, but this is a bigger issue for poor countries

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 35 of 84

in Africa and the Middle East, which depend heavily on imports to feed growing populations. Russia and Ukraine are the source of 87% of Sudan's imported wheat.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said more than \$1.9 billion is needed in 2022 to provide assistance and protection to 14.3 million people in Sudan.

Sudan has for years struggled with an array of economic woes. The country was plunged into an economic crisis when the oil-rich south seceded in 2011 after decades of war, taking with it more than half of public revenues and 95% of exports.

Sudan was also an international pariah after it was placed on the United States' list of state sponsors of terror early in the 1990s. This largely excluded the country from the global economy and prevented it from receiving loans from international institutions like the IMF.

Former President Donald Trump removed Sudan from the blacklist after the transitional government agreed to pay \$335 million in compensation for victims of attacks carried out by Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network while the terror leader was living in Sudan. The removal also was an incentive for Sudan to normalize ties with Israel.

Imam, the economic researcher, said Sudan had been expecting \$700 million in the 2022 budget in foreign loans and aid to ease the burden of austerity measures, including the currency flotation and slashing of subsidies for bread and fuel.

But with suspension of such aid, the military-led government has increased taxes and other fees by 145%. "This adds to people's sufferings," she said.

The 6 lives lost in the Sacramento mass shooting

By ADAM BEAM and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A father of four. A best friend with a positive personality. A vivacious party-goer. The six people who were killed during a mass shooting in California's capital city were remembered by their friends and family Monday as police worked to piece together what happened.

Dozens of rapid-fire gunshots rang out early Sunday in the crowded streets of Sacramento, leaving three women and three men dead and another 12 people wounded. On Monday, small memorials with candles, balloons and flowers had been placed near the crime scene.

Investigators were searching for at least two shooters who were responsible for the violence on the outskirts of the city's main entertainment district that occurred as bars and nightclubs were closing. Sacramento police said Monday that they booked Dandrae Martin, 26, as a "related suspect" on charges of assault with a deadly weapon and being a convict carrying a loaded gun. Jail records said he was held without bail and was scheduled to appear in court Tuesday. It was not immediately clear whether Martin had an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

Few details have been made public as investigators comb through evidence gathered from what Police Chief Kathy Lester called a complex crime scene. Witnesses have submitted more than 100 videos and photos taken during and shortly after the shooting.

The Sacramento County coroner released the identities of the six people killed. They were Johntaya Alexander, 21; Melinda Davis, 57; Yamile Martinez-Andrade, 21; Sergio Harris, 38; Joshua Hoye-Lucchesi, 32; and De'vazia Turner, 29.

DE'VAZIA TURNER

De'vazia Turner had four young children, including a 3-year-old daughter named Penelope with sticky fingers. But his bright yellow Mercedes CLS was always clean.

Born and raised in Sacramento, Turner played football from a young age until a knee injury slowed him down. He worked as a manager for an inventory company, keeping a close eye on things his mother might like and letting her know when they would go on sale.

"He was a protector," his mother, Penelope Scott, said. "Raising him as a single mom, you know, he took the role of being the man of the house. He took care of everything."

He worked out with his dad, Frank Turner, five days a week. When they weren't pumping iron, they

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 36 of 84

were probably talking about cars. They both had old Buicks – Turner’s was a 1973 while his dad’s was a 1970 – and Turner had big plans for his. He had just ordered a new stereo and a steering wheel with a cherrywood finish.

Frank Turner said he plans to finish his son’s car, including painting it to include images of De’vazia’s face for his kids to see.

“I want them to see their daddy when they see that car,” Frank Turner said.

De’vazia had visited his mother on Saturday, eating leftover pork chops and taking a shower before briefly falling asleep on her couch. When he woke up, he said he was going out – a rarity for him, because he works so much, Scott said.

Scott woke up at around 1 a.m. and couldn’t get back to sleep. She was looking at her phone when she got a call that her son had been killed.

“Your kids are supposed to bury you. You’re not supposed to do that,” she said. “I’m grateful that he has a legacy with his children. However, you know, he’s 29. He didn’t make it to 30.”

The last time Frank Turner saw his son was at the auto shop where they were working on their cars. After his son’s death, a friend called Frank Turner and told him the shop’s security cameras had picked up their conversation.

He watched the video — a father and son spending time together on something they loved — and he cried.

JOHNTAYA ALEXANDER

Alexander was just shy of turning 22 when she was killed, her father told the Los Angeles Times. Her birthday was at the end of the month.

She hoped to become a social worker who worked with children and was a doting aunt to her nieces and nephews, John Alexander told the newspaper.

His daughter’s name was a combination of his own and his older sister’s, he told the Times.

“She was just beginning her life,” he told the newspaper, sobbing. “Stop all this senseless shooting.”

MELINDA DAVIS

Davis was a “very sassy lady” who lived on the streets of Sacramento near the shooting site, The Sacramento Bee reported.

Shawn Peter, a guide with the Downtown Sacramento Partnership who had known Davis for 15 years, told the newspaper that she had been homeless and lived in the area on and off for a decade.

Officials had helped her find housing before the pandemic began but she had returned to the downtown business district in recent months, Peter said. A small bouquet of purple roses with a note saying “Melinda Rest In Peace” was left on the street in her memory.

“Melinda was a very eccentric individual, a very sassy lady,” he told the newspaper. “This was her world, 24/7.”

Davis was a periodic guest at Maryhouse, a daytime center for women and children experiencing homelessness, from 2016 to 2018, director Shannon Stevens said in an email to The Associated Press. Stevens recalled her as kind but someone who did not do well in crowds. She was seeking housing services at the time.

“This was a space she came to find respite from the trauma of living on the streets of our city,” Sacramento Loaves & Fishes, which runs the Maryhouse program, said in a statement.

SERGIO HARRIS

Described by family members as the life of the party, Harris was a frequent presence at the London nightclub, which is near the shooting scene.

“My son was a very vivacious young man,” his mother, Pamela Harris, told KCRA-TV. “Fun to be around, liked to party, smiling all the time. Don’t bother people. For this to happen is crazy. I’m just to the point right now, I don’t know what to do. I don’t even feel like this is real. I feel like this is a dream.”

His family members congregated at the crime scene Sunday after they hadn’t heard from him for hours. Later that day, Harris was the first victim publicly identified by the coroner.

“This is a sad and terrible act of violence that took the lives of many,” his wife, Leticia Harris, told KCRA-

TV. "I want answers so I can have closure for my children."

YAMILE MARTINEZ-ANDRADE

Martinez-Andrade was killed in front of her best friend, according to KXTV-TV.

She was described as someone who "brought light to the room," the station reported, and had a positive outlook.

"There was never a dull moment with her. She has a beautiful heart and a beautiful mind. Everyone misses her so much," her best friend, who was not named, told KXTV-TV.

JOSHUA HOYE-LUCCHESI

A memorial with white and blue balloons, candles and two empty bottles of Hennessy was left a block from the shooting in honor of Joshua Hoyer-Lucchese. On the ground, someone wrote "Josh" in what appeared to be blue paint.

"I love and miss you. Forever in my heart!" someone wrote in black marker on a white balloon shaped like a star. "Things will never be the same," read another balloon.

Harvard students' site helping Ukraine refugees find housing

By RODRIQUE NGOWI Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) — Two Harvard University freshmen have launched a website designed to connect people fleeing Ukraine to those in safer countries willing to take them in — and it's generating offers of help and housing worldwide.

Moved by the plight of Ukrainian refugees desperate to escape Russian bombardment across the former Soviet republic, Marco Burstein, 18, of Los Angeles, and Avi Schiffman, 19, of Seattle, used their coding skills to create UkraineTakeShelter.com over three frenzied days in early March.

Since then, more than 18,000 prospective hosts have signed up on the site to offer assistance to refugees seeking matches with hosts in their preferred or convenient locations. On a recent day, Burstein and Schiffman logged 800,000 users.

"We've heard all sorts of amazing stories of hosts and refugees getting connected all over the world," Burstein said in an interview on the Harvard campus. "We have hosts in almost any country you can imagine from Hungary and Romania and Poland to Canada to Australia. And we've been really blown away by the response."

Five weeks into the invasion that has left thousands dead on both sides, the number of Ukrainians fleeing the country topped a staggering 4 million, half of them children, according to the United Nations.

Schiffman, who's been taking a semester off to work on several projects, said from Miami he was inspired to use his internet activism to help after attending a pro-Ukraine rally in San Diego.

"I felt that I could really do something on a more global scale here," he said. "Ukraine Take Shelter puts the power back into the hands of the refugee ... they're able to take the initiative and find the listings and get in contact with hosts by themselves instead of having to freeze on a curb in Eastern Europe in the wintertime."

Among those who have taken in refugees through the website is Rickard Mijarov, a resident of the southwestern Swedish city of Linköping who's sharing his home with 45-year-old Ukrainian evacuee Oksana Frantseva, her 18-year-old daughter and their cat.

Mijarov and his wife signed up at an embassy indicating they'd help, but then stumbled upon the Harvard students' site and registered there as well.

"The next morning, I had a message from Oksana asking if we had place for them," he said in an interview via Zoom. "It became reality quite fast."

"I was surprised how quickly Rickard answered to me," Frantseva said in halting English. Five days later, she, her daughter and their pet were at the front door.

Burstein and Schiffman designed the platform with combat refugees' particular concerns in mind. They worked to make it as easy to use as possible so someone in immediate danger can enter their location and see the offers of help that are closest to them.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 38 of 84

On the hosting side, they also gave prospective hosts the opportunity to indicate what languages they speak; how many refugees they can accommodate; and any restrictions on taking in young children or pets.

To help avoid human trafficking and other hazards that vulnerable refugees face, the platform encourages evacuees to ask hosts to provide their full names and social media profiles, and request a video call to show what accommodations they're offering.

"We know that this is potentially a dangerous situation, so we have a lot of steps in place to ensure the protection of our refugees," Burstein said. "We have a detailed guide that we give to all refugees to help them verify the host that they're talking to — make sure that the person that they may be speaking with on the phone is the same one that they're meeting up with in person."

The two students say they're trying to arrange a meeting with officials from the U.N. refugee agency, and they are also looking to work with Airbnb, Vrbo and other online vacation rental companies.

So far, they've borne all the expenses — a hardship for college students — for web hosting and Google Translate costs. But they're determined to continue as long as possible and are looking into registering as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit so they can apply for grants.

Back in Sweden, Mijarov admits it was a bit unnerving to open his home, but he has no regrets.

"It's the first time we are doing something like this," he said, seated next to Frantseva. "But they're very nice people. So, yeah, going along well."

Arrest made in connection with Sacramento mass shooting

By ADAM BEAM and KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Sacramento police arrested a man Monday connected to the shooting that killed six people and wounded a dozen others in the heart of California's capital as multiple shooters fired more than 100 rapid-fire rounds and people ran for their lives.

Police said they booked Dandrae Martin, 26, as a "related suspect" on charges of assault with a deadly weapon and being a convict carrying a loaded gun. Detectives and SWAT team members found one handgun during searches of three area homes.

The arrest came as the three women and three men killed were identified in the shooting that occurred at about 2 a.m. Sunday as bars were closing and patrons filled the streets near the state Capitol.

The fallen included a father of four, a young woman who wanted to be a social worker, a man described as the life of the party, and a woman who lived on the streets nearby and was looking for housing.

The Sacramento County coroner identified the women killed as Johntaya Alexander, 21; Melinda Davis, 57; and Yamile Martinez-Andrade, 21. The three men were Sergio Harris, 38; Joshua Hoye-Lucchesi, 32; and De'vazia Turner, 29.

Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg read their names during a vigil Monday evening attended by grieving relatives, friends and community members.

"So we gather here to remember the victims and to commit ourselves to doing all we can to ending the stain of violence, not only in our community but throughout the state, throughout the country, and throughout the world," Steinberg said.

Turner, who had three daughters and a son, was a "protector" who worked as the night manager at an inventory company, his mother, Penelope Scott, told The Associated Press. He rarely went out, and she had no reason to believe he would be in harm's way when he left her house after he visited Saturday night.

"My son was walking down the street and somebody started shooting, and he got shot. Why is that to happen?" Scott said. "I feel like I've got a hole in my heart."

The burst of gunshots sent people running in terror in the neighborhood just a few blocks from the arena where the NBA's Sacramento Kings play.

Detectives were trying to determine if a stolen handgun found at the crime scene was connected to the shooting, Police Chief Kathy Lester said. Witnesses answered her plea for help by providing more than 100 videos and photos of evidence.

District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert noted Martin was not arrested on suspicion of homicide, but sug-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 39 of 84

gested investigators were making progress.

"The investigation is highly complex involving many witnesses, videos of numerous types and significant physical evidence," Schubert said in a statement. "This is an ongoing investigation and we anticipate more arrests in this case."

Martin was held without bail and was scheduled to appear in Sacramento County Superior Court on Tuesday, according to jail records.

Martin was freed from an Arizona prison in 2020 after serving just over 1 1/2 years for violating probation in separate cases involving a felony conviction for aggravated assault in 2016 and a conviction on a marijuana charge in 2018.

Court records show he pleaded guilty to punching, kicking and choking a woman in a hotel room when she refused to work for him as a prostitute.

He was also wanted on a misdemeanor warrant by the Riverside County Sheriff's Department in Southern California.

It was not immediately clear whether Martin had an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

Of the 12 wounded, at least four suffered critical injuries, the Sacramento Fire Department said. At least seven of the victims had been released from hospitals by Monday.

At the scene where the chaos erupted, streets were reopened Monday and police tape had been removed.

Memorials with candles and flowers began to grow on sidewalks where video showed people screaming and running for shelter as gunshots rang out and others laying on the ground writhing in pain. One balloon had a message on it saying in part: "You will forever be in our hearts and thoughts. Nothing will ever be the same."

A small bouquet of purple roses was dedicated to Davis, who lived on the streets for years, with a note saying "Melinda Rest In Peace."

Harris was regular at the London nightclub, near the shooting scene.

"My son was a very vivacious young man," his mother, Pamela Harris, told KCRA-TV. "Fun to be around, liked to party, smiling all the time. Don't bother people. For this to happen is crazy. ... I don't even feel like this is real. I feel like this is a dream."

Alexander was a doting aunt who wanted to work with children as a social worker.

"She was just beginning her life," her father, John Alexander, told the Los Angeles Times, sobbing. "Stop all this senseless shooting."

Politicians decried the violence, and some Democrats, including President Joe Biden, called for tougher action against gun violence.

California has some of the nation's toughest restrictions on firearms, requiring background checks to buy guns and ammunition, limiting magazines to 10 bullets, and banning firearms that fall into its definition of assault weapons.

But state lawmakers plan to go further. A bill getting its first hearing Tuesday would allow citizens to sue those who possess illegal weapons, a measure patterned after a controversial Texas bill aimed at abortions.

Other proposed California legislation this year would make it easier for people to sue gun companies and target unregistered "ghost guns."

The California Assembly held a moment of silence Monday in honor of the victims.

Assemblymember Kevin McCarty, a Democrat who represents Sacramento, noted lawmakers could see the crime scene from the building's balcony.

"Tragic is too small of a word to describe what occurred just two nights ago as a devastating loss for our city," McCarty said.

Police were investigating whether the shooting was connected with a street fight that broke out just before gunfire erupted. Several people could be seen in videos scrapping on a street lined with an upscale hotel, nightclubs and bars when gunshots sent people scattering.

Scott, a hospice social worker who deals with death for a living, said she was not prepared for this kind of grief.

"I know the process of bereavement but, you know, this is my kid," she said. "It's tragic and sudden. I'd

just seen him, just had him in my house. He's got children. He's got a wife."

World Bank says war shocks to drag on Asian economies

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Disruptions to supplies of commodities, financial strains and higher prices are among the impacts of the war in Ukraine that will slow economies in Asia in coming months, the World Bank says in a report released Tuesday.

The report forecasts slower growth and rising poverty in the Asia-Pacific region this year as "multiple shocks" compound troubles for people and for businesses.

Growth for the region is estimated at 5%, down from the original forecast of 5.4%. The "low case" scenario foresees growth dipping to 4%, it said. The region saw a rebound to 7.2% growth in 2021 after many economies experienced downturns with the onset of the pandemic.

The World Bank anticipates that China, the region's largest economy, will expand at a 5% annual pace, much slower than the 8.1% growth of 2021.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has helped drive up prices for oil, gas and other commodities, eating into household purchasing power and burdening businesses and governments that already are contending with unusually high levels of debt due to the pandemic, the report said.

The development lending institution urged governments to lift restrictions on trade and services to take advantage of more opportunities for trade and to end fossil fuel subsidies to encourage adoption of more green energy technologies.

"The succession of shocks means that the growing economic pain of the people will have to face the shrinking financial capacity of their governments," said the World Bank's East Asia and Pacific Chief Economist Aaditya Mattoo. "A combination of fiscal, financial and trade reforms could mitigate risks, revive growth and reduce poverty."

The report pointed to three main potential shocks for the region: the war, changing monetary policy in the U.S. and some other countries and a slowdown in China.

While rising interest rates make sense for cooling the U.S. economy and curbing inflation, much of Asia lags behind in its recovery from the pandemic. Countries like Malaysia may suffer outflows of currency and other financial repercussions from those changing policies, it said.

Meanwhile, China's already slowing economy could falter as outbreaks of COVID-19 provoke lockdowns like the one now in place in Shanghai, the country's biggest megacity. That is likely to affect many Asian countries whose trade relies on demand from China.

"These shocks are likely to magnify existing post-COVID difficulties," the report said. The 8 million households whose members fell back into poverty during the pandemic, "will see real incomes shrink even further as prices soar."

The report noted that regional economies fared better during the 2021 Delta variant waves of coronavirus than in the initial months of the pandemic in 2020, largely because fewer restrictions were imposed and widespread vaccinations helped limit the severity of the outbreaks.

On average, countries with a 1 percentage point higher vaccination rate had higher growth, it said.

Victims in California shooting remembered for warm hearts

By The Associated Press undefined

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A father of four. A best friend with a positive personality. A vivacious party-goer. The six people who were killed during a mass shooting in California's capital city were remembered by their friends and family Monday as police worked to piece together what happened.

Dozens of rapid-fire gunshots rang out early Sunday in the crowded streets of Sacramento, leaving three women and three men dead and another 12 people wounded. On Monday, small memorials with candles, balloons and flowers had been placed near the crime scene.

Investigators were searching for at least two shooters who were responsible for the violence on the

Graton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 41 of 84

outskirts of the city's main entertainment district that occurred as bars and nightclubs were closing. Sacramento police said Monday that they booked Dandrae Martin, 26, as a "related suspect" on charges of assault with a deadly weapon and being a convict carrying a loaded gun. Jail records said he was held without bail and was scheduled to appear in court Tuesday. It was not immediately clear whether Martin had an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

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DE'VAZIA TURNER

De'vazia Turner had four young children, including a 3-year-old daughter named Penelope with sticky fingers. But his bright yellow Mercedes CLS was always clean.

Born and raised in Sacramento, Turner played football from a young age until a knee injury slowed him down. He worked as a manager for an inventory company, keeping a close eye on things his mother might like and letting her know when they would go on sale.

"He was a protector," his mother, Penelope Scott, said. "Raising him as a single mom, you know, he took the role of being the man of the house. He took care of everything."

He worked out with his dad, Frank Turner, five days a week. When they weren't pumping iron, they were probably talking about cars. They both had old Buicks – Turner's was a 1973 while his dad's was a 1970 – and Turner had big plans for his. He had just ordered a new stereo and a steering wheel with a cherrywood finish.

Frank Turner said he plans to finish his son's car, including painting it to include images of De'vazia's face for his kids to see.

"I want them to see their daddy when they see that car," Frank Turner said.

De'vazia visited his mother on Saturday, eating leftover pork chops and taking a shower before briefly falling asleep on her couch. When he woke up, he said he was going out – a rarity for him, because he works so much, Scott said.

Scott woke up at around 1 a.m. and couldn't get back to sleep. She was looking at her phone when she got a call that her son had been killed.

"Your kids are supposed to bury you. You're not supposed to do that," she said. "I'm grateful that he has a legacy with his children. However, you know, he's 29. He didn't make it to 30."

The last time Frank Turner saw his son was at the auto shop where they were working on their cars. After his son's death, a friend called Frank Turner and told him the shop's security cameras had picked up their conversation.

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JOHNTAYA ALEXANDER

Alexander was just shy of turning 22 when she was killed, her father told the Los Angeles Times. Her birthday was at the end of the month.

She hoped to become a social worker who worked with children and was a doting aunt to her nieces and nephews, John Alexander told the newspaper.

His daughter's name was a combination of his own and his older sister's, he told the Times.

"She was just beginning her life," he told the newspaper, sobbing. "Stop all this senseless shooting."

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Davis was a "very sassy lady" who lived on the streets of Sacramento near the shooting site, The Sacramento Bee reported.

Shawn Peter, a guide with the Downtown Sacramento Partnership who had known Davis for 15 years,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 42 of 84

told the newspaper that she had been homeless and lived in the area on and off for a decade.

Officials had helped her find housing before the pandemic began but she had returned to the downtown business district in recent months, Peter said. A small bouquet of purple roses with a note saying "Melinda Rest In Peace" was left on the street in her memory.

"Melinda was a very eccentric individual, a very sassy lady," he told the newspaper. "This was her world, 24/7."

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SERGIO HARRIS

Described by family members as the life of the party, Harris was a frequent presence at the London nightclub which is near the shooting scene.

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His family members congregated at the crime scene Sunday after they hadn't heard from him for hours. Later that day, Harris was the first victim publicly identified by the coroner.

"This is a sad and terrible act of violence that took the lives of many," his wife, Leticia Harris, told KCRA-TV. "I want answers so I can have closure for my children."

YAMILE MARTINEZ-ANDRADE

Martinez-Andrade was killed in front of her best friend, according to KXTV-TV.

She was described as someone who "brought light to the room," the station reported, and had a positive outlook.

"There was never a dull moment with her. She has a beautiful heart and a beautiful mind. Everyone misses her so much," her best friend, who was not named, told KXTV-TV.

JOSHUA HOYE-LUCCHESI

A memorial with white and blue balloons, candles and two empty bottles of Hennessy was left a block from the shooting in honor of Joshua Hoye-Lucchesi. On the ground, someone wrote "Josh" in what appeared to be blue paint.

"I love and miss you. Forever in my heart!" someone wrote in black marker on a white balloon shaped like a star. "Things will never be the same," read another balloon.

Ukraine's president to tell UN Security Council about war

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will speak to the U.N. Security Council for the first time Tuesday at a meeting certain to focus on what appear to be deliberate killings of civilians in Ukraine by Russian troops.

The dead were discovered after Russian forces pulled out of a town on the outskirts of the capital, Kyiv, and have sparked global outrage and vehement denials from the Russian government that it was responsible.

The United Kingdom, which holds the council presidency this month, announced late Monday that Zelenskyy would speak at the open meeting already scheduled for Tuesday to discuss the situation in Ukraine.

Zelenskyy is to address the U.N.'s most powerful body virtually after it receives briefings from U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, his political chief Rosemary DiCarlo, and U.N. humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths, who is trying to arrange an immediate humanitarian cease-fire and met with senior Russian officials in Moscow on Monday and will shortly be heading to Ukraine.

Videos and photos of streets in the town of Bucha strewn with corpses of what appeared to be civilians,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 43 of 84

some with their hands tied behind their back, have led to global revulsion, calls for tougher sanctions on Russia and its suspension from the U.N.'s premiere human rights body, the Human Rights Council.

According to Ukraine's prosecutor-general, Iryna Venediktova, the bodies of 410 civilians have been removed from Bucha and other Kyiv-area towns that were recently retaken from Russian troops.

Associated Press journalists have reported seeing dozens of bodies in various spots around Bucha, northwest of the capital. The bodies included a group of nine in civilian clothes who appeared to have been shot at close range. At least two had their hands tied behind their backs. A bag of spilled groceries was near one of the dead.

Russia's U.N. ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, accused Ukraine and the West on Monday of "a false flag attempt" to blame Russian troops for atrocities in Bucha that he charged were committed by Ukrainian nationalists. He called video of bodies lying in the streets "a crude forgery," and insisted that during the time that Bucha was under Russian control, "not a single local person has suffered from any violent action."

At a news conference, the Russian ambassador showed brief video footage of the smiling mayor of Bucha on March 31 calling the withdrawal of Russian forces a victory of the Ukrainian army and never mentioning "any mass atrocities, dead bodies, killings, graves or anything like that." He also showed footage from Ukrainian television on April 2 showing Ukrainian soldiers entering Bucha, with "no dead bodies in the streets."

He said Russia would present further "factual evidence" to the Security Council on Tuesday.

Nebenzia was asked whether he believed videos of Ukrainian family members speaking about the deaths of loved ones killed by Russian troops were also faked. He responded: "This is warfare. In warfare anything happens. You cannot exclude that civilians are dying. That is a sad fact of life."

But he again charged that the Bucha videos were "staged."

Britain's U.N. ambassador, Barbara Woodward, called the images from Bucha "harrowing, appalling, probable evidence of war crimes and possibly a genocide," and she said the Security Council needs "to think about how we deal with that."

The council remains paralyzed on taking any action on Ukraine because Russia as one of its five permanent members has veto power. But the 193-member General Assembly, where there are no vetoes, has condemned Russia's invasion and demanded an immediate cessation of hostilities, withdrawal of Russian forces and protection for civilians.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield announced Monday that the United States will soon introduce a General Assembly resolution that would suspend Russia from the U.N.'s premiere human rights body, the 57-nation Human Rights Council, saying there are increasing signs that it committed war crimes in Ukraine. The council is based in Geneva but its members are elected by the 193-nation General Assembly.

Thomas-Greenfield told NPR late Monday that the U.S. plans to seek a vote "as soon as possible this week, and possibly as early as Thursday."

Any resolution to suspend Russia's membership rights would require support from two-thirds of member countries that vote "yes" or "no." Assembly resolutions are not legally binding -- unlike Security Council resolutions -- but they do have clout as a reflection of global opinion.

Russia had sought an emergency meeting of the Security Council to discuss Bucha on Monday afternoon, but Woodward told reporters that with Tuesday's council meeting already scheduled "we didn't see a good reason to have two meetings back-to-back on Ukraine."

Nebenzia was asked if the U.S.-led effort to suspend Russia from the rights council and Britain's refusal to hold an emergency Security Council meeting Monday at Russia's request would affect talks between Moscow and Kyiv.

"This will not facilitate or encourage, or be helpful, to what is happening between Russian and Ukrainian peace talks," Nebenzia said.

Jury in Michigan Gov. Whitmer plot deliberating for 2nd day

By JOHN FLESHER and ED WHITE Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 44 of 84

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — Jurors are returning for a second day of deliberations in the trial of four men accused of conspiring to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

Jurors asked for a definition of “weapon” Monday but otherwise gave no indication of the progress of their work.

“We’ll do the same drill” Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Robert Jonker said.

Adam Fox, Barry Croft Jr., Daniel Harris and Brandon Caserta are charged with a kidnapping conspiracy. Three of them also face additional charges, including conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction, namely an explosive.

The judge consulted prosecutors and defense lawyers before explaining how to define “weapon.”

“Something that can be used to injure, kill or destroy someone or something,” Jonker told the jury. “So if that helps — I hope — great. If it doesn’t, just let us know.”

The trial has lasted 16 days, including 13 days of testimony. The jury heard hours of closing arguments and instructions Friday.

Prosecutors said the conspiracy against Whitmer was fueled by anti-government extremism and anger over her COVID-19 restrictions. With undercover FBI agents and informants embedded in the group, the men trained with a crudely built “shoot house” to replicate her vacation home in September 2020, according to testimony.

There is no dispute that the alleged leaders, Fox and Croft, traveled to Elk Rapids, Michigan, that same weekend to see the location of the governor’s lakeside property and a nearby bridge. Harris and Caserta have been described as “soldiers” in the scheme.

Another man, Ty Garbin, who pleaded guilty, said the goal was to get Whitmer before the fall election and create enough chaos to create a civil war and stop Joe Biden from winning the presidency. Much of the government’s case came from secretly recorded conversations, group messages and social media posts.

Defense lawyers attacked the government’s investigation and the use of a crucial informant, Dan Chappel. They claimed Chappel was the real leader, taking direction from the FBI and keeping the group on edge while recording them for months.

“There was no plan,” Croft attorney Joshua Blanchard told the jury.

Croft is from Bear, Delaware, while the others are from Michigan.

Whitmer, a Democrat, rarely talks publicly about the plot, though she referred to “surprises” during her term that seemed like “something out of fiction” when she filed for reelection on March 17.

She has blamed former President Donald Trump for fomenting anger over coronavirus restrictions and refusing to condemn right-wing extremists like those charged in the case.

Russia faces global outrage over bodies in Ukraine’s streets

By OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI and NEBI QENA Associated Press

BUCHA, Ukraine (AP) — Moscow faced global revulsion and accusations of war crimes Monday after the Russian pullout from the outskirts of Kyiv revealed streets, buildings and yards strewn with corpses of what appeared to be civilians, many of them evidently killed at close range.

The grisly images of battered or burned bodies left out in the open or hastily buried led to calls for tougher sanctions against the Kremlin, especially a cutoff of fuel imports from Russia. Germany and France reacted by expelling dozens of Russian diplomats, suggesting they were spies, and U.S. President Joe Biden said Russian leader Vladimir Putin should be tried for war crimes.

“This guy is brutal, and what’s happening in Bucha is outrageous,” Biden said, referring to the town northwest of the capital that was the scene of some of the horrors.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy left the capital, Kyiv, for his first reported trip since the war began nearly six weeks ago to see for himself what he called the “genocide” and “war crimes” in Bucha.

In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy pledged that Ukraine would work with the European Union and the International Criminal Court to identify Russian fighters involved in any atrocities.

“The time will come when every Russian will learn the whole truth about who among their fellow citizens

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 45 of 84

killed, who gave orders, who turned a blind eye to the murders," he said.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov dismissed the scenes outside Kyiv as a "stage-managed anti-Russian provocation." Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said the images contained "signs of video forgery and various fakes."

Russia has similarly rejected previous allegations of atrocities as fabrications on Ukraine's part.

Ukrainian officials said the bodies of at least 410 civilians have been found in towns around Kyiv that were recaptured from Russian forces in recent days.

The Ukrainian prosecutor-general's office described one room discovered in Bucha as a "torture chamber." In a statement, it said the bodies of five men with their hands bound were found in the basement of a children's sanatorium where civilians were tortured and killed.

Associated Press journalists saw dozens of bodies in Bucha, including at least 13 in and around a building that local people said Russian troops used as a base. Three other bodies were found in a stairwell, and a group of six were burned together.

Many victims seen by AP appeared to have been shot at close range. Some were shot in the head. At least two had their hands tied. A bag of spilled groceries lay near one victim.

The dead witnessed by the news agency's journalists also included bodies wrapped in black plastic, piled on one end of a mass grave in a Bucha churchyard. Many of those victims had been shot in cars or killed in explosions trying to flee the city. With the morgue full and the cemetery impossible to reach, the churchyard was the only place to keep the dead, Father Andrii Galavin said.

Tanya Nedashkivs'ka said she buried her husband in a garden outside their apartment building after he was detained by Russian troops. His body was one of those left heaped in a stairwell.

"Please, I am begging you, do something!" she said. "It's me talking, a Ukrainian woman, a Ukrainian woman, a mother of two kids and one grandchild. For all the wives and mothers, make peace on Earth so no one ever grieves again."

Another Bucha resident, Volodymyr Pilhutskyi, said his neighbor Pavlo Vlasenko was taken away by Russian soldiers because the military-style pants he was wearing and the uniforms that Vlasenko said belonged to his security guard son appeared suspicious. When Vlasenko's body was later found, it had burn marks from a flamethrower, his neighbor said.

"I came closer and saw that his body was burnt," Pilhutskyi said. "They didn't just shoot him."

Russia's U.N. ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, insisted Monday at a news conference that during the time that Bucha was under Russian control, "not a single local person has suffered from any violent action."

However, high-resolution satellite imagery by commercial provider Maxar Technologies showed that many of the bodies have been lying in the open for weeks, during the time that Russian forces were in Bucha. The New York Times first reported on the satellite images showing the dead.

In other developments, more than 1,500 civilians were evacuated Monday from the besieged and devastated port city of Mariupol in the south, using the dwindling number of private vehicles available to get out, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said.

But amid the fighting, a Red Cross-accompanied convoy of buses that has been thwarted for days on end in a bid to deliver supplies and evacuate residents was again unable to get inside the city, Vereshchuk said.

European leaders and the United Nations human rights chief joined the Ukrainians in condemning the bloodshed that was exposed after Russian troops withdrew from the area around Kyiv.

At the same time, many warned that the full extent of the horrors has yet to emerge.

"I can tell you without exaggeration but with great sorrow that the situation in Mariupol is much worse compared to what we've seen in Bucha and other cities, towns, and villages nearby Kyiv," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said.

Zelenskyy was due to speak to a previously scheduled U.N. Security Council meeting Tuesday. Britain's U.N. ambassador, Barbara Woodward, said the session was certain to focus on the killing of large numbers of civilians in Ukraine.

Western and Ukrainian leaders have accused Russia of war crimes before, and the International Criminal

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 46 of 84

Court's prosecutor has already opened an investigation. But the latest reports ratcheted up the condemnation.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said the images from Bucha reveal the "unbelievable brutality of the Russian leadership and those who follow its propaganda." And French President Emmanuel Macron said there is "clear evidence of war crimes" in Bucha that demand new punitive measures.

"I'm in favor of a new round of sanctions and in particular on coal and gasoline. We need to act," he said on France-Inter radio.

Though united in outrage, the European allies appeared split on how to respond. While Poland urged Europe to quickly wean itself off Russian energy, Germany said it would stick with a gradual approach of phasing out coal and oil imports over the next several months.

The U.S. and its allies have sought to punish Russia for the invasion by imposing sweeping sanctions but fear further harm to the global economy, which is still recovering from the pandemic. Europe is in a particular bind, since it gets 40% of its gas and 25% of its oil from Russia.

Poland's prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, described Russia under Putin as a "totalitarian-fascist state" and called for strong actions "that will finally break Putin's war machine." "Would you negotiate with Hitler, with Stalin, with Pol Pot?" Morawiecki asked of Macron.

Russia withdrew many of its forces from the capital area in recent days after being thwarted in its bid to swiftly capture Kyiv.

It has instead poured troops and mercenaries into the country's east in a stepped-up bid to gain control of the Donbas, the largely Russian-speaking industrial region that includes Mariupol, which has seen some of the heaviest fighting and worst suffering of the war.

About two-thirds of the Russian troops around Kyiv have left and are either in Belarus or on their way there, probably getting more supplies and reinforcements, said a senior U.S. defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an intelligence assessment.

Russian forces also appear to be repositioning artillery and troops to try to take the city of Izyum, which lies on a key route to the Donbas, the official said.

On Monday, Russian shelling killed 11 people in the southern city of Mykolaiv, regional governor Vitaliy Kim said in a video message on social media. Kim said nine of the victims died at a public transport stop in the city center.

Zelenskyy appealed for more weaponry as Russia prepares a new offensive.

"If we had already got what we needed — all these planes, tanks, artillery, anti-missile and anti-ship weapons — we could have saved thousands of people," he said.

California shooting victims remembered for kind hearts

By The Associated Press undefined

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A father of four. A best friend with a positive personality. A vivacious party-goer. The six people who were killed during a mass shooting in California's capital city were remembered by their friends and family Monday as police worked to piece together what happened.

Dozens of rapid-fire gunshots rang out early Sunday in the crowded streets of Sacramento, leaving three women and three men dead and another 12 people wounded. On Monday morning, small memorials with candles, balloons and flowers had been placed near the crime scene.

Investigators were searching for at least two shooters who were responsible for the violence on the outskirts of the city's main entertainment district that occurred as bars and nightclubs were closing. Sacramento police said Monday that they booked Dandrae Martin, 26, as a "related suspect" on charges of assault with a deadly weapon and being a convict carrying a loaded gun. Jail records said he was held without bail and was scheduled to appear in court Tuesday. It was not immediately clear whether Martin had an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

Few details have been made public as investigators comb through evidence gathered from what Police Chief Kathy Lester called a complex crime scene. Witnesses have submitted more than 100 videos and

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 47 of 84

photos taken during and shortly after the shooting.

The Sacramento County coroner released the identities of the six people killed. They were Johntaya Alexander, 21; Melinda Davis, 57; Yamile Martinez-Andrade, 21; Sergio Harris, 38; Joshua Hoye-Lucchesi, 32; and De'vazia Turner, 29.

DE'VAZIA TURNER

De'vazia Turner had four young children, including a 3-year-old daughter named Penelope with sticky fingers. But his bright yellow Mercedes CLS was always clean.

Born and raised in Sacramento, Turner played football from a young age until a knee injury slowed him down. He worked as a manager for an inventory company, keeping a close eye on things his mother might like and letting her know when they would go on sale.

"He was a protector," his mother, Penelope Scott, said. "Raising him as a single mom, you know, he took the role of being the man of the house. He took care of everything."

He worked out with his dad, Frank Turner, five days a week. When they weren't pumping iron, they were probably talking about cars. They both had old Buicks – Turner's was a 1973 while his dad's was a 1970 – and Turner had big plans for his. He had just ordered a new stereo and a steering wheel with a cherrywood finish.

Frank Turner said he plans to finish his son's car, including painting it to include images of De'vazia's face for his kids to see.

"I want them to see their daddy when they see that car," Frank Turner said.

De'vazia visited his mother on Saturday, eating leftover pork chops and taking a shower before briefly falling asleep on her couch. When he woke up, he said he was going out – a rarity for him, because he works so much, Scott said.

Scott woke up at around 1 a.m. and couldn't get back to sleep. She was looking at her phone when she got a call that her son had been killed.

"Your kids are supposed to bury you. You're not supposed to do that," she said. "I'm grateful that he has a legacy with his children. However, you know, he's 29. He didn't make it to 30."

The last time Frank Turner saw his son was at the auto shop where they were working on their cars. After his son's death, a friend called Frank Turner and told him the shop's security cameras had picked up their conversation.

He watched the video — a father and son spending time together on something they loved — and he cried.

JOHNTAYA ALEXANDER

Alexander was just shy of turning 22 when she was killed, her father told the Los Angeles Times. Her birthday was at the end of the month.

She hoped to become a social worker who worked with children and was a doting aunt to her nieces and nephews, John Alexander told the newspaper.

His daughter's name was a combination of his own and his older sister's, he told the Times.

"She was just beginning her life," he told the newspaper, sobbing. "Stop all this senseless shooting."

MELINDA DAVIS

Davis was a "very sassy lady" who lived on the streets of Sacramento near the shooting site, The Sacramento Bee reported.

Shawn Peter, a guide with the Downtown Sacramento Partnership who had known Davis for 15 years, told the newspaper that she had been homeless and lived in the area on and off for a decade.

Officials had helped her find housing before the pandemic began but she had returned to the downtown business district in recent months, Peter said. A small bouquet of purple roses with a note saying "Melinda Rest In Peace" was left on the street in her memory.

"Melinda was a very eccentric individual, a very sassy lady," he told the newspaper. "This was her world, 24/7."

Davis was a periodic guest at Maryhouse, a daytime center for women and children experiencing home-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 48 of 84

lessness, from 2016 to 2018, director Shannon Stevens said in an email to The Associated Press. Stevens recalled her as kind but someone who did not do well in crowds. She was seeking housing services at the time.

"This was a space she came to find respite from the trauma of living on the streets of our city," Sacramento Loaves & Fishes, which runs the Maryhouse program, said in a statement.

SERGIO HARRIS

Described by family members as the life of the party, Harris was a frequent presence at the London nightclub which is near the shooting scene.

"My son was a very vivacious young man," his mother, Pamela Harris, told KCRA-TV. "Fun to be around, liked to party, smiling all the time. Don't bother people. For this to happen is crazy. I'm just to the point right now, I don't know what to do. I don't even feel like this is real. I feel like this is a dream."

His family members congregated at the crime scene Sunday after they hadn't heard from him for hours. Later that day, Harris was the first victim publicly identified by the coroner.

"This is a sad and terrible act of violence that took the lives of many," his wife, Leticia Harris, told KCRA-TV. "I want answers so I can have closure for my children."

YAMILE MARTINEZ-ANDRADE

Martinez-Andrade was killed in front of her best friend, according to KXTV-TV.

She was described as someone who "brought light to the room," the station reported, and had a positive outlook.

"There was never a dull moment with her. She has a beautiful heart and a beautiful mind. Everyone misses her so much," her best friend, who was not named, told KXTV-TV.

JOSHUA HOYE-LUCCHESI

A memorial with white and blue balloons, candles and two empty bottles of Hennessy was left a block from the shooting in honor of Joshua Hoye-Lucchese. On the ground, someone wrote "Josh" in what appeared to be blue paint.

"I love and miss you. Foreva n my heart!" someone wrote in black marker on a white balloon shaped like a star. "Things will never be the same," read another balloon.

Democratic, GOP Senate bargainers reach \$10B COVID agreement

By ALAN FRAM and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate bargainers reached agreement Monday on a slimmed-down \$10 billion package for countering COVID-19 with treatments, vaccines and other steps, the top Democratic and Republican negotiators said, but ended up dropping all funding to help nations abroad combat the pandemic.

The compromise drew quick support from President Joe Biden, who initially pushed for a \$22.5 billion package. In a setback, he ended up settling for much less despite administration warnings that the government was running out of money to keep pace with the disease's continued — though diminished — spread in the U.S.

"Every dollar we requested is essential and we will continue to work with Congress to get all of the funding we need," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki. "But time is of the essence. We urge Congress to move promptly on this \$10 billion package because it can begin to fund the most immediate needs."

Biden and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., his party's lead bargainer, abandoned Biden's request to include \$5 billion to help countries — especially poorer ones — where the disease is still running rampant.

The inability of Biden and top Democrats to protect the additional spending they wanted came after the two parties gridlocked over GOP demands to pay for it by pulling back unspent aid from earlier pandemic measures. It also reflected the diminished political force that battling COVID-19 has this election year, two years into a pandemic that began with bipartisan support for throwing trillions of dollars at it.

Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah, the lead GOP bargainer, hailed the accord as one that would address "urgent COVID needs." He also trumpeted the measure's savings, which he said meant it "will not cost the Ameri-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 49 of 84

can people a single additional dollar.”

Still uncertain Monday was whether objections by some Republicans might prevent the Senate from considering the bill this week, as Biden wants, before Congress begins a two-week spring recess. It was also not yet certain there would be the minimum 10 GOP votes needed for passage in the 50-50 chamber.

Its fate was also not guaranteed in the House, where House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and many liberals have criticized the ejection of global assistance. But party leaders there signaled they were ready to compromise.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said, “That’s all the Senate can do right now, which I regret deeply, then I think we need to pass that” as fast as possible. A senior House Democratic aide, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe internal thinking, said it would be best to take what was achievable and fight for more later.

Schumer said the agreement would provide “the tools we need” to help the country recover from the economic and public health blows that COVID-19 has inflicted. But he said while the \$10 billion “is absolutely necessary, it is well short of what is truly needed to keep up safe” over time.

He said members of both parties want to craft a second spending measure this spring that could include funds to battle COVID-19 and hunger overseas and more assistance for Ukraine as it continues battling the Russian invasion. The fate of such a measure is uncertain.

Romney also suggested an openness to considering future money. “While this agreement does not include funding for the U.S. global vaccination program, I am willing to explore a fiscally responsible solution to support global efforts in the weeks ahead,” he said.

The agreement comes with BA.2, the new omicron variant, expected to spark a fresh increase in U.S. cases. Around 980,000 Americans and over 6 million people worldwide have died from COVID-19.

At least half the agreement’s \$10 billion would be used to research and produce therapeutics to treat the disease, according to fact sheets from Schumer and Romney.

The money would also be used to buy vaccines and tests. At least \$750 million would be used to research new COVID-19 variants and to expand vaccine production, the descriptions said.

Administration officials have said the government has run out of money to finance COVID-19 testing and treatments for people without insurance. They’ve also said funds are running low for boosters, vaccines focused on specific variants, free monoclonal antibody treatments and care for people with immune system weaknesses.

The deal is also a reduction from a \$15 billion version that both parties’ leaders negotiated last month. Pelosi abandoned that plan after Democratic lawmakers rejected proposed cuts in state pandemic aid to help pay for the package.

Democrats from both chambers complained about the eliminated global spending.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., leader of the House Progressive Caucus, said it is “a big problem” to erase the international assistance and “not spend money on making sure this virus is contained around the world.”

Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., a leading foreign policy voice, said he would back the bill but called it a “grave mistake” to not help other countries’ efforts. He called it “fiscally foolish” to not send tens of millions of unused U.S. vaccines abroad to the 2.8 billion unvaccinated people worldwide.

The measure is fully paid for by pulling back unspent funds from previous pandemic relief bills that have been enacted, bargainers said.

Romney’s fact sheet says that includes \$2.3 billion from a fund protecting aviation manufacturing jobs; \$1.9 billion from money for helping entertainment venues shuttered by the pandemic; another \$1.9 billion from a program that helps states extend credit to small businesses; and \$1.6 billion from agriculture assistance programs.

Dick Kelsey, beloved AP broadcast editor, dies at age 76

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 50 of 84

PHOENIX (AP) — Dick Kelsey, a retired Associated Press broadcast editor who was revered as much for his humor as his hardworking nature, has died after a seven-year battle with cancer. He was 76.

Kelsey died Thursday surrounded by loved ones at his Phoenix home.

The longtime editor never sought attention in the newsroom of AP's West Regional Desk in Phoenix unless it was to share a funny story or sly observation. From the glint in his eye, it was clear when he was about to toss out a joke or his own funny spin on the day's news.

A storyteller at heart, Kelsey regaled co-workers with anecdotes of his exploits in AM radio in Buffalo, New York, in the 1970s and coverage of decades-old stories. He also had an encyclopedic knowledge of rock 'n' roll and an uncanny ability to recite an apt lyric from Chuck Berry, Bruce Springsteen or Bob Dylan that connected with the dominant news story of the day, said Josh Hoffner, AP news editor for national beats and one of Kelsey's former managers.

"Dick was a talented journalist, a gleeful storyteller and a terrific all-around person who was absolutely adored by his many colleagues and friends at the AP," Hoffner said. "He loved nothing more than rolling up his sleeves and going to work on a big breaking story. His presence in the newsroom was legendary, with his infectious sense of humor, sharp wit and love of puns that never disappointed (even the bad ones)."

Kelsey worked primarily in broadcast during his time in Arizona, editing state news summaries sent to radio and TV stations across the Western U.S. Even when the West Regional Desk — which includes a team of Phoenix reporters — was a hectic hub over a major story, he remained calm.

"Dick was a steady presence on the AP's west region broadcast desk," said Chris Havlik, an AP video producer and former broadcast supervisor. "He could always be counted on to keep things light in the newsroom even when he was in the middle of writing and updating news summaries for 13 different states seemingly all at once."

J. Richard Kelsey was born in Buffalo, New York, and grew up in nearby Lockport. He fell in love with radio and television at a young age. Overcoming a childhood stutter fueled his mission to someday be on the air in whatever medium so people would listen to his voice, said his wife, Sharon.

"That's all he ever wanted to be," she said. "How many other people are that lucky to get to do exactly what they wanted to do with their life?"

At Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, Kelsey decided to minor in radio-TV and ended up in a few classes with a young David Letterman. Kelsey would confirm that the former "Late Show" TV host was just as hilarious then.

Upon graduation, he was hired at his hometown radio station, WUSJ. He thrived as a disc jockey, newsman and talk show host. From there, Kelsey went to radio stations in Buffalo and Erie, Pennsylvania. By 1980, he moved westward and had broadcast stints in Denver and Austin, Texas.

Kelsey then made the leap into print journalism and spent a few years at the United Press International in Dallas. By the 1990s, he moved to its Denver office and was covering some of the biggest news stories. Among them were 6-year-old JonBenet Ramsey's killing and the Oklahoma City bombing trials.

"I think he was quite proud of that — that he was able to juggle all that and get the information, help everybody," Sharon Kelsey said.

When the UPI/Denver bureau closed, Kelsey took a job as a news director at a radio station and then as a writer/assignment editor at a TV station. In 2005, he landed at the AP as a broadcast editor in Kansas City, Missouri.

Jim Clarke, AP's managing director of local markets, was the news editor who hired Kelsey. Clarke recalls getting a call from Kelsey his first day in town. His new hire had gotten into an accident, and his car — with all his belongings — was totaled. But what stuck out was Kelsey's resilience.

"He instantly fell into the routine. I mean, I've on-boarded a few reporters and editors in my life at the AP, but this guy took to it absolutely like a fish to water," Clarke said. "The broadcast report instantly improved because he wanted to do a good job."

Kelsey also enjoyed keeping in touch with anyone he mentored — and not just in journalism. He was very proud of being 28 years sober and using his experience when being a sponsor for someone else.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 51 of 84

"He helped other people shine," Sharon Kelsey said. "He was brilliant in his own way. But it was an unassuming way. ... And I think that's a real quality."

Besides his wife, Kelsey is survived by his daughter, Jennifer, son-in-law Eric, grandson Cooper and sister M. Jane Kelsey. A private service is planned.

On his last day before retiring in 2017, Kelsey sent a parting note to colleagues saying he was, for once, speechless.

"This has been a bittersweet day for me, but the sweet part is all the kind words I've received by phone, email and IM," Kelsey wrote. "The past 12 years, 8 months and 15 days (give or take) at The Associated Press have given me a ringside seat to real journalism alongside the best in the business. Stay cool everyone."

Masters is all about Tiger Woods, even with so many subplots

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — The gates to Augusta National opened a little after 7 a.m. Monday. It didn't feel as though Masters week started until just before 3 p.m.

Tiger Woods was on the first tee, and this was no time to be shopping for shirts and caps or standing in line for pimento cheese sandwiches. That much was evident by the biggest golf crowd this year on one hole except for the circus par-3 16th at the Phoenix Open.

Woods consumes attention at every Masters he plays. It's been that way since the first of his five green jackets he won 25 years ago.

Now it's even greater under these unusual circumstances.

He hasn't played against the best in 17 months, not since the 2020 Masters in November, while recovering from a car crash that once looked as though it might end his career. And still to be determined is whether he plays this one.

Woods has said it would be a "game-time" decision whether his battered right leg and ankle can handle walking and competing over 18 holes at Augusta National.

"There's always buzz around this place," Billy Horschel said. "But there's just another level of buzz to see him and see him play. I've thought about it in the past, and I may be on the first tee watching him tee off if my tee works out and everything, just because it's a special moment."

It's not as though this Masters was devoid of drama.

Rory McIlroy gets another crack at the career Grand Slam. He spent Monday in an Irish fourball alongside Shane Lowry, Padraig Harrington and Seamus Power. They have eight majors among them; Power is making his Masters debut.

Bryson DeChambeau is back, even though he says his doctors don't recommend it.

DeChambeau said he first hurt his left hip two years ago while speed training — swinging as fast as his body allowed — and slipping on concrete.

Then, he didn't work on finger strength, and that led to a popping sound in his wrist before his TV match against Brooks Koepka in Las Vegas last November. That led to a hairline fracture of his hamate bone in his left hand. And then he slipped on marble while playing table tennis in Saudi Arabia in early February, went horizontal and landed on his hand and his hip.

He declared himself 80%, though he liked the way he felt coming into the Masters. DeChambeau hasn't make a 36-hole cut since The Northern Trust in late August — then again, he has played only eight times since then, six of those tournaments without a cut.

"The past few weeks have been very, very difficult on me, not playing well and not hitting it anywhere near where I know I should be hitting it," he said. "Yelling 'Fore!' off the tee every time is just not fun. It's very difficult on your mental psyche as well."

Playing the Masters was a "huge risk" a few weeks ago and a decision he said his doctors did not recommend. He was day to day until he felt comfortable giving it a go.

"Different situation than Tiger, obviously, but it was definitely a day-by-day process of figuring out if I could do this," he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 52 of 84

So much goes back to Woods, who had broken bones in his right leg and ankle from the car crash outside Los Angeles in February 2021 that left him immobilized for three months and not swinging a club until last November.

Brooks Koepka knows a thing or two about playing with injury, even if not as many were people were paying attention.

Koepka had surgery on his right knee three weeks before the Masters last year and still was determined to play. It was so bad he couldn't crouch to read putts. Koepka is finally back at full strength, though he still hasn't won since the Phoenix Open more than a year ago.

He is more concerned with his own game that what Woods has going on, though Koepka can appreciate the walk Woods is facing better than most players.

"Look, I'm happy he's becoming healthier and able to play golf," Koepka said. "We need him, the game needs him, everybody needs him, the fans need him, all that stuff. But at the end of the day everybody is just out here competing. I'm worried about myself and I'm sure everybody else is worried about themselves."

Koepka said he required cortisone shots just to play. Throw in the hours to prepare before the round and to recover after the round, and that has led to some long days.

"I understand what he's up against. It'll be difficult. But if anybody can do it, it's him," Koepka said. "I don't know everything he's going through. His was a lot worse than mine, so I'm not trying to compare it. I just know it's difficult walking this place when you don't have the same body parts you're used to."

1st day ends with no verdict in Michigan Gov. Whitmer plot

By JOHN FLESHER and ED WHITE Associated Press

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (AP) — Jurors returned to court to ask a question Monday but offered no verdict during the first day of deliberations in the trial of four men accused of conspiring to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

U.S. District Judge Robert Jonker told jurors to "find a good distraction," maybe the NCAA men's basketball championship, and return Tuesday "ready to engage, fresh."

Adam Fox, Barry Croft Jr., Daniel Harris and Brandon Caserta are charged with a kidnapping conspiracy. Three men also face additional charges, including conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction, namely an explosive.

The jury asked the judge for a definition of "weapon" at mid-afternoon Monday, but otherwise gave no indication of the progress of deliberations.

"Something that can be used to injure, kill or destroy someone or something," Jonker said after consulting with prosecutors and defense lawyers. "So if that helps — I hope — great. If it doesn't, just let us know."

The trial has lasted 16 days, including 13 days of testimony. The jury heard hours of closing arguments and instructions Friday.

Jonker last week told jurors that the men could be convicted of conspiracy, even if a kidnapping did not occur in fall 2020.

A key factor, if the jury finds it, would be a "mutual understanding either spoken or unspoken" between two or more people in the group, the judge said.

Prosecutors said the plot was simmering for months, leavened by anti-government extremism and anger over Whitmer's COVID-19 restrictions. With undercover FBI agents and informants embedded in the group, the men trained with a crudely built "shoot house" to replicate her vacation home, prosecutors allege.

There is no dispute that the alleged leaders, Fox and Croft, traveled to Elk Rapids, Michigan, to scout the governor's property and a nearby bridge that same weekend in September 2020.

Ty Garbin and Kaleb Franks, who pleaded guilty and testified against the four men, were on the same road trip, along with covert investigators.

Garbin said the goal was to get Whitmer before the fall election and create enough chaos to create a civil war and stop Joe Biden from winning the presidency. Much of the government's case came from secretly recorded conversations, group messages and social media posts.

"You heard them in their own voices over and over again," Assistant U.S. Attorney Nils Kessler told jurors,

"talking about kidnapping her, murdering her, blowing up bridges and people and anybody who could get in their way. And it wasn't just talk."

The men were arrested in October 2020.

Defense lawyers, especially those representing Fox and Croft, attacked the government's investigation and the use of a crucial informant, Dan Chappel. They claimed Chappel was the real leader, taking direction from the FBI and keeping the group on edge while recording them for months.

"Dan Chappel makes everything happen," attorney Christopher Gibbons said in his closing remarks.

Attorney Joshua Blanchard repeatedly called the scheme "smoke and mirrors."

"There was no plan. There was no agreement," he said.

Croft is from Bear, Delaware, while the others are from Michigan.

Whitmer, a Democrat, rarely talks publicly about the plot, though she referred to "surprises" during her term that seemed like "something out of fiction" when she filed for reelection on March 17.

She has blamed former President Donald Trump for fomenting anger over coronavirus restrictions and refusing to condemn right-wing extremists like those charged in the case.

Suddenly, Twitter's biggest stakeholder is Tesla's Elon Musk

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN and TOM KRISHER AP Business Writers

Tesla CEO Elon Musk has acquired a 9% stake in Twitter to become its largest shareholder while joining other critics in questioning the social media platform's dedication to free speech and the First Amendment.

Musk's ultimate aim in acquiring 73.5 million shares, worth about \$3 billion, isn't clear. Yet in late March Musk, who has 80 million Twitter followers and is active on the site, questioned free speech on Twitter and whether the platform is undermining democracy.

In years past, Twitter and other social platforms have taken fire for allowing harmful speech ranging from incitement to violence to coordinated harassment and racial abuse. More recently, these platforms have made concerted efforts to rein in such behavior, often drawing criticism similar to Musk's from the political right. Both Twitter and Facebook faced blowback after suspending the accounts run by former President Donald Trump following the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection last year.

It's unclear just when Musk bought the stake. A U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission filing made public on Monday says the event triggering the filing happened March 14. Musk has also raised the possibility with his massive and loyal Twitter following, that he could create a rival social media network.

Industry analysts and legal experts say Musk could begin advocating for changes at Twitter immediately if he chooses. In a note to investors, CFRA Analyst Angelo Zino wrote that Twitter could be viewed as an acquisition target because the value of its shares have been falling since early last year.

Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey stepped down as CEO in November. Musk's stake in Twitter is now more than four times the size of Dorsey's, who had been the largest individual shareholder.

"Musk's actual investment is a very small percentage of his wealth, and an all-out buyout should not be ruled out," wrote Zino, who covers Twitter and social media.

Musk could see Twitter as an investment with big growth ahead, or he could have noninvestment reasons for the purchase, such as buying to make sure the platform doesn't restrain his speech, said Erik Gordon, a law and business professor at the University of Michigan.

"What he could be worried about is if enough of his tweets start to look like disinformation, that Twitter says 'we're doing our job against disinformation.'" Gordon said. No CEO would refuse to take a call from the company's top shareholder, so the purchase gives Musk access to Twitter's top management, he said.

Musk has not spoken specifically about any Twitter rule changes he might push, but the social media platform's history of suspensions and bans is well documented.

Trump's suspension from both Twitter and Facebook has raised difficult questions about free speech in a social media industry dominated by a few tech giants — an issue that Trump and conservative media have seized upon. There was broad praise for Musk from those circles Monday.

Michael Flynn, the retired general who served briefly as Donald Trump's national security adviser, and

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 54 of 84

who was suspended from Twitter in January 2021, sent Musk some free advice via Telegram.

"Hey Elon, how about letting all of those dropped from twitter for being America First and Pro-Trump back on Twitter!!!," Flynn wrote.

Twitter earlier this year banned the personal account of far-right U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene for multiple violations of the platform's COVID-19 misinformation policy. Other people banned in recent years include Steve Bannon, for suggesting the beheading of Dr. Anthony Fauci, former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke for breaking the social media site's rules forbidding hate speech, and right-wing conspiracy theorist Alex Jones and his Infowars show for abusive behavior.

Musk recently described himself on Twitter as a "free speech absolutist" in explaining why the Starlink satellite internet service — part of his aerospace company SpaceX — would not block Russian state media outlets, which have spread propaganda and misinformation in line with the Kremlin's narrative on its war in Ukraine.

But such absolutism would not be welcome by advertisers who are Twitter's chief revenue source, said Brian Wieser, global president of business intelligence at GroupM. Brands that advertise on Twitter strongly prefer some content standards because a toxic platform can drive many other users away.

"Certain kinds of speech, such as advocating an insurrection or advocating hurting people, are not the kinds of things most advertisers want to support," said Wieser, who analyzes the media industry for advertisers.

Twitter's stock surged nearly 30% Monday. Since March 14, the date listed on filing by Twitter, its shares are up nearly 50%, meaning that Musk's investment has paid handsomely — so far.

Twitter did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In March, Musk told his millions of followers on Twitter that he was "giving serious thought" to creating his own social media platform, and has clashed repeatedly with financial regulators about his use of Twitter.

Musk is locked into a bitter dispute with the SEC over his ability to post on Twitter. His lawyer has contended in court motions that the SEC is infringing on the Tesla CEO's First Amendment rights.

In October of 2018, Musk and Tesla agreed to pay \$40 million in civil fines and for Musk to have his tweets approved by a corporate lawyer after he tweeted about having the money to take Tesla private at \$420 per share.

The funding was far from secured and the electric vehicle company remains public, but Tesla's stock price jumped. The settlement came after the SEC brought a securities fraud charge. It specified governance changes, including Musk's ouster as board chairman, as well as pre-approval of his tweets.

Musk's lawyer is now asking a U.S. District Court judge in Manhattan to throw out the settlement, contending that the SEC is harassing him and infringing on his First Amendment rights.

The SEC says it has legal authority to subpoena Tesla and Musk about his tweets, and that Musk's move to throw out the settlement is not valid.

The SEC also disclosed that it is investigating Musk's Nov. 6, 2021 tweets that asked followers whether he should sell 10% of his Tesla stake. The commission said it issued administrative subpoenas while investigating whether Musk and Tesla are complying with disclosure controls in the 2018 agreement.

Musk ended up selling more than 15 million shares worth roughly \$16.4 billion. With some sales in late December, Musk is close to selling 10%.

Study finds higher homicide risk in homes with handguns

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Most U.S. gun owners say they own firearms to protect themselves and their loved ones, surveys show. But a study published Monday suggests people who live with handgun owners are shot to death at a higher rate than those who don't have such weapons at home.

"We found zero evidence of any kind of protective effects" from living in a home with a handgun, said David Studdert, a Stanford University researcher who was the lead author of the Annals of Internal Medicine study.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 55 of 84

The study has several shortcomings. For example, the researchers said they could not determine which victims were killed by the handgun owners or with the in-home weapons. They couldn't account for illegal guns and looked only at handguns, not rifles or other firearms.

The dataset also was limited to registered voters in California who were 21 and older. It's not clear that the findings are generalizable to the whole state, let alone to the rest of the country, the authors acknowledged.

But some outside experts said the work was well done, important and the largest research of its kind.

"I would call this a landmark study," said Cassandra Crifasi, a gun violence policy researcher at Johns Hopkins University. "This contributes to our understanding of the potential causal relationship between guns in the home and homicides," she said.

California is unusual in that it offers gun ownership data and other information not obtainable in almost any other state. That allowed the researchers to follow millions of people over many years to try to better establish what happens when a person begins living in a home with handgun, they said.

The study focused on nearly 600,000 Californians who did not own handguns but began living in homes with handguns between October 2004 and December 2016 — either because they started living with someone who owned one or because someone in their household bought one.

The researchers calculated that for every 100,000 people in that situation, 12 will be shot to death by someone else over five years. In comparison, eight out of 100,000 who live in gun-free homes will be killed that way over the same time span.

"The rates are low" and the absolute risk is small, but it's important to consider the increase in a person's risk of being killed, Studdert said.

Those numbers suggest the risk rises 50%, but Studdert said it's actually higher: In a separate calculation designed to better account for where people live and other factors, the researchers estimated the risk was actually more than twice as high.

Separately, the researchers found that those who lived with handgun owners had a much higher rate of being fatally shot by a spouse or intimate partner. The vast majority of such victims — 84% — were women, they said.

The study was confined to California, but the risk is likely even greater in states with less stringent gun laws and where gun ownership is more common, Crifasi said.

Previous research estimated that nearly 3% of U.S. adults became new gun owners between January 2019 and April 2021, which translates to about 7.5 million Americans. Of those, about 5.4 million previously lived in a home with no guns.

For decades, studies have shown guns in the home raise the risk of a violent death. Much of that work, including an earlier study by Studdert and his colleagues, focused on suicide.

The new study goes further in addressing the perception that handguns are still worthwhile because of the safety they provide against being murdered, some experts said.

"The reason people have guns in their home is for protection from strangers," said David Hemenway, director of the Harvard University's Injury Control Research Center. "But what this is showing that having a gun in the home is bad for people in the home."

AP Exclusive: Behind-the-scenes with women's NCAA champions

By PETE IACOBELLI AP Sports Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — They laughed at each other. They laughed with each other. They shared meals, shared moments, dared teammates to play them in ping-pong, got serious when it was time for school-work and got very serious when it was time for basketball.

Say this for the South Carolina women's basketball team: Regardless of the outcome, they went to the Final Four fully committed to enjoying and savoring the moment. Even though it seems like playing on the college game's biggest stage is an annual event now, nothing was taken for granted and nobody needed to explain that the memories created over the season's last few days would last forever.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 56 of 84

The real "fun" for them, however, would only come from cutting down the championship nets on Sunday night.

So all those pent up emotions erupted after they completed a wire-to-wire run as the top-ranked women's basketball team in the nation by knocking off UConn 64-49 Sunday night in the national title game.

The celebration was on.

Players screamed and shouted on the court as the final seconds ticked off the clock, then the party continued back at the team hotel.

About 300 people filled the lobby and when the Gamecocks came through the door, they cheered as each player walked past. They saved their loudest cries for the coach, chanting "Dawn, Dawn, Dawn" as Staley fist-bumped and took selfies with anyone who asked.

A member of the school's pep band presented her with a drum head signed by this year's musicians.

"Teams work hard all year," Staley said, "but seasons don't all end like this."

Staley then went to a building adjacent to the hotel for a Gamecock Club celebration where football coach Shane Beamer was with his family.

There were more photos, more hugs and more thanks from Staley.

"We have a home court advantage, that turns into a road court advantage, because you show up," she said.

"We have a Dawn advantage," someone yelled as Staley beamed.

Then she gave them a hint of what's next: "How about this?" she said, "back to back."

The Gamecocks granted The Associated Press behind-the-scenes access to their Final Four experience, a chance to observe them away from the public spotlight. It was clear there was a singular focus to the journey that didn't start last week but rather last year, almost immediately after a 66-65 loss in the national semifinals to eventual champion Stanford.

They were unified in their goal of reaching this year's Final Four. Once here, everything was done as a team. Everything.

And they had plenty of support every step of their journey, all the way to the exhilarating end at the Target Center.

"Some fans had tickets and rooms long before we did," Staley jokingly told the AP at the team hotel.

The expectations were warranted. South Carolina began the season atop the AP Top 25 and never relinquished the mantle, motivated by the gut-wrenching loss in San Antonio a year ago when Aliyah Boston's short putback in the closing seconds didn't drop.

They made getting back here look easy. South Carolina, the overall top seed in this year's tourney, reached the Final Four last week in Greensboro, North Carolina, with an 80-50 win over Creighton.

It was time to pack.

After the traveling party of 44 players, coaches, administrative staff and support personnel arrived Tuesday in Minneapolis, the work truly began the next day.

After breakfast at the hotel, there was film study and practice.

But, in what became a theme for the Gamecocks' time in Minnesota, that day's agenda was a blend of preparation and celebration.

Following practice, the team went to the Loew's Hotel by the Final Four arena to watch Boston and Staley pick up Naismith Awards. The 6-foot-5 forward was named defensive player of the year and national player of the year; Staley walked with coach of the year honors.

"Well done," freshman teammate Saniya Rivers called out to Boston as the team cheered.

Boston, not one to heap praise on herself, smiled and gently shook her head at the ruckus.

"It's such a blessing to be here to see this," said Cleone Boston, Aliyah's mother.

On Thursday, Boston received more hardware when she was named the AP player of the year. And whenever the ceremonies ended, the group would return to the hotel to change, nap and get ready for whatever was coming next.

That often was study hall.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 57 of 84

Academic sessions were a regular occurrence during March with the Southeastern Conference and NCAA tournaments keeping them away from campus.

Maria Hickman, the school's executive associate AD and administrator for women's basketball, checks in the players, who spread out among the round banquet tables with laptops and cellphones for Facetimeing tutors. Some, especially freshmen, spent more time in the 90-minute session than others.

"They understand what they have to do. They're a good group," Hickman said.

Ten players, all on this year's roster, made the 2021 SEC winter academic honor roll including South Carolina's starting five of Boston, forward Victaria Saxton and guards Brea Beal, Zia Cooke and Destanni Henderson. The list honors scholarship athletes with a GPA of 3.0 or better.

There was a little more levity at dinner following study hall, though not much.

Dinner was served buffet style with dishes of pasta, vegetables, fish and a taco tray. Fruit and slices of cheesecake were lined up for dessert. Water was the drink of choice.

Players kept the frivolity to a minimum during the meal, knowing a film session followed. Staley's assistant Fred Chmiel prepared the presentation in a nearby hall.

For the film session, players sat at long tables set up in a U-shape with Chmiel in the middle in front a projector frozen with a Louisville offensive set. Chmiel grilled them with questions about what they should've already studied about the Cardinals.

Louisville guard Hailey Van Lith?

"She can't go right. Stay in all plays. Box her out," said Beal, the Gamecocks top perimeter defender.

Chmiel next grilled Boston, her new award serving as her new nickname.

"Naismith. Emily Engstler?" Chmiel said.

"Got to box her out," the center responded.

In the midst of the session, two former South Carolina greats — A'ja Wilson and Allisha Gray — pop in. The pair of Olympic gold medalists are in town for a U.S. national team camp taking place here in conjunction with the Final Four.

The two guests — "We've seen this plenty of times before," Wilson says of the film session — pull up chairs and the lights go out for about 10 minutes of Louisville offensive and defensive sets. Around 8:30 p.m., the lights come on. Players, who know a long day is just about over, audibly sigh.

They clearly were paying attention during the film study: South Carolina beat Louisville. Afterward, fans gathered in the team's lobby to welcome the Gamecocks back. Everyone allowed themselves to enjoy the moment; Staley pumped her fist several times as supporters yelled, clapped and shouted.

Athletic director Ray Tanner joked how he talked with Staley at the Target Center and she asked how he was holding up against critics of the school's recent search to replace Frank Martin, which ended last week with the hiring of Chattanooga's Lamont Paris.

"I'm good," Tanner told her. "But you could help me out a lot."

Tanner didn't have to say how. "Win it all" was left unsaid, because it was clear.

So, Saturday morning, it was back to work.

Film study ramped up with a session on the Huskies, who took down defending champion Stanford 63-58 in the second semifinal.

Assistant Jollette Law, the former Illinois head coach — and Harlem Globetrotter — ran this one. She had run the film session before South Carolina's 73-57 victory over then-second ranked UConn in the Bahamas back in November.

However, Staley was more talkative this time, especially regarding Huskies star Paige Bueckers.

"We're going to change the way we play her throughout the game so she can't get comfortable," the coach said.

Staley emphasized the Gamecocks' need to push the pace.

"We need to exhaust them," she said. "It may exhaust us, but there's a lot more of us than there are of them."

Before exhausting her own team, Staley knew mental breaks were needed. There were times players headed to a fourth-floor lounge area equipped with a PlayStation and Nintendo Switch game systems.

Boston and Beal settled into two massaging leather lounge chairs to play on their phones.

"I wish this were part of" the players' gift suite, Boston quipped.

There's a ping-pong table with key reserve forward LeLe Grissett in full charge. First she's trying to teach sophomore guard Eniya Russell how to play, before the younger player gives up. Backup forward Kamilla Cardoso sits nearby, smiling.

"You want to play? Who wants to play," Grissett said.

Cooke and freshman Sania Feagin have a quick contest, seeing who can better spin small, commemorative basketballs on their finger. Then they start pitching them to each other faster and faster before Cooke's toss gets away from Feagin.

They are loose, joyous moments for a group that chased the game's top prize all year long.

"Every player on this team has sacrificed," said Staley, in her 14th season. "For some it's playing lots of minutes, for others it's not playing at all. But without them all playing their part, we wouldn't be here, not at all."

Such is the culture she has built, a powerhouse program that got a shoutout Monday from former President Barack Obama (and a reply from Staley).

In a few days, the yearlong quest to make the 2023 Final Four will begin. Staley is coming back. Most of her team is coming back. This season is over, but the next celebration weekend probably isn't too far away.

Nevada toad declared endangered at site of geothermal plant

By SCOTT SONNER Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — In a rare emergency move, the U.S. government temporarily declared a northern Nevada toad endangered Monday, saying a geothermal power plant in the works could result in its extinction.

The Fish and Wildlife Service announced it is formally proposing a rule to list the Dixie Valley toad as an endangered species subject to 60 days of public comment under the Endangered Species Act's normal rulemaking process.

But it said the emergency listing goes into effect immediately and will continue for eight months while more permanent protections are considered for the toad at the only place it is known to exist in the world.

It marks only the second time in 20 years the service has listed a species as endangered on an emergency basis.

"Protecting small population species like this ensures the continued biodiversity necessary to maintain climate resilient landscapes in one of the driest states in the country," the agency said.

It wasn't immediately clear how the toad's listing might affect construction of the power plant about 100 miles (160 kilometers) east of Reno. Conservationists and tribal members are trying to block the project in a lawsuit currently before the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The dispute is among a growing number of conflicts over wildlife protection and tribal rights on federal lands that the Biden administration faces as it pursues its agenda to combat climate change by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy.

Officials for Reno-based Ormat Technologies Inc., which broke ground on the power plant last month, have said they don't believe a listing would impact the project because the company spent six years developing a mitigation plan to offset any potential environmental impacts.

"Ormat long recognized the importance of conserving the Dixie Valley toad, regardless of its legal status," Ormat Vice President Paul Thomsen said Monday in an email to The Associated Press.

"Ormat will coordinate with relevant agencies to ensure that any additional required process is met while we continue our work on this important renewable energy project," he said.

Geothermal power is generated from hot water deep beneath the earth.

The Dixie Valley toad lives in wetlands around hot springs next to the construction site. In addition to geothermal development, other primary threats to one of the smallest toads in the western U.S. include disease, predation by non-native frog species, groundwater pumping for human and agricultural uses and climate change, the service said.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 59 of 84

The agency agreed last month to expedite consideration of a federal listing of the toad as part of a settlement with conservationists and the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe, who are suing to block the power plant. The Nevada tribe says the site is sacred to its people who have lived there for thousands of years.

The Center for Biological Diversity first petitioned for the toad's listing in 2017.

Monday's decision "comes just in the nick of time for the Dixie Valley toads, which are staring down the barrel of extinction," said Patrick Donnelly, the center's Great Basin director.

"We've been saying for five years that the Dixie Meadows geothermal project could wipe out these tiny toads, and I'm thankful those concerns have been heard," he said in a statement emailed to The Associated Press.

The center for Biological Diversity and the tribe won a federal court order in Reno in January temporarily blocking construction of Ormat's project on U.S. Bureau of Land Management land east of Fallon.

But the 9th U.S. Circuit of Appeals stayed that order Feb. 4 pending full consideration of Ormat's appeal. The San Francisco-based appellate court is considering hearing arguments on the appeal in June.

The last time a species was declared endangered on an emergency basis was in 2011, when the the Obama administration took action on the Miami blue butterfly in southern Florida. Before that, an emergency listing was granted for the California tiger salamander under the Bush administration in 2002.

Other species listed as endangered on an emergency basis over the years include the California bighorn sheep in the Sierra Nevada in 1999, steller sea lions in 1990, and the Sacramento River winter migration run of chinook salmon and Mojave desert tortoise, both in 1989.

With students in turmoil, US teachers train in mental health

By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — As Benito Luna-Herrera teaches his seventh-grade social studies classes, he is on alert for signs of inner turmoil. And there is so much of it these days.

One of his 12-year-old students felt her world was falling apart. Distance learning had upended her friendships. Things with her boyfriend were verging on violent. Her home life was stressful. "I'm just done with it," the girl told Luna-Herrera during the pandemic, and shared a detailed plan to kill herself.

Another student was typically a big jokester and full of confidence. But one day she told him she didn't want to live anymore. She, too, had a plan in place to end her life.

Luna-Herrera is just one teacher, in one Southern California middle school, but stories of students in distress are increasingly common around the country. The silver lining is that special training helped him know what to look for and how to respond when he saw the signs of a mental emergency.

Since the pandemic started, experts have warned of a mental health crisis facing American children. That is now playing out at schools in the form of increased childhood depression, anxiety, panic attacks, eating disorders, fights and thoughts of suicide at alarming levels, according to interviews with teachers, administrators, education officials and mental health experts.

In low-income areas, where adverse childhood experiences were high before the pandemic, the crisis is even more acute and compounded by a shortage of school staff and mental health professionals.

Luna-Herrera, who teaches in a high poverty area of the Mojave Desert, is among a small but growing number of California teachers to take a course called Youth Mental Health First Aid. It teaches adults how to spot warning signs of mental health risks and substance abuse in children, and how to prevent a tragedy.

The California Department of Education funds the program for any school district requesting it, and the pandemic has accelerated moves to make such courses a requirement. The training program is operated by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing and available in every state.

"I don't want to read about another teenager where there were warning signs and we looked the other way," said Sen. Anthony Portantino, author of a bill that would require all California middle and high schools to train at least 75% of employees in behavioral health. "Teachers and school staff are on the front lines of a crisis, and need to be trained to spot students who are suffering."

Experts say while childhood depression and anxiety had been on the rise for years, the pandemic's un-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 60 of 84

relenting stress and grief amplified the problems, particularly for those already experiencing mental health issues who were cut off from counselors and other school resources during distance learning.

For children, the issues with distance learning were not just academic, said Sharon Hoover, professor of child psychiatry at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and co-director of the National Center for School Mental Health.

Child abuse and neglect increased during the pandemic, according to Hoover. For children in troubled homes, with alcoholic or abusive parents, distance learning meant they had no escape. Those who lacked technology or had spotty internet connections were isolated even more than their peers and fell further behind academically and socially.

Many children bounced back after the extended isolation, but for others it will take longer, and mental health problems often lag a stressor.

"We can't assume that 'OK we're back in school, it's been a few months and now everyone should be back to normal.' That is not the case," said Hoover.

Returning to school after months of isolation intensified the anxiety for some children. Teachers say students have greater difficulty focusing, concentrating, sitting still and many need to relearn how to socialize and resolve conflicts face-to-face after prolonged immersion in screens.

Kids expected to pick up where they left off but some found friendships, and their ability to cope with social stress, had changed. Educators say they also see a concerning increase in apathy — about grades, how students treat each other and themselves — and a lot less empathy.

"I have never seen kids be so mean to each other in my life," said Terrin Musbach, who trains teachers in mental health awareness and other social-emotional programs at the Del Norte Unified School District, a high-poverty district in rural Northern California. "There's more school violence, there's more vaping, there's more substance abuse, there's more sexual activity, there's more suicide ideation, there's more of every single behavior that we would be worried about in kids."

Many states have mandated teacher training on suicide prevention over the last decade and the pandemic prompted some to broaden the scope to include mental health awareness and supporting behavioral health needs.

But school districts nationwide also say they need more psychologists and counselors. The Hopeful Futures Campaign, a coalition of national mental health organizations, last month published a report that found most states are struggling with mental health support in schools. Only Idaho and the District of Columbia exceed the nationally recommended ratio of one psychologist per 500 students.

In some states, including West Virginia, Missouri, Texas and Georgia, there is only one school psychologist for over 4,000 students, the report says. Similarly, few states meet the goal of one counselor per 250 students.

President Joe Biden has proposed \$1 billion in new federal funding to help schools hire more counselors and psychologists and bolster suicide prevention programs. That followed a rare public advisory in December from U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy on "the urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis."

In early 2021, emergency room visits in the U.S. for suspected suicide attempts were 51% higher for adolescent girls and 4% higher for adolescent boys compared to the same period in 2019, according to research cited in the advisory.

Since California began offering the Youth Mental Health First Aid course in 2014, more than 8,000 teachers, administrators and school staff have been trained, said Monica Nepomuceno, who oversees mental health programming at the California Department of Education.

She said much more needs to be done in the country's largest state, which employs over 600,000 K-12 staff at schools.

The course helps distinguish typical adolescent ways of dealing with stress — slamming doors, crying, bursts of anger — from warning signs of mental distress, which can be blatant or subtle.

Red flags include when a child talks about dying or suicide, but can be more nuanced like: "I can't do this anymore," or "I'm tired of this," said Tramaine El-Amin, a spokesperson for the National Council for

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 61 of 84

Mental Wellbeing. More than 550,000 K-12 educators across the country have taken the Youth Mental Health First Aid course since it launched in 2012, she said.

Changes in behavior could be cause for concern — a child who stops a sport or activity they were passionate about without replacing it with another one; a typically put together child who starts to look regularly unkempt; a student whose grades plummet or who stops handing in homework; a child who eats lunch alone and has stopped palling around with their friends.

After noticing something might be wrong, the course teaches the next step is to ask the student without pressuring or casting judgment and letting them know you care and want to help.

"Sometimes an adult can ask a question that causes more harm than good," said Luna-Herrera, the social studies teacher at California City Middle School, a two-hour drive into the desert from Los Angeles.

He took the course in spring 2021 and two weeks later put it to use. It was during distance learning and a student had failed to show up for online tutoring but he spotted her chatting online on the school's distance learning platform, having a heated dispute with her then-boyfriend. Luna reached out to her privately.

"I asked her if she was OK," he said. Little by little, the girl told Luna-Herrera about problems with friends and her boyfriend and problems at home that left her feeling alone and desperately unanchored.

The course tells adults to ask open-ended questions that keep the conversation going, and not to project themselves into an adolescent's problems with comments like: "You'll be fine; It's not that bad; I went through that; Try to ignore it." What might seem trivial to an adult can feel overwhelming for a young person, and failure to recognize that can be a conversation stopper.

The 12-year old told Luna-Herrera she had considered hurting herself. "Is that a recurring thought?" he asked, recalling how his heart started racing as she revealed her suicide plan.

Like CPR first-aid training, the course teaches how to handle a crisis: Raise the alarm and get expert help. Do not leave a person contemplating suicide alone. As Luna-Herrera continued talking to the girl, he texted his school superintendent, who got the principal on the line, they called 911 and police rushed to the home, where they spoke to the girl and her mother, who was startled and unaware.

"He absolutely saved that child's life," said Mojave Unified Superintendent Katherine Aguirre, who oversees the district of about 3,000 students, the majority of whom are Latino and Black children from economically disadvantaged families.

Aguirre recognized the need for behavioral health training early in the pandemic and through the Department of Education trained all of her employees, from teachers to yard supervisors and cafeteria workers.

"It's about awareness. And that Sandy Hook promise: If you see something, say something," she said.

That did not happen with 14-year-old Taya Bruell.

Taya was a bright, precocious student who had started struggling with mental health issues at about 11, according to her father, Harry Bruell. At the time, the family lived in Boulder, Colorado where Taya was hospitalized at one point for psychiatric care but kept up the trappings of a model student: She got straight As, was co-leader of her high school writing club and in her spare time taught senior citizens to use computers.

For a literature class, Taya was assigned to keep a journal. In it, she drew a disturbing portrait that showed self-harm and wrote about how much she hated her body and was hearing voices she wanted to silence.

Her teacher read the assignment and wrote: "Taya, very thorough journal. I loved reading the entries. A+"

Three months later in February 2016, Taya killed herself. After her death, Taya's parents discovered the journal in her room and brought it to the school, where they learned Taya's teacher had not informed the school counselor or administrators of what she had seen. They don't blame the teacher but will always wonder what if she had not ignored the signs of danger.

"I don't think the teacher wanted to hurt our daughter. I think she had no idea what to do when she read those stark warning signs in Taya's journal," said her father, who has since relocated with the family to Santa Barbara, California.

He believes legislation to require teacher training in behavioral health will save lives. "It teaches you to raise the alarm, and not just walk away, which is what happened to Taya."

UN warns Earth 'firmly on track toward an unlivable world'

By FRANK JORDANS and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Temperatures on Earth will shoot past a key danger point unless greenhouse gas emissions fall faster than countries have committed, the world's top body of climate scientists said Monday, warning of the consequences of inaction but also noting hopeful signs of progress.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change revealed "a litany of broken climate promises" by governments and corporations, accusing them of stoking global warming by clinging to harmful fossil fuels.

"It is a file of shame, cataloguing the empty pledges that put us firmly on track toward an unlivable world," he said.

Governments agreed in the 2015 Paris accord to keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) this century, ideally no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit). Yet temperatures have already increased by over 1.1C (2F) since pre-industrial times, resulting in measurable increases in disasters such flash floods, extreme heat, more intense hurricanes and longer-burning wildfires, putting human lives in danger and costing governments hundreds of billions of dollars to confront.

"Projected global emissions from (national pledges) place limiting global warming to 1.5C beyond reach and make it harder after 2030 to limit warming to 2C," the panel said.

In other words, the report's co-chair, James Skea of Imperial College London, told The Associated Press: "If we continue acting as we are now, we're not even going to limit warming to 2 degrees, never mind 1.5 degrees."

Ongoing investments in fossil fuel infrastructure and clearing large swaths of forest for agriculture undermine the massive curbs in emissions needed to meet the Paris goal, the report found.

Emissions in 2019 were about 12% higher than they were in 2010 and 54% higher than in 1990, said Skea.

The rate of growth has slowed from 2.1% per year in the early part of this century to 1.3% per year between 2010 and 2019, the report's authors said. But they voiced "high confidence" that unless countries step up their efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions, the planet will on average be 2.4C to 3.5C (4.3 to 6.3F) warmer by the end of the century — a level experts say is sure to cause severe impacts for much of the world's population.

"Limiting warming to 1.5C requires global greenhouse gas emissions to peak before 2025 at the latest and be reduced by 43% by 2030," he said.

Such cuts would be hard to achieve without without drastic, economy-wide measures, the panel acknowledged. It's more likely that the world will pass 1.5C and efforts will then need to be made to bring temperatures back down again, including by removing vast amounts of carbon dioxide — the main greenhouse gas — from the atmosphere.

Many experts say this is unfeasible with current technologies, and even if it could be done it would be far costlier than preventing the emissions in the first place.

The report, numbering thousands of pages, doesn't single out individual countries for blame. But the figures show much of the carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere was released by rich countries that were the first to burn coal, oil and gas beginning with the industrial revolution.

The U.N. panel said 40% of emissions since then came from Europe and North America. Just over 12% can be attributed to East Asia, which includes China. But China took over the position as world's top emissions polluter from the United States in the mid-2000s.

Many countries and companies have used recent climate meetings to paint rosy pictures of their emissions-cutting efforts, while continuing to invest in fossil fuels and other polluting activities, Guterres charged.

"Some government and business leaders are saying one thing but doing another," he said. "Simply put, they are lying. And the results will be catastrophic."

The report isn't without some hope, however.

Its authors highlight myriad ways in which the world can be brought back on track to 2C or even, with great effort, return to 1.5C after that threshold has been passed. This could require measures such as the removal of CO2 from the atmosphere with natural or artificial means, but also potentially risky technolo-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 63 of 84

gies such as pumping aerosols into the sky to reflect sunlight.

Among the solutions recommended are a rapid shift away from fossil fuels toward renewable energy such as increasingly cheap solar and wind power, the electrification of transport, less meat consumption, more efficient use of resources and massive financial support for poor countries unable to pay for such measures without help.

The situation is as if humanity has "gone to the doctor in a very unhealthy condition," and the doctor is saying "you need to change, it's a radical change. If you don't you're in trouble," said report co-author Pete Smith, a professor of soils and global change at the University Aberdeen.

"It's not like a diet," Smith said. "It is a fundamental lifestyle change. It's changing what you eat, how much you eat and get on a more active lifestyle."

One move often described as "low-hanging fruit" by scientists is to plug methane leaks from mines, wells and landfills that release the potent but short-lived greenhouse gas into the atmosphere. A pact forged between the United States and China at last year's U.N. climate conference in Glasgow aims to do just that.

"The big message we've got (is that) human activities got us into this problem and human agency can actually get us out of it again," said Skea, the panel's co-chair.

The panel's reports have become increasingly blunt since the first one was published in 1990, and the latest may be the last before the planet passes 1.5C of warming, Skea told the AP.

Last August, it said climate change caused by humans was "an established fact" and warned that some effects of global warming are already inevitable. In late February, the panel published a report that outlined how further temperature increases will multiply the risk of floods, storms, drought and heat waves worldwide.

Still, the British government's former chief science adviser David King, who wasn't involved in writing the report, said there are too optimistic assumptions about how much CO2 the world can afford to emit.

"We don't actually have a remaining carbon budget to burn," said King, who now chairs the Climate Crisis Advisory Group.

"It's just the reverse. We've already done too much in the way of putting greenhouse gases up there," he said, arguing that the IPCC's calculation omits new risks and potentially self-reinforcing effects already happening, such as the increased absorption of heat into the oceans from sea ice loss and the release of methane as permafrost melts.

Such warnings were echoed by U.N. chief Guterres, citing scientists' warnings that the planet is moving "perilously close to tipping points that could lead to cascading and irreversible climate impacts."

"But high-emitting governments and corporations are not just turning a blind eye; they are adding fuel to the flames," he said, calling for an end to further coal, oil and gas extraction. "Investing in new fossil fuels infrastructure is moral and economic madness."

Vulnerable nations said the report showed big polluters have to step up their efforts before the next U.N. climate summit in Egypt this fall.

"We are looking to the G-20, to the world's biggest emitters, to set ambitious targets ahead of COP27, and to reach those targets – by investing in renewables, cutting out coal and fossil fuel subsidies," said Tina Stege, climate envoy for the Marshall Islands. "It's long past time to deliver on promises made."

EXPLAINER: Why is Europe balking at a ban on Russian energy?

By The Associated Press undefined

Shocking pictures from the Ukrainian town of Bucha and accusations of Russian war crimes are building pressure for more sanctions against Moscow. A key potential target: Russian oil and natural gas, and the \$850 million that European importers pay for those supplies every day.

But it's not so easy, given Europe's dependence on Russian energy.

Western sanctions so far have targeted Russian banks and companies but spared oil and gas payments — a U.S. concession to keep European allies on board and present a united front.

Here are key facts around Europe's energy imports from Russia and whether a boycott is possible:

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 64 of 84

WHAT SUPPLY IS AT STAKE?

The European Union gets about 40% of its natural gas from Russia, which is used to heat homes, generate electricity and supply industry with both energy and a key raw material for products such as fertilizer.

For oil, it's about 25%, most of which goes toward gasoline and diesel for vehicles. Russia supplies some 14% of diesel, S&P Global analysts said, and a cutoff could send already high prices for truck and tractor fuel through the roof.

WHY CAN'T EUROPE CUT OFF RUSSIAN ENERGY LIKE THE U.S. DID?

The United States imported little oil and no natural gas from Russia as it's become a major producer and exporter of oil and gas thanks to fracking. Europe had some oil and gas deposits, but production has been declining, leaving the 27-country EU dependent on imports.

Of the 155 billion cubic meters of gas that Europe imports from Russia every year, 140 billion comes through pipelines crossing Ukraine, Poland and under the Baltic Sea. Europe is scrambling to get additional supplies by ship in the form of liquefied natural gas, or LNG, but that can't make up for losing gas by pipeline.

LNG is also much more expensive, and suppliers are maxed out. While some European countries are well-connected to LNG terminals, such as Spain, and new projects are in the works in places like Greece and Poland, the infrastructure isn't there to get supplies to the rest of Europe. Building LNG import terminals and pipelines to connect the gas to places that need it can take years.

Because reliance on Russia varies, agreement on an EU boycott is harder to achieve. Lithuania said Saturday that it stopped Russian gas imports and would rely only on an LNG terminal it launched in 2014. Poland, which has spent years looking for alternatives, says it won't renew a Russian gas contract at year's end, on top of taking steps to ban Russian coal and oil.

Germany, the continent's biggest economy, still gets 40% of its gas from Russia, even after cutting its reliance. It aims to end Russian coal imports this summer, oil imports by year's end and be largely independent on gas by 2024, Economy Minister Robert Habeck said.

WHERE ELSE COULD EUROPE GET ENERGY?

It's working to get off Russian gas as fast as possible by finding new sources, conserving and accelerating wind and solar. The EU plan is to cut use of Russian gas by two-thirds by year's end and exit well before 2030.

Besides getting LNG from places like the United States and Qatar, Europe is pushing for more gas from non-Russian pipelines from Norway and Algeria.

Oil is different in that it mostly comes by ship. Still, it wouldn't be easy to replace Russian supply with global markets tight. Taking Russia's 2 million-plus barrels per day to Europe off the market would push oil prices higher worldwide. And Russia could try to sell the oil to India and China, though it might earn less.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF EUROPE BANNED RUSSIAN ENERGY?

Estimates vary, but a cutoff implies a substantial hit to the European economy. A ban might mean governments would have to ration gas among companies to protect homes and hospitals.

Makers of metals, fertilizer, chemicals and glass would be hard hit. Even a partial shutoff of gas to industry could cost "hundreds of thousands" of jobs, said Michael Vassiliadis, head of Germany's BCE union representing workers in the chemicals and mining industries.

"We will likely continue to see resistance from Germany and a select few others as they're simply far more reliant on Russian imports of oil, gas and coal," said Craig Erlam, senior markets analyst for the U.K., Europe, Middle East and Africa at currency broker Oanda. "Forecasts for the impact of an embargo vary, but it would almost certainly tip the country into recession."

A group of nine U.S., UK and German economists said an embargo would mean substantial economic costs for Germany but that it would be "clearly manageable." The country "weathered deeper slumps in recent years and recovered quickly," including the 2009 global financial crisis and pandemic recession, they said.

"Public fear-mongering about the catastrophic consequences of an energy embargo from lobby groups and affiliated think tanks does not hold up to academic standards," they said in an analysis on the Centre for Economic Policy Research's policy portal voxeu.org.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 65 of 84

WHAT ELSE COULD EUROPE DO?

Energy policy expert Simone Tagliapietra and economist Guntram Wolff at the Bruegel think tank in Brussels proposed an EU import tariff on Russian oil and gas. That would reduce Russia's revenue while avoiding a major hit to Europe's growth, with the legal advantage of leaving contracts intact. European leaders last week insisted those same contracts protected them from Russia's demand to pay for gas in rubles. The money from the tariff could be used to protect vulnerable households from higher energy prices.

While the army that invaded Ukraine is already paid for, the tariff would put the Kremlin in "a more difficult economic position, in which they might possibly start having difficulties buying stuff from the outside world, including armaments, and paying the salaries of the public sector," Tagliapietra said.

HOW DID EUROPE GET TO THIS POINT?

Germany relied on natural gas as it transitioned away from coal and after former Chancellor Angela Merkel shut down the remaining nuclear plants after the Fukushima disaster in Japan in 2011. Merkel emphasized diplomatic dialogue with Russian President Vladimir Putin during her 16 years in office and stressed that even during the Cold War, energy supplies kept flowing from Russia.

She also backed the Nord Stream 2 pipeline from Russia despite criticism it would increase Germany's dependence on Russia. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who served as Merkel's finance minister, froze the project after the invasion.

Italy, another big EU economy, increased its reliance on Russian gas over the years as it transitioned away from coal. Italian officials say Russia supplies 38% of the natural gas used for electricity and for heavy industry, including steel and paper mills.

Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, who has been traveling to energy-producing nations seeking alternatives, told the news agency ANSA on Monday that "Italy could not veto sanctions regarding Russian gas." But Premier Mario Draghi, who said last week that gas payments were funding Russia's war, didn't address energy when he condemned images of bodies on Ukrainian streets.

EXPLAINER: Charges in Michigan Gov. Whitmer kidnap plot case

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Jurors are deliberating at the trial of four men accused of plotting to abduct Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in 2020. They began going through evidence on Monday after some four weeks of testimony in U.S. District Court in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Here's a look at the charges and what's required to secure convictions:

WHO ARE THE DEFENDANTS?

Six men were initially charged but two pleaded guilty before trial.

The remaining defendants include Adam Fox, described by prosecutors as the plot's ringleader. He and co-defendant Barry Croft Jr. were affiliated with the "Three Percenter" far-right anti-government movement. Prosecutors say the other two defendants, Daniel Harris and Brandon Caserta, were members of the Wolverine Watchmen, a self-styled militia with similar views.

Ty Garbin pleaded guilty last year and Kaleb Franks joined him in February. Both were star government witnesses at trial.

WHAT ARE THE CHARGES?

All four are charged with kidnapping conspiracy.

According to prosecutors, the defendants plotted from June to October 2020 to abduct Whitmer from her vacation home in northern Michigan because they were infuriated by what they saw as her overly restrictive policies during the pandemic.

Fox, Croft and Harris are also charged with conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction. Prosecutors said they sought to construct and buy explosives, with the aim of destroying a bridge near Whitmer's cottage to stymie police during the kidnapping.

Croft and Harris are charged with possession of an unregistered destructive device — a firework wrapped with pennies that could serve as shrapnel.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 66 of 84

Harris is the only one charged with possession of a semi-automatic assault rifle with a barrel less than 16 inches long that wasn't registered to him.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL SENTENCES?

The kidnapping conspiracy and conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction charges carry maximum life sentences.

The maximum sentence for possession of an unregistered destructive device is 10 years, and Harris could face up to three years in prison if convicted of the semi-automatic rifle charge.

Garbin has already been sentenced to six years in prison, and Franks is expected to receive a lighter sentence than if he had lost at trial.

WHAT'S REQUIRED FOR CONVICTIONS?

The defendants never achieved their purported goal of kidnapping Whitmer. Unbeknownst to them, the FBI had infiltrated their group and was closely monitoring them. They were arrested in October 2020.

Defense attorneys portrayed their clients as weekend warriors prone to big, wild talk, who were often stoned. To prove it was deadly serious, prosecutors entered evidence showing the defendants took specific steps, referred to as "overt acts," toward implementing their plans.

Jury instructions explain that convictions on the kidnapping and weapons conspiracy charges require evidence that each defendant committed at least one of the long list of overt acts in the indictment.

Proof that a defendant simply knew about the conspiracy or associated with members of the conspiracy isn't enough.

WHAT ARE THE ALLEGED OVERT ACTS?

They include that Fox proposed the kidnapping of Whitmer on Aug. 23, 2020, during a meeting with Harris and Caserta. Another is that the men scrutinized each other's IDs in a bid to ensure no one was an undercover agent.

Another is that Fox, Croft, Harris and Caserta held field-training exercises in September 2020, practicing tactics for fighting Whitmer's security detail.

The indictment attributes another overt act on Oct. 7, 2020, to Caserta, alleging he instructed co-conspirators that, if they encountered police, they should give the officers one chance to leave, then kill them.

Alleged overt acts on the weapons of mass destruction charge include that Harris boasted on May 1, 2020, that he was a Marine Corps veteran who "can make things go boom if you give me what I need."

WHAT'S THE ROLE OF ENTRAPMENT?

The defense mounted an entrapment defense at trial, accusing the FBI of engaging in the barred investigatory practice. Jurors who find authorities tricked or cajoled targets into committing crimes they showed no predisposition to commit are supposed to return with not guilty verdicts.

Prosecutors have the burden of proving defendants weren't entrapped. At trial, they sought to show that not only were the men predisposed to joining the kidnap plot but that they discussed such schemes before the FBI sting began.

Meet Jon Batiste, new Grammy winner with plenty going on

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Jon Batiste wears so many hats he may need a closet for them all — recording artist, bandleader, musical director, film composer, museum creative director and scion of New Orleans musical royalty. The multi-instrumentalist won five Grammys on Sunday and despite being on TV all week, not many people may know fully.

HE'S GOT 'SOUL'

Batiste composed music, consulted on and arranged songs for Pixar's animated film "Soul," a mid-life crisis movie mixed with a New York jazz fantasia and a body-swap comedy. He won a Golden Globe for the music alongside Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross of Nine Inch Nails; and the trio also earned the Academy Award for best original score. For their work on "Soul," Batiste, Reznor and Ross won the Grammy on Sunday for best score soundtrack for visual media.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 67 of 84

AT THE PIANO NIGHTLY

Batiste has toured globally with his band Stay Human and made a memorable stop at Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report" in 2014. When producers of "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert" were considering having a house band the following year, Batiste and Stay Human were a natural fit. The mutual respect Colbert and Batiste share is obvious. The bandleader often cheers the comedian's nightly monologue from the piano, appears in segments and accompanies the musical guests. Batiste stuck with the gig even during the pandemic, coming up with tunes, both original and covers, on the spot.

MAKING SWEET MUSIC

Recording since he was a teenager, Batiste's albums include "Hollywood Africans," produced by T Bone Burnett, "Anatomy of Angels: Live at the Village Vanguard," and "Meditations," a collaboration with guitarist Cory Wong. His album "Social Music" spent over a month atop the Billboard and iTunes jazz charts, and he also put together the pandemic benefit album, "Relief: A Benefit for the Jazz Foundation of America's Musicians Relief Fund." His eighth album and the Grammy breakthrough was 2021's "We Are," a sonic blow-out blending R&B, jazz, hip-hop, marching bands and rock, sometimes in the same song. He earned nods in such various categories as R&B, jazz, American roots, classical, music video and album of the year. Batiste's "American Symphony" is set to premiere at Carnegie Hall in May.

THE BIG EASY

Batiste was born into a long lineage of New Orleans musicians, which includes the Batiste Brothers Band and brass band legends Milton and "Uncle" Lionel Batiste. He played drums as a child before switching to piano at age 11. He is a graduate of New Orleans Center for Creative Arts and the prestigious The Juilliard School. The music and culture of New Orleans are highlighted in Batiste's "Freedom" video, which features the band from St. Augustine High School, which Batiste attended, marching through the city's streets. "Jon Batiste has been a tremendous ambassador for Louisiana, as an entertainer and as someone who truly cares about the people of our great state," Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards said Monday.

SIDE HUSTLES

Batiste became the first musical director for The Atlantic magazine in 2017 and is co-creative director of the National Jazz Museum in Harlem. He has been featured in ad campaigns for Chase, Apple, Lincoln and numerous fashion brands including Ralph Lauren, Barney's, Nordstrom and H&M. His song "Freedom" has been showcased across the NCAA Tournament and served as the face of New Orleans ahead of Saturday night's Final Four at the Caesars Superdome. He also had a role in Spike Lee's 2012 film "Red Hook Summer" and appeared as himself on the HBO television series "Treme." Batiste is literally the poster boy for the upcoming New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

Africa looks to renewables to curb warming, boost economies

By WANJOHI KABUKURU Associated Press

MOMBASA, Kenya (AP) — From wind farms across the African coastline to geothermal projects in the east African rift valley, a new United Nations climate report on Monday brought the continent's vast clean energy potential into the spotlight. If realized, these renewable energy projects could blunt the harshest global warming effects, power the continent's projected economic development and lift millions out of poverty, the report said.

The U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change report comes at a time when Africa's renewable energy business is already booming. Many African nations are intensifying efforts to embrace alternative renewable energy pathways and shift away from fossil fuel dependency, with countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Morocco, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Africa taking the lead on large-scale clean energy adoption.

Yet Africa has attracted just 2% — \$60 billion — of the \$2.8 trillion invested in renewables worldwide in the last two decades and accounts for only 3% of the world's current renewable energy capacity. Limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) or 2C (3.6F), in line with the 2016 Paris climate agreement, will involve even greater energy system transformation, the U.N. report said.

That means more renewable energy initiatives, such as Kenya's Lake Turkana Wind Power, launched in

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 68 of 84

2019 some 600km (372 miles) northwest of the capital Nairobi and making up 18% of the country's energy production, are needed. Its CEO, Phylip Leferink, said large projects like these can be replicated, but it remains logistically challenging.

"The wind conditions in the north of Kenya are rather unique for the continent. You will be hard-pressed to find another location in Africa with a similar wind regime," Leferink said. "(This) however does not mean that there is no potential for other wind projects in Africa; there most certainly is. Especially the African coastline, from Djibouti all the way south around South Africa and up north again up to Cameroon, has good wind potential and certainly warrants initiatives in this regard."

The project is already in good company, with off-grid solar power also contributing to the country's energy production. In Nakuru county, some 167km (104 miles) northwest of Nairobi, James Kariuki signed up for M-Kopa solar power, a pay-as-you-go low-cost financing for off-grid solar power to his home.

"When I installed solar power into my home, I ended up making considerable savings from the use of kerosene lamp for lighting and charcoal in my house," Kariuki said. "Hospital bills for my family have since gone down and we now have internet and watch international sports in my home."

Since 2012, M-Kopa has powered over 225,000 homes in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania with off-grid solar power. Kenya has also been expanding its geothermal and bioenergy capacity for several years.

These initiatives are a firm step in the right direction, according to report author and energy expert Yamina Saheb.

"Renewable energy sources are definitely an important mitigation strategy for Africa, offering its citizens decent living standards by developing infrastructure and buildings that do not require carbon intensive solutions," Saheb told the Associated Press. "The whole continent could go solar including PV (photovoltaic) and thermal solar and some countries could also go for wind."

Solar energy initiatives such as the Noor Ouarzazate complex in Morocco, Benban solar park in Egypt and South Africa's Redstone solar park have sprung up across the continent. The four nations attracted 75% of all the renewable energy investments flows in the region.

Africa has a world-leading capacity for even more solar power initiatives, the report said, with a solar photovoltaic potential of up to 7900 gigawatts. Plans are also underway to explore the potential for geothermal energy in the east African rift valley system and nations dotted around the continent, such as Angola, Sudan and Zambia, are investing in wind and hydropower.

A transition to clean energy is also "economically attractive" in some circumstances, the IPCC report said. The U.N. estimates that Africa's continued uptake of renewable energies will see the creation of more than 12 million new jobs. China remains the largest lender of Africa's renewable energy investments followed by the African Development Bank, World Bank and the Green Climate Fund.

"This latest IPCC working group report on mitigation is a clear indicator that Africa should harness the immense renewable energies opportunities available within the continent to power economic growth and build resilient infrastructure," said Max Bankole Jarrett, an energy expert and former Africa regional manager at the International Energy Agency. "Africa's vast renewable energy sources should be a priority not just for the continent but also for the world racing to fulfill the net zero ambition."

53 African nations have already submitted their voluntary national determined contributions under the Paris climate agreement which details energy plans and outlines targets to curb emissions. 40 of those countries have included renewable energy targets.

Africa suffers some of the most severe effects from climate change, despite being the lowest greenhouse gas emitting continent with the least adaptive capacity. Swathes of the continent still lack access to electricity and cooking fuels: The International Energy Agency estimates some 580 million people were without power in 2019, and the World Health Organization says about 906 million are in need of cleaner cooking fuels and technologies. But providing universal access using non-renewable energy sources would lead to increased global emissions, the report warned.

"Climate action is a key component in meeting the sustainable development goals," it said.

No obituary for Earth: Scientists fight climate doom talk

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

It's not the end of the world. It only seems that way.

Climate change is going to get worse, but as gloomy as the latest scientific reports are, including today's from the United Nations, scientist after scientist stresses that curbing global warming is not hopeless. The science says it is not game over for planet Earth or humanity. Action can prevent some of the worst if done soon, they say.

After decades of trying to get the public's attention, spur action by governments and fight against organized movements denying the science, climate researchers say they have a new fight on their hands: doomism. It's the feeling that nothing can be done, so why bother. It's young people publicly swearing off having children because of climate change.

University of Maine climate scientist Jacquelyn Gill noticed in 2018 fewer people telling her climate change isn't real and more "people that we now call doomers that you know believe that nothing can be done." Gill says it is just not true.

"I refuse to write off or write an obituary for something that's still alive," Gill told The Associated Press, referring to the Earth. "We are not through a threshold or past the threshold. There's no such thing as pass-fail when it comes to the climate crisis."

"It's really, really, really hard to walk people back from that ledge," Gill said.

Doomism "is definitely a thing," said Wooster College psychology professor Susan Clayton, who studies climate change anxiety and spoke at a conference in Norway last week that addressed the issue. "It's a way of saying 'I don't have to go to the effort of making changes because there's nothing I can do anyway.'"

Gill and six other scientists who talked with The Associated Press about doomism aren't sugarcoating the escalating harm to the climate from accumulating emissions. But that doesn't make it hopeless, they said.

"Everybody knows it's going to get worse," said Woodwell Climate Research Center scientist Jennifer Francis. "We can do a lot to make it less bad than the worst case scenario."

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change just issued its third report in six months. The first two were on how bad warming is and how it will hurt people and ecosystems, with today's report focusing on how the extent of disruption depends on how much fossil fuels are burned. It shows the world is still heading in the wrong direction in its fight to curb climate change, with new investments in fossil fuel infrastructure and forests falling to make way for agriculture.

"It's not that they're saying you are condemned to a future of destruction and increasing misery," said Christiana Figueres, the former U.N. climate secretary who helped forge the 2015 Paris climate agreement and now runs an organization called Global Optimism. "What they're saying is 'the business-as-usual path ... is an atlas of misery' or a future of increasing destruction. But we don't have to choose that. And that's the piece, the second piece, that sort of always gets dropped out of the conversation."

United Nations Environment Program Director Inger Andersen said with reports like these, officials are walking a tightrope. They are trying to spur the world to action because scientists are calling this a crisis. But they also don't want to send people spiraling into paralysis because it is too gloomy.

"We are not doomed, but rapid action is absolutely essential," Andersen said. "With every month or year that we delay action, climate change becomes more complex, expensive and difficult to overcome."

"The big message we've got (is that) human activities got us into this problem and human agency can actually get us out of it again," James Skea, co-chair of Monday's report, said. "It's not all lost. We really have the chance to do something."

Monday's report details that it is unlikely, without immediate and drastic carbon pollution cuts, that the world will limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, which is the world's agreed upon goal. The world has already warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit). And earlier IPCC reports have shown that after 1.5 degrees, more people die, more ecosystems are in trouble and climate change worsens rapidly.

"We don't fall over the cliff at 1.5 degrees," Skea said, "Even if we were to go beyond 1.5 it doesn't mean

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 70 of 84

we throw up our hands in despair.”

IPCC reports showed that depending on how much coal, oil, and natural gas is burned, warming by 2100 could be anywhere from 1.4 to 4.4 degrees Celsius (2.5 to 7.2 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial times, which can mean large differences in sickness, death and weather disasters.

While he sees the increase in doom talk as inevitable, NASA climate scientist Gavin Schmidt said he knows first-hand that people are wrong when they say nothing can be done: “I work with people and I’m watching other people and I’m seeing the administration. And people are doing things and they’re doing the right things for the most part as best they can. So I’m seeing people do things.”

Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann said scientists used to think Earth would be committed to decades of future warming even after people stopped pumping more carbon dioxide into the air than nature takes out. But newer analyses in recent years show it will only take a few years after net zero emissions for carbon levels in the air to start to go down because of carbon being sucked up by the oceans and forests, Mann said.

Scientists’ legitimate worries get repeated and amplified like in the kids game of telephone and “by the time you’re done, it’s ‘we’re doomed’ when what the scientist actually said was we need to reduce or carbon emissions 50% within this decade to avoid 1.5 (degrees of) warming, which would be really bad. Two degrees of warming would be far worse than 1.5 warming, but not the end of civilization,” Mann said.

Mann said doomism has become far more of a threat than denialism and he believes that some of the same people, trade associations and companies that denied climate change are encouraging people who say it is too late. Mann is battling publicly with a retired University of Arizona ecologist, Guy McPherson, an intellectual leader of the doom movement.

McPherson said he’s not part of the monetary system, hasn’t had a paycheck in 13 years, doesn’t vote and lived off the grid for a decade. He said all species go extinct and humans are no exception. He publicly predicted humanity will go extinct in 2026, but in an interview with The Associated Press said, “I’m not nearly as stuck on 2026,” and mentioned 2030 and changes to human habitat from the loss of Arctic summer sea ice.

Woodwell’s Francis, a pioneer in the study of Arctic sea ice who McPherson said he admires, said while the Arctic will be ice free by the summer by 2050, McPherson exaggerates the bad effects. Local Arctic residents will be hit hard, “the rest of us will experience accelerated warming and sea-level rise, disrupted weather patterns and more frequent extreme weather. Most communities will adapt to varying degrees,” Francis said. “There’s no way in hell humans will go extinct by 2026.”

Humans probably can no longer prevent Arctic sea ice from disappearing in the summer, but with new technology and emissions cuts, Francis said, “we stand a real chance of preventing those (other) catastrophic scenarios out there.”

Psychology professor Clayton said “no matter how bad things are, they can always be worse. You can make a difference between bad and worse... That’s very powerful, very self-affirming.”

War Crimes Watch: Hard path to justice in Bucha atrocities

By ERIKA KINETZ Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The horrific images and stories tumbling out of Ukrainian towns like Bucha in the wake of the withdrawal of Russian troops bear witness to depravity on a scale recalling the barbarities of Cambodia, the Balkans, World War II.

The question now: What to do with this suffering?

With disclosures by Ukrainian officials that more than 400 civilian corpses had been discovered, a chorus has resounded at the highest levels of Western political power, calling for accountability, prosecution and punishment. On Monday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy denounced the killings as “genocide” and “war crimes,” and U.S. President Joe Biden said Vladimir Putin was “a war criminal” who should be brought to trial.

But the path to holding the Russian president and other top leaders criminally responsible is long and

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 71 of 84

complex, international lawyers caution.

"Certainly, the discovery of bodies which bear signs of executions -- such as gunshot wounds to the head -- presents strong evidence of war crimes," said Clint Williamson, who served as U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues from 2006 to 2009.

"When victims are found with their hands bound, with blindfolds and bearing signs of torture or sexual assault, an even more compelling case is made. There are no circumstances under which these actions are permitted, whether the victims are civilians or military personnel who had been taken prisoner."

This story is part of an ongoing investigation from The Associated Press and Frontline that includes the War Crimes Watch Ukraine interactive experience and an upcoming documentary.

There is no reason to believe the Russians will own up to war crimes. Russia's Defense Ministry said Sunday that "not a single civilian has faced any violent action by the Russian military," and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has described the scenes outside Kyiv as a "stage-managed anti-Russian provocation."

The International Criminal Court, which typically prosecutes only a handful of high-level perpetrators, has opened an investigation into atrocities in Ukraine. Ukrainian prosecutors have launched thousands of criminal investigations, while prosecutors in Poland, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, France, Slovakia, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland have opened investigations of their own. And there have been growing calls to set up a special tribunal to try Russia for the crime of aggression in Ukraine.

To build a case for war crimes, prosecutors must gather forensic and ballistic evidence, as they would in any murder case, to establish the cause and circumstances of the victims' deaths. They also need to show that the crime occurred in the context of an ongoing armed conflict, which is clearly the case of Ukraine.

To build a case for crimes against humanity, prosecutors must additionally establish that the crimes were part of widespread, systematic attacks on civilians by, for example, showing patterns of behavior in how people were killed in Bucha, Motyzhyn, Irpin and other towns.

Then comes the more difficult task of establishing who is responsible by building a chain of evidence to link the crime scene with top civilian or military leaders. The first link in that chain is often understanding which forces were present when the atrocities occurred and whose command they were under.

"If you want to look into chains of command and perpetrators, it's important to analyze and gather information about which unit is where," said Andreas Schüller, program director for International Crimes and Accountability at the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights in Berlin. "You need linkage evidence from the entire military apparatus. Documents could be leaked, or witnesses could speak up and disclose internal planning operations."

Building a case all the way to the top -- to hold Putin and other leaders individually accountable for war crimes or crimes against humanity -- will be tough, legal experts say.

"You've got to prove that they knew or they could have known or should have known," said Philippe Sands, a prominent British lawyer and professor at University College London. "There's a real risk you end up with trials of mid-level people in three years and the main people responsible for this horror -- Putin, Lavrov, the Minister of Defense, the intelligence folks, the military folks and the financiers who are supporting it -- will get off the hook."

It would be easier to nab Putin for the crime of aggression -- that is, the act of waging a ruthless, unprovoked war against another country. But the International Criminal Court doesn't have jurisdiction over Russia for the crime of aggression because Russia, like the United States, is not a signatory.

In March, dozens of prominent lawyers and politicians, including Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, launched a campaign to create a special tribunal to plug this legal hole and try Russia for the crime of aggression in Ukraine.

Negotiations are ongoing over how to actually set up such a tribunal so that it has broad legitimacy, either through an international body like the United Nations or under the auspices of a collection of individual states. The Nuremberg tribunal was established by the Soviet Union, the United States, the United

Kingdom and France to hold Nazi leaders to account after World War II.

Sands, who also supports the initiative, said that whatever their legal weight, the images pouring out of Ukraine strengthen the political will needed to hold Russia accountable.

"You feel something is stirring. And I think I think that's the way the law works. The law does not lead. The law follows, and it follows realities and images and stories, and that's what causes things to happen," he said.

"The worse the horrors on the ground, the more calls I get about a crime of aggression tribunal," he added. "Governments feel intense pressure to do something."

But it may take an even bigger political shift to convict Putin in a meaningful way. Trials in absentia are not permitted at the International Criminal Court, and even if a special tribunal were set up that could try Putin in absentia, a trial without a perpetrator present might ring hollow.

"I'm really struggling to see how there is any plausible defense to the evidence we are witnessing," said Alex Batesmith, who served as a United Nations prosecutor in Kosovo and Cambodia and is now a lecturer at the University of Leeds law school. "But there's no way on earth Putin will surrender to the ICC or be arrested and brought to the ICC without major cross-continental conflict or internal political shifts in Russia which don't seem plausible."

US seizes yacht owned by oligarch with close ties to Putin

By FRANCISCO UBILLA, ARITZ PARRA and MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

PALMA DE MALLORCA, Spain (AP) — The U.S. government on Monday seized a 254-foot yacht in Spain owned by an oligarch with close ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin, a first by the Biden administration under sanctions imposed after the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine and targeting pricey assets of Russian elites.

Spain's Civil Guard and U.S. federal agents descended on the Tango at the Marina Real in the port of Palma de Mallorca, the capital of Spain's Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea. Associated Press reporters at the scene saw police going in and out of the boat.

The U.S. Justice Department, which obtained a warrant from a federal judge in Washington, alleges the yacht should be forfeited for violating U.S. bank fraud, money laundering and sanctions statutes.

Superyachtfan.com, a specialized website that tracks the world's largest and most exclusive recreational boats, values the 78-meter vessel, which carries the Cook Islands flag, at \$120 million.

The yacht is among the assets linked to Viktor Vekselberg, a billionaire and close Putin ally who heads the Moscow-based Renova Group, a conglomerate encompassing metals, mining, tech and other assets, according to U.S. Treasury Department documents.

All of Vekselberg's assets in the United States are frozen and American companies are barred from doing business with him and his entities. The Ukrainian-born businessman built his fortune by investing in the aluminum and oil industries in the post-Soviet era.

Prosecutors allege Vekselberg bought the Tango in 2011 and has owned it since then, though they believe he has used shell companies to try to obfuscate his ownership and to avoid financial oversight.

They contend Vekselberg and those working for him continued to make payments using U.S. banks to support and maintain the yacht, even after sanctions were imposed on him in 2018. Those payments included a stay in December 2020 at a luxury water villa resort in the Maldives and fees to moor the yacht.

It's the first U.S. seizure of an oligarch's yacht since U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland and U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen assembled a task force known as REPO — short for Russian Elites, Proxies and Oligarchs — as an effort to enforce sanctions after Russia invaded Ukraine in late February.

"It will not be the last." Garland said in a statement. "Together, with our international partners, we will do everything possible to hold accountable any individual whose criminal acts enable the Russian government to continue its unjust war."

Vekselberg has long had ties to the U.S., including a green card he once held and homes in New York and Connecticut. He was also questioned in special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and has worked closely with his American cousin, Andrew

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 73 of 84

Intrater, who heads the New York investment management firm Columbus Nova.

Vekselberg and Intrater were thrust into the spotlight in that investigation after the lawyer for adult film star Stormy Daniels released a memo that claimed \$500,000 in hush money was routed through Columbus Nova to a shell company set up by Donald Trump's personal attorney, Michael Cohen. Columbus Nova denied that Vekselberg played any role in its payments to Cohen.

Vekselberg and Intrater met with Cohen at Trump Tower, one of several meetings between members of Trump's inner circle and high-level Russians during Trump's 2016 campaign and the transition before his presidency.

The 64-year-old Vekselberg founded Renova Group more than three decades ago. The group holds the largest stake in United Co. Rusal, Russia's biggest aluminum producer, among other investments.

Vekselberg was first sanctioned by the U.S. in 2018, and again in March of this year, shortly after the invasion of Ukraine began. Vekselberg has also been sanctioned by authorities in the United Kingdom.

The yacht sails under the Cook Islands flag and is owned by a company registered in the British Virgin Islands administered by different societies in Panama, the Civil Guard said, "following a complicated financial and societal web to conceal its truthful ownership."

Agents confiscated documents and computers inside the yacht that will be analyzed to confirm the real identity of the owner, it said.

The U.S. Justice Department has also launched a sanctions enforcement task force known as Klepto-Capture, which also aims to enforce financial restrictions in the U.S. imposed on Russia and its billionaires, working with the FBI, the U.S. Treasury and other federal agencies. That task force will also target financial institutions and entities that have helped oligarchs move money to dodge sanctions.

The White House has said that many allied countries, including Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and others are involved in trying to collect and share information against Russians targeted for sanctions. In his State of the Union address on March 1, President Joe Biden warned oligarchs that the U.S. and European allies would "find and seize your yachts, your luxury apartments, your private jets."

"We are coming for your ill-begotten gains," he said.

Monday's capture is not the first time Spanish authorities have been involved in the seizure of a Russian oligarch's superyacht. Officials said they had seized a vessel valued at over \$140 million owned by the CEO of a state-owned defense conglomerate and a close Putin ally.

French authorities have seized superyachts, including one believed to belong to Igor Sechin, a Putin ally who runs Russian oil giant Rosneft, which has been on the U.S. sanctions list since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014.

Italy has seized several yachts and other assets.

Italian financial police moved quickly seizing the superyacht Lena belonging to Gennady Timchenko, an oligarch close to Putin, in the port of San Remo; the 65-meter (215-foot) Lady M owned by Alexei Mor-dashov in nearby Imperia, featuring six suites and estimated to be worth 65 million euros; as well as villas in Tuscany and Como, according to government officials.

Judge blocks Air Force discipline over vaccine objections

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — A federal judge has blocked the military from disciplining a dozen U.S. Air Force officers who are asking for religious exemptions to the mandatory COVID-19 vaccine.

The officers, mostly from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, along with a handful of airmen and reservists, filed a lawsuit in February after their exemption requests were denied.

U.S. District Court Judge Matthew McFarland in Cincinnati granted a preliminary injunction last Thursday that stops the Air Force from acting against the officers, airmen and reservists until their lawsuit is resolved.

The plaintiffs accuse the Air Force of using a double standard when it comes to approving exemption requests, saying it had allowed thousands of medical and administrative exemptions but only a handful for religious reasons.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 74 of 84

Last week, a federal judge in Texas barred the Navy from taking action for now against sailors who have objected to being vaccinated on religious grounds.

U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor had, in January, issued a preliminary injunction preventing the Navy from disciplining or discharging 35 sailors who sued over the Navy's vaccine policy while their case played out. A week ago, O'Connor agreed the case could go forward as a class action lawsuit and issued a preliminary injunction covering about 4,000 sailors who have objected on religious grounds to being vaccinated.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin last year made vaccinations mandatory for service members, saying the vaccine is critical to maintaining military readiness and the health of the force. But members of Congress, the military and the public have questioned if the exemption reviews have been fair.

Those who refuse the vaccine can face discipline up to being discharged from the service.

The officers who filed the lawsuit in Ohio said they had followed their chain of command and each had talked with an Air Force chaplain to determine the sincerity of their beliefs.

Billions, and growing, for lawmakers' projects in big bill

By ALAN FRAM and AARON M. KESSLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Home-district projects for members of Congress are back, sprinkled across the government-wide \$1.5 trillion bill President Joe Biden signed recently. The official tally shows amounts modest by past standards yet spread widely around the country — and that understate what lawmakers are claiming credit for.

The bipartisan legislation, financing federal agencies this year, contains 4,975 such projects worth \$9.7 billion, according to an Associated Press examination of items attributed to specific lawmakers in legislative documents. The listed projects, long called earmarks, ranged from \$4,000 for evidence detection equipment for Huntington, West Virginia, to \$350 million to help restore Florida's vast but imperiled Everglades.

The projects' reemergence after an 11-year hiatus, with transparency requirements and other curbs, marks a revival of expenditures that let lawmakers tout achievements to voters and help party leaders build support for legislation.

They're vilified by some, especially conservatives, as emblems of influence peddling and waste. But they've been openly embraced by lawmakers from both parties, who cite Congress' constitutional power of the purse and say they know their local needs.

"I'm very proud of them," said Sen. Richard Shelby, top Republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee, of the eye-popping \$648 million he amassed for his state, the AP analysis showed. That included \$126 million for two campuses of the University of Alabama, his alma mater, and hundreds of millions to improve the city of Mobile's seaport and airport.

The price tag of Shelby's projects was the highest in Congress, according to Taxpayers for Common Sense, a nonpartisan group that favors fiscal restraint and produced largely similar figures in its own preliminary study. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., was next at \$361 million.

Shelby, who's retiring, took credit in press releases for winning "billions" for Alabama, well beyond the amount in the public lists. Just one example he cited is \$1.3 billion for flight training at Fort Rucker, an Army base in the state.

Many lawmakers are asserting that the money they won for constituents exceeded what the measure explicitly attributes to them. That's because Congress narrowly defines what's listed as home-district projects.

Bolstering broad, national programs that lawmakers know benefit their states isn't included, so lawmakers can tout such amounts as achievements without having them formally listed as earmarks.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., had 203 projects for New York, which the Taxpayers group found was far more than anyone else in Congress. They totaled \$314 million and ranged from \$27 million to upgrade Fort Drum's water systems to \$44,000 for neighborhood improvements in the city of Geneva.

But in press releases, Schumer and other New Yorkers took credit for other funding not on the lists. For example, he and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., pointed to \$293 million they said they'd secured for the Air Force Research Laboratory in Rome, N.Y., following "their fierce advocacy."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 75 of 84

The House limited lawmakers to a maximum of 10 projects apiece.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., was among over 140 lawmakers not listed as receiving projects. Yet a press release cited more than three dozen items in the bill that would benefit his state, including \$321 million for an environmental cleanup at an old uranium enrichment plant in Paducah.

"I was proud to help craft this legislation with a special focus on Kentucky," he wrote.

Long distributed with little transparency, Congress stopped providing earmarks in 2011 after high-profile abuses soured voters on them. To some lawmakers the projects retain a stigma, especially for Republicans.

All but a handful of the 222 House Democrats requested projects for this year's bill, compared with around half the 210 Republicans. In the 50-50 Senate, the items were sought by 46 Democrats and their two allied independents, but just 16 Republicans.

Even so, much of the largesse was bipartisan.

The measure provided \$5.1 billion for Democrats, \$3.4 billion for Republicans and \$600 million for projects sponsored by members of both parties, according to the Taxpayers group. Nearly everyone who requested projects got some.

The last time Congress used earmarks, in 2010, lawmakers disclosed 11,320 of them worth \$32 billion, according to the Congressional Research Service, Congress' nonpartisan research agency. The numbers aren't exactly comparable due to differing methodologies, but suggest the practice has been curbed.

There was even room this year for projects for lawmakers who voted against the overall legislation carrying them.

Of the 106 House Republicans with projects, 70 voted against either or both sections of the legislation yet still collected earmarks worth \$946 million, according to Taxpayers. In an unusual procedure, the House had divided the bill into distinct security and non-security programs and held separate votes on each.

Rep. Garret Graves, R-La., voted against both portions of the legislation yet won projects worth \$45 million, among the House's highest figures. He cited the overall bill's size and lack of money for his state to recover from hurricanes.

"I'm supposed to say I didn't vote for the bill, so I'm not going to go work projects for our district?" said Graves, who won funds for water projects and sugar cane research. "No, that's not what our job is."

Five GOP senators who opposed the bill received projects worth \$386 million, the Taxpayers group's figures show: John Boozman of Arkansas, Richard Burr and Thom Tillis of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and Mike Rounds of South Dakota.

Even Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., perhaps Congress' most notorious recent mutineer, did well. He backed the \$1.5 trillion bill last month, but in December famously opposed Biden's earlier social and environment legislation, sinking it.

Rather than being punished by Democratic leaders for upending what was the party's top legislative goal, the spending bill Biden signed had 86 West Virginia projects Manchin requested worth \$164 million.

Billions, and more, for lawmakers' projects in spending bill

By ALAN FRAM and AARON M. KESSLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Home-district projects for members of Congress are back, sprinkled across the government-wide \$1.5 trillion bill President Joe Biden signed recently. The official tally shows amounts modest by past standards yet spread widely around the country — and that understate what lawmakers are claiming credit for.

The bipartisan measure, financing federal agencies this year, contains 4,975 such projects worth \$9.7 billion, according to an Associated Press examination of items attributed to specific lawmakers in documents accompanying the bill. The listed projects, long called earmarks, ranged from \$4,000 for evidence detection equipment for Huntington, West Virginia, to \$350 million to help restore Florida's vast but imperiled Everglades.

The projects' reemergence after an 11-year hiatus, with transparency requirements and other curbs, marks a revival of expenditures that let lawmakers tout achievements to voters and help party leaders

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 76 of 84

build support for legislation. While still vilified by some, especially conservatives, as emblems of influence peddling and wasteful spending, they've been embraced by lawmakers from both parties, who cite Congress' constitutional power of the purse and say they know their local needs.

Retiring Sen. Richard Shelby attained \$126 million for two campuses of the University of Alabama, his alma mater, including for an endowment for its flagship Tuscaloosa campus to hire science and engineering faculty. There was also hundreds of millions to improve the city of Mobile's seaport and airport, part of an eye-popping \$648 million he amassed for his state, according to the AP's look at the legislative documents.

The price tag of Shelby's projects was the highest in Congress, according to Taxpayers for Common Sense, a nonpartisan group that favors fiscal restraint and produced largely similar figures in its own preliminary study. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., was next at \$361 million.

"I'm very proud of them," said Shelby, top Republican on the Senate Appropriations Committee, which writes spending bills. He rebuffed complaints that it was unfair for senior lawmakers to use clout to garner federal spending.

"I think you earn your way," Shelby, in Congress since 1979, said in a brief interview. "And that's what people do in any legislative body. And people vote on them. That's what it's all about."

In press releases issued as Congress approved the legislation last month, Shelby took credit for winning "billions" for Alabama, well beyond the amount in the public list. His statements cited \$1.3 billion for flight training at Fort Rucker, an Army base, \$570 million for construction on an FBI technical center at the Army's Redstone Arsenal and other items not on the legislation's official roster of projects.

Claims they'd brought even more money back home than the tables showed were common among lawmakers. That's because Congress narrowly defines home-district projects as lawmaker-driven expenditures for specific locations or recipients that existing laws or agency procedures wouldn't have automatically triggered.

That leaves room, for example, for legislators to take credit for bolstering broad national programs they know benefit their states without having the items listed publicly as home district projects, a characterization that can still attract disdain.

"Those lawmakers know where that money is going," said Steve Ellis, the Taxpayers group president.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., had 203 projects for New York, ranging from \$27 million to upgrade Fort Drum's water systems to \$44,000 for neighborhood improvements in the city of Geneva, the AP found. Facing what should be easy reelection this fall, Schumer totaled \$314 million, including at least \$23 million for hospitals, violence prevention and other programs in his home borough of Brooklyn.

Schumer had more home district projects than anyone else in Congress, the Taxpayers organization's figures showed. Next came Oregon Democratic Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, who each had fewer than 150. The House limited lawmakers to a maximum of 10.

Schumer sponsored many projects along with Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., and some of the state's House members. In press releases, he took credit for even more — such as \$293 million he and Gillibrand said they'd secured for the Air Force Research Laboratory in Rome, N.Y., following "their fierce advocacy."

Fewer than 150 lawmakers received no listed projects, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. Yet in a seven-page press release, he cited over three dozen items he said he'd "secured" that would benefit his state.

These included \$321 million for an environmental cleanup at an old uranium enrichment plant in Paducah, \$73 million to refurbish barracks at Fort Campbell and money for nationwide substance abuse, water project and other programs that help the state.

"I was proud to help craft this legislation with a special focus on Kentucky," he wrote.

Long distributed with little transparency, Congress stopped providing earmarks in 2011 after high-profile abuses soured voters on them.

Leaders resuscitated the practice for this year with restrictions forbidding financial interest in the projects by lawmakers, requiring public disclosure of requests, barring for-profit recipients and curbing spending amounts. In a rebranding, they're now called community project funding by the House, congressionally

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 77 of 84

directed spending by the Senate.

Whatever their name, the projects retain a stigma to some, especially Republicans.

All but a handful of the 222 House Democrats requested projects for this year's bill, compared with around half the 210 Republicans. In the 50-50 Senate, the items were sought by 46 Democrats and their two allied independents, but just 16 Republicans.

Only three states received no projects after their congressional delegations declined to request any: Montana, North Dakota and Wyoming. Eight of the nine lawmakers representing those conservative states are Republicans.

Even so, much of the largesse in the 2,741-page legislation was bipartisan.

The measure provided \$5.1 billion for Democrats, \$3.4 billion for Republicans and \$600 million for projects sponsored by members of both parties, according to the Taxpayers group. Nearly all who requested projects got some.

The AP's figures include spending that the documents showed was also requested by Biden, which enhanced its chances. The entire \$350 million Everglades restoration project, requested by Rep. Brian Mast, R-Fla., was sought by Biden, and at least \$99 million that Shelby procured was also proposed by the president.

The magnitude of this year's projects was small compared with 2010, the last time Congress used earmarks. Lawmakers disclosed 11,320 of them worth \$32 billion that year, according to the Congressional Research Service, Congress' nonpartisan research agency. Though the numbers aren't exactly comparable due to differing methodologies, earmarks that year consumed nearly 2.5% of federal agency budgets, while this year's are about half of 1% of the total.

Even so, there was plenty of room to spread this year's money around.

Around 3 in 4 House members and 64 of the 100 senators got projects, according to the Taxpayers organization. So did the non-voting House members from the District of Columbia and four of the five represented U.S. territories.

California's \$757 million was the highest total for any state, the Taxpayers group found. Largely due to Shelby, Alabama was next at \$542 million — though its population is roughly one-eighth of California's 39 million people.

There was even room to reward lawmakers who opposed the overall legislation.

Of the 106 House Republicans with projects in the bill, 70 voted against either or both sections of the legislation yet still collected spending worth \$946 million, according to Taxpayers. That included 14 who opposed both parts of the measure yet still got \$187 million. In an unusual procedure, the House divided the bill into distinct security and non-security segments and approved both separately.

Rep. Garret Graves, R-La., voted against both portions of the legislation yet won projects worth \$45 million, among the House's highest figures. He said he didn't like the overall bill's size and its lack of money for his state to recover from recent hurricanes.

"I'm supposed to say I didn't vote for the bill, so I'm not going to go work projects for our district?" said Graves, who won funds for water projects and sugar cane research. "No, that's not what our job is."

Five GOP senators who opposed the bill received projects worth \$386 million, the Taxpayers group's figures show: John Boozman of Arkansas, Richard Burr and Thom Tillis of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and Mike Rounds of South Dakota.

And 6 of 15 House Democrats who voted against the security part of the legislation had projects in that section, though they totaled just \$9 million. No House Democrats opposed the non-security provisions.

Favorable treatment for such lawmakers is befuddling to old-school lawmakers.

If someone was opposing legislation bearing a project they'd requested, "I'd explain to them that by and large, if they ever wanted an earmark again they'd vote for the bill," former Rep. Bob Livingston, R-La., said in a recent interview. He chaired the House Appropriations Committee in the 1990s.

Even Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., perhaps Congress' most notorious recent mutineer, did well. He backed the \$1.5 trillion bill last month, but in December famously opposed Biden's earlier social and environment

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 78 of 84

legislation, sinking it.

Rather than being punished by Democratic leaders for upending what was the party's top legislative goal, the spending bill Biden signed had 86 West Virginia projects Manchin requested worth \$164 million. That included \$22 million he and Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., won for water treatment for the city of Weirton.

Capitol Hill veterans suggested Manchin was treated well because Democrats will need him this year in the evenly divided Senate, including in efforts to revive Biden's prized domestic bill.

"Anybody focused on the past and not the future is not much of a legislator," said Scott Lilly, a former top House Democratic aide.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., also was not listed as having projects. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., got a handful worth \$11 million, largely for low-income housing and other social initiatives in her hometown of San Francisco.

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., notched \$167 million for his state. House Appropriations Committee Chair Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., garnered projects worth a relatively modest \$14 million, but none were listed for Rep. Kay Granger of Texas, top Republican on that House panel.

Even so, a Granger press release said she'd "secured major funding" for her area with money to build jet fighters, combat drug abuse and battle feral hogs.

"I'm going to choose my words very carefully here. Let's just say that as a rule, senior members do rather well in the appropriations process," said Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., a veteran member of the House Appropriations Committee.

Of five senators facing tough reelection races this fall, three Democrats received at least \$81 million each in projects: Sens. Mark Kelly of Arizona, Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada and Raphael Warnock of Georgia. Two others, Sens. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., and Ron Johnson, R-Wis., requested and received none.

While McCarthy wasn't listed as getting projects, his top two lieutenants were. No. 2 leader Steve Scalise, R-La., got \$31 million, including \$5 million for Louisiana State University aerospace research. No. 3 GOP leader Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., won \$35 million, including sharing credit with Schumer and Gillibrand for improving Fort Drum's \$27 million water project.

No. 2 Senate Democrat Richard Durbin of Illinois had \$182 million while No. 2 House Democrat Steny Hoyer of Maryland landed \$13 million.

Library study finds 'challenged' books soared in 2021

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom, has never been so busy.

"A year ago, we might have been receiving one, maybe two reports a day about a book being challenged at a library. And usually those calls would be for guidance on how to handle a challenge or for materials that support the value of the work being challenged," Caldwell-Stone told The Associated Press. "Now, we're getting three, four, five reports a day, many in need of support and some in need of a great deal of support."

"We're on the phone constantly," she added.

Accounts of book bannings and attempted book bannings, along with threats against librarians, have soared over the past year and the ALA has included some numbers in its annual State of America's Libraries Report, released Monday. The association found 729 challenges — affecting nearly 1,600 books — at public schools and libraries in 2021, more than double 2020's figures and the highest since the ALA began compiling challenges more than 20 years ago.

The actual total for last year is likely much higher — the ALA collects data through media accounts and through cases it learns about from librarians and educators and other community members. Books preemptively pulled by librarians — out of fear of community protest or concern for their jobs — and challenges never reported by libraries are not included.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 79 of 84

The number could well grow again in 2022, Caldwell-Stone said, as conservative-led school boards and legislatures enact more restrictions. Last week, the Georgia legislature passed a bill that would accelerate the process for removing books seen as "harmful to minors."

"Nothing would surprise me," Caldwell-Stone says.

The two most challenged books on the ALA's top 10 list have been in the news often: Maia Kobabe's graphic memoir about sexual identity, "Gender Queer," and Jonathan Evison's "Lawn Boy," a coming-of-age novel narrated by a young gay man. Both have been singled out by Republican officials.

Last fall in Virginia, Glenn Youngkin backed a local school board's banning of the two books during his successful run for governor. Around the same time, South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster supported a school board's decision to remove "Gender Queer."

In Florida recently, Gov. Ron DeSantis criticized "Gender Queer" and "Lawn Boy" upon signing a law that would force elementary schools to provide a searchable list of every book available in their libraries or used in instruction and allow parents, DeSantis said, "to blow the whistle."

Kobabe and Evison noted during recent interviews an irony of their books being targeted: Neither set out to write a story for young people. But they gained a following among students with the help of the American Library Association, which has given each book an Alex Award for works "written for adults that have special appeal to young adults, ages 12 through 18."

"I think a big part of our books getting so much attention is that they're award winners and ended up being purchased by libraries all over the country," Kobabe said.

Others on the ALA list, virtually all cited for LGBTQ or racial themes, include Angie Thomas' bestselling "The Hate U Give," centered on a police shooting of a Black teen; George Johnson's "All Boys Aren't Blue," Juno Dawson's "This Book Is Gay" and Susan Kuklin's "Beyond Magenta." Two older works that have been on the list before also appear: Sherman Alexie's autobiographical novel "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian" and Nobel laureate Toni Morrison's debut novel "The Bluest Eye."

The library association defines a "challenge" as a "formal, written complaint filed with a library or school requesting that materials be removed because of content or appropriateness." The ALA doesn't keep a precise figure for how many books have actually been removed, but cases have come up routinely over the past year. Last December, a school district in San Antonio, Texas, pulled hundreds of library books to "ensure they did not have any obscene or vulgar material in them."

'Green steel' heating up in Sweden's frozen north

By JAMES BROOKS Associated Press

LULEA, Sweden (AP) — For hundreds of years, raging blast furnaces — fed with coking coal — have forged steel used in cars, railways, bridges and skyscrapers.

But the puffs of coal-fired smoke are a big source of carbon dioxide, the heat-trapping gas that's driving climate change.

According to the World Steel Association, every metric ton of steel produced in 2020 emitted almost twice that much carbon dioxide (1.8 tons) into the atmosphere. Total direct emissions from making steel were about 2.6 billion tons in 2020, representing around 7% of global CO2 emissions.

In Sweden, a single company, steel giant SSAB, accounts for about 10% of the country's emissions due to the furnaces it operates at mills like the one in the northern town of Lulea.

But not far away, a high-tech pilot plant is seeking to significantly reduce the carbon emissions involved in steel production by switching some of that process away from burning coking coal to burning hydrogen that itself was produced with renewable energy.

HYBRIT — or Hydrogen Breakthrough Ironmaking Technology — is a joint venture between SSAB, mining company LKAB and Swedish state-owned power firm Vattenfall launched in 2016.

"The cost of renewable energy, fossil-free energy, had come down dramatically and at the same time, you had a rising awareness and the Paris Agreement" in 2015 to reduce global emissions, said Mikael Nordlander, Vattenfall's head of industry decarbonization.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 80 of 84

"We realized that we might have a chance now to outcompete the direct use of fossil fuels in industry with this electricity coming from fossil-free sources," he added.

Last year, the plant made its first commercial delivery. European carmakers that have committed to dramatically reducing their emissions need cleaner steel. Chinese-owned Volvo Group became the first carmaker to partner with HYBRIT. Head of procurement Kerstin Enochsson said steel is a "major contributor" to their cars' carbon footprint, between 20 and 35%.

"Tackling only the tailpipe emissions by being an electric company is not enough. We need to focus on the car itself, as well," she said.

Demand from other companies, including Volkswagen, is also sending a signal that there is demand for green steel. Steelmakers in Europe have announced plans to scale up production of steel made without coal.

The HYBRIT process aims to replace the coking coal that's traditionally used for ore-based steel making with hydrogen and renewable electricity.

It begins with brown-tinged iron ore pellets that react with the hydrogen gas and are reduced to ball-shaped "sponge iron," which takes its name due to pores left behind following the removal of oxygen. This is then melted in an electric furnace.

If the hydrogen is made using renewable energy, too, the process produces no CO₂.

"We get iron, and then we get water vapor instead," said SSAB's chief technology officer Martin Pei. "Water vapor can be condensed, recirculated, reused in the process.

"We really solve the root cause of carbon dioxide emissions from steel making," he said.

Steel is a recyclable material, but demand for the alloy is expected to grow in the coming years, amid a push to transform society and build wind turbines, solar plants, power transmission lines and new electric vehicles.

"Steel is a superb construction material. It is also possible to recycle steel again and again," said Pei. "You can reuse steel as many times as possible.

"The only problem today is the current way of making steel from iron ore emits too much CO₂," he said.

By the end of this decade, the European Union is attempting to cut overall CO₂ emissions in the 27-nation bloc by 55% compared to 1990 levels. Part of that effort includes making companies pay for their CO₂ emissions and encourage the switch to low-carbon alternatives.

Sweden's steel industry has set out plans to achieve "fossil-free" operations by 2045. SSAB in January brought forward its own plans to largely eliminate carbon dioxide emissions in its steel-making processes by the end of the decade.

"The companies are well aware of their possibilities and limitations in the current processes and that they have to do something about it," said Helen Axelsson, director of energy and environment at Jernkontoret, the Swedish steel producers' association.

But according to the World Steel Association, over 70% of global steel production takes place in Asia, where steel producers don't have access to the same quantities of old scrap steel as countries that have been industrialized for a longer time. That's another reason why average emissions per ton of steel are higher in the global south.

Filip Johnsson, a professor in energy technology at Gothenburg's Chalmers University, said the vast amounts of renewable electricity necessary to make hydrogen and cleaner steel could make rolling out the HYBRIT process difficult in other parts of the world.

"I would say that the major challenge is to get loads of electricity and also to provide it sort of constantly," he said.

The small Lulea pilot plant is still a research facility, and has so far produced just a couple of hundred tons. There are plans to construct a larger demonstration plant and begin commercial deliveries by 2026.

Hong Kong leader Lam won't seek new term after rocky 5 years

By ZEN SOO and VINCENT YU Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said Monday she wouldn't seek a second term after

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 81 of 84

a rocky five years marked by huge protests calling for her resignation, a security crackdown that has quashed dissent and most recently a COVID-19 wave that overwhelmed the health system.

Her successor will be picked in May, with the city's hard-line security chief during the 2019 protests seen as a likely choice.

"I will complete my five-year term as chief executive on the 30th of June this year, and I will also call an end to my 42 years of public service," Lam said at a news conference. The 64-year-old career civil servant said she plans to spend more time with her family, which is her "sole consideration."

Speculation had swirled for months about whether she would seek another term, and she repeatedly declined to comment on the possibility. But on Monday, she said her decision had been conveyed to the central government in Beijing last year and was met with "respect and understanding."

Her time in office will likely be remembered as a turning point during which Beijing firmly established control over the former British colony, which was returned to China in 1997. For years, the city rocked back and forth between calls for more freedom and growing signs of China extending its reach, chipping away at a promise by the mainland government to give Hong Kong the power to govern itself semi-autonomously for 50 years.

Lam's popularity sharply declined over her five-year term, particularly over legislation that would have allowed criminal suspects to be extradited to mainland China for trial and her leadership during the protests that ensued in 2019. The mass demonstrations were marked at times by violent clashes between police and protesters. Authorities in Hong Kong and Beijing insisted that overseas forces were fueling the movement, rather than local activism, while protesters denounced the police crackdown as excessive and said that claims of sedition were attempts to undermine the pro-democracy cause.

Lam said she came under great pressure because of the extradition bill, "interference from foreign forces" and the pandemic. "However, the motivation for me to press on was the very staunch support behind me by the central authorities," she said, according to a simultaneous translation by a government interpreter.

Later, Lam strongly backed the national security law initiated by Beijing and implemented by her government that was seen as eroding the "one country, two systems" framework that promised after the handover from Britain that city residents would retain freedoms not found in mainland China, such as a free press and freedom of expression.

The security law and other police and court actions in the years since have virtually erased the city's pro-democracy movement, with activists and the movement's supporters either arrested or jailed. Others have fled into exile. Lam and the central government in Beijing say their actions have restored stability in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong media have reported this week that Chief Secretary John Lee, the city's No. 2 leader, is likely to enter the race to succeed Lam. Lee rose through the ranks as a police officer to become deputy commissioner in 2010, and was the city's secretary of security during the 2019 protests. He is known for his support for the police force during the protests and his tough stance against protesters.

Hong Kong's leader is elected by a committee made up of lawmakers, representatives of various industries and professions, and pro-Beijing representatives such as Hong Kong deputies to China's legislature. One of the unfulfilled demands of the 2019 protests was direct election of the city's chief executive.

The election for the chief executive had been set on March 27 but was postponed until May 8 as the city endures its worst coronavirus outbreak.

Lam said that holding the polls as originally scheduled would pose "public health risks" even if a committee of only 1,462 people is involved.

Hong Kong has reported nearly 1.2 million cases, 99% of them during the wave driven by the highly transmissible omicron variant. It has strained the healthcare system, with hospitals at times placing patients on beds outdoors. More than 8,000 people have died in the latest outbreak, and mortuaries operating at capacity have used refrigerated containers to temporarily store bodies.

Lam's government has been widely criticized for flip-flopping policies, including mixed messaging in February and March on whether a lockdown and compulsory mass-testing would be implemented. The uncertainty sparked panic among residents, who cleared out store shelves to hoard daily necessities.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 82 of 84

The plans for compulsory mass-testing were dropped, and Lam last week urged all residents to test themselves with rapid antigen kits between April 8 to 10. She later said the exercise was voluntary as it was not possible to enforce.

Lam previously served as chief secretary and secretary for development and in other civil service positions. She earned the nickname "good fighter" for her tough stance and refusal to back down in political battles.

Lam renounced her British nationality in 2007 when she was appointed secretary for development. Her husband and two children have retained their British nationalities.

Late frost ices over French vineyards, threatens fruit crops

By THIBAUT CAMUS Associated Press

CHABLIS, France (AP) — French vintners are lighting candles to thaw their grapevines to save them from a late frost following a winter warm spell, a temperature swing that is threatening fruit crops in multiple countries.

Ice-coated vines stretched across hillsides around Chablis as the Burgundy region woke Monday to temperatures of minus 5 C (23 F). Fruit growers are worried that the frost will kill off large numbers of early buds, which appeared in March as temperatures rose above 20 C (68 F), and disrupt the whole growing season.

The frost is particularly frustrating after a similar phenomenon hit French vineyards last year, leading to some 2 billion euros (\$2.4 billion) in losses. Scientists later found that the damaging 2021 frost was made more likely by climate change.

Before dawn Monday, row upon row of candles flickered beneath the frosty vines in Chablis. As the sun rose, it illuminated the ice crystals gripping the vines.

Some vintners tried to warm the vines with electrical lines, or sprayed the buds with water to protect them from frost. The water creates a thin layer of ice that ensures the blossom's temperature remains around freezing point but does not dip much lower.

Chablis vintner Daniel Defaix, whose vineyard has been producing wine for 400 years and lived through a multitude of climate disasters, calls what's happening now "a very, very serious frost."

He noted temperatures are dropping a few degrees lower than last year, down to minus 7 C in places, and have reached warmer hilltop plots as well as those in the cooler valleys.

He placed paraffin candles on the soil or set up special irrigation systems to protect about five hectares of his most valuable grand cru and premier cru grapes, but had to leave the remaining 25 hectares to face the forces of nature.

At a cost of 10 euros per candle — and 600 candles per hectare — it was too costly to invest in saving the rest of the grapes.

"After that, you have to cross your fingers and pray to God," he told The Associated Press.

In neighboring Switzerland, fruit growers scrambled Sunday to protect their crops, rolling out heaters and pellet stoves at night and around dawn, or turning on overhead irrigation systems, said Beatrice Ruettimann, a spokeswoman for Swiss Fruit, a union of fruit producers. Some unfurled plastic sheeting to shield their trees.

Temperatures fell below freezing in most fruit-growing regions in Switzerland, she said. Northwestern Switzerland bore the brunt of the cold snap, which was most critical for stone fruit — like cherries, apricots and plums — because they're in bloom and "therefore in a delicate stage," she said. A few early varieties of apple including Gravensteiner and Williams were also affected.

In the Betuwe fruit-growing region of the Netherlands, farmers sprayed their trees with water Saturday night and into the early hours of Sunday morning to ensure a layer of ice protected fragile blossoms from the sub-zero temperatures.

Last year's April frost led to what French government officials described as "probably the greatest agricultural catastrophe of the beginning of the 21st century." The pattern was similar: an intense April 6-8

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 83 of 84

frost after a lengthy warm period in March.

Researchers with the group World Weather Attribution studied the effect of the 2021 frost on the vineyard-rich Champagne, Loire Valley and Burgundy regions of France, and found the March warmth made it particularly damaging.

The researchers concluded that the warming caused by man-made emissions had coaxed the plants into exposing their young leaves early, before a blast of Arctic cold reached Europe in April.

The cold weather was not bad news for all, however. In the central Dutch town of Winterswijk, skaters took to the ice Sunday at the local ice skating club. "This is unique: Skating on natural ice in April," the club's "ice master," Hendrik ten Prooije, told local network Omroep Gelderland.

Today in History: April 5, Rosenbergs sentenced to death

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, April 5, the 95th day of 2022. There are 270 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 5, 1951, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were sentenced to death following their conviction in New York on charges of conspiring to commit espionage for the Soviet Union.

On this date:

In 1614, Indian Chief Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas married Englishman John Rolfe, a widower, in the Virginia Colony.

In 1621, the Mayflower sailed from Plymouth Colony in present-day Massachusetts on a monthlong return trip to England.

In 1764, Britain's Parliament passed The American Revenue Act of 1764, also known as the Sugar Act.

In 1887, in Tusculum, Alabama, teacher Anne Sullivan achieved a breakthrough as her 6-year-old deaf-blind pupil, Helen Keller, learned the meaning of the word "water" as spelled out in the Manual Alphabet.

In 1976, reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes died in Houston at age 70.

In 1986, two American servicemen and a Turkish woman were killed in the bombing of a West Berlin discotheque, an incident that prompted a U.S. air raid on Libya more than a week later.

In 1987, Fox Broadcasting Co. made its prime-time TV debut by airing the situation comedy "Married with Children" followed by "The Tracey Ullman Show," then repeating both premiere episodes two more times in the same evening.

In 1991, former Sen. John Tower, R-Texas, his daughter Marian and 21 other people were killed in a commuter plane crash near Brunswick, Georgia.

In 2008, actor Charlton Heston, big-screen hero and later leader of the National Rifle Association, died in Beverly Hills, California, at age 84.

In 2010, an explosion at the Upper Big Branch mine near Charleston, West Virginia, killed 29 workers. In a televised rescue, 115 Chinese coal miners were freed after spending eight days trapped in a flooded mine, surviving an accident that had killed 38.

In 2016, UConn won an unprecedented fourth straight women's national championship, capping another perfect season by routing Syracuse 82-51.

In 2019, inspecting a refurbished section of fencing at the Mexican border in California, President Donald Trump declared that "our country is full," and that illegal crossings must be stopped.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama signed bipartisan jobs legislation intended to help small businesses and make it easier for startups to raise capital. Barney McKenna, 72, the last original member of the Irish folk band The Dubliners, died in Dublin.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump declared that a deadly chemical attack in Syria the day before had crossed "many, many lines" and abruptly changed his views of Syrian President Bashar Assad, but he refused to say what the U.S. might do in response. A senior U.S. defense official said a North Korean mis-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 05, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 272 ~ 84 of 84

sile test ended in failure when the rocket spun out of control and plunged into the ocean in a fiery crash. YouTube TV, Google's new streaming package of about 40 television channels, made its debut.

One year ago: The Minneapolis police chief testified that former officer Derek Chauvin had violated departmental policy in pressing his knee against George Floyd's neck and keeping Floyd down after he had stopped breathing; the testimony came on the sixth day of Chauvin's murder trial. (Chauvin would be convicted of murder and manslaughter.) Baylor defeated Gonzaga 86-70 in the championship game of the NCAA basketball tournament in Indianapolis, ending Gonzaga's hopes for an undefeated season.

Today's Birthdays: Movie producer Roger Corman is 96. Country singer Tommy Cash is 82. Actor Michael Moriarty is 81. Pop singer Allan Clarke (The Hollies) is 80. Writer-director Peter Greenaway is 80. Actor Max Gail is 79. Actor Jane Asher is 76. Singer Agnetha (ag-NEE'-tah) Faltskog (ABBA) is 72. Actor Mitch Pileggi is 70. Singer-songwriter Peter Case is 68. Hip-hop artist/actor Christopher "Kid" Reid is 58. Rock musician Mike McCready (Pearl Jam) is 56. Singer Paula Cole is 54. Actor Krista Allen is 51. Actor Victoria Hamilton is 51. Country singer Pat Green is 50. Rapper-producer Pharrell (fa-REHL') Williams is 49. Rapper/producer Juicy J is 47. Actor Sterling K. Brown is 46. Country singer-musician Mike Eli (The Eli Young Band) is 41. Actor Hayley Atwell is 40. Actor Lily James is 33.