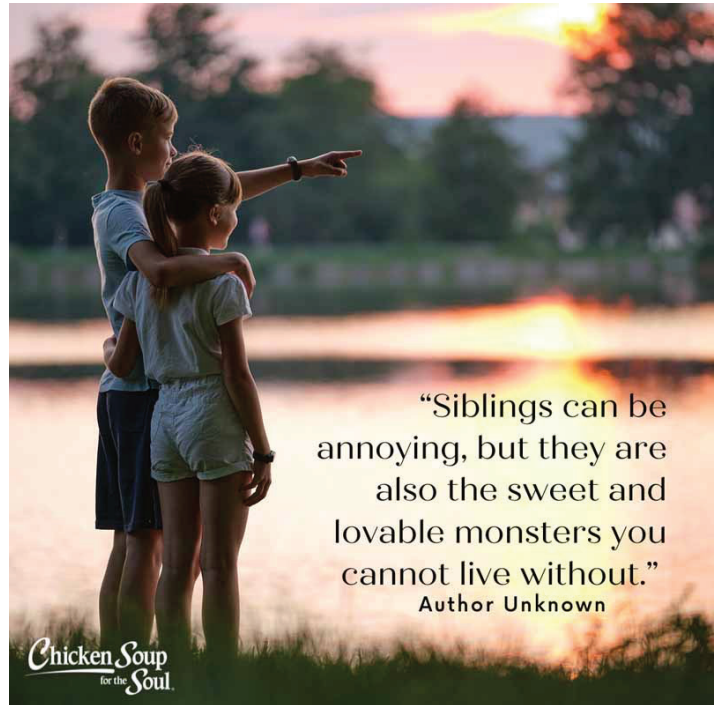


# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 1 of 87

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [1- Truss Pros Help Wanted](#)
- [2- Dish Network Ad](#)
- [3- Winter Storm Watch](#)
- [4- Turkey Vultures in Groton](#)
- [5- Hawaii - Alaskan Tour Ad](#)
- [6- Easter egg Hunt](#)
- [7- DirectTV Ad](#)
- [8- Sunday Extras](#)
- [27- Rep. Johnson's Weekly Column](#)
- [28- Gov. Noem's Weekly Column](#)
- [29- aPlaceforMom Ad](#)
- [30- Rep. Thune's Weekly Column](#)
- [31- Rev. Snyder's Column](#)
- [33- EarthTalk -Russian Invasion](#)
- [34- COVID-19 Reports](#)
- [38- Weather Pages](#)
- [43- Daily Devotional](#)
- [44- 2022 Community Events](#)
- [45- Subscription Form](#)
- [46- News from the Associated Press](#)



“Siblings can be annoying, but they are also the sweet and lovable monsters you cannot live without.”  
Author Unknown

## UpComing Events

### Sunday, April 10

Emmanuel: 9 a.m. Worship with communion, Procession of Palms, 10:15 a.m. Grace Alone Study, 1:30 p.m. Baby Shower for Jared and Alyson Anderson, 7 p.m. Choir

St. John's: 8 a.m. Bible Study, Worship at 9 a.m. at St. John's followed by Voter's

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

United Methodist: Conde worship, 9 a.m.; Brunch, 9:45 a.m.; Groton worship, 11 a.m.; Sunday School Singing, 11:10 a.m.

### Monday, April 11

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

1 p.m.: Senior Citizens meet at Groton Community Center

Emmanuel: 6:30 a.m.. Bible Study

School Breakfast: Frittata.

School Lunch: Lasagna hot dish, corn.

Senior Menu: Lasagna rotini, tossed salad with dressing, ambrosia fruit salad, cookie, whole wheat

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

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

brea

### Tuesday, April 12

11 a.m.: Track meet in Groton

Catholic: Turton Mass, 5 p.m.

Emmanuel: 7 p.m. Church Council

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

School Breakfast: Blueberry French Toast Bake.

School Lunch: Hot dogs, fries.

Senior Menu: Hot turkey sandwich, macaroni salad, mandarin orange dessert, sherbet.

### 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.uslbn.com/careers](http://www.uslbn.com/careers) and search for jobs in Britton, SD.

## OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 2 of 87



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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 3 of 87

## Winter Storm Watch

URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE  
National Weather Service Aberdeen SD  
323 AM CDT Sun Apr 10 2022

SDZ005-006-010-016-017-102200-  
/O.NEW.KABR.WS.A.0003.220413T0000Z-220414T1200Z/  
McPherson-Brown-Edmunds-Potter-Faulk-  
Including the cities of Eureka, Aberdeen, Ipswich, Gettysburg,  
and Faulkton  
323 AM CDT Sun Apr 10 2022

...WINTER STORM WATCH IN EFFECT FROM TUESDAY EVENING THROUGH THURSDAY MORNING...

\* WHAT...Heavy snow possible. Total snow accumulations of 5 to 10 inches possible. Winds could gust as high as 50 mph.

\* WHERE...McPherson, Brown, Edmunds, Potter and Faulk Counties.

\* WHEN...From Tuesday evening through Thursday morning.

\* IMPACTS...Travel could be very difficult. Areas of blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning or evening commute.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Monitor the latest forecasts for updates on this situation.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 4 of 87



Photos by Paul Kosel

Several Turkey Vultures were roosting on a Cottonwood Tree along Broadway in Groton Saturday evening.

According to From Wikipedia, "The turkey vulture is a scavenger and feeds almost exclusively on carrion.[4] It finds its food using its keen eyes and sense of smell, flying low enough to detect the gasses produced by the beginnings of the process of decay in dead animals.[4] In flight, it uses thermals to move through the air, flapping its wings infrequently. It roosts in large community groups. Lacking a syrinx—the vocal organ of birds—its only vocalizations are grunts or low hisses. It nests in caves, hollow trees, or thickets. Each year it generally raises two chicks, which it feeds by regurgitation. It has very few natural predators. In the United States, the vulture receives legal protection under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918."



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 5 of 87

## FREE DATE CHANGES



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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 6 of 87



**The Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt was held Saturday at the Groton City Park. Once 10 a.m. came, it was off the races. The eggs were collected in five minutes!** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



**Everyone is in line ready for the 10:00 a.m. start of the Easter Egg Hunt at the Groton City Park.** (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 7 of 87



Groton Lions Club members helping with the Easter Egg Hunt were Steve Gebur, Karyn Babcock, Mayor Scott Hanlon, Dave Pigors, sitting next to bunny-honorary member April Abeln and Topper Tastad. (Photo courtesy April Abeln)

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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 8 of 87



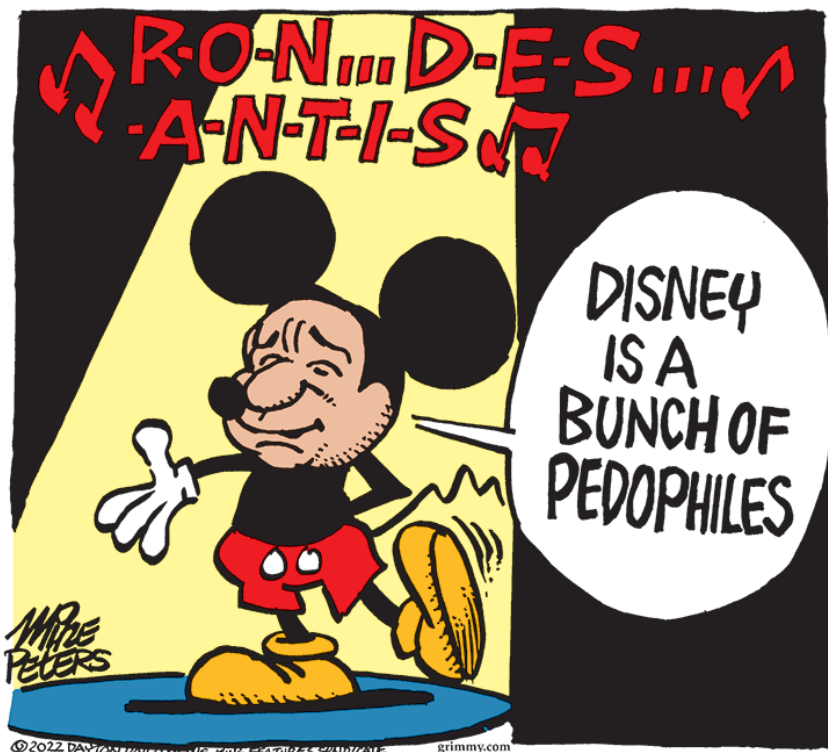
## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens." God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good.*

Genesis 1: 20, 21



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## BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of John in the Old or New Testament or neither?
2. In Matthew 17, from where did Peter get money to pay the temple tax? *Mountaintop, Cupboard, Fish's mouth, Ground*
3. What did the angel who met Joshua outside Jericho tell him to remove? *Belt, Cloak, Guilt, Shoes*
4. From Mark 2 and Luke 5, what was Matthew's other name? *Simon, Levi, Nergal, Ammon*
5. Who/what was Caesarea Philippi? *Julius Caesar's wife, Town, Tomb, Mountain*
6. From Luke 3, how old was Jesus at His baptism? *A baby, 7, 12, Around 30*

ANSWERS: 1) New; 2) Fish's mouth; 3) Shoes; 4) Levi; 5) Town; 6) Around 30

*Comments? More Trivia? Gift ideas? Visit [www.TriviaGuy.com](http://www.TriviaGuy.com)*

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by Healthy Exchanges

### Pronto Ham Minestrone

---  
Try this soup recipe the next time you have leftover ham. You're not going to believe how easy and tasty this is until you try it. It's filled with flavor -- but not fat!

- 1 full cup diced extra lean ham
- 1 (16 ounce) can tomatoes, coarsely chopped and undrained
- 1 (10 3/4-ounce) can reduced-fat tomato soup
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 teaspoon dried minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 1 (16-ounce) can red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup shredded cabbage
- 1/3 cup broken uncooked spaghetti
- 1/4 cup grated reduced-fat Parmesan cheese

1. In a large saucepan, combine ham, undrained tomatoes, tomato soup and water. Stir in garlic, Worcestershire sauce and Italian seasoning. Add kidney beans, cabbage and uncooked spaghetti. Mix well to combine.

2. Bring mixture to a boil. Lower heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until spaghetti is tender, stirring occasionally. When serving, top each bowl with 1 tablespoon Parmesan cheese. Makes 4 (1/2 cup) servings.

\* Each serving equals: 219 calories, 3g fat, 14g protein, 34g carb., 811mg sodium, 7g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 2 Meat, 1 1/2 Starch, 1 1/2 Vegetable.

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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 10 of 87

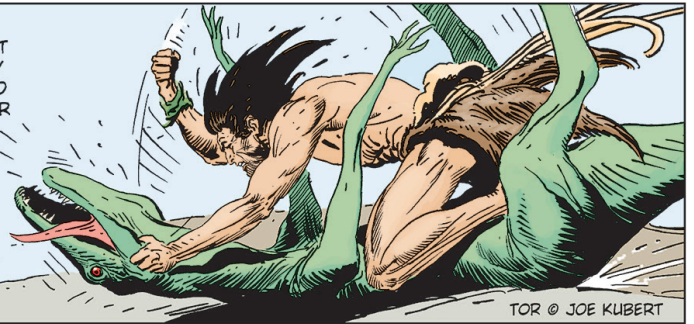
ARTIST SPOTLIGHT:  
JOE KUBERT



JOE KUBERT HAS BEEN A PROFESSIONAL CARTOONIST FOR OVER 60 YEARS AND HAS DRAWN ALMOST EVERY COMIC BOOK CHARACTER IN EXISTENCE. IN ADDITION TO DRAWING, HE HAS BEEN AN EDITOR, PUBLISHER, WRITER AND LETTERER.

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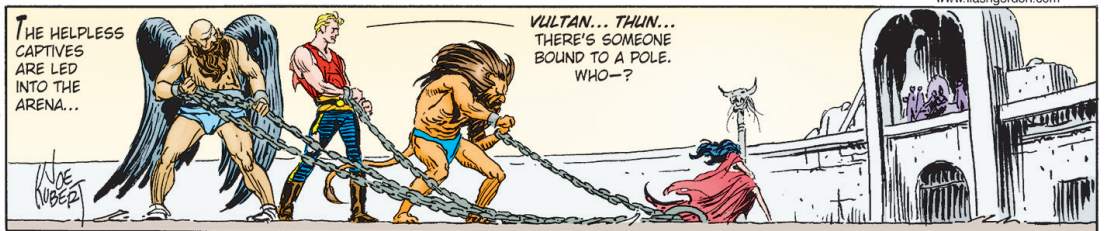
[www.flashgordon.com](http://www.flashgordon.com)



By  
JIM  
KEEFE

4-3

Artwork: JOE KUBERT



THE HELPLESS CAPTIVES ARE LED INTO THE ARENA...

VULTAN... THUN... THERE'S SOMEONE BOUND TO A POLE. WHO-?

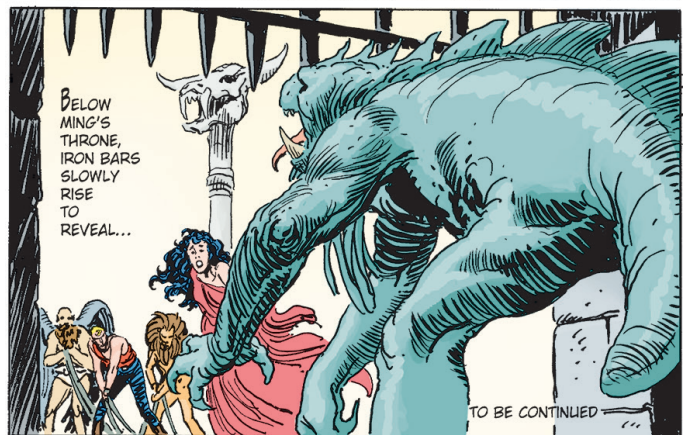
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IT'S DALE! THAT DEVIL, MING, HAS CAPTURED HER AS WELL.



YOU MAY SAVE HER YET, FLASH GORDON... IF YOU CAN. LET THE TOURNAMENT OF DEATH BEGIN!

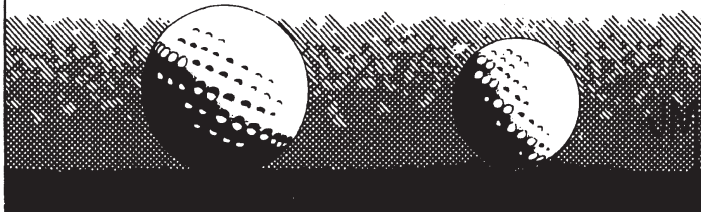


BELOW MING'S THRONE, IRON BARS SLOWLY RISE TO REVEAL...

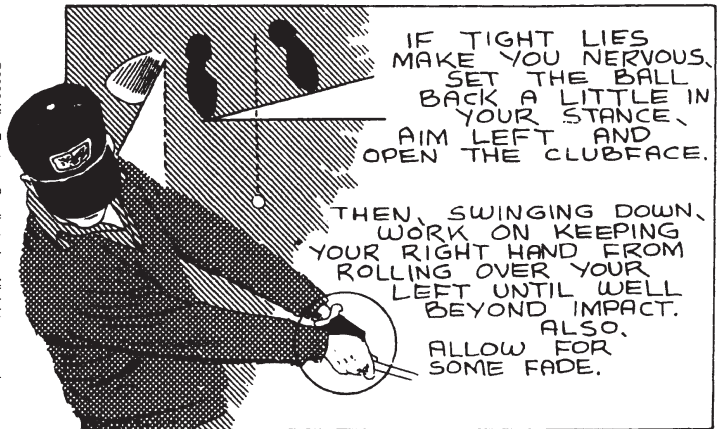
TO BE CONTINUED

## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

**B**ECAUSE TIGHT APPROACH-SHOT LIES MAKE IT EASIER TO CONTROL THE BALL THROUGH BACKSPIN, THEY ARE PREFERRED BY GOOD PLAYERS OVER SIT-UP-AND-BEG "WINTER-RULES"-TYPE LIES.



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IF TIGHT LIES MAKE YOU NERVOUS, SET THE BALL BACK A LITTLE IN YOUR STANCE, AIM LEFT AND OPEN THE CLUBFACE.

THEN, SWINGING DOWN, WORK ON KEEPING YOUR RIGHT HAND FROM ROLLING OVER YOUR LEFT UNTIL WELL BEYOND IMPACT. ALSO, ALLOW FOR SOME FADE.

## Treat Leg Swelling With Horse Chestnuts?



---  
DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a 75-year-old male who was diagnosed two years ago with superficial venous insufficiency. Venous ablation was considered, but my cardiologist informed me that it most likely would not improve my condition. Therefore, the best treatment is to wear compression socks and elevate my legs as much as possible. I am following my cardiologist's advice.

I recently read a recommendation to take horse chestnut seed extract (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and to look for products that have had the toxic substance esculin removed. I discussed this with my cardiologist's physician assistant, and she saw no reason not to try it. What do you think? -- M.P.

ANSWER: Some years ago, I saw a well-done study showing that horse chestnut extract is an effective treatment for the swelling associated with venous insufficiency. The dose usually studied has been 300 mg of the extract, standardized to 50 mg of escin, twice daily. The side effects noted in studies have been both infrequent and mild, and I have had several patients try it.

Unfortunately, my patients' experiences have not been successful. I don't know whether that was just bad luck that I had patients who didn't respond, or whether they did not get an effective medication.

One big problem with herbal treatments in the U.S., which are sold as dietary supplements, is that the purity and standardization cannot be guaranteed. They are not well regulated, as compared with pharmaceuticals. I am sure there are ethical manufacturers who follow good practices, but the literature on supplements in general has shown that some products for sale do not contain the amount of the substance they purport to. There is no brand I feel comfortable recommending.

Nonetheless, I think it is reasonable to try, especially in combination with standard therapy, which includes compression stockings during the day and at least three sessions of raising the legs above the heart for 30 minutes at a time.

\*\*\*

DEAR DR. ROACH: My 57-year-old son has been diagnosed with stage 1 pancreatic cancer. He has chosen not to have surgery, nor take chemotherapy or radiation. He has his own personal reasons and I respect that. Do you know of any other treatments, such as diet? -- Anon.

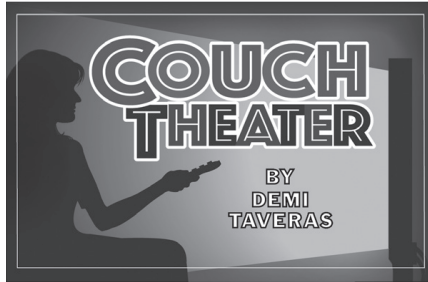
ANSWER: Every person has the right to seek or refuse treatment. However, stage 1 pancreatic cancer is potentially curable with surgery, and time is of the essence. Many people have changed their minds about seeking standard treatment only after alternative treatment fails and their disease progresses. While I understand your respect for his decision, it is hard for an outsider like me to see someone refuse potentially curative treatment for a disease that will shortly become incurable in all likelihood. Hopefully his decision was made based on a thorough and careful review of the facts.

While a healthy diet, herbs, massage and other therapies may be helpful in making people feel better, there is no good evidence that they will cure this terrible disease.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 12 of 87



**Death on the Nile** (PG-13) — Murder mysteries could be considered one of the most interactive genres to watch at home because of how easily viewers can band together to guess which of the characters committed the crime. “Death on the Nile” is no exception. Taking place in the late 1930s, Belgian detective Hercule Poirot (Kenneth Branagh), first seen in action in the film “Murder on the Orient Express,” must solve a series of murders that occur during his vacation in Egypt. The group of suspects, portrayed by stars like Gal Gadot, Letitia Wright, Armie Hammer and Jennifer Saunders, each have peculiar motives for the murders as well as resentments against one another, and Poirot works to peel the truth from them one by one. (HBO Max)

**Our Great National Parks** (PG) — Narrated by former President Barack Obama, “Our Great National Parks” is a new docuseries focusing on the most fascinating national parks across the world, including the Gunung Leuser National Park in Indonesia and the Tsavo National Park in Kenya. The featured parks contain some species that can’t be found anywhere else on the planet. While this series obviously draws in all the animal lovers, “Our Great National Parks” is a great watch for anyone looking to learn more about the intriguing creatures that inhabit our world and the benefits they provide to our ecosystems worldwide. Premieres April 13. (Netflix)

**Outer Range** (TV-MA) — There’s trouble brewing in the wilderness of Wyoming. In the mystery thriller series “Outer Range,” rancher Royal Abbott (Josh Brolin) must fight to maintain his home after a void eerily opens up on his land. Abbott and his

family feel haunted by an alien symbol displayed throughout their town, and Brolin gives a commendable performance as he emotionally begs to God to give them answers to this mystery. Eight episodes long, the first season of “Outer Range” puts a spin on your normal Western by adding elements of sci-fi and horror. Executive producers Brolin and Brad Pitt backed the series. Premieres April 15. (Amazon Prime)



Courtesy of HBO

**Kenneth Branagh as Hercule Poirot**

**Killing It** (NR) — Craig Robinson, who you might know best from his roles on “The Office” and “Brooklyn Nine-Nine,” stars as the main character (also named Craig) in this new comedy series. Craig, a security guard, needs \$20,000 for a piece of swampland he wants to purchase. Strapped for cash, Craig is in the backseat of an Uber when he finds his solution to acquiring the money he needs. At first appalled when his Uber driver pulls over mid-ride to kill a snake, Craig is told by the driver that, due to an ecological disaster, the snake’s head is worth a lot of money to the state. Now set with a new and unlikely mission, Craig embarks on a wild journey to get \$20,000 worth of snakes so he can bring his ambitions to life. Premieres April 14. (Peacock)

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 13 of 87

## FLASH BACK POP, ROCK & SOUL TRIVIA BY MICK HARPER

1. Which artist released "Rock with You"?
2. Name the group that released "Sexy Eyes."
3. What 1956 Elvis Presley 45 rpm record had No. 1 hits on both sides?
4. How long was "Street Hassle"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Livin' on your cheatin' and the pain grows inside me, It's enough to leave me crying in the rain."

### Answers

1. Michael Jackson, in 1979, on his "Off the Wall" album. It was re-released in the box set "Visionary: The Video Singles" in 2006.
2. Dr. Hook in 1980, on their "Sometimes You Win" album. In the beginning (1968), the group was called "Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show: Tonic for the Soul."
3. Both "Don't Be Cruel" and "Hound Dog" stayed at No. 1 for 11 weeks. Ellie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton had first released "Hound Dog" in 1953.
4. Lou Reed's 1978 song was 10 minutes, 56 seconds long, and was broken into three parts: "Waltzing Matilda," "Street Hassle" and "Slipaway."
5. "Love You Inside Out," by the Bee Gees in 1979. The song was released on their "Spirits Having Flown" album and went to No. 1 on the charts for one week -- the group's last chart topper in the U.S.

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## GRIN and BEAR IT <sup>Wagner</sup>

### Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



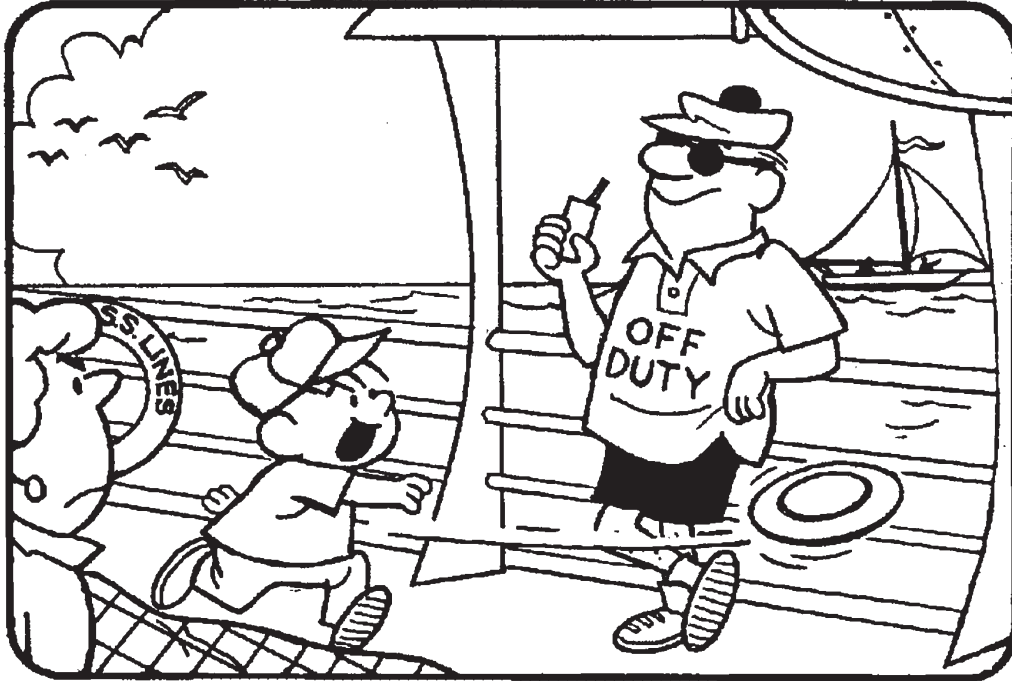
"I'm not eating any performance-enhancing cereal, Pop!"

# Groton Daily Independent

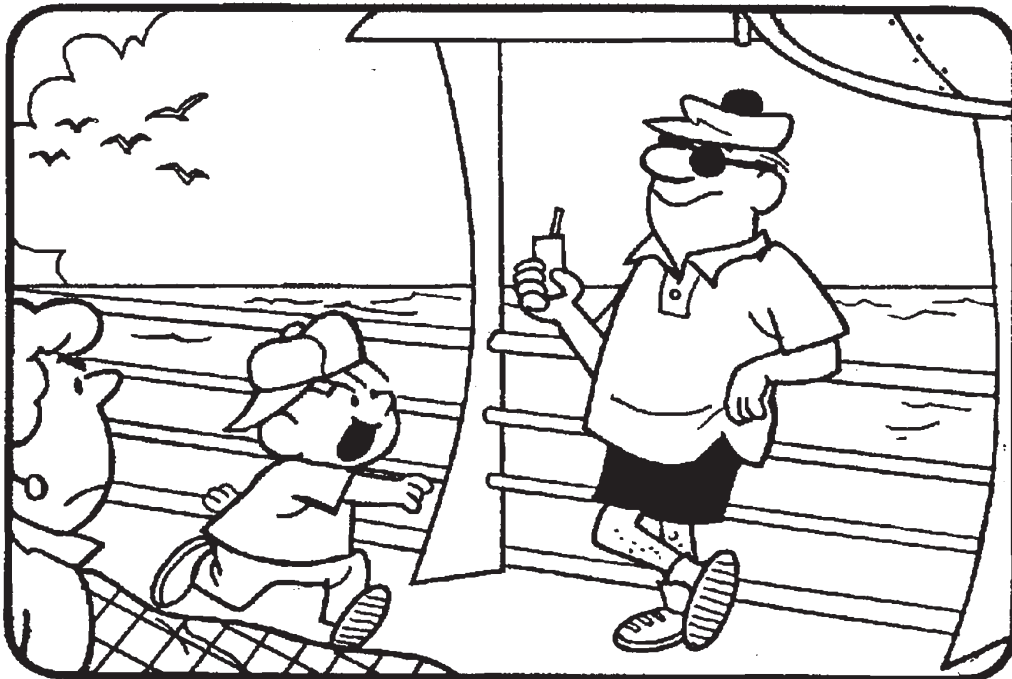
Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 14 of 87

## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Life preserver is missing. 2. Cap is reversed. 3. Arm is moved. 4. Shirt words are missing. 5. Frisbee is missing. 6. Boat is missing.

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- A great idea for mini ice packs: Freeze ketchup packets you get from takeout food. They are great for icing small bumps or bug bites.

- Spread a teaspoon of peanut butter thinly on a paper plate. Then when the dog is busy with its treat, you can trim its nails. Or sometimes just having it nearby as a promised treat can do the trick to distract your pet. Good luck!

- “One of the things I do each spring (and fall) is to go through my makeup and toss the old items. I also restock my first-aid kit and get new bottles of sunscreen and bug spray to keep in my car kit, so I will always have it around.” — *E.A. in California*

- Love beans but trying to save a little money? Don't be intimidated by dry beans; just rinse them and chuck them in the slow cooker. Add water according to package directions and cook on low for up to eight hours. After they cool, you can bag them in freezer-safe,

zipper-top bags and freeze them for easy use later.

- “On a health kick: Step one is to keep a food and activity diary for a week. You can get an idea of what you eat, what times of the day you are overeating and the areas where you can make improvements. Knowledge is power!” — *V.R. in Oregon*

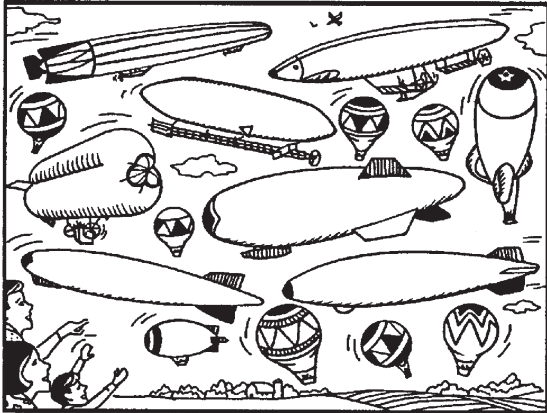
- J.D. of Massachusetts writes: Mix 1/2 cup vinegar and a chamomile tea bag in a pan of medium hot water. Let cool slightly and soak feet for up to 10 minutes. Follow up with foot powder or deodorant.

*Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.*

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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 16 of 87



## Junior Whirl

by Hal Kaufman

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**SPOT TWINS!** Two of 16 lighter-than-air craft shown above are twins. Can you find them? P.S.: Study them carefully.

1 IN \_

2 IN \_ \_

3 IN \_ \_ \_

4 IN \_ \_ \_ \_

5 IN \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

6 IN \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

7 IN \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

### COUNT-ME-IN STEPWORDS

YOU are asked to find seven progressively longer words beginning with IN (see left), in accord with the following definitions:

1. Sign, as a contract (slang.)
2. Move along slowly in a traffic snarl.
3. Back of the book subject matter.
4. Vital tax form info.
5. Out of the elements on a nasty day.
6. Footsoldier branch of the army.
7. Player at third or short stop, for instance.

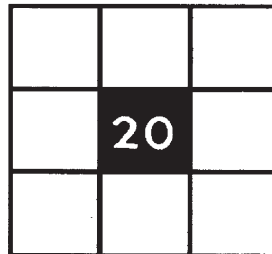
See how quickly you can find the answers.

**AIR BASE!** Earth's atmosphere is said to be composed mainly of three gases in rough volume amounts of 78 percent, 21 percent and 1 percent. What are the three gases in order of their volumes?

Nitrogen, oxygen and argon, respectively.

**9-COUNT!** Let's say you have 24 marbles — that's right, 24 — and you wish to place them in empty compartments of the square at right so that the sum on each side is 9. Place three in each box and alakazam, the deed is done.

BUT, let's say now you have only 20 marbles and wish to achieve the same result — that is, have 9 on each side. How quickly can you insert the 20 marbles to achieve another 9-per-side arrangement? Give it a try.

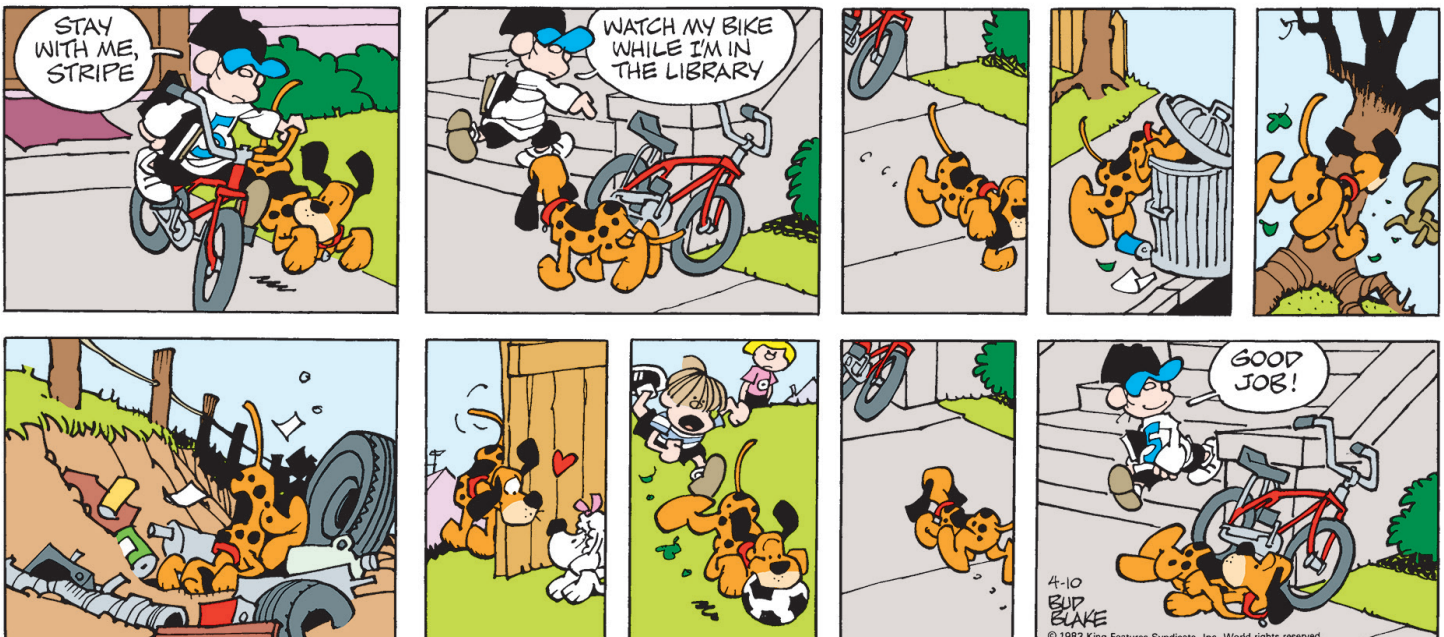


Answer: Place four marbles in each corner box and one in each middle box.

1. Ink. 2. Inch. 3. Index. 4. Income. 5. Indoors. 6. Infantry. 7. Infielder.

## TIGER

by BUD BLAKE





# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 17 of 87

## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Swiss peaks
- 5 — roll (winning)
- 8 Lily variety
- 12 Not worth debating
- 13 Chest muscle
- 14 Here (Sp.)
- 15 Shop tools
- 17 Void partner
- 18 Chemical suffix
- 19 MGM motto start
- 20 Enlighten
- 21 Elev.
- 22 Petrol
- 23 Prima donnas
- 26 Thornton Wilder drama
- 30 B — boy
- 31 Grass shack
- 32 "Closer" actor Clive
- 33 "Blue Bloods" actress Moynahan
- 35 El Greco's birthplace
- 36 Sunbather's goal
- 37 Carrier to Amsterdam
- 38 Cabbage choice
- 41 Chairman of China
- 42 Persian, for one
- 45 Recognized

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15				16					17			
18				19				20				
			21				22					
23	24	25				26				27	28	29
30					31				32			
33				34				35				
			36				37					
38	39	40				41				42	43	44
45					46				47			
48					49				50			
51					52				53			

- 46 Sightseeing stop
- 48 Falco of "The Sopranos"
- 49 Whatever number
- 50 Unruly kid
- 51 Volition
- 52 Zee preceder
- 53 Priestly vestments
- 6 Reporter's quest
- 7 Rm. coolers
- 8 Desert hazard
- 9 Iso-
- 10 Chasm
- 11 Unctuous
- 16 Droops
- 20 Listener
- 21 Small wiper
- 22 Belly
- 23 Apply cream
- 24 Medit. nation
- 25 Half of XIV
- 26 Ump's call
- 27 Have bills
- 28 Drench
- 29 SSW opposite
- 31 Chick's mom
- 34 Carefree
- 35 LummoX
- 37 Rap star West
- 38 Distort
- 39 "The King —"
- 40 Bridal accessory
- 41 Oodles
- 42 Poet Sandburg
- 43 Basra resident
- 44 B'way booth sign
- 46 Legislation
- 47 CEO's deg.

### DOWN

- 1 Both (Pref.)
- 2 Burden
- 3 Corn recipe
- 4 Norm (Abbr.)
- 5 Dizzying designs

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 18 of 87

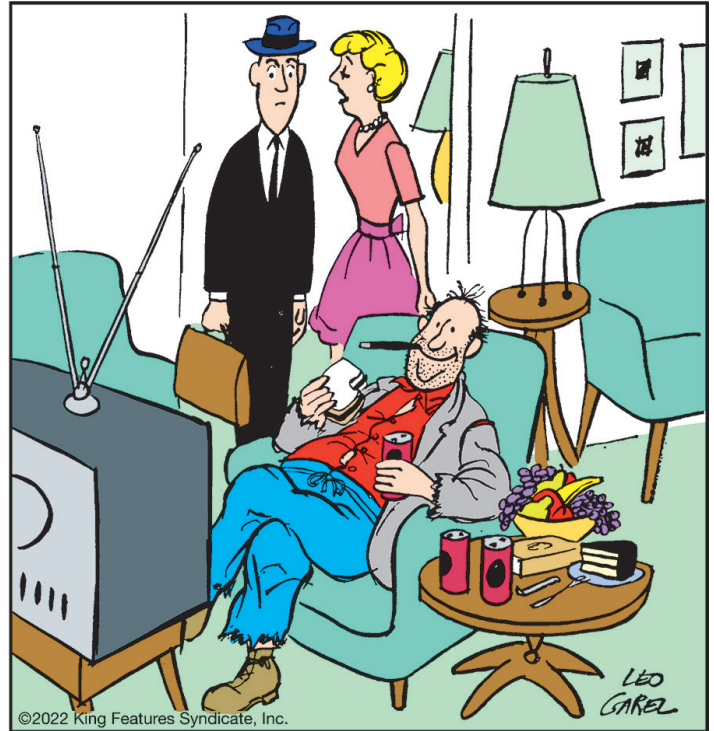
## — King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 23 mins.

A	L	P	S		O	N	A		S	E	G	O
M	O	O	T		P	E	C		A	Q	U	I
B	A	N	D	S	A	W	S		N	U	L	L
I	D	E		A	R	S			E	D	I	F
		H	G	T		G	A	S				
D	I	V	A	S		O	U	R	T	O	W	N
A	S	I	N		H	U	T		O	W	E	N
B	R	I	D	G	E	T		C	R	E	T	E
		T	A	N		K	L	M				
S	A	V	O	Y		M	A	O		C	A	T
K	N	E	W		L	A	N	D	M	A	R	K
E	D	I	E		A	N	Y		B	R	A	T
W	I	L	L		W	Y	E		A	L	B	S

## LAFF - A - DAY



“When he came to the door, NATURALLY I assumed he was one of your relatives.”

## Out on a Limb

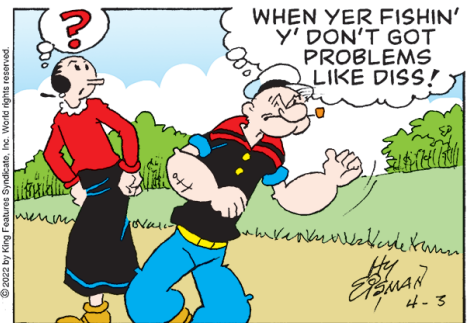
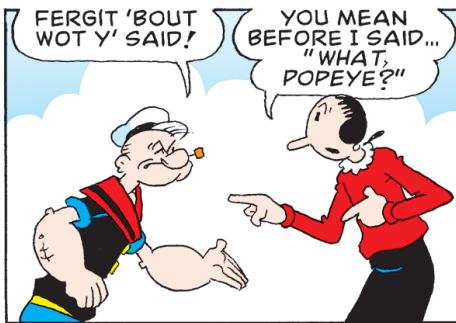
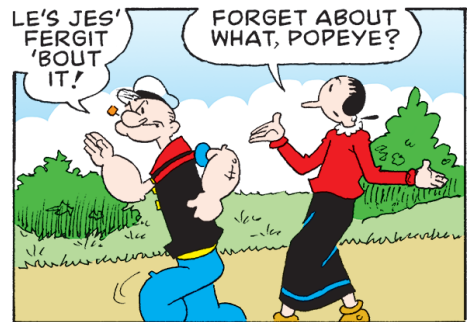
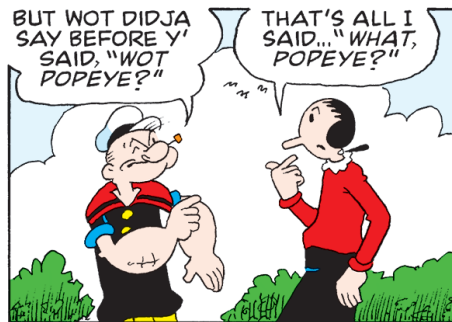
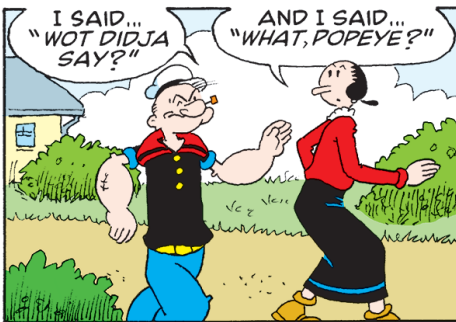
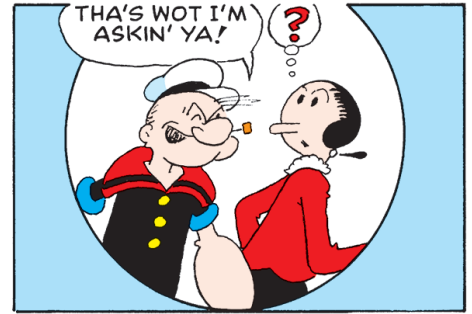
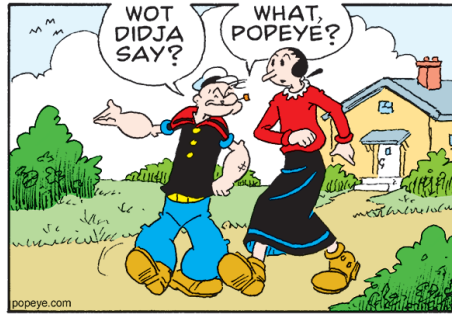
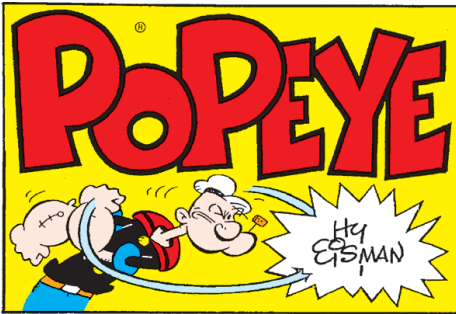
by Gary Kopervas



LAUNDRY  
DAY  
IN  
MADRID

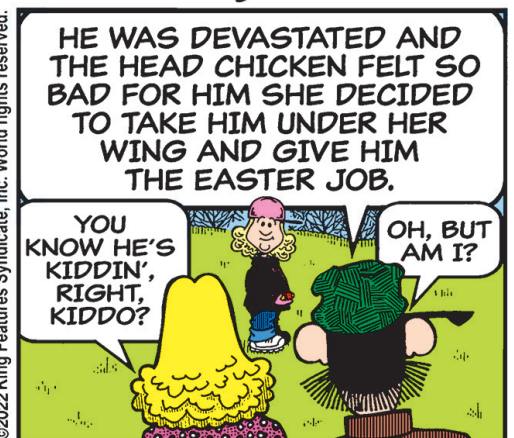
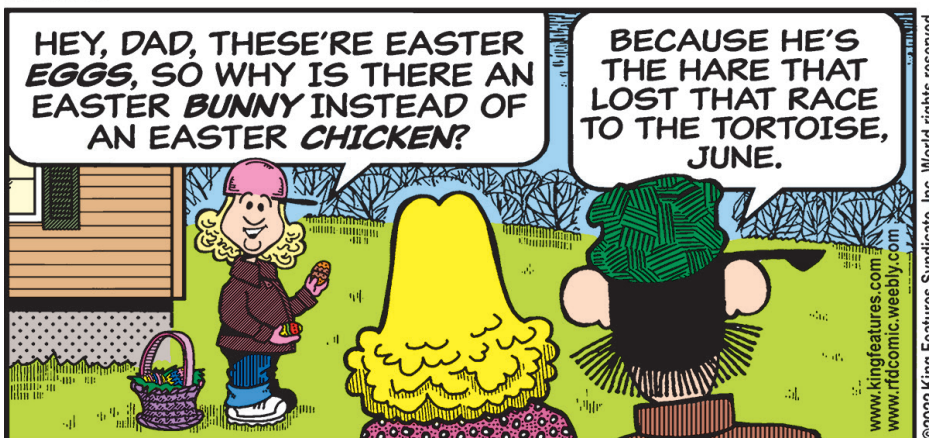
# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 19 of 87



## R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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# Groton Daily Independent

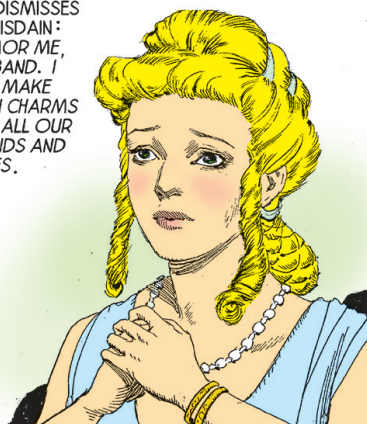
Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 20 of 87



Hal Foster's  
**Prince Valiant**  
BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ  
IN THE DAYS OF KING ARTHUR

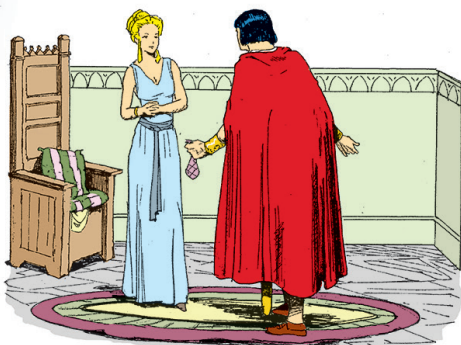
ALETA BESEECHES VAL TO CARRY A CHARM THAT WOULD PROTECT HIM FROM EVIL.

SHE DISMISSES HIS DISDAIN: "HUMOR ME, HUSBAND. I WILL MAKE SUCH CHARMS FOR ALL OUR FRIENDS AND ALLIES."



"MALDUBH IS POWERFUL - AND I HAVE BEEN LAX IN WEAVING OUR PROTECTIONS. NOW THAT SHE HAS BEEN DETECTED, HER ATTACKS WILL BECOME MORE DIRECT."

VAL TRIES TO MAKE LIGHT OF THE CONFUSING SITUATION: "VERY WELL, WIFE, IF IT PUTS YOUR MIND AT EASE..." BUT ALL THIS TALK OF WITCHCRAFT HAS SHAKEN HIM...



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...PERHAPS JUSTIFIABLY SO. OUTSIDE THEIR CHAMBERS, A HULKING SHAPE CRAWLS SPIDER-LIKE UP THE SHEER WALLS.

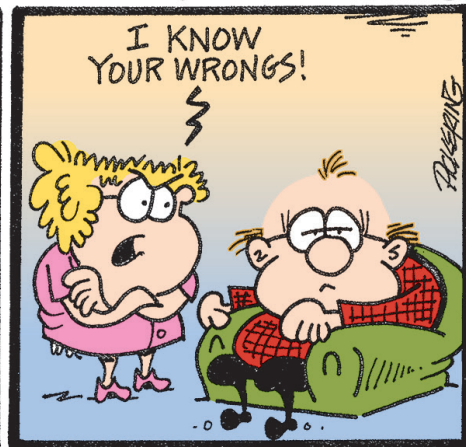
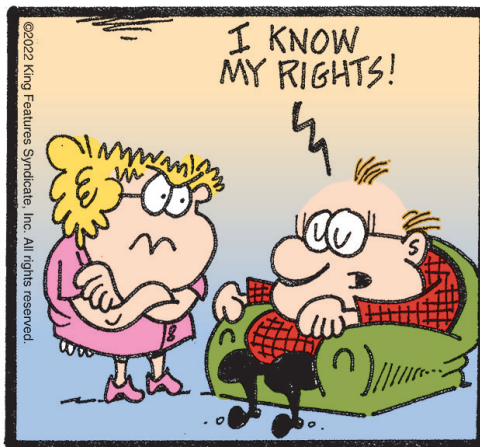
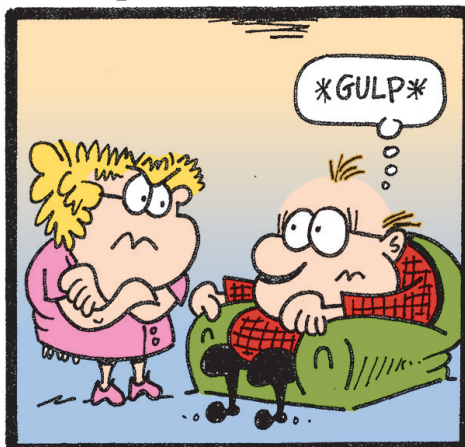
NEXT:  
**Home invasion**

Gianni  
2-13

3862

## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### COVID Phone Scams

Thieves and scammers will do nearly anything to help us part with our dollars. In the latest one, as I write this, the thieves want to help me get the free COVID tests the government is sending out.

I signed up months ago and received my shipment of four tests. The scammers, however, think I should have more on hand and have offered to help me order them ... for a small handling fee. That handling fee for the free tests? Thirty dollars, and giving them my banking information.

No, I don't think so.

We need to be on our toes with these thieves. No matter what topic is on the news, they'll find a way to turn it into a scam.

You might get a call supposedly from a COVID contact tracer who asks too many personal questions, such as for your banking information. You might get a call saying we're now supposed

to get an additional booster and you can be put at the head of the wait list for a small fee. Or you might get a call saying you're due to get another government relief check, but you have to pay the taxes first out of your checking account.

Why, oh why do they target seniors? The answer is that we are perceived to have lots of money and that we're not likely to report fraud. We're also, unfortunately, too trusting and too polite.

If you don't recognize the phone number when someone calls, don't answer. If someone hasn't left a message, don't call them back. If someone does get you on the phone and the conversation involves any pressure, time-limited offers or questions about your personal information, hang up. Remember, you are not obligated to be polite!

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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 22 of 87

1. In 1955, what catcher and outfielder became the first Black player in New York Yankees history?

2. In an October 2000 NFL game dubbed "The Monday Night Miracle," what team scored 30 points in the fourth quarter and sealed a 40-37 overtime win against the Miami Dolphins?

3. At the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympics, alpine skier Hanni Wenzel won the first two gold medals in the history of what small European country?

4. In 1994, Augusta National Golf Club banned what irreverent CBS golf analyst from broadcasting the Masters?

5. Hockey Hall of Famer Glenn Hall holds the NHL record for most consecutive regular-season games started by a goaltender with how many?

6. The Utah vs. BYU and Notre Dame vs. Boston College football rivalries have what nickname in common?

7. Santiago Bernabeu Stadium is



by Ryan A. Berenz

home to what European professional football club?

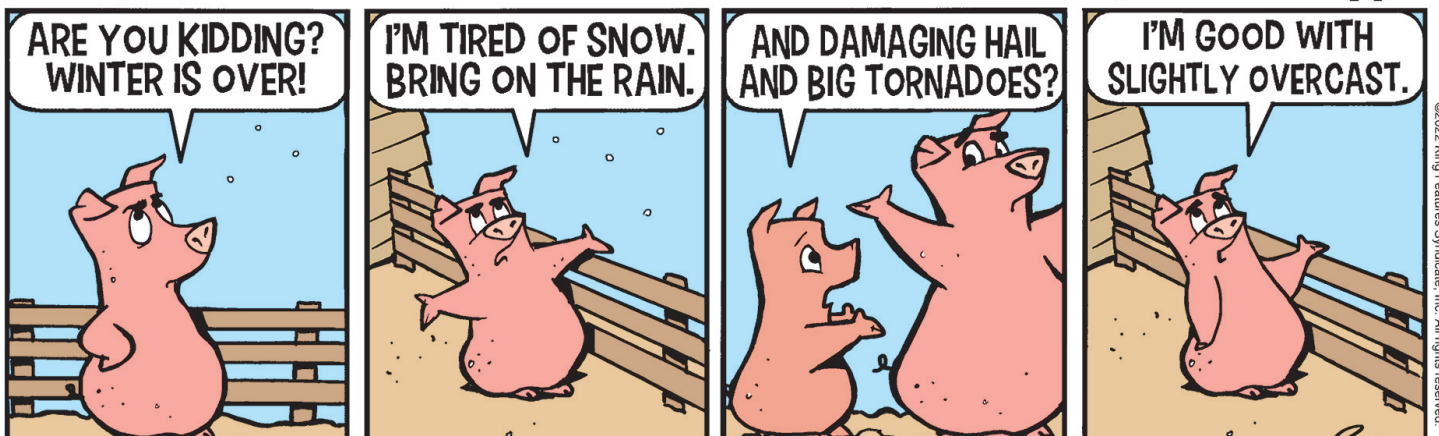
## Answers

1. Elston Howard.
2. The New York Jets.
3. Liechtenstein.
4. Gary McCord.
5. 502.
6. The Holy War.
7. Real Madrid CF.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





## Social Media a Bad Idea When Rehoming Pets

**DEAR PAW'S CORNER:** I read about Sherrie's dilemma in trying to rehome her grandmother's cats. Should she maybe put a notice in the newspaper or on Facebook that the cats need a good home? — *Gerry O., via email*

**DEAR GERRY:** On the surface, it seems like a good idea. But there are some dangers involved in rehoming cats using these routes. In fact, many publications and some social media sites — most notably, Facebook — do not allow posts about pets being available for free or for sale.

The danger for pets is that they could go to a home that's not going to meet their needs, where they may be abused. They may not even go to a home — dogs, puppies and even kit-

tens have been obtained this way by promoters of illegal dog fights, or by others with bad intentions, where they meet a terrible end.

For humans, the danger with rehoming via the internet is that the person they're meeting may be setting them up as a target. Whether to rob them directly or initiate a con job to get even more money out of them, the danger is real.

The best ways for Sherrie to get the word out about needing to rehome the cats is to talk directly to friends and relatives, let the veterinarian know and contact the local shelter. More information can be found by searching for "rehoming your pet" at the national Humane Society website ([www.humanesociety.org](http://www.humanesociety.org)).

*Send your questions, tips and comments to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).*

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## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

\* Now, here's a good reason not to neglect checking your spam email folder from time to time: A Michigan woman bought a lottery ticket online but forgot about it until, opening said folder days later in search of a missing message, discovered that she'd won \$3 million.

\* In 1985, a sting operation dubbed Operation Flagship mailed letters offering free tickets for Washington Redskins games to fugitive criminals. More than 100 arrests resulted, including two of America's top 10 most wanted.

\* Domino's Pizza Group has its own registered Tartan in its brand hues of red, white and blue.

\* In 2007, Ben Carpenter got the most terrifying ride of his life when his wheelchair's handles were caught in the grill of a semi-trailer. Carpenter was pushed for several miles at a speed of over 60 mph before a pair of police officers followed the truck to its place of business and informed the stunned driver. The chair's wheels had to be replaced, but Ben survived without injury.

\* FedEx's founder nearly bankrupted his company with a Las Vegas trip, in which he used the corporation's last \$5,000 to play blackjack. Fortunately, he managed to turn the sum into \$27,000 and keep things running until he obtained more funding.

\* The movie "Babe" required one animatronic and 48 real pigs, due to their rapid growth rate.

\* Remember playing "Simon Says" in your youth? In France, it's "Jack Says"; in Norway "The King Commands"; in Japan "Teacher Says" and in Ireland "O'Grady Says."

\* In 1920, Anoka, Minnesota, became the first U.S. city to put on a Halloween celebration, in an effort to distract kids from playing Halloween pranks.

\*\*\*

Thought for the Day: "Winning doesn't always mean being first. Winning means you're doing better than you've done before." -- Speedskater Bonnie Blair

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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 25 of 87

## THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

SHOCK WAVES-- MOM AND DAD, AFTER YEARS OF DEBT BRINGING UP A FAMILY-- CAN AT LAST SEE DAYLIGHT-- WHEN IN WALKS JUNIOR ET AL....



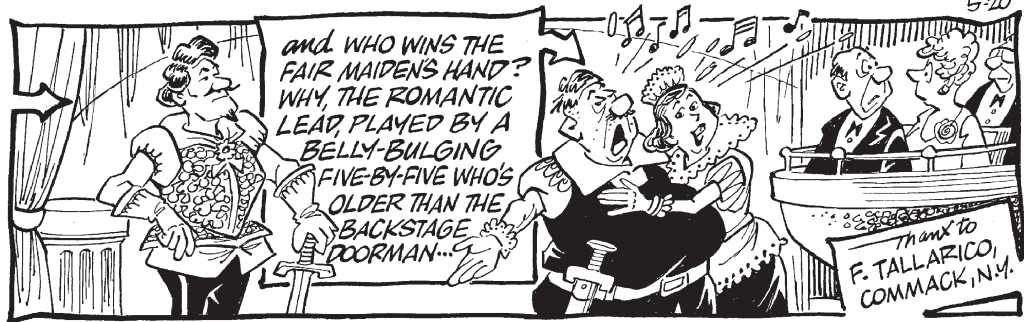
Thank to W. HONNIGER, WASHINGTON, D.C.

## BY AL SCADUTO



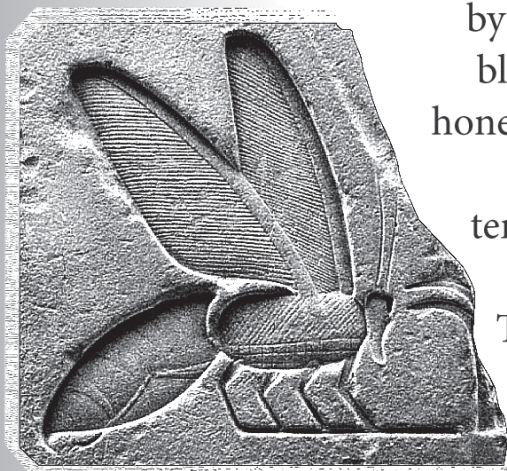
Thank to CAROL STUMPF, INDIANAPOLIS, IND

J'EVER NOTICE?  
IN MOST OPERAS,  
THE DASTARDLY  
VILLAIN, WHOM  
THE HEROINE  
DESPISES, IS  
ACTED BY A  
YOUNG, HAND-  
SOME HUNK  
OF MAN.....



Thank to F. TALLARICO, COMMACK, N.Y.

## The Garden Bug



**Apiculture** (from the Latin *apis*, "bee") is the maintenance of bee colonies by man to collect honey and beeswax, to pollinate crops or to produce bees for sale. Hives have been kept by man since ancient times. Workers blowing smoke into hives to remove honeycombs and inscriptions detailing honey production are depicted on temple walls in Egypt. Sealed pots of honey were found in the tombs of Tutankhamun and other pharaohs.

— Brenda Weaver

Source: thefreedictionary.com

## VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

### Patient Surveys Show VA Hospitals Improving

In the latest Medicare Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems patient survey, the Department of Veterans Affairs outperformed community hospitals in 10 of 11 different categories.

The report said that 54% of VA hospitals earned four or five stars, while only 35% of community hospitals did. That's a hefty increase; just a few years ago, only 26% of VA hospitals rated four or five stars.

The categories included cleanliness of the hospital, care transition, communication with nurses, discharge info and more. Questions were wide ranging, from "Did doctors treat you with courtesy and respect?" all the way to "If you were given new medication, were you told what it was for?" and "Was your personal information treated in a confidential way?"

The VA questionnaire, called the Survey of Healthcare Experience of Patients, is based on Medicare's Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems surveys. Results for all hospitals can be found at Medicare.gov and are updated quarterly. The latest release of the data, however, includes results from July 2020 through March 2021.

One worrying detail: Staff selects veterans to fill out the surveys based on the kind of care they got and the last time they filled out a survey. These can be either veterans who were admitted and had surgery or a treatment and then were sent home, or veterans who had care during a medical visit. Shortly afterward, they're sent the survey packet (questionnaire, cover letter, return envelope).

The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS.gov) website says that the survey is for a "random sample" of patients. How, one wonders, is it truly random if staff is selecting the patients to ask? Additionally, since all hospitals have a different mix of patients, it appears that those who finalize the reports average out the results in areas such as age, education, health status and so forth in what they call patient-mix adjustments.

What would the results be if they weren't making adjustments?

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 27 of 87



CONGRESSMAN  
**DUSTY JOHNSON**  
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



## Tourism is a Reminder of Why Policies Matter

Travel is coming back. After nearly two years of pleas, Speaker Pelosi finally reopened the Capitol building to visitors and tours. South Dakotans wasted no time in coming to their nation's capital. This week, I had the opportunity to meet with members of the South Dakota Department of Tourism, including their Secretary Jim Hagen.

Fortunately, South Dakota policies throughout the pandemic have offered our tourism industry an easier bounce-back than many other states and communities. But the tourism industry across America is still hurting.

Policies like extended shutdowns, mask mandates, restaurant closures, capacity limits, vaccine mandates, and international travel restrictions, have cost the travel industry more than \$755 billion over the past two years.

States like California, who implemented prolonged strict COVID-19 policies, have seen the toll it can take on the industry. Tourism spending in California during 2021 dropped to 67.2% of the 2019 amount. The last time it was this low was 2010. In 2021, the number of visitors to New York City was 32.9 million, down from 66.7 million in 2019—nearly a 50% decrease. Comparatively, in Florida—a state famous for low COVID-19 restrictions—the number of 2021 visitors were only down 9% from 2019 numbers.

In 2021, there were one million fewer visitors in South Dakota than the 2019 numbers – that's a small decrease of 6.9%. Visitor spending and GDP of the South Dakota tourism industry throughout 2021 has even outpaced 2019 levels. It's not perfect though, our hospitality industry is facing a workforce shortage – too many open jobs, not enough people. Without the tourism industry, each South Dakota household would pay an additional \$980 in taxes. A thriving tourism industry is beneficial for all South Dakotans, not just those with skin in the game.

While everyone took a hit at the start of the pandemic, the COVID-19 policies put into effect thereafter made all the difference when it comes to the reopening of economies. Policies matter, and the COVID-19 responses between states is a clear way to see the impact state and local economies have on our lives. Common-sense policies protect and create jobs – they allow businesses to thrive on their own. Federalism works.

South Dakota Governor

## Kristi Noem



**South Dakota:** *Under God, the People Rule*

### The Lessons of History

I love learning about history. When I see the granite faces on Mount Rushmore, I always want to learn more about the men enshrined there. When I walk through downtown Rapid City and see the bronze statues of our presidents, I want to learn more about each of their successes and failures. I love the stories — and we can learn powerful lessons from those stories.

At times, history can be a refreshing reminder that the difficulties that we face are not wholly unique. There are often corollaries in the past, lessons to be learned from situations that mirror the present challenges that we face.

America's history is unique when compared to every other nation on the planet. To this day, we are the only nation founded on an idea — and a transformational idea at that. It's an idea that has inspired nations the world over, one that even inspires the people of Ukraine today: "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights."

Unfortunately, our nation's appreciation for that founding idea has slipped over time. This isn't a new phenomenon; President Reagan warned us of it in his farewell address: "We've got to do a better job of getting across that America is freedom — freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of enterprise — and freedom is special and rare." We need to remind our children about those freedoms and why they were instituted in the first place.

In particular, our children should learn the struggles our nation faced to implement those freedoms and the triumphs that were made in advancing them to folks who had not enjoyed them previously. Sometimes that history is tough, but it must be told for future generations to understand why this country is worth fighting for.

In the process of teaching that history, we should not compel our children to adhere to the false narrative that they are responsible for those previous shortcomings

— not on the basis of their race, color, or sex. Such a philosophy is not in keeping with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s powerful dream, "that (his) four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." That is the America that I was raised in, and that is the America that I am proud to pass on to my children and to my granddaughter.

This week, I signed an executive order to restrict the teaching of divisive ideologies like Critical Race Theory in our K-12 classrooms. These ideologies reject

America's founding idea and instead teach that America was founded on racism — and that is not true.

At various times in our history, America fell short of the founding belief that all men are created equal. And together, our nation overcame those shortcomings.

It is on us as a society — and on each elected leader — to commit to defending American liberty for every person in this country. That is my commitment to you as Governor.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 29 of 87

Our children should learn America's true and honest history. I hope that it will inspire them to accomplish incredible things with their lives and to always recognize that all of their peers are just as valuable as they are — no better and no worse. We all have incredible opportunities in this Land of the Free. The lessons from our past should inspire us to reach for those opportunities and teach us the mistakes to avoid along the way.



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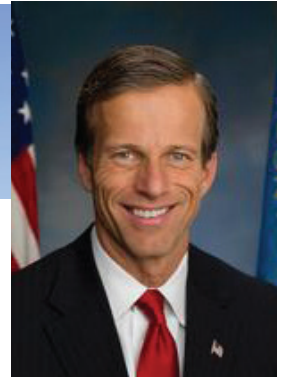
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*aPlace for Mom.*

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**John Thune**  
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



## Biden's Border Crisis Continues

From the day the president took office, our nation has been experiencing an unprecedented surge of individuals who want to enter the United States illegally through the southern border. There have been 2 million illegal border crossing attempts since President Biden was sworn in, yet his administration refuses to implement policies that would deter illegal immigrants from coming into our country. Now the administration has announced that Title 42 border restrictions, which have provided for the immediate deportation for many of those who have crossed the border illegally, will end in May. Once Title 42 restrictions are officially lifted, the flood of illegal immigration across our southern border is expected to become a tsunami.

The Department of Homeland Security expects as many as 18,000 migrants per day to attempt to cross our southern border after the policy is lifted, which adds up to more than half a million migrants per month. To put those numbers in perspective, in fiscal year 2021, the Border Patrol encountered more than 1.7 million individuals attempting to cross our southern border, which was the highest number ever recorded in a single year.

Title 42 restrictions were never intended to be a permanent border solution, but the problem with the Biden administration abruptly lifting them is that its doing it without any type of a coherent plan in place to handle the flood of likely illegal immigration to follow. The administration's approach amounts to an invitation for this current security and humanitarian crisis to get exponentially worse.

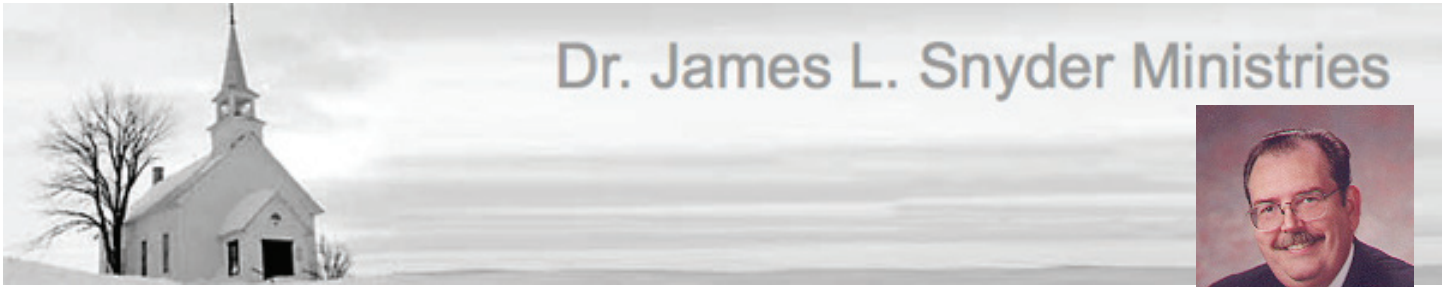
This isn't just a Republican concern. I recently introduced legislation with five Republican senators and five Democrat senators that would block the administration's rollback of Title 42 border policies until the administration presents Congress with a plan to stem the crisis. Asking for a plan shouldn't be too much to ask. Even several of my Democrat colleagues agree that rescinding this policy would send a clear and dangerous signal to anyone who wishes to illegally cross the southern border.

The obvious policy contradiction by the administration can't be overlooked here either. By ending Title 42, the administration is saying that the pandemic is over at the border. That's an ironic position because President Biden is still pressing for more COVID funding in Washington. His administration is still extending the pause on student loan repayments, presumably for pandemic-related reasons. And most shocking to me, the Biden administration is still requiring some toddlers in the Head Start program – as young as two years old – to wear masks, even on the playground. When you boil it down, President Biden is essentially declaring that the pandemic is over at the border, but it's overwhelming on the playground.

We can't keep COVID policies in place forever, obviously, but there's no sign that the administration has any substantive plan for how to deal with the resulting surge or the enhanced criminal activity that would accompany rescinding this border policy. The decision to lift Title 42 without a legitimate plan in place to handle a mass surge of illegal immigrants is irresponsible, dangerous, and reckless. I hope the president will get serious about developing a plan to secure our southern border.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 31 of 87



## I'd Give Her a Piece of My Mind If I Had Any To Spare

I do not know if grouchy comes with old age or if in old age you are too weak to subdue it. I guess it does not really matter because I am having a little bit of trouble along this line. My grouchy seems to be getting out of control.

I remember the good old days, those carefree days, days when I did not let anything bother me. Oh, how I wish they would return.

Lately, it seems everywhere I go I run into people that irritate me. It does not matter if I am driving in a car or walking down the street or sitting in a restaurant, irritating people seem to be everywhere. At least, they seem to be everywhere that I am. Every time I turn around there is somebody irritating me. I am at the point where I am tempted to stop "turning around."

Driving across town the other day I ran into, almost literally, some driver not watching where she was going. Barely missing her, I noticed she was talking on her cell phone. I am quite sure she did not even see me. I wanted to stop everything, get out of my car and give her a good piece of my mind.

But I didn't.

It took me a few minutes to settle down and quiet my nerves and so I decided to go to a little café for a cup of coffee. Nothing seems to soothe my nerves quicker than a nice hot cup of Joe. Let them say what they will, coffee is my best friend.

Fortunately, I was not in a hurry, but it still was a situation that irritated me and stirred up the grouchy within.

I was standing in line waiting to order my coffee when the lady in front of me was trying to figure out what she wanted. I am not sure if this person had ever been in a café before, but she acted as if she did not know what she was doing or what she wanted.

Then she did something that accented the positive in my grouchy.

"Could I have a sample taste of that coffee?" she said to the person behind the counter.

At first, I did not know what she was saying. But he agreed and went back and got a little cup and gave her a sample.

"I'm not sure," she said quite hesitatingly, "can I try another one?" And pointed to one of the coffees

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 32 of 87

she was interested in.

I am absolutely positive that people should have the ability to make their own choices. I have no problem with that. My choice at that moment was to give that woman a good piece of my mind.

But I didn't.

Finally, after tasting about 10 different coffees, she picked one and finally I was able to order my coffee and find a seat and enjoy it.

I say, "Enjoy it," but it was rather difficult because my irritableness just would not go away. After all, there should be some respect for the person behind you when you are standing in line. Especially, if that person standing in line is me.

As I was sipping my coffee alone in the corner, some thoughts began to rattle in my head. The main thought emerging was that grouchy may be an inherited condition.

I began thinking of my father and his father and unfortunately, I did not know my great-grandfather, but the two that I did know had a wide streak of grouchy in them. If my memory serves me correct, the older they got, the more grouchy became predominant.

So, if grouchy is inherited I am really not to blame. Just thinking about that made me chuckle a little bit. In fact, I began to chuckle so much that my grouchy ran away in fear of his life. And so he should.

As I sat in that café enjoying my 2nd cup of coffee, I began evaluating my life. I think I have found out why grouchy is becoming more dominant in my life.

Everybody is born with a certain amount of "mind." We can do with that "mind" whatever we want to do with it. And so, if I begin giving people a "piece of my mind," I am going to diminish my supply of "mind."

When the "mind" gets low it introduces the level of grouchy. The last phase is when a person comes to the point where he "loses his mind." Now, once you lose your mind, you can never get it back.

I am at the grouchy stage and so I need to take a little bit of inventory. I have only so much "mind" left and I better take care of because that is all I got. Whenever I am tempted to give somebody a piece of my mind, I am going to stop and think it over a little bit.

Does that person really does serve a piece of my "mind?" If I give that person a piece of my mind, will I miss it?

I like what Peter says, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

I am going to protect my mind and use it wisely because it is all I got.



## EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: What kind of environmental toll is Russia's war on Ukraine taking?

-- James P., Philadelphia, PA

Russia's war on Ukraine is one of the worst humanitarian crises facing Europe since World War II. As Russian military forces continue their violent, murderous invasion, environmental organizations worldwide are raising additional concerns of the war's far-reaching devastation to the environment.

Russia's military activities threaten Ukraine's environment through air, water and soil pollution. Toxic materials are released not only from munitions, but from the destruction of infrastructure, ranging from buildings and roads to pipelines and chemical storage sites. Ukraine's highly industrialized landscape intensifies the country's risk of toxic pollution from destruction in and around industrial facilities like fuel storage facilities and hazardous waste storage sites. The Donbas region of eastern Ukraine knows this impact all too well: That area was the site of fighting after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, and is still suffering toxic contamination from leaking industrial facilities and munitions.

Ukraine is home to Europe's largest nuclear facility, the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, and fighting near the plant has caused fires to break out. Russian occupancy of the Chernobyl nuclear site, also located in Ukraine, is also deeply concerning. "Few regions on Earth are as poorly equipped to handle military conflict as the Chernobyl nuclear power plant," Senior White House Correspondent Alexander Nazaryan says. Russian movement in the area has launched radioactive dust from soil into the air, spiking radiation levels within the zone. While experts say there is no immediate danger to surrounding vicinities, the potential of nuclear disaster makes this war even more dangerous to the environment.

The country's already deteriorating water infrastructure is further threatened by the war. On top of Russian forces cutting off vital water resources that civilians need for drinking and sanitation, damages to wastewater infrastructure are causing untreated sewage to pollute water supplies. On the other end of the spectrum, artillery fire compacted with dry conditions due to climate change make the region susceptible to wildfires. "There is an urgent need for ecological monitoring to assess and minimize the environmental risks arising from the armed conflict," says UN Environment Program analyst Leila Urekenova.

The war is impacting climate change talks as well. Since Russia is one of the top three fossil fuel suppliers in the world, some green groups worry the climate change agenda will be sidelined. Already, the crisis is showing that other countries, especially the U.S., need to be less dependent on foreign fuel, and fossil fuels in general. Climate analysts hope, if anything good can come from the war, it will be the advancement of renewable energy investment to secure energy independence from nations like Russia.

In its present state, the environmental toll of the Russian war on Ukraine seems boundless. However, the full environmental impact may not be seen for generations to come. As Benjamin Franklin warned, "Wars are not paid for in wartime, the bill comes later."



**Russia's war on the Ukraine is creating untold environmental mayhem in the form of air, water and soil pollution.** Credit:

Manhhai, FlickrCC..

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 34 of 87

## South Dakota COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

139

Active Cases

488  
-49

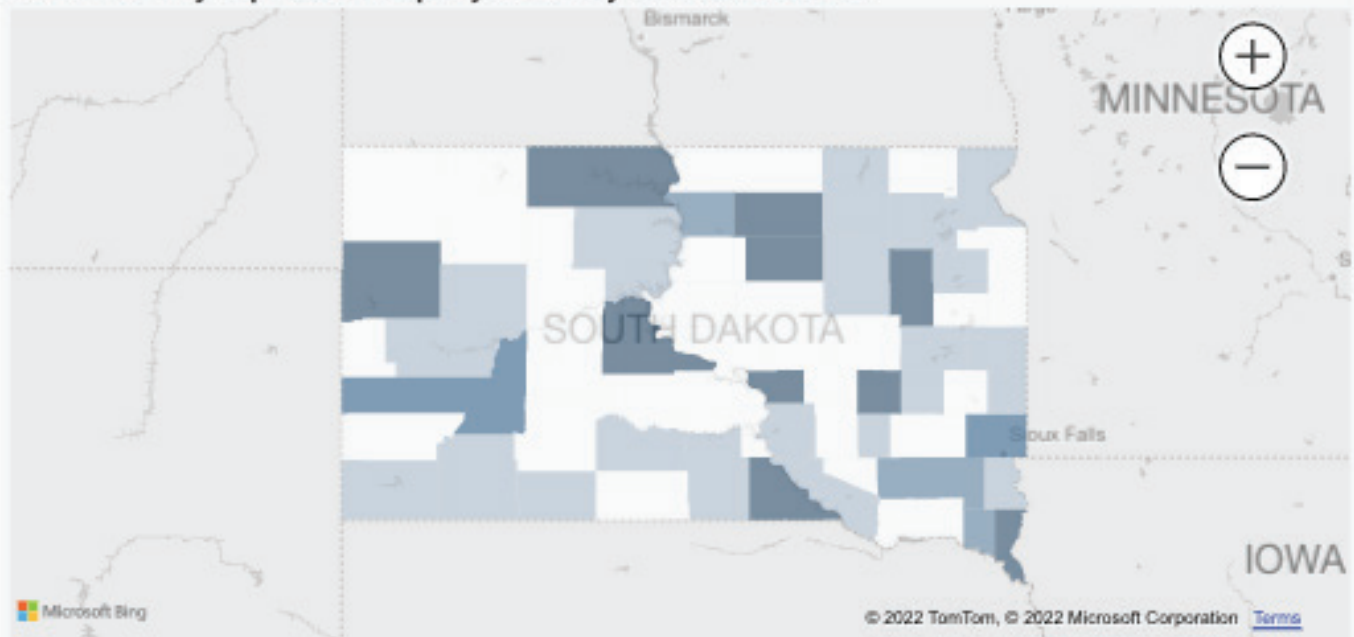
Recovered Cases

233,865

Currently Hospitalized

41

### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.

More information on U.S COVID-19 Community levels can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

237,246

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days

3.8%

3/29/2022 - 4/4/2022

Total Tests

2,144,062

Ever Hospitalized

10,731

Deaths Among Cases

2,893

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

169%

% Progress (March Goal: 44233 Tests)

100%

% Progress (April Goal: 44233 Tests)

8%

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 35 of 87

## Brown County COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

12

Active Cases

33  
+/- 0

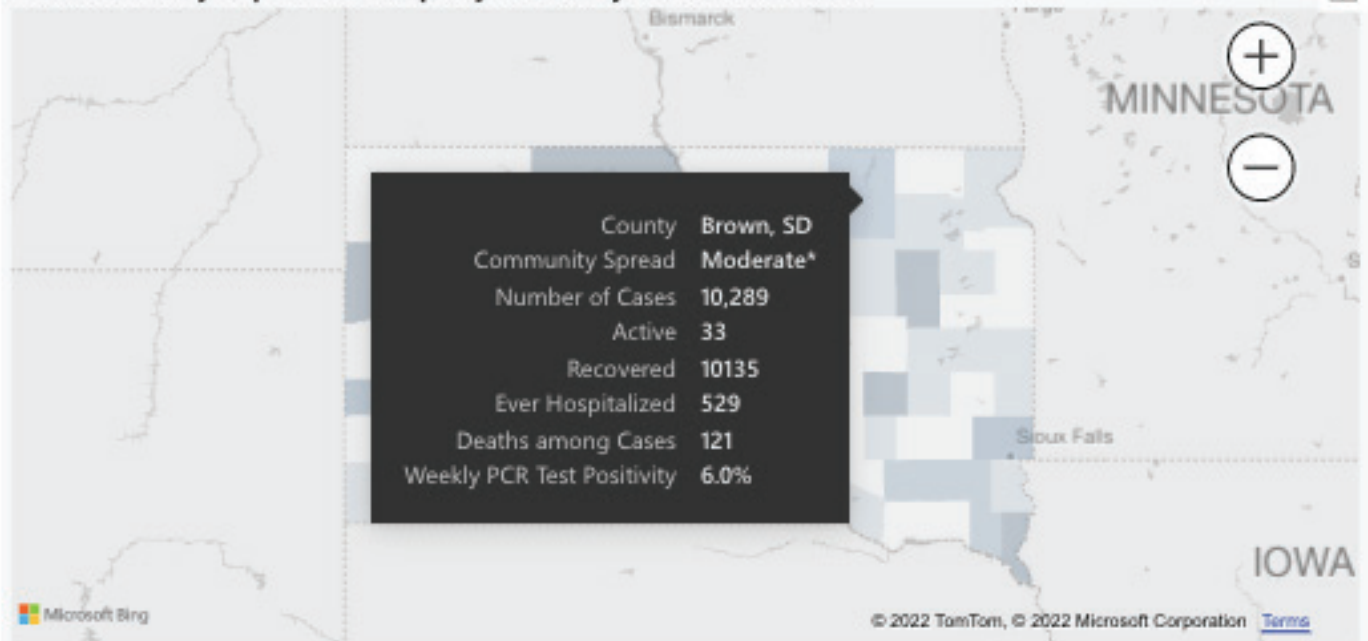
Recovered Cases

10,135

Currently Hospitalized

41

### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread Low Moderate Substantial High

Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.

More information on U.S COVID-19 Community levels can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

10,289

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days

7.6%

3/29/2022 - 4/4/2022

Total Tests

103,229

Ever Hospitalized

529

Deaths Among Cases

121

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

169%

% Progress (March Goal: 44233 Tests)

100%

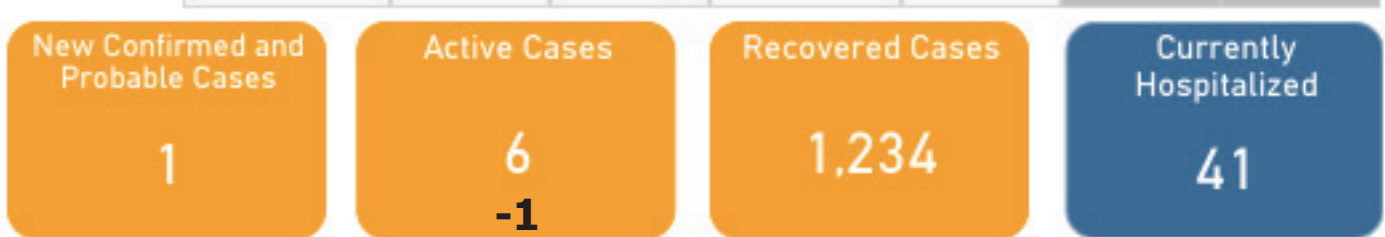
% Progress (April Goal: 44233 Tests)

8%

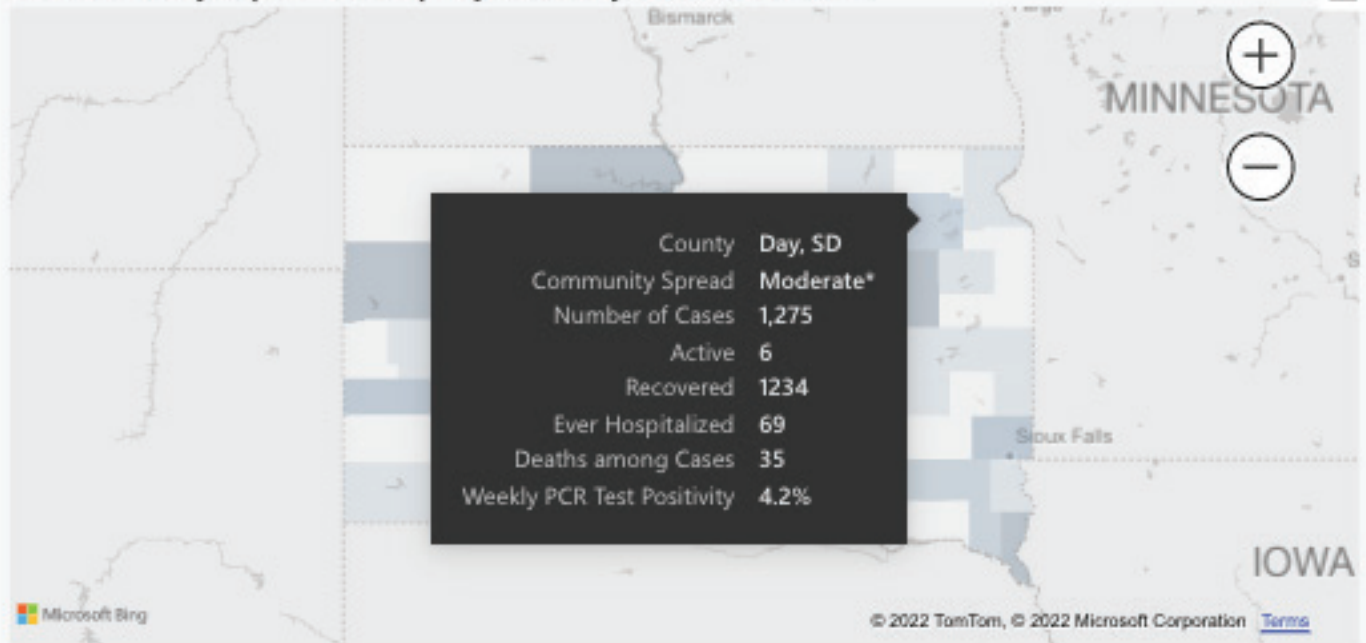
# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 36 of 87

## Day County COVID-19 Report



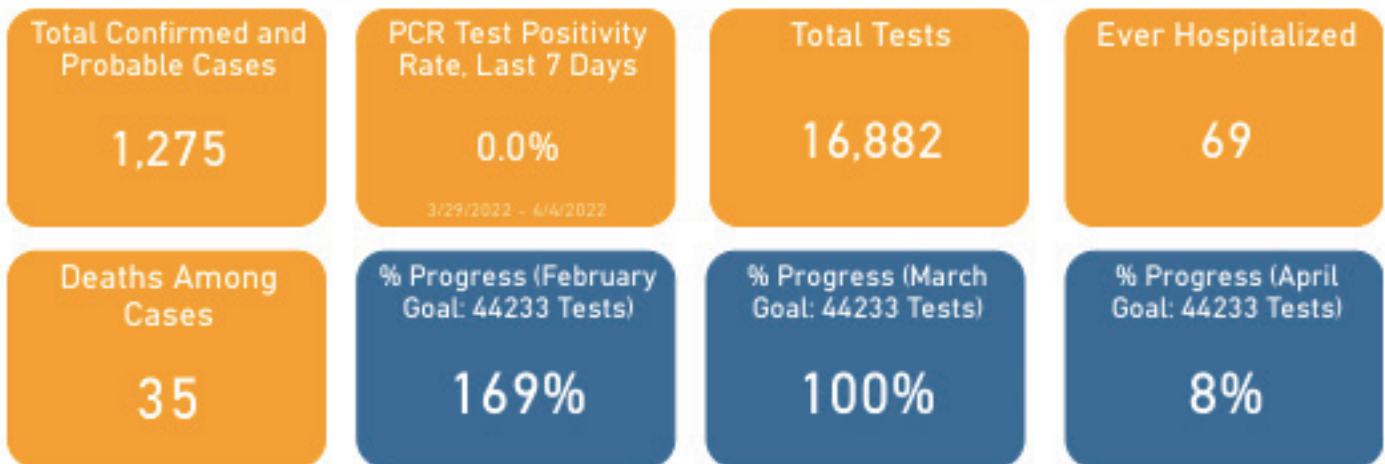
### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread Low Moderate Substantial High

Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.

More information on U.S COVID-19 Community levels can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

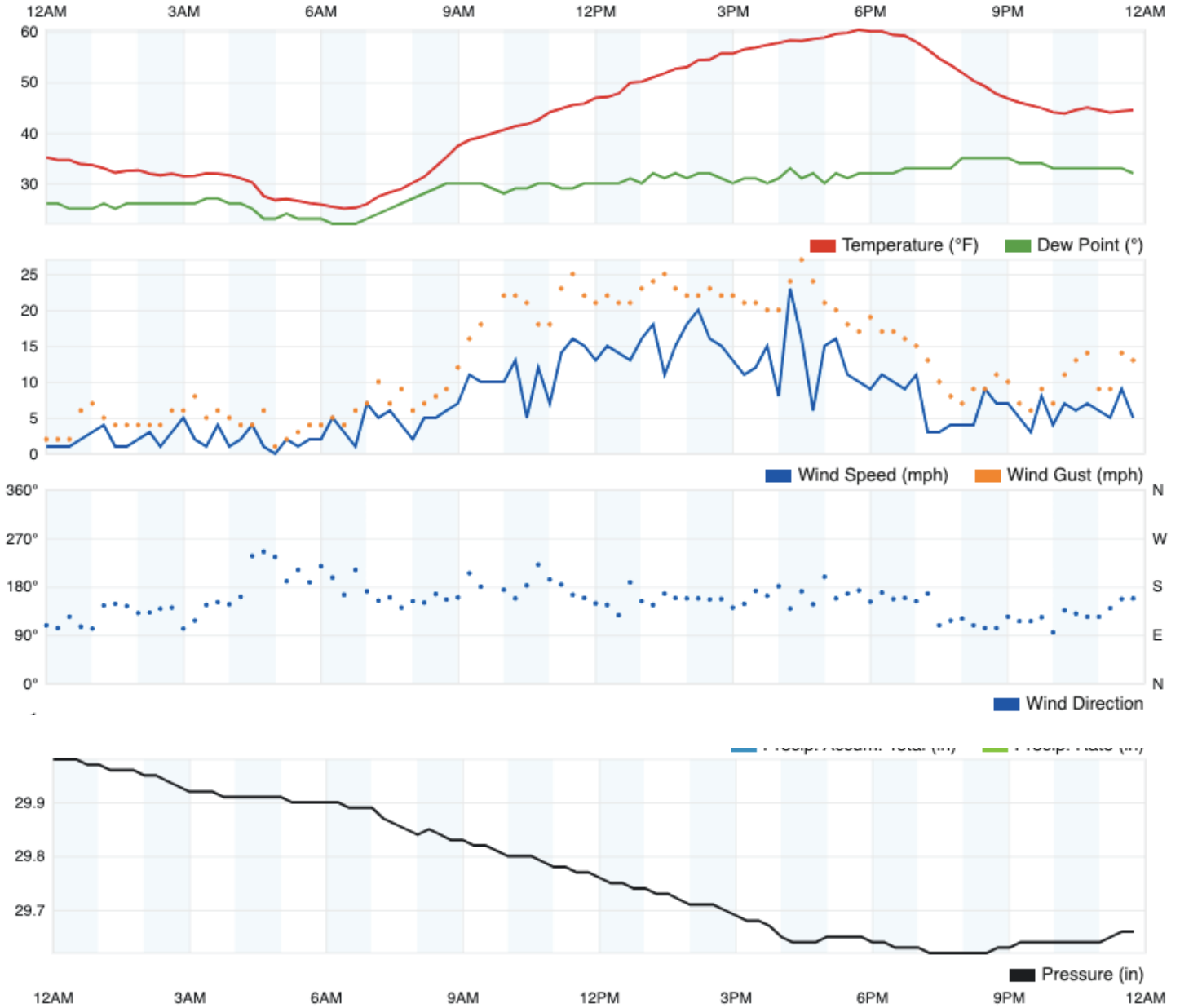




# Groton Daily Independent


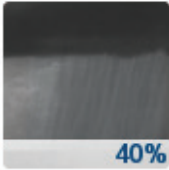



Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 38 of 87

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 39 of 87

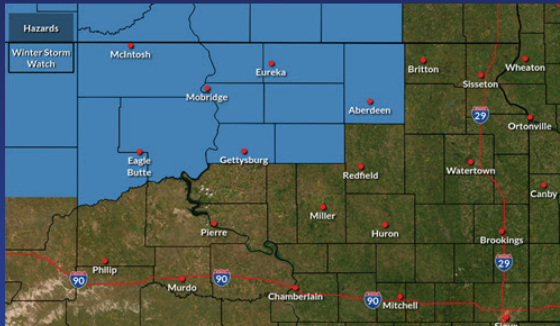
Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
				
80%	40%	20%	20%	80%
Rain	Chance Showers	Partly Sunny then Slight Chance Showers	Partly Cloudy then Slight Chance Rain/Snow	Breezy. Rain/Snow then Rain
High: 45 °F	Low: 31 °F	High: 52 °F	Low: 34 °F	High: 46 °F

## Today

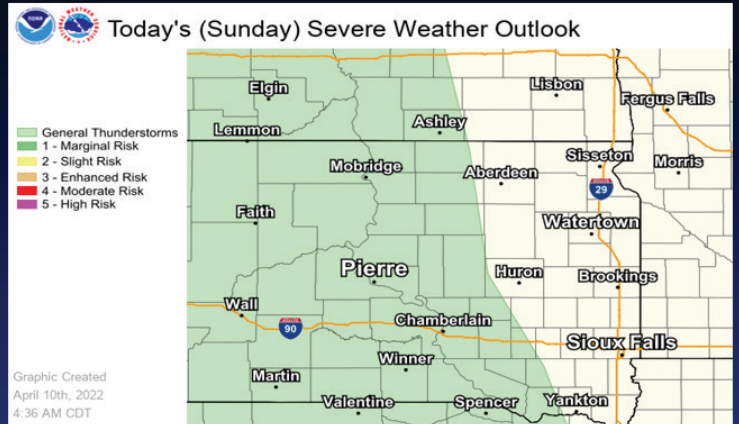
Rain, possibly mixing with snow in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota.

Isolated showers and thunderstorms this afternoon, mainly west of the James River valley.

## Looking Ahead



*Winter Storm Watch Tuesday – Thursday Morning*



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD



A storm system crossing the area today will bring mainly rain, perhaps mixing with light snow in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. This afternoon, locations west of the James River valley could see isolated showers and thunderstorms. A storm system will impact the region Tuesday through Thursday, bringing the potential for significant snowfall and high winds to north-central South Dakota.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 40 of 87



## Is The Snow Forecast Changing?

Heavy Snow Is Still Expected Over the Northern Plains



### Check Out These Snow Forecast Trend Graphics

**What:** Moderate to heavy snow

**When:** Tuesday through Thursday

**Where:** Heaviest snowfall axis trending north and west

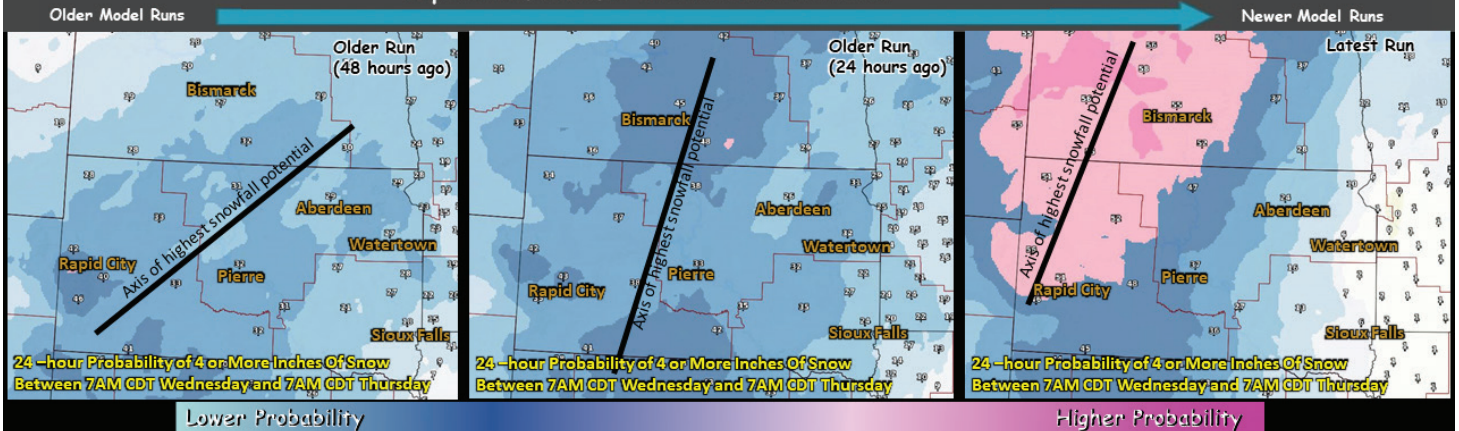
**Snowfall Amount Trend:** Decreasing over this Forecast Area

**How Much?** Potentially Several Inches

**Winter Storm Watch Confidence:** 30%

(Timing, snowfall rates, and location are still the main uncertainties)

Depiction Of Snowfall Amount/Location Trends



One Of The Somewhat Higher Confidence Forecast Elements Continues To Be Strong Northwest Winds Developing Tuesday Night Along and West Of The Missouri River, Spreading East On Wednesday And Lasting Through Thursday Night

There is still a rather large, powerful spring storm system forecast to move across the region during the middle portion of this upcoming week. Still thinking the highest snow accumulation potential will set up north and west in the region from Tuesday through Thursday, with much of central and northeast South Dakota into western Minnesota seeing just plain rain Tuesday before a gradual change over to snow happens Tuesday night into Wednesday. Eventually precipitation chances begin to wane Thursday into Thursday night. Breezy to windy east winds develop on Tuesday before switching around to the northwest throughout the Missouri River valley region Tuesday night and spreading over into Minnesota Wednesday into Wednesday night. The strong northwest winds are expected to stick around through Thursday night.



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 41 of 87

## Today in Weather History

April 10, 1965: Severe Thunderstorms in the afternoon and early evening resulted in severe hail reports throughout much of Clark County. Hail up to 2.00 inches in diameter was recorded 30 miles northeast of Huron around 2:40 PM. About 6:30 PM, hail 0.75 inches in diameter fell near Garden City on a flock of wild geese in flight, killing 25 of them.

April 10, 1969: The Elm River in Westport was the highest of all time at 22.11 feet, which is 8.11 feet above flood stage.

April 10, 2005: Thunderstorm winds caused widespread damage in Menno, in Hutchinson County. Numerous trees including several large trees were uprooted. Numerous homes were damaged, some directly by the wind and others by trees and other debris. Garages were especially hard hit, including at least one garage which was destroyed. A grain elevator was damaged, with a catwalk and conveyor being blown over. A historical post office addition to a log building was destroyed, doors and part of the roof of a flour mill were blown down, and doors were blown off several other buildings. Many homes and other buildings had windows broken and siding damaged. A few small storage buildings were destroyed, and others were damaged or blown over. Several farms were heavily damaged, with machine sheds, at least, one hog barn, and several other small structures destroyed. Several vehicles were damaged, including one pickup which was pushed partly onto the porch of a house. Power lines and poles were blown down, resulting in a power outage in Menno.

April 10, 2013: A large slow-moving upper-level low-pressure area moving across the region brought several rounds of heavy snow to much of central and northeast South Dakota. Snowfall amounts from 6 to as much as 22 inches occurred over the several day periods. Travel became difficult if not impossible with some roads closed for a time. Interstate-90 closed on the evening of the 9th. Many schools were also closed across the region. Additionally, a 66-year-old suffered a heart attack and passed away while shoveling the snow in front of his house in Aberdeen.

1935: Severe dust storms across Iowa and Kansas closed schools and highways. Dodge City, Kansas experienced its worst dust storm of record, with dense dust reported from the morning of the 9th until after sunset on the 11th. The sky was almost as dark as night at times during the daylight hours. The thick dust suspended traffic on highways and railroads and also suspended most business in town.

1979: This day was known as "Terrible Tuesday" to the residents of Wichita Falls, Texas as a tornado rated F4 on the Fujita scale ripped through the city. A massive F4 tornado smashed into Wichita Falls killing 43 persons and causing 300 million dollars in damage. Another tornado struck Vernon, Texas killing eleven persons.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 42 of 87

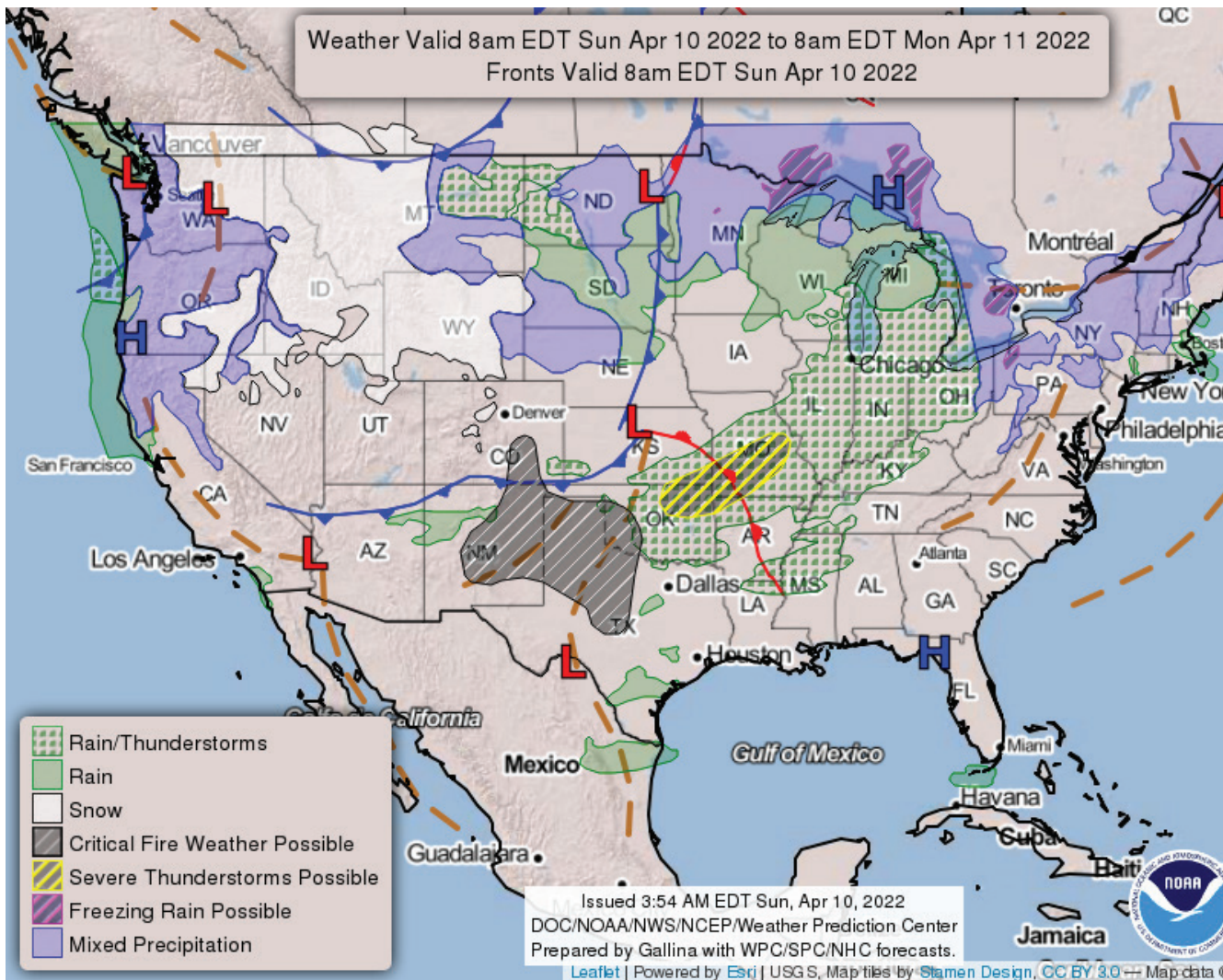
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 60.4 °F at 5:45 PM**  
**Low Temp: 25 °F at 6:30 AM**  
**Wind: 27 mph at 4:30 PM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

Day length: 13 hours, 19 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 88 in 1977  
Record Low: 16 in 1997  
Average High: 55°F  
Average Low: 29°F  
Average Precip in April.: 0.46  
Precip to date in April.: 0.30  
Average Precip to date: 2.52  
Precip Year to Date: 2.10  
Sunset Tonight: 8:13:29 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:51:57 AM



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 43 of 87



## WHAT TO DO WHEN

What's the best thing to do when life comes crashing in?

He had worked many years to reform the church. It seemed that everyone and everything had turned against him, and he had no place to run. In desperation and despair, he turned to a fellow servant and said, "Come, let us sing Psalm 130." Soon their deep dedication to God replaced their despair and desperation when they sang, "Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy."

Who among us has not experienced the desperation that comes from being betrayed and abandoned? Most of us, at one time or another, have cried, "Who cares for me? Everyone belongs to a 'we' except me." It is then that we need to call on Jesus who said, "Come to me - all of you who have hearts that are deeply troubled and who have burdens that are too heavy for you to carry by yourself. I'm the only One who is always there for you!"

All of us have been overwhelmed when the treasures of life are snatched from our hands. Handel, the master musician, lost his health. Soon after that, his right side became paralyzed. Then, he lost his money. He was so discouraged that he wanted to give up on life. But he cried to God and from this hopeless condition penned *The Messiah* which ends with the Hallelujah Chorus.

And there is the depth of sin. It lowers us, limits us, and never lifts us. But God will do that for us through His Son, who wants to be our Savior - Christ the Lord.

Prayer: Father, help us never to give up on You even though all seems lost. Remind us that we belong to You, and we are not alone. Hear our voice when we call on You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. Psalm 130:1-2

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 44 of 87

## 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

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 45 of 87

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# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 46 of 87

News from the  Associated Press

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

02-09-12-21-28

(two, nine, twelve, twenty-one, twenty-eight)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

07-10-20-36-37, Star Ball: 5, ASB: 3

(seven, ten, twenty, thirty-six, thirty-seven; Star Ball: five; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$10.49 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$106 million

Powerball

06-16-31-62-66, Powerball: 18, Power Play: 2

(six, sixteen, thirty-one, sixty-two, sixty-six; Powerball: eighteen; Power Play: two)

## Woman gets probation for theft of pandemic-related funds

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota woman has been sentenced to probation and ordered to pay more than \$20,000 restitution after defrauding multiple government agencies of pandemic-related jobless funds.

Marietta Ravnass, 52, of Miller, was convicted of money laundering in January.

The Argus Leader reports Ravnass used an international money transfer service to accept unlawful payments from several states.

The two-year probation sentence also included restitution of \$8,200 to be paid to Massachusetts and \$12,100 to Washington.

## 'The Eagle Has Landed' author Jack Higgins dead at 92

LONDON (AP) — British author Jack Higgins, who wrote "The Eagle Has Landed" and other bestselling thrillers and espionage novels, has died. He was 92.

Publisher HarperCollins said that Higgins died at his home on the English Channel island of Jersey surrounded by his family.

Born Henry Patterson in Newcastle, England, in July 1929, Higgins served in the military before studying sociology at the London School of Economics. He became a teacher in the northern city of Leeds and a writer in his spare time, with novels that sold modestly starting in the late 1950s.

That changed with the 1975 publication of "The Eagle Has Landed," about a fictional World War II plot to kidnap British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. In a 2010 interview with The Guardian, Higgins recounted a pivotal call from his accountant.

"He asked me what I wanted to get out of my writing," Higgins said. "I replied that I wasn't really sure, before adding as a joke it would be nice to make a million by the time I retired. He then said: 'Well you're a bloody fool. Because you've just earned that much this week. So what are you going to do about it?'"

He was advised to leave England because of 1970s taxation rates and settled with his family on Jersey.

"The Eagle Has Landed" became more popular after the 1976 film adaptation was released. Michael Caine, Donald Sutherland and Robert Duvall were among the stars of the eponymously named movie that was a box office success.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 47 of 87

In a statement, HarperCollins chief executive Charlie Redmayne said Higgins' death marked "the end of an era."

"I've been a fan of Jack Higgins for longer than I can remember. He was a classic thriller writer: instinctive, tough, relentless," he said.

"The Eagle Has Landed and his other Liam Devlin books, his later Sean Dillon series, and so many others were and remain absolutely unputdownable."

Patterson wrote nearly 80 books, most under the pseudonym of Jack Higgins. Other Higgins titles included "The Eagle Has Flown," "Angel of Death," "Day of Reckoning," and "A Darker Place."

According to his publisher's website, the novels have sold more than 250 million copies and been translated into dozens of languages.

His survivors include his wife, Denise, and four children from his previous marriage.

## French go to the polls in 1st round of presidential election

By THOMAS ADAMSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French citizens flocked to polling stations across the country Sunday to vote in the first round of the country's presidential election, where up to 48 million eligible voters will be choosing between 12 candidates.

Centrist President Emmanuel Macron is seeking a second five-year term, but faces a strong challenge from the far right.

Polls close at 7 p.m. (1700 GMT) in most places and an hour later in some larger cities. By noon, just over a quarter of France's electorate had cast their ballot, slightly down from previous elections. France operates a manual system for elections: Voters are obliged to cast ballots in person, and they are hand-counted once voting closes.

Unless someone gets more than half of the nationwide vote, there will be a second and decisive round between the top two candidates on Sunday, April 24.

Bundled up against an April chill, voters lined up to cast ballots at one polling station in southern Paris on Sunday before it opened. Once inside, they placed their paper ballots into envelopes and then into a transparent box, many wearing masks or using hand gel as part of COVID-19 measures.

Many candidates made early visits to their own polling stations, smiling to journalists.

Valerie Pécresse of the Republican Party cast her vote in Velizy-Villacoublay, southwest of Paris, while far right leader Marine Le Pen cast hers in Henin-Beaumont, a town in northern France 190 kilometers (120 miles) northeast of Paris. Macron and his wife cast their votes in the town of Le Touquet, in northern France.

Far-left firebrand Jean-Luc Mélenchon is among other prominent figures vying to take the presidential Elysee.

Macron for months looked like a shoo-in to become France's first president in 20 years to win a second term. But that scenario blurred in the campaign's closing stages as the pain of inflation and of pump, food and energy prices roared back as dominant election themes for many low-income households. They could drive many voters Sunday into the arms of Le Pen, Macron's political nemesis.

Macron trounced Le Pen by a landslide to become France's youngest modern president in 2017. The win for the former banker — now 44 — was seen as a victory against populist, nationalist politics, coming in the wake of Donald Trump's election to the White House and Britain's vote to leave the European Union, both in 2016.

With populist Viktor Orbán winning a fourth consecutive term as Hungary's prime minister days ago, eyes have now turned to France's resurgent far right candidates — especially National Rally leader Le Pen, who wants to ban Muslim headscarves in streets and halal and kosher butchers, and drastically reduce immigration from outside Europe. This election has the potential to reshape France's post-war identity and indicate whether European populism is ascendant or in decline.

Meanwhile, if Macron wins, it will be seen as a victory for the European Union. Observers say a Macron re-election would spell real likelihood for increased cooperation and investment in European security and

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 48 of 87

defense — especially with a new pro-EU German government.

With war singeing the EU's eastern edge, French voters will be casting ballots in a presidential election whose outcome will have international implications. France is the 27-member bloc's second economy, the only one with a U.N. Security Council veto, and its sole nuclear power. And as Russian President Vladimir Putin carries on with the war in Ukraine, French power will help shape Europe's response.

Russia's war in Ukraine has afforded Macron the chance to demonstrate his influence on the international stage and burnish his pro-NATO credentials in election debates. Macron is the only front-runner who supports the alliance while other candidates hold differing views on France's role within it. Melenchon is among those who want to abandon it altogether, saying it produces nothing but squabbles and instability.

Such a development would deal a huge blow to an alliance built to protect its members in the emerging Cold War 73 years ago.

## Pakistan's PM vows to fight on after Parliament ousts him

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The ouster of Prime Minister Imran Khan in a parliamentary no-confidence vote early Sunday set Pakistan on an uncertain political path, with Khan calling on supporters to take to the streets in protest and the political opposition preparing to install his replacement.

Khan was brought down after a day of drama and often vitriolic remarks. His supporters accused Washington of orchestrating his ouster and his party walked out of Parliament shortly before the vote. In the end, 174 lawmakers in the 342-seat Parliament voted to depose him, two more than the required simple majority.

Khan's successor is to be elected and sworn in by Parliament on Monday. The leading contender is Shahbaz Sharif, a brother of disgraced former prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

Shahbaz Sharif heads the largest party in a diverse alliance of opposition factions that span the spectrum from the left to radically religious. Khan's nominee for prime minister will be his foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.

Khan's ouster comes amid his cooling relations with the powerful military and an economy struggling with high inflation and a plummeting Pakistani rupee. The opposition has charged Khan's government with economic mismanagement.

Khan has claimed the U.S. worked behind the scenes to bring him down, purportedly because of Washington's displeasure over his independent foreign policy choices, which often favor China and Russia. He has occasionally defied America and stridently criticized America's post 9/11 war on terror. Khan said America was deeply disturbed by his visit to Russia and his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Feb. 24, the start of the devastating war in Ukraine.

The U.S. State Department has denied his allegations.

Elizabeth Threlkeld, a Pakistan expert at the U.S.-based The Stimson Center, said that even as prime minister, Khan often played the role of opposition leader.

"His removal would see him to a role he knows well, armed with a narrative of victimhood from unfounded claims of international interference," she said. "His base will remain loyal, though I expect both his controversial attempt to remain in power and reduced military backing will lose him less committed supporters."

Khan would seem to have few options going forward.

General elections are not scheduled before August 2023. Even if the new prime minister favors early elections, this would likely not happen before October. The Pakistan Election Commission, which oversees polls, told the Supreme Court last week it had still to finish re-aligning constituencies in line with the results of a 2017 census before polls could be held.

In the aftermath of Sunday's vote, giant steel containers stacked on top of each other blocked main roads leading to Parliament and to the diplomatic enclave in the capital of Islamabad. Khan has called on his supporters to gather late Sunday, after the end of the daily dawn-to-dusk fast during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 49 of 87

Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Washington-based Wilson Center, predicted a turbulent time ahead for Pakistan.

"Khan's defeat would also leave Pakistan a bitterly partisan and divided place. He has not only intensified political rivalries, he has also defied and alienated key entities like the Army Chief and Pakistan's foreign office," said Kugelman. "It will take time for the country to pick up the pieces, and the coming months will be politically turbulent."

Sunday's vote capped a week-long constitutional crisis that had mesmerized the nation. It began last Sunday when Khan sought to sidestep the no confidence vote by dissolving Parliament and calling early elections, It was then left to the Supreme Court to sort, eventually ruling to reinstate Parliament and demand the vote be held.

Khan has won international praise for his handling of the COVID pandemic opting for so called "smart lockdowns" where outbreaks occurred rather than countrywide closures that helped protect some industries like the construction sector. His reputation for fighting corruption has brought a record \$21 billion in deposits from overseas Pakistanis.

But he has not been able to overcome an increasingly strained relationship with the army, which has ruled Pakistan directly for more than half its 75-year history and indirectly from the sidelines when civilian governments ruled.

Khan's opponents say the army helped him win the 2018 elections after it had fallen out with Nawaz Sharif, who was convicted of corruption after being named in the so-called Panama Papers. These papers are a collection of leaked secret financial documents showing how some of the world's richest hide their money and involving a global law firm based in Panama.

Pakistan's Supreme Court disqualified Sharif from holding office. He lives in London in self-imposed exile after being convicted in a Pakistani court of corruption. He was sentenced to 10 years in jail.

Fissures in Khan's relationship with the army began last November after he squabbled with the powerful Army Chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa over the appointment of the new intelligence chief.

Last weekend, Bajwa appeared to distance himself from Khan's anti-U.S. attacks saying Pakistan wants good relations with Washington, its largest export trading partner and with China. He condemned Russia's war in Ukraine.

## **Analysis: War, economy could weaken Putin's place as leader**

By JOHN DANISZEWSKI Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — With the Russian military in retreat from around Kyiv and facing condemnation for brutal tactics, harsh political repression at home and the economy buffeted by Western sanctions, adversaries and allies alike are raising the same question about President Vladimir Putin: Can he hold onto power?

The answer: For now, but maybe not forever.

After 22 years in power, Putin has built a powerful phalanx of loyalists who surround him, both in the Russian military and the secret services. He also has significant support among the Russian people, who are steeped in pro-Putin propaganda through the Russian leader's almost total control of television and other mass communication. Even today, many Russians view his leadership as having delivered greater prestige, prosperity and stability for the country over two decades.

This edifice of protection, the vast wealth Putin controls and the lack of any significant history of palace coups in Russia make either of the obvious means of removing Putin — a military mutiny or a mass popular "color" revolution — almost inconceivable right now.

Yet all strongman states are inherently vulnerable to the unforeseen — especially when they become deaf to the society around them. Just ask Hosni Mubarak.

"For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power," declared President Joe Biden of Putin last month in Poland. It was an unscripted but heartfelt comment as the bloodletting in Ukraine has mounted.

The 69-year-old Putin is up for re-election in 2024, and changes in the Russian constitution conceivably would allow him to remain president until 2036. But the imprisonment of Russia's best-known opposition

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 50 of 87

figure, Alexei Navalny, is just one sign that Putin is not confident enough of his popularity to submit to an actual democratic test.

While there can be no credible polling in a country now effectively under martial law, the number of Russians informed and courageous enough to protest against the war in Ukraine so far has numbered in the thousands, not the hundreds of thousands.

Tens of thousands of affluent citizens, intellectuals and political critics have abandoned Russia rather than remain under the tight controls Putin has imposed, finding escape in Istanbul, Tbilisi or cities in the West. This brain drain no doubt will hurt Russia in the future. But at the moment, their departure removes a possible nexus of opposition from the society.

Of course, history is unpredictable. Few anticipated the rapid dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. If Russian casualties in Ukraine are as high as has been reported — 15,000 or more dead and three times that wounded in the space of six weeks — those results eventually will begin filtering through the society in spite of official censorship.

Arguably, the USSR's fate was sealed in 1986 after its then-leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, loosened the Communist Party's iron grip on information and set sights on the restructuring of the Soviet Union's stagnating economy in order to better compete with the West. That was the year of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, when the Politburo — after initially trying to cover up the disaster — was forced to disclose it to the Soviet public. The Soviet war in Afghanistan, meanwhile, had turned into a quagmire, leading to withdrawal in 1988-89.

In 1988, when Polish workers loyal to the independent Solidarity union movement launched a series of strikes in coal mines and shipyards, Gorbachev signaled that he would not intervene in one of the Soviet Union's key satellite states. Then-Polish leader Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, whose 1981 imposition of martial law had led that country nowhere, opted instead to open up talks with the strikers' leader, Lech Walesa. The result: partly democratic elections.

That in turn set in motion a series of dominoes within the Eastern European countries, with Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Bulgaria, Romania and Albania all seeking to escape Soviet dominance and Communist rule. Before long, the fever had spread to the Baltic countries that were part of the Soviet Union itself, and nationalist emotions flared across the union.

Hardliners in Moscow who had seen enough attempted a coup against Gorbachev, but they were too late. That quickly was overturned by the popular outpouring of support led by Boris Yeltsin. On Dec. 31, 1991, both Gorbachev and the Soviet Union had been swept aside when the Soviet Union ended.

Putin, at the time an intelligence agent in East Germany, lived through the events and has drawn appropriate conclusions to maintain control now. Even before the war in Ukraine, he worked to shape public opinion by portraying the Ukrainians as Nazis who threatened Russia. Then, he clamped down on independent media organizations and the few remaining civil society groups.

More recently, he has imposed draconian anti-media laws that ban telling the Russia public anything about the war that conflicts with the Kremlin's chosen narrative about the "special military operation." Dissenters and doubters have been branded as scum and gnats, worthy only to be spat out.

Aside from Gorbachev, the sole Soviet leader to be removed was Nikita Khrushchev, whose 11 years in power ended in 1964.

He was forced out by his closest associates in the Communist Party. Disturbed by a series of disastrous economic decisions, a failed initiative to install nuclear weapons in Cuba and the signs that Khrushchev intended to build a cult of personality, fellow members of the Communist Presidium denounced him in a closed meeting while he was away.

When he returned, realizing that he had lost all support, Khrushchev agreed to step aside on fictional grounds of ill health. He soon was rendered a nonperson within the Soviet Union, as his successor Leonid Brezhnev assumed the leadership. But again, Khrushchev's bloodless removal was unique.

Could something like that happen to Putin as economic conditions worsen, or if the Ukrainian invasion is a disaster for Russia?

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 51 of 87

Unlike the Soviet Union, there is little in the way of an institutional party structure that could intervene to topple him. Putin has cronies, yes men, and a coterie of "siloviki" — people of power awash in hard-nosed nationalist thinking of the FSB and military — none of whom so far dare to show the least independence from Putin's Ukraine war "project."

Yet losses on the battlefield have already led to an apparent paring-down of military goals, angering and disappointing some anti-Ukraine pundits on Russian TV.

While Putin's coterie has every incentive to stay close for the time being or risk losing privileges and wealth, if the war in Ukraine drags on for months or years, and Putin's adventure becomes the mammoth disaster that it appears to be so far, it is almost certain that cracks will emerge.

Absent Russia's total victory over Ukraine, it already is difficult to imagine the world going back to business as usual with Vladimir Putin. He could find himself boxed into a grinding, open-ended conflict on his border and facing a need to impose more and more repression at home to stifle dissent in a population paying the economic consequences of the invasion.

Aging leaders rarely last forever or have the luxury to leave office on their own terms. Whether it is by elections, revolt or an internal mutiny, the long days of Putin's rule may well be numbered.

## **The AP Interview: Zelenskyy seeks peace despite atrocities**

By ADAM SCHRECK and MSTYSLAV CHERNOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday that he is committed to pressing for peace despite Russian attacks on civilians that have stunned the world, and he renewed his plea for more weapons ahead of an expected surge in fighting in the country's east.

He made the comments in an interview with The Associated Press a day after at least 52 people were killed in a strike on a train station in the eastern city of Kramatorsk, and as evidence of civilian killings came to light after Russian troops failed to seize the capital where he has hunkered down, Kyiv.

"No one wants to negotiate with a person or people who tortured this nation. It's all understandable. And as a man, as a father, I understand this very well," Zelenskyy said. But "we don't want to lose opportunities, if we have them, for a diplomatic solution."

Wearing the olive drab that has marked his transformation into a wartime leader, he looked visibly exhausted yet animated by a drive to persevere. He spoke to the AP inside the presidential office complex, where windows and hallways are protected by towers of sandbags and heavily armed soldiers.

"We have to fight, but fight for life. You can't fight for dust when there is nothing and no people. That's why it is important to stop this war," Zelenskyy said.

Russian troops that withdrew from northern Ukraine are now regrouping for what is expected to be an intensified push in the eastern Donbas region, including the besieged port city of Mariupol that Ukrainian fighters are striving to defend.

The president said those defenders are tying up "a big part of the enemy forces," characterizing the battle to hold Mariupol as "the heart of the war" right now.

"It's beating. We're fighting. We're strong. And if it stops beating, we will be in a weaker position," he said.

Zelenskyy said he is confident Ukrainians would accept peace despite the horrors they have witnessed in the more than six-week-long war.

Those included gruesome images of bodies of civilians found in yards, parks and city squares and buried in mass graves in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha after Russian troops withdrew. Ukrainian and Western leaders have accused Moscow of war crimes.

Russia has falsely claimed that the scenes in Bucha were staged. It also put the blame on Ukraine for the attack on the train station in Kramatorsk as thousands of people rushed to flee ahead of an expected Russian offensive.

Despite hopes for peace, Zelenskyy acknowledged that he must be "realistic" about the prospects for a swift resolution given that negotiations have so far been limited to low-level talks that do not include Russian President Vladimir Putin.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 52 of 87

Zelenskyy displayed a palpable sense of resignation and frustration when asked whether the supplies of weapons and other equipment his country has received from the United States and other Western nations were enough to turn the tide of the war.

"Not yet," he said, switching to English for emphasis. "Of course it's not enough."

Still, he noted that there has been increased support from Europe and said deliveries of U.S. weapons have been accelerating.

Just this week, neighboring Slovakia, a European Union member, donated its Soviet-era S-300 air defense system to Ukraine in response to Zelenskyy's appeal to help "close the skies" to Russian warplanes and missiles.

Some of that support has come through visits by European leaders.

After meeting Zelenskyy in Kyiv earlier Saturday, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer said he expects more EU sanctions against Russia even as he defended his country's opposition to cutting off deliveries of Russian natural gas.

The U.S., EU and United Kingdom responded to the images from Bucha with more sanctions, including ones targeting Putin's adult daughters. While the EU went after the Russian energy sector for the first time by banning coal, it has so far failed to agree on cutting off the much more lucrative oil and natural gas that is funding Putin's war chest. Europe relies on those supplies to generate electricity, fill fuel tanks and keep industry churning.

U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson also made an unannounced visit to meet Zelenskyy, with his office saying they discussed Britain's "long-term support."

In Kyiv on Friday, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented Ukraine's leader with a questionnaire marking the first step for applying for EU membership. The head of the bloc's executive arm said the process for completing the questionnaire could take weeks — an unusually fast turnaround — though securing membership would take far longer.

Zelenskyy turned introspective when asked what impact the pace of arms deliveries had for his people and whether more lives could have been saved if the help had come sooner.

"Very often we look for answers in someone else, but I often look for answers in myself. Did we do enough to get them?" he said of the weapons. "Did we do enough for these leaders to believe in us? Did we do enough?"

He paused and shook his head.

"Are we the best for this place and this time? Who knows? I don't know. You question yourself," he said.

## **Zelenskyy: Russian aggression not limited to Ukraine alone**

By ADAM SCHRECK and CARA ANNA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia is targeting all of Europe with its invasion of Ukraine, and stopping Moscow's aggression is essential for the security of all democracies, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said as Russian forces prepared for battle in the east of his country.

Addressing the "free people of a brave country," Zelenskyy said in a late night video message to Ukrainians that Russia's war aim "was not intended to be limited to Ukraine alone" and the "entire European project is a target."

"That is why it is not just the moral duty of all democracies, all the forces of Europe, to support Ukraine's desire for peace," he said. "This is, in fact, a strategy of defense for every civilized state."

His address came as civilians continued to flee eastern parts of the country before an expected onslaught and emergency workers searched for survivors in towns north of Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, that are no longer occupied by Russian forces.

Russia has pulled its troops from the northern part of the country and refocused on the eastern Donbas region, where Moscow-backed separatists have fought Ukrainian troops for eight years and controlled some territory before the war, now in its 46th day.

Western military analysts said an arc of territory in eastern Ukraine was under assault, from Kharkiv —

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 53 of 87

Ukraine's second-largest city — in the north to Kherson in the south. Newly released Maxar Technologies satellite imagery collected Friday showed an 8-mile (13-kilometer) convoy of military vehicles headed south to the Donbas through the town of Velykyi Burluk.

However, Western assessments expressed increasing confidence in the ability of Ukraine's defenders to repel Russian assaults, portraying Russia's troops as suffering from low morale and mounting casualties.

Britain's Defense Ministry said Sunday that the Russian military was seeking to respond to mounting losses by boosting troop numbers with personnel who have been discharged from military service since 2012.

In an update on Twitter, the ministry also said that the Russian military's efforts to "generate more fighting power" also include trying to recruit from Trans-Dniester, a breakaway region in Moldova that borders Ukraine.

Russia-backed separatists in eastern Moldova took up arms in 1992 to establish Trans-Dniester, which is not internationally recognized and where Russia maintains some 1,500 troops.

Several European leaders have made efforts to show solidarity with battle-scarred Ukraine. In his video address, Zelenskyy thanked the leaders of Britain and Austria for their visits to Kyiv on Saturday and pledges of further support.

He also thanked the European Commission president and Canada's prime minister for a global fundraising event that brought in more than 10 billion euros (\$11 billion) for the millions of Ukrainians who have fled their homes.

Zelenskyy repeated his call for a complete embargo on Russian oil and gas, which he called the sources of Russia's "self-confidence and impunity." Some European countries depend heavily on imported Russian energy.

"Freedom does not have time to wait," Zelenskyy said. "When tyranny begins its aggression against everything that keeps the peace in Europe, action must be taken immediately."

In an interview with The Associated Press inside his heavily guarded presidential office complex, Zelenskyy said he was committed to negotiating a diplomatic end to the war even though Russia has "tortured" Ukraine.

He also acknowledged that peace likely will not come quickly. Talks so far have not included Russian President Vladimir Putin or other top officials.

"We have to fight, but fight for life. You can't fight for dust when there is nothing and no people. That's why it is important to stop this war," the president said.

Ukrainian authorities have accused Russia forces of committing war crimes against thousands of civilians during the invasion, including airstrikes on hospitals, a missile attack that killed 52 people at a train station Friday and shooting residents of towns in the north at close range.

Graphic evidence of civilian slayings emerged after Russian forces withdrew from Bucha, and firefighters were searching buildings in Borodyanka, another settlement outside Kyiv. Russia has denied engaging in war crimes and falsely claimed that the scenes in Bucha were staged.

Ukrainian authorities have said they expect to find more mass killings once they reach the southern port city of Mariupol, which is also in the Donbas and has been subjected to a monthlong blockade and intense fighting. The city's location on the Sea of Azov is critical to establishing a land bridge from the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia seized from Ukraine eight years ago.

Ukrainian officials have pleaded with Western powers almost daily to send more arms and further punish Moscow with sanctions, including the exclusion of Russian banks from the global financial system and a total EU embargo on Russian gas and oil.

During his visit Saturday, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer said he expects more EU sanctions against Russia, but defended his country's opposition so far to cutting off deliveries of Russian gas.

A package of sanctions imposed this week "won't be the last one," the chancellor said, acknowledging that "as long as people are dying, every sanction is still insufficient." Austria is militarily neutral and not a member of NATO.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's visit came a day after the U.K. pledged an additional 100 million pounds (\$130 million) in high-grade military equipment. Johnson also confirmed further economic sup-

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 54 of 87

port, guaranteeing an additional \$500 million in World Bank lending to Ukraine, taking Britain's total loan guarantee to up to \$1 billion.

In the interview with AP, Zelenskyy noted the increased support but expressed frustration when asked if weapons and equipment Ukraine has received from the West is sufficient to shift the war's outcome. "Not yet," he said, switching to English for emphasis. "Of course it's not enough."

## Living with COVID: Experts divided on UK plan as cases soar

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — For many in the U.K., the pandemic may as well be over.

Mask requirements have been dropped. Free mass testing is a thing of the past. And for the first time since spring 2020, people can go abroad for holidays without ordering tests or filling out lengthy forms.

That sense of freedom is widespread even as infections soared in Britain in March, driven by the milder but more transmissible omicron BA.2 variant that's rapidly spreading around Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere.

The situation in the U.K. may portend what lies ahead for other countries as they ease coronavirus restrictions.

France and Germany have seen similar spikes in infections in recent weeks, and the number of hospitalizations in the U.K. and France has again climbed — though the number of deaths per day remains well below levels seen earlier in the pandemic.

In the U.S., more and more Americans are testing at home, so official case numbers are likely a vast undercount. The roster of those newly infected include actors and politicians, who are tested regularly. Cabinet members, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Broadway actors and the governors of New Jersey and Connecticut have all tested positive.

Britain stands out in Europe because it ditched all mitigation policies in February, including mandatory self-isolation for those infected. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's conservative government is determined to stick to its "living with COVID" plan, but experts disagree on whether the country is coping well.

Some scientists argue it's the right time to accept that "living with COVID" means tolerating a certain level of disruption and deaths, much like we do for seasonal flu. Others believe that Britain's government lifted restrictions too quickly and too soon. They warned that deaths and hospital admissions could keep rising because more people over 55 — those who are most likely to get seriously ill from COVID-19 — are now getting infected despite high levels of vaccination.

Hospitals are again under strain, both from patients with the virus and huge numbers of staff off sick, said National Health Service medical director Stephen Powis.

"Blinding ourselves to this level of harm does not constitute living with a virus infection — quite the opposite," said Stephen Griffin, a professor in medicine at the University of Leeds. "Without sufficient vaccination, ventilation, masking, isolation and testing, we will continue to 'live with' disruption, disease and sadly, death, as a result."

Others, like Paul Hunter, a medicine professor at the University of East Anglia, are more supportive of the government's policies.

"We're still not at the point where (COVID-19) is going to be least harmful ... but we're over the worst," he said. Once a high vaccination rate is achieved there is little value in maintaining restrictions such as social distancing because "they never ultimately prevent infections, only delay them," he argued.

Britain's official statistics agency estimated that almost 5 million U.K. residents, or 1 in 13, had the virus in late March, the most it had reported. Separately, the REACT study from London's Imperial College said its data showed that the country's infection levels in March were 40% higher than the first omicron peak in January.

Infection rates are so high that airlines had to cancel flights during the busy two-week Easter break because too many workers were calling in sick.

France and Germany have seen similar surges as restrictions eased in most European countries. More

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 55 of 87

than 100,000 people in France were testing positive every day despite a sharp dropoff in testing, and the number of virus patients in intensive care rose 22% over the past week.

President Emmanuel Macron's government, keen to encourage voter turnout in April elections, is not talking about any new restrictions.

In Germany, infection levels have drifted down from a recent peak. But Health Minister Karl Lauterbach backed off a decision to end mandatory self-isolation for infected people just two days after it was announced. He said the plan would send a "completely wrong" signal that "either the pandemic is over or the virus has become significantly more harmless than was assumed in the past."

In the U.S., outbreaks at Georgetown University and Johns Hopkins University are bringing back mask requirements to those campuses as officials seek out quarantine space.

Across Europe, only Spain and Switzerland have joined the U.K. in lifting self-isolation requirements for at least some infected people.

But many European countries have eased mass testing, which will make it much harder to know how prevalent the virus is. Britain stopped distributing free rapid home tests this month.

Julian Tang, a flu virologist at the University of Leicester, said that while it's important to have a surveillance program to monitor for new variants and update the vaccine, countries cope with flu without mandatory restrictions or mass testing.

"Eventually, COVID-19 will settle down to become more endemic and seasonal, like flu," Tang said. "Living with COVID, to me, should mimic living with flu."

Cambridge University virologist Ravindra Gupta is more cautious. Mortality rates for COVID-19 are still far higher than seasonal flu and the virus causes more severe disease, he warned. He would have preferred "more gentle easing of restrictions."

"There's no reason to believe that a new variant would not be more transmissible or severe," he added.

## Poland-Ukraine ties seen as target of Russian disinformation

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Days before Poland's Independence Day in November, vandals painted the blue-and-yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag on monuments in Krakow. The vandalism, which took place as Russia massed troops near Ukraine's border, looked as if Ukrainians were defacing memorials to Polish national heroes.

Yet some clues suggested otherwise.

The flag's colors were reversed, with the yellow on top of the blue and one offensive message was in an unnatural mix of Russian and Ukrainian. Though prosecutors are still investigating, Polish and Ukrainian authorities believe it was most likely a Russian-inspired attempt to trigger ethnic hostility between Ukrainians and Poles.

Polish and Ukrainian authorities have for years accused Russia of trying to provoke hostility between their neighboring nations as part of a broader effort to divide and destabilize the West — and the concerns have gained greater urgency since Russia invaded Ukraine.

Poland and Ukraine are neighbors and allies but they share a difficult history of oppression and bloodshed, and those historical traumas sometimes rise to the surface.

Poland has also accepted large numbers of Ukrainian refugees, creating fears that could become another wedge issue that Russia could exploit.

"The Russian efforts to sow divisions between the Poles and Ukrainians, particularly by means of exploiting historical issues, are as old as time," said Stanislaw Zaryn, the spokesman for Poland's security services.

"Russia has redoubled them since the war began," he said. "And they are more dangerous now because the war is going on and it can affect more people than before."

Reacting to the November incident, the Ukrainian Embassy in Warsaw immediately denounced it as "shameful" and "a provocation aimed at harming the good neighborly relations between Ukraine and Poland."

More than 2.5 million Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Poland since the war began, and while some

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 56 of 87

move on to other countries more than half have remained. Poles have reacted with an outpouring of help and goodwill and the government has extended to the Ukrainians the same rights to education and health care that Poles have.

Never Again, an anti-racism association in Poland, has documented several attempts to stoke aversion to the Ukrainian refugees and even to openly justify Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion. In some cases those behind the messages are far-right Polish activists or politicians with pro-Kremlin views, according to a report the organization published Thursday.

"These groups do not enjoy widespread public support, but they do their best to make Poles and Ukrainians quarrel, spread hateful content, conspiracy theories and false information, primarily in the internet space," it said.

Larysa Lacko, an expert on countering disinformation at NATO, said Russia is known to exploit refugees as a wedge issue because it touches on the economy, race and other sensitive issues, and that she has also observed Russian "disinformation talking about historical grievances."

Western Ukraine was once under Polish rule, with Ukrainians largely subservient to a Polish landowning class.

Resentments erupted in ethnic bloodshed during World War II, when the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, a nationalist military formation, slaughtered tens of thousands of Poles in the Nazi-occupied Polish regions of Volhynia and Eastern Galicia.

Poland also has a difficult history with Moscow. Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union carved up Poland at the start of World War II in 1939, invading and occupying the country based on a secret clause in the notorious Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Poles suffered atrocities inflicted by both occupying states. The Nazis set up death camps and concentration camps where they murdered Jews and they killed many other Polish citizens as well. Meanwhile, the Soviets sent some Poles to Siberia and murdered 22,000 Polish officers in the Katyn massacres of 1940.

Even after the war, Poland was forced to live under Moscow's oppressive control for the decades of the Cold War.

It still stings Poles to remember the Soviet Union denied the truth of the Katyn killings for decades, forbidding Poles from publicly commemorating the victims. When the Polish wartime government-in-exile asked the International Red Cross to investigate the Nazi disclosures of the Soviet crimes, Moscow smeared the Polish leaders as "Fascist collaborators" — much as they have falsely accused Ukraine today of being a Nazi state.

Some Poles, especially those who lived through the war, remember those times and carry a lingering hostility to both Russians and Ukrainians.

One false claim Polish authorities say Russians are spreading is that Poland seeks to reclaim Lviv and other territory in western Ukraine that once was Polish. "Those claims are untrue," the Polish Foreign Ministry said in a series of tweets seeking to debunk false claims. "Poland will never accept the annexation of any territory belonging to an independent state."

Another is that Poland, a NATO ally hosting thousands of U.S. troops, is working to set the West against Russia.

That claim was made recently by former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, the current deputy chairman of the Russian security council.

"Now the interests of the citizens of Poland have been sacrificed due to the Russophobia of mediocre politicians and their puppeteers from across the ocean with clear signs of senile insanity," Medvedev wrote recently on Telegram, a social media app popular in Russia and Ukraine.

Zaryn, the Polish security services spokesman, also pointed to a Polish Facebook page called "A Ukrainian is NOT my brother," whose posts call on followers not to forget the Ukrainian massacres of Poles in the 1940s.

The page was created less than a month after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and has nearly 55,000 followers. In recent weeks posts have criticized Polish authorities for their strong sup-



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 57 of 87

port for Ukraine.

Zaryn said evidence points to it being run by a woman with ties to a pro-Kremlin party, Zmiana, in Poland. The former leader of the party, Mateusz Piskorski, has worked for Russian news outlets RT and Sputnik and has been charged with espionage for Russia and China.

Poland's government has been taking steps to protect itself, with public warnings about the disinformation attempts and expulsions of dozens of suspected Russian agents and one arrest.

Days after Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, Polish authorities arrested a man they accused of being an agent of the Russian military intelligence agency, GRU, in Przemysl, a key entry points for Ukrainian refugees, as he sought to cross into Ukraine.

In late March, Poland ordered the expulsion of 45 suspected Russian intelligence officers they accused of using diplomatic status as a cover to operate in the country.

"The illegal activities of these diplomats can also pose a threat to those people who left their country to flee the war and found protection in our country," Foreign Ministry spokesman Lukasz Jasina said.

At a moment of huge solidarity in Poland and elsewhere with Ukrainians, disinformation is limited in its impact, argued Lacko, the NATO expert working to counter disinformation.

"Given the atrocities on the ground, it's harder to fall into these sorts of traps," she said.

But officials in Poland say they have to remain on guard, especially if the number of refugees grows, creating the potential for more social anxieties that can be exploited.

## India extends COVID-19 booster shots to all adults

NEW DELHI (AP) — India began offering booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine to all adults on Sunday but limited free shots at government centers to front-line workers and people over age 60.

The doses, which India is calling a "precautionary" shot instead of a booster, are available to people nine months after they receive their second jab, the Health Ministry said in a statement Friday. Those outside the two priority categories will need to pay for the shots at privately run facilities, the ministry said.

Unlike other countries, where many people receive a different vaccine as a booster, most Indians have received the same type — in most cases the AstraZeneca vaccine produced by India's Serum Institute, the world's largest vaccine maker. It accounts for nearly 90% of all doses that have been administered in India, even though emergency approvals have been given for eight vaccines.

On Saturday, the Serum Institute of India said it has cut the price of its AstraZeneca vaccine from \$7.90 a dose to \$2.96 for private hospitals.

India has so far vaccinated about 96% of those aged 15 years and older with at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose, while about 83% have received both shots, according to official data.

India's booster program started in January when healthcare and front-line workers along with people over age 60 with health problems were allowed to receive shots.

India has recorded a steep decline in coronavirus cases in recent weeks, with the Health Ministry reporting 1,054 cases in the latest 24 hours.

## Pakistan's embattled PM ousted in no-confidence vote

By KATHY GANNON and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's political opposition toppled Prime Minister Imran Khan in a no-confidence vote in Parliament early Sunday after several political allies and a key party in his ruling coalition deserted him.

The opposition, which spans the political spectrum from leftists to religious radicals, will form a new government. The head of one of the largest parties, a brother of disgraced former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, is likely to take over as prime minister if confirmed in a vote Monday.

Anticipating his loss, Khan, who charged the opposition colluded with the United States to unseat him, has called on his supporters to stage rallies nationwide on Sunday. Khan's options are limited, though.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 58 of 87

Should he see a big turnout in his support, he may try to keep the momentum of street protests as a way to pressure Parliament to hold early elections.

Khan earlier had tried to sidestep the vote by dissolving Parliament and calling early elections but a Supreme Court ruling ordered the vote to go ahead.

The vote comes amid cooling relations between Khan and Pakistan's powerful military, which many of his political opponents allege helped him come to power in general elections in 2018. The military has directly ruled Pakistan for more than half of its 75 years and wields considerable power over civilian governments.

In seeking Khan's ouster, the opposition had accused him of economic mismanagement as inflation soars and the Pakistani rupee plummets in value. The vote caps months of political turmoil and a constitutional crisis that required the Supreme Court to step in.

In an impassioned speech Friday, Khan doubled down on his accusations that his opponents colluded with the United States to unseat him over his foreign policy choices, which often seemed to favor China and Russia and defied the U.S.

Khan said Washington opposed his Feb. 24 meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin. The meeting took place hours after Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, launching a devastating war in the heart of Europe.

Ahead of the vote, a member of Khan's Cabinet referred to an earlier claim by Khan that Pakistani diplomats in Washington were told by a senior U.S. official that relations would improve if Khan was ousted.

Human rights minister Shireen Mazari told Parliament that the purported memo by the U.S. official stated that "all would be forgiven" if Khan was out of power. She went on to ask: "Forgiven for what? What is our sin?"

The U.S. State Department has denied any involvement in Pakistan's internal politics. Deputy State Department spokeswoman Jalina Porter told reporters on Friday there was "absolutely no truth to these allegations."

Still, Khan urged his supporters to take to the streets, particularly the youth who have been the backbone of his support since the former cricket star turned conservative Islamist politician came to power in 2018. He said they needed to protect Pakistan's sovereignty and oppose alleged U.S. dictates.

"You have to come out to protect your own future. It is you who have to protect your democracy, your sovereignty and your independence. ... This is your duty," he said. "I will not accept an imposed government."

Khan's allegations of U.S. involvement are likely to resonate with many in Pakistan, says Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Washington-based Wilson Center.

"Khan's conspiracy allegations will resonate in a country where there's a tendency to ascribe the worst possible motives to U.S. policy, especially because there is a past history of U.S. meddling in Pakistani politics," said Kugelman.

Khan's allegations of U.S. involvement in attempts to oust him also exploit a deep-seated mistrust among many in Pakistan of U.S. intentions, particularly following 9/11.

Washington has often berated Pakistan for doing too little to fight Islamic militants, even as thousands of Pakistanis have died at their hands and the army has lost more than 5,000 soldiers. Pakistan has been accused of aiding Afghanistan's Taliban insurgents while also being asked to bring them to the peace table.

The no-confidence vote loss for Khan brings to power some unlikely partners.

Among them is a radically religious party that runs scores of religious schools. The Jamiat-e-Ulema-Islam, or Assembly of Clerics, teaches a deeply conservative brand of Islam in its schools. Many of Afghanistan's Taliban and Pakistan's own homegrown violent Taliban graduated from JUI schools.

The largest among the opposition parties — the Pakistan People's Party, led by the son of slain former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, and the Pakistan Muslim League — have been tainted by allegations of widespread corruption.

Pakistan Muslim League leader and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was convicted of corruption after being named in the so-called Panama Papers. That's a collection of leaked secret financial docu-

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 59 of 87

ments showing how some of the world's richest hide their money and involving a global law firm based in Panama. Sharif was disqualified by Pakistan's Supreme Court from holding office. The new prime minister is expected to be Sharif's brother Shahbaz Sharif after a vote for the new prime minister is held in Parliament on Monday.

"This would be the first time in Pakistan's history that a no-confidence vote succeeds in ousting a Prime Minister -- the fulfilment of a constitutional process that was far from guaranteed after Khan's attempts to derail the vote," said Elizabeth Threlkeld, Pakistan expert at the U.S.-based The Stimson Center. "That, in itself, is significant, and could give Pakistan something to build on going forward."

## More flee as Ukraine warns of stepped-up Russian attacks

By ADAM SCHRECK and CARA ANNA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Civilian evacuations moved forward in patches of battle-scarred eastern Ukraine on Saturday, a day after a missile strike killed at least 52 people and wounded more than 100 at a train station where thousands clamored to leave before an expected Russian onslaught.

In the wake of the attack in Kramatorsk, several European leaders made efforts to show solidarity with Ukraine, with Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson visiting Kyiv — the capital city that Russia failed to capture and where troops retreated days ago. Johnson met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in a surprise visit in which he pledged new military assistance, including 120 armored vehicles and new anti-ship missile systems.

Zelenskyy noted the increased support in an Associated Press interview, but expressed frustration when asked if weapons and other equipment Ukraine has received from the West is sufficient to shift the war's outcome.

"Not yet," he said, switching to English for emphasis. "Of course it's not enough."

Zelenskyy later thanked Johnson and Nehammer during his nightly video address to the nation. He also thanked the European Commission president and the Canadian prime minister for a global fundraising event that raised more than 10 billion euros (\$11 billion) for Ukrainians who have had to flee their homes. He added that democratic countries are united in working to stop the war. "Because Russian aggression was not intended to be limited to Ukraine alone. ... The entire European project is a target for Russia."

Zelenskyy repeated his call for a complete embargo on Russian oil and gas, which he called the sources of Moscow's "self-confidence and impunity."

More than six weeks after the invasion began, Russia has pulled its troops from the northern part of the country, around Kyiv, and refocused on the Donbas region in the east. Western military analysts said an arc of territory in eastern Ukraine was under Russian control, from Kharkiv — Ukraine's second-largest city — in the north to Kherson in the south. But counterattacks are threatening Russian control of Kherson, according to the Western assessments, and Ukrainian forces are repelling Russian assaults elsewhere in the Donbas.

Ukrainian authorities have called on civilians to get out ahead of an imminent, stepped-up offensive by Russian forces in the east. With trains not running out of Kramatorsk on Saturday, panicked residents boarded buses or looked for other ways to leave, fearing the kind of unrelenting assaults and occupations by Russian invaders that brought food shortages, demolished buildings and death to other cities.

"It was terrifying. The horror, the horror," one resident told British broadcaster Sky, recalling Friday's attack on the train station. "Heaven forbid, to live through this again. No, I don't want to."

Ukraine's state railway company said residents of Kramatorsk and other parts of the Donbas could flee through other train stations. Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said 10 evacuation corridors were planned for Saturday.

Zelenskyy called the train station attack the latest example of war crimes by Russian forces and said it should motivate the West to do more to help his country defend itself.

Russia denied responsibility and accused Ukraine's military of firing on the station to turn blame for civilian casualties on Moscow. A Russian Defense Ministry spokesman detailed the missile's trajectory and

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 60 of 87

Ukrainian troop positions to bolster the argument.

Major Gen. Igor Konashenkov alleged Ukraine's security services were preparing a "cynical staged" media operation in Irpin, another town near Kyiv, intended to attribute civilian casualties to Russian forces — falsely, he said — and to stage the slaying of a fake Russian intelligence team that intended to kill witnesses. The claims could not be independently verified.

Western experts and Ukrainian authorities insisted that Russia attacked the station. Remnants of the rocket had the words "For the children" in Russian painted on it. The phrasing seemed to suggest the missile was sent to avenge the loss or subjugation of children, although its exact meaning remained unclear.

Ukrainian authorities have worked to identify victims and document possible war crimes in the country's north. The mayor of Bucha, a town near Kyiv where graphic evidence of civilian slayings emerged after Russian forces withdrew, said search teams were still finding bodies of people shot at close range in yards, parks and city squares.

Workers unearthed 67 bodies Friday from a mass grave near a church, according to Ukraine's prosecutor general. Russia has falsely claimed that the scenes in Bucha were staged.

Ukrainian and Western officials have repeatedly accused Russian forces of committing atrocities. A total of 176 children have been killed, while 324 more have been wounded, the Prosecutor General's Office said Saturday.

Speaking to AP inside the heavily guarded presidential office complex in Kyiv, Zelenskyy said he is committed to negotiating a diplomatic end to the war even though Russia has "tortured" Ukraine. He also acknowledged that peace likely will not come quickly. Talks so far have not included Russian President Vladimir Putin or other top officials.

"We have to fight, but fight for life. You can't fight for dust when there is nothing and no people. That's why it is important to stop this war," he said.

Ukrainian authorities have said they expect to find more mass killings once they reach the southern port city of Mariupol, which is also in the Donbas and has been subjected to a monthlong blockade and intense fighting.

As journalists who had been largely absent from the city began to trickle back in, new images emerged of the devastation from an airstrike on a theater last month that reportedly killed hundreds of civilians seeking shelter.

Military analysts had predicted for weeks that Russia would succeed in taking Mariupol but said Ukrainian defenders were still putting up a fight. The city's location on the Sea of Azov is critical to establishing a land bridge from the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia seized from Ukraine eight years ago.

Many civilians now trying to evacuate are accustomed to living in or near a war zone because Moscow-backed rebels have been fighting Ukrainian forces since 2014 in the Donbas, a mostly Russian-speaking, industrial region.

Ukrainian officials have pleaded with Western powers almost daily to send more arms and further punish Moscow with sanctions, including the exclusion of Russian banks from the global financial system and a total EU embargo on Russian gas and oil.

Nehammer said during his visit to Kyiv that he expects more EU sanctions against Russia, but he defended his country's opposition so far to cutting off deliveries of Russian gas.

A package of sanctions imposed this week "won't be the last one," the chancellor said, acknowledging that "as long as people are dying, every sanction is still insufficient." Austria is militarily neutral and not a member of NATO.

Johnson's visit came a day after the U.K. pledged an additional 100 million pounds (\$130 million) in high-grade military equipment to Ukraine.

Johnson also confirmed further economic support, guaranteeing an additional \$500 million in World Bank lending to Ukraine, taking Britain's total loan guarantee to up to \$1 billion.

**Scheffler survives wild, windy cold day to lead Masters by 3**

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 61 of 87

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — The harsh cold and relentless wind. The lead late Saturday afternoon at the Masters. All the elements were there for Scottie Scheffler to start feeling the pressure of trying to win his first major at Augusta National.

Scheffler never looked worried until the final hole, and then only briefly.

His lead at four shots, his confidence level high, Scheffler's wild drive to the left of the 18th fairway into the trees didn't bother him nearly as much as the sight of the spotter poking around in the leaves in a desperate search for the golf ball.

"We saw the guy with the flag that always finds the balls kind of panicking," Scheffler said. "I was like, 'Oh, crap. Wonder what's going on there?' Fortunately, they found the ball. And then all I was trying to do was figure out how I was going to get it on the green."

Like everything else this week, Scheffler figured it out.

He took a one-shot penalty, dropped it onto pine straw and then ripped a 3-iron from 240 yards that hit the green and rolled just over the back, leaving him two putts for a bogey that felt much better.

Scheffler had a 1-under 71 — one of only nine scores under par in the third round — that gave him a three-shot lead over Cameron Smith going into Sunday.

Scheffler spent all day fending off the cold wind by slipping on a vest over his layers of clothing after every shot on every hole. Maybe his next wardrobe change will be a green jacket.

Smith had the low round at 68, the only player to break 70, and gave himself another shot at winning the Masters in his first start since his victory in The Players Championship. He was a runner-up to Dustin Johnson at Augusta two years ago.

"Should be a great fight tomorrow," Scheffler said. "Obviously Cam is a tremendous player, and he's got a fantastic short game, and he's coming off a huge win at The Players. Both of us are in good form, so I'm definitely looking forward to the challenge of playing with him tomorrow."

Sungjae Im (71), also a Masters runner-up in 2020, was the only other player within five shots.

Tiger Woods wanted to find a way to get into red numbers and wound up with his worst score ever at the Masters, a 78 that will be remembered for his first four-putt at Augusta National. He also had four three-putts and was 16 shots behind.

"You'd think I'd have figured it out somewhere along the line, but it just didn't happen," he said.

On such a cold day — the wind chill was in the upper 40s most of the day — perhaps this was a warmup for what Scheffler can expect on Sunday at Augusta National, typically the greatest theater of the majors, especially for those seeking their first major.

The last player who failed to hold a lead of three shots or more going into the final round was 21-year-old Rory McIlroy in 2011.

Scheffler looked as though he might turn this into a runaway when he made his fourth birdie of the round on the par-5 eighth and expanded his lead to six shots.

But then a shot from the front bunker on the par-3 12th went over the green. He bounced back with a birdie only to come up well short of the monstrous mound guarding the back right pin on the 14th for bogey, and three-putting the par-5 15th for another bogey.

Even after his best shot of the round, a wedge from 160 yards that rode the right-to-left wind and settled 4 feet away for birdie on the 17th, he ran into trouble off the tee and managed to limit the damage.

"You hate bogeying the last hole, but the way I bogeyed it, it for sure felt like a par," he said.

Scheffler was at 9-under 207.

Sunday will be the first time since a final pairing at a major featured players from the top 10 in the world since the 2015 PGA Championship with Jason Day and Jordan Spieth.

Scheffler and Smith might be the two hottest players in golf, too.

Scheffler has won three of his last five tournaments, all against some of the strongest fields of the year, a run that has elevated the 25-year-old from Dallas to No. 1 in the world.

Smith began the year by taking down the former No. 1 player, Jon Rahm, with a record score to par at

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 62 of 87

Kapalua. His latest feat was to win the next best thing to a major, The Players Championship, last month.

"It just means I can get it done, I guess, when I'm up against the best guys in the world. It's a good feeling to have. It's earned. It's not given to you," Smith said. "So I'm going to have to go out there tomorrow and play really good golf again, probably similar to today. Hopefully, everything just falls into place."

Woods finished as Scheffler was still comfortably ahead, and the five-time Masters champion feels as though he has seen this before. Players hit peak form all the time, and it's especially sweet when that run is in the spring with the Masters on the calendar.

Woods won back-to-back ahead of his Masters victory in 2001. Jordan Spieth won and had a pair of runner-up finishes when he won his green jacket in 2015. Fred Couples won twice and was runner-up twice ahead of his 1992 victory at Augusta.

"We all wish we had that two, three-month window when we get hot, and hopefully majors fall somewhere along in that window. We take care of it in those windows," Woods said. "Scottie seems to be in that window right now."

Charl Schwartzel, who won the Masters in 2011, was trying to keep stride with Smith until he three-putted from about 8 feet for bogey on the 16th and dropped another shot on the 17th, slipping to a 73. He was at 2-under 214 along with Shane Lowry (73).

Justin Thomas (72) and Corey Connors (73) were the only other players under par.

## Juvenile lifer seeks reprieve amid broader push for leniency

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Shortly after Riley Briones Jr. arrived in federal prison, he cut his long, braided hair in a symbolic death of his old self.

As a leader of a violent gang and just shy of 18, Briones drove the getaway car in a robbery turned deadly on the Salt River-Pima Maricopa Indian Community outside Phoenix in 1994. He was convicted of murder and given a mandatory sentence of life without parole.

In prison, he has been baptized a Christian, ministers to other inmates who call him Brother Briones, got his GED and has a spotless disciplinary record, his attorneys say in their latest bid to get the now 45-year-old's sentence cut short.

"He's clearly on the side of the line where he should be walking free," said his attorney, Easha Anand.

The U.S. Supreme Court opened the door for that possibility with a 2012 ruling that said only the rare, irredeemable juvenile offender should serve life in prison. Over the past decade, most of the 39 defendants in federal cases who received that sentence have gotten a reprieve and are serving far fewer years behind bars.

Briones is among those whose life sentences have been upheld. His attorneys recently petitioned the full 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to give Briones another chance to reduce it.

At the same time, more than 60 legal experts and scholars have asked the federal government to cap sentences for juvenile offenders at 30 years, create a committee to review life sentences in the future and reconsider its stance in Briones' case.

Prosecutors in Briones' case have until May to respond to the latest petition. They've previously acknowledged he's improved in prison and ultimately expressed remorse but say that's not worthy of early release because he has minimized his role in the "Eastside Crips Rolling 30s" and its crimes that terrorized Salt River amid a surge of gang violence on Native American reservations in the 1990s.

Briones' prison sentence started in 1997 after he was convicted in the death of Brian Patrick Lindsay, a Northern Arizona University student who was home for the summer and working a solo shift at a Subway restaurant.

Briones drove four other gang members to the restaurant on May 15, 1994, and waited outside. Lindsay was preparing sandwiches when one of the gang members went outside to talk to Briones, came back inside and shot Lindsay in the face. The shooter pumped more bullets into Lindsay as he lay on the floor.

The gang took the food and a bank bag with \$100.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 63 of 87

Prosecutors said the murder was the most egregious of the violent crimes that Briones helped plot and carry out on the reservation about 15 miles (24 kilometers) from Phoenix. But there were others that demonstrated a "murderous, unrepentant and unapologetic attitude," they said, including drive-by shootings and fires set at rival gang members' homes.

Briones also was convicted of arson, tampering with a witness and assault with a dangerous weapon. Three of his co-defendants in Lindsay's death were sentenced to life in prison. One cooperated with authorities and received a lesser term.

Because Briones was a juvenile at the time of the murder, he was eligible for a resentencing after the Supreme Court's 2012 decision in *Miller v. Alabama*. It was part of a series of cases in which the court found minors should be treated differently from adults, partly because of a lack of maturity.

The February letter seeking reform from the Justice Department pointed to statistics that show the median sentence for adults convicted of murder in the federal system is 20 years — nearly half the median for the juvenile offenders. The agency did not respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press.

Briones' case has ping-ponged through courts as laws changed regarding juvenile offenders. A three-judge 9th Circuit panel most recently ruled against Briones, who is enrolled San Carlos Apache and Salt River Pima-Maricopa. The full court could reconsider.

Emails and a phone message left for Lindsay's parents were not returned. In a letter to the court during Briones' 2016 resentencing, Sharyn and Brian Lindsay said the passing of time has done little to mend their hearts.

"Isn't a lifetime without our son enough without having to go through another court proceeding?" they wrote.

They were in the courtroom during the trial when prosecutors played the 911 recording in which Lindsay told dispatchers through a mouthful of blood that he had been shot.

"I can still almost hear that tape," Paul Charlton, one of the prosecutors at the time, recently told The Associated Press. "And if you had been through that trial, if you had seen the callous and remorseless way in which these individuals faced the evidence against them and their lack of remorse at that time, most people would be as I remain today, unsympathetic to Mr. Briones' arguments."

Bennit Hayes, who served time with Briones at the federal prison in Beaumont, Texas, said he believes Briones is a changed man. He said Briones studied intently, worked hard and encouraged others to lead better lives.

"He was the light in the candle that I put up against everything else going forward," said Hayes, whose sentence was commuted by President Barack Obama in 2016.

Briones now is at the federal prison in metropolitan Phoenix, near Carmen Briones' home on the Salt River reservation. She said they keep in contact but haven't seen each other since last May because of pandemic restrictions.

Releasing Riley Briones from prison would mean they could be a family in a more meaningful way, she said. But whatever the 9th Circuit decides, she said it won't change who her husband has become.

"He's still going to continue wherever he's at to minister, to mentor, to be a positive example and give guidance to those who he has contact with," said Carmen Briones, who is Pascua Yaqui. "We've had enough appeals come and go that ... wisdom would tell you just pray and see what happens."

## Police: Arrest made in slaying of girl walking on NYC street

NEW YORK (AP) — A suspect was charged Saturday in the fatal shooting of a teen girl who was walking home from school when she was hit by a stray bullet during a street dispute in New York City.

New York Police Department officials announced the arrest of Jeremiah Ryan on charges of murder, attempted murder and criminal possession of a weapon in connection with Friday's shooting.

Police identified the girl killed in the shooting as 16-year-old Angellyh Yambo. Another 16-year-old girl was hit in the leg, and a 17-year-old boy was wounded in the buttocks. Both are expected to survive.

Prosecutors said Ryan, 17, would have a court appearance either later Saturday or on Sunday. They

declined further comment.

It was not immediately clear if Ryan had an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

The shooting in the Bronx was the latest episode of headline-grabbing violence in the city amid a surge in crime during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Police had said the gunfire appeared to start after Ryan and another person were gesturing at each other across an intersection. The teens who were struck were walking by on the sidewalk headed home from school, police said.

Police were investigating whether the shooting suspect, who had no criminal record, was using a so-called "ghost gun" — homemade firearms that can be built with parts bought online and lack serial numbers normally used to trace them. They said a total of six rounds were fired.

At a news briefing on Saturday, Deputy Police Chief Timothy McCormack expressed dismay over the circumstances of the case.

"We have two families that are completely destroyed right now — our victim's family and our shooter's family," McCormack said. He described the suspect's mother as "a hard-working woman" whose child had "zero police contact" before his arrest.

The shooting happened outside of the South Bronx Educational Campus, which is home to two schools, Mott Haven Village Prep and University Heights Secondary School.

The Department of Education said two of the teens went to Mott Haven. The third teen went to University Prep Charter High School, a short distance away.

Mayor Eric Adams has made fighting crime a priority since taking office Jan. 1. Homicides are down slightly from this time last year, but gun violence overall remains at levels not seen in a decade.

New York City saw shootings drop to modern-era lows from 2012 to 2019, but that progress was partly erased during the pandemic and social unrest of the past two years. Violence still remains at levels far below the city's nadir in the 1990s or even in the decade after the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

## **Police: 3 dead in gun range shooting; 40 weapons stolen**

CHEVEL JOHNSON undefined

ATLANTA (AP) — Police are searching for at least one armed suspect in connection with the killing of the owner of a gun range in Georgia and his wife and grandson, authorities said Saturday.

The Grantville Police Department said via Facebook that the robbery occurred Friday evening. When officers arrived at the scene around 8 p.m., they discovered the bodies of the owner of Lock Stock & Barrel Shooting Range, along with his wife and grandson.

According to WSB-TV, Grantville Police identified the victims as the gun range owner, Thomas Hawk, 75; his wife, Evelyn, 75; and their grandson, Luke, 17.

Police Chief Steve Whitlock said the Hawk family was well-known and well-respected in their small, tight-knit community. The Hawks had operated Lock Stock & Barrel for nearly 30 years. Their grandson was on spring break, helping his grandparents at the shop.

"This is just a shock to everybody in the community," Whitlock told The Associated Press. "We're trying to do the best that we can to figure this out."

Whitlock said investigators believe the robbery and shooting happened around 5:30 p.m. Friday, which is when the range normally closes. He said Hawk's son, Richard, came by the business and was the person who found the victims.

There are no suspects as of early Saturday, and no arrests have been made, he said. Investigators said that as many as 40 guns and the range's surveillance camera were also stolen.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation is investigating, but when contacted Saturday referred all inquiries to Grantville Police. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives was also called in due to the amount of weapons taken. Whitlock said he's grateful for the help from other law enforcement agencies in the investigation.

"We're just a small town, 12 officers. I've been here eight years and have never had to investigate any-



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 65 of 87

thing like this. It's been kind of hard on us. The crime rate is really, really low," he said.

A reward of \$15,000 has been posted for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the killer or killers in the case, according to the ATF Atlanta office's Twitter feed.

"ATF and our law enforcement partners will work tirelessly to bring the killer(s) to justice," ATF Atlanta Field Division Special Agent in Charge Benjamin P. Gibbons said in a statement. "The brutality of these senseless murders along with the fact that these killer(s) have acquired additional firearms makes solving this case our top priority."

A message left with the ATF office in Atlanta was not immediately returned.

Police are asking any witnesses to come forward. Whitlock said they don't have any video evidence to work with right now.

"Anyone having driven by the shooting range during the time frame of 530pm to 630 pm that may have seen vehicles other than a white Ford dually truck and a black Ford expedition are asked to contact the police department," Grantville police said in their Facebook statement.

The shooting range is in rural Coweta County, about 50 miles (about 80 kilometers) southwest of Atlanta.

Coweta County Sheriff Lenn Wood said in a statement on Facebook that the entire community was forever broken by the "senseless and tragic" killings of the Hawk family members.

"I am also fervently praying that God will use our law enforcement community and the Coweta Community," he said, "to bring justice swiftly."

## In outcome of Whitmer case, some see freedom, others danger

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

Outside the Michigan courthouse where a jury did not convict any of the four men charged with planning to kidnap Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a defense lawyer said jurors saw the alleged plot as what it was: Dirty FBI tactics and "rough talk."

The men — who were heard on audio during the trial talking about killing Whitmer, blowing up a bridge and other violence — didn't say anything shocking, attorney Michael Hills said. He noted one of the defense witnesses he considered calling to testify planned to assert that he's "heard worse from pregnant mothers up on the Capitol."

"If I don't like the governor and it's rough talk, I can do that in our country. That's what's beautiful about this country. That's what's great about it," Hills said. "So hurrah, freedom in America. It's still here."

But to others, Friday's outcome following a weeklong trial was a chilling reminder that the political violence that is raging across the U.S. too often goes unpunished. From attacks on social media and elsewhere that disproportionately affect women lawmakers, to the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and the plan to abduct Whitmer, people are increasingly angry and feeling emboldened to act on it, they say.

Whitmer, a Democrat, has blamed former President Donald Trump for stoking anger over COVID-19 restrictions and refusing to condemn right-wing extremists. On Friday, her office said people across the country are experiencing "a normalization" of violence. A Democratic state lawmaker said the threats posed won't be taken seriously "until someone dies."

"The plot to kidnap and kill a governor may seem like an anomaly. But we must be honest about what it really is: the result of violent, divisive rhetoric that is all too common across our country," Whitmer's chief of staff, JoAnne Huls, said in a statement. "There must be accountability and consequences for those who commit heinous crimes. Without accountability, extremists will be emboldened."

Whitmer wasn't a trial witness, didn't attend the trial and has not directly commented on the proceedings, but on Saturday, she alluded to the trial's outcome.

"I have often been asked why the heck do I want to keep doing this job. And after yesterday I'm sure we all have to ask that question maybe once or twice," she said during a speech at the Michigan Democratic Party Endorsement Convention in Detroit. "But here's the reason: Tough times call for tough people and we are going to get through this together."

Four men — Adam Fox, Barry Croft Jr., Brandon Caserta and Daniel Harris — were arrested in October

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 66 of 87

2020. Federal prosecutors said they wanted to kidnap Whitmer because they were angry over pandemic restrictions she imposed, and saw her as a “tyrant” who needed to be removed.

The charges came at a particularly divisive time, with debate raging over the pandemic and just weeks before the 2020 presidential election between Trump and Joe Biden. Armed protests were occurring at the Michigan Capitol and elsewhere in the U.S., and in the streets of many cities, demonstrations over the police killing of George Floyd at times turned violent.

Prosecutors presented evidence at the federal trial in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from undercover agents, an FBI informant and two men who pleaded guilty to the plot. Jurors also read and heard secretly recorded conversations, violent social media posts and chat messages.

Defense attorneys argued that the men were entrapped by the FBI — pulled into an alleged plot they would never have participated in if not for the government and its informants luring them. They painted the men as wannabes who were frequently high and easily influenced, or in one case, a former member of the military who wanted to brush up on firearms training.

Before returning their verdicts, the jury said that after nearly five days of deliberations they could not agree unanimously on all 10 of the charges against the men.

Harris, 24, and Caserta, 33, were found not guilty of conspiracy. Harris also was acquitted of charges related to explosives and a gun.

The jury could not reach verdicts for Fox, 38, and Croft, 46, which means the government can put them on trial again.

U.S. Attorney Andrew Birge said after the verdicts that “We have two defendants that are awaiting trial and we’ll get back to work on that.”

Hills, who defended Caserta, said the outcome was a message to the government that the FBI’s actions were “unconscionable.” He said the federal government should “let it go” rather than take Croft and Fox to trial a second time.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Republican, tweeted after the verdict that the “FBI and DOJ need a complete and total cleansing. ... All the rot must be removed and these agencies must be restored.”

Others were stunned by the jury’s decision, and said it set a dangerous example.

U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell, a Democrat, called for an end to “the hatred and division in this country” and said she is “Deeply concerned that today’s decision in the Whitmer kidnapping trial will give people further license to choose violence and threats.”

Michigan Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist called on elected officials, parents, teachers and others to stand up to “these hateful actions and teach our kids that there is a better way.”

“Our differences must be settled at the ballot box, not through violence,” he said. “We need to be honest and clear about what causes violence by extremists and do all we can to address the root cause of it.”

Michigan state Rep. Laurie Pohutsky, a Democrat, noted on Twitter that a man who threatened to kill her in 2020 was acquitted.

“The next time you ask why we can’t get good people to run for office, consider today’s verdict,” she said, adding, “This won’t be taken seriously until someone dies.”

## In France, a nail-biting election as Macron’s rival surges

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

POISSY, France (AP) — From the market stall outside Paris that she’s run for 40 years, Yvette Robert can see first-hand how soaring prices are weighing on France’s presidential election and turning the first round of voting on Sunday into a nail-biter for incumbent President Emmanuel Macron.

Shoppers, increasingly worried about how to make ends meet, are buying ever-smaller quantities of Robert’s neatly stacked fruits and vegetables, she says. And some of her clients no longer come at all to the market for its baguettes, cheeses and other tasty offerings. Robert suspects that with fuel prices so high, some can no longer afford to take their vehicles to shop.

“People are scared — with everything that’s going up, with prices for fuel going up,” she said Friday as

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 67 of 87

campaigning concluded for act one of the two-part French election drama, held against the backdrop of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Macron, a political centrist, for months looked like a shoo-in to become France's first president in 20 years to win a second term. But that scenario blurred in the campaign's closing stages. The pain of inflation and of pump, food and energy prices that are hitting low-income households particularly hard subsequently roared back as dominant election themes. They could drive many voters Sunday into the arms of far-right leader Marine Le Pen, Macron's political nemesis.

Macron, now 44, trounced Le Pen by a landslide to become France's youngest president in 2017. The win for the former banker who, unlike Le Pen, is a fervent proponent of European collaboration was seen as a victory against populist, nationalist politics, coming in the wake of Donald Trump's election to the White House and Britain's vote to leave the European Union, both in 2016.

In courting voters, Macron has economic successes to point to: The French economy is rebounding faster than expected from the battering of COVID-19, with a 2021 growth rate of 7%, the highest since 1969. Unemployment is down to levels not seen since the 2008 financial crisis. When Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, sparking Europe's worst security crisis since World War II, Macron also got a polling bump, with people rallying around the wartime leader.

But the 53-year-old Le Pen is now a more polished, formidable and savvy political foe as she makes her third attempt to become France's first woman president. And she has campaigned particularly hard and for months on cost of living concerns, capitalizing on the issue that pollsters say is foremost on voters' minds.

Le Pen also pulled off two remarkable feats. Despite her plans to sharply curtail immigration and dial back some rights for Muslims in France, she nevertheless appears to have convinced growing numbers of voters that she is no longer the dangerous, racist nationalist extremist that critics, including Macron, accuse her of being.

She's done that partly by diluting some of her rhetoric and fieriness. She also had outside help: A presidential run by Eric Zemmour, an even more extreme far-right rabble-rouser with repeated convictions for hate speech, has had the knock-on benefit for Le Pen of making her look almost mainstream by comparison.

Secondly, and also stunning: Le Pen has adroitly sidestepped any significant blowback for her previous perceived closeness with Russian President Vladimir Putin. She went to the Kremlin to meet him during her last presidential campaign in 2017. But in the wake of the war in Ukraine, that potential embarrassment doesn't appear to have turned Le Pen's supporters against her. She has called the invasion "absolutely indefensible" and said Putin's behavior cannot be excused "in any way."

At her market stall, Robert says she plans to vote Macron, partly because of the billions of euros (dollars) that his government doled out at the the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to keep people, businesses and France's economy afloat. When food markets closed, Robert got 1,500 euros (\$1,600) a month to tide her over.

"He didn't leave anyone by the side of the road," she says of Macron.

But she thinks that this time, Le Pen is in with a chance, too.

"She has changed the way she speaks," Robert said. "She has learned to moderate herself."

Barring a monumental surprise, both Macron and Le Pen are expected to advance again from the first-round field of 12 candidates, to set up a winner-takes-all rematch in the second-round vote on April 24. Polls suggest that far-left leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon is likely to finish out of the running in third place. Some of France's overseas territories in the Pacific, the Caribbean and South America vote Saturday, before Sunday voting on the French mainland.

When Macron made a campaign stop in Poissy, the town west of Paris where Robert has her stall, in early March, pollsters had him leading Le Pen by double digits. Although a Le Pen victory still appears improbable, much of Macron's advantage has subsequently evaporated. Kept busy by the war in Ukraine, Macron may be paying a price for his somewhat subdued campaign, which made him look aloof to some voters.

Market-goer Marie-Helene Hirel, a 64-year-old retired tax collector, voted Macron in 2017 but said she's too angry with him to do so again. Struggling on her pension with rising prices, Hirel said she is thinking of switching her vote to Le Pen, who has promised fuel and energy tax cuts that Macron says would be

ruinous.

Although Le Pen's "relations with Putin worry me," Hirel said that voting for her would be a way of protesting against Macron and what she perceives as his failure to better protect people from the sting of inflation.

"Now I'm also part of the 'all against Macron camp,'" she said. "He is making fools of us all."

## **S&P downgrade indicates Russia headed for historic default**

By FRANK BAJAK Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The credit ratings agency Standard & Poor's has downgraded its assessment of Russia's ability to repay foreign debt, signaling rising prospects that Moscow will soon default on external loans for the first time in more than a century.

S&P Global Ratings issued the downgrade to "selective default" late Friday after Russia arranged to make foreign bond payments in rubles on Monday when they were due in dollars. It said it didn't expect Russia to be able to convert the rubles into dollars within the 30-day grace period allowed.

S&P said in a statement that its decision was based partly on its opinion that sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine "are likely to be further increased in the coming weeks, hampering Russia's willingness and technical abilities to honor the terms and conditions of its obligations to foreign debtholders."

An S&P spokesperson said a selective default rating is when a lender defaults on a specific payment but makes others on time.

While Russia has signaled that it remains willing to pay its debts, the Kremlin also has warned that it would do so in rubles if its overseas accounts in foreign currencies remain frozen.

Tightened sanctions placed on Russia this week after evidence of alleged war crimes — the killing of civilians in the town of Bucha during Russian military occupation — barred it from using any foreign reserves held in U.S. banks for debt payments.

Russia's finance ministry said Wednesday that it tried to make a \$649 million payment toward two bonds to an unnamed U.S. bank — previously reported as JPMorgan Chase — but that the tightened sanctions prevented the payment from being accepted, so it paid in rubles.

Western sanctions have severely squeezed Russia's economy, and S&P and other ratings agencies had already downgraded its debt to "junk" status, deeming a default highly likely.

Russia has used strict capital controls, other severe measures and proceeds from oil and gas sales to artificially prop up the ruble.

The country has not defaulted on foreign debt since the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, when the Soviet Union emerged. Even in the late 1990s, following the Soviet Union's demise, Russia was able to continue to pay foreign debts with the help of international aid. It did default on domestic debt, however.

## **Steelers QB Dwayne Haskins killed in auto accident**

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Dwayne Haskins was working on a second chapter for his young NFL career. The 24-year-old quarterback was spending time with some teammates with the Pittsburgh Steelers, getting ready to compete for a starting job.

That's when his life was cut short.

Haskins was killed early Saturday morning when he was hit by a dump truck while he was walking on a South Florida highway. Florida Highway Patrol spokeswoman Lt. Indiana Miranda said Haskins was pronounced dead at the scene.

"He was attempting to cross the westbound lanes of Interstate 595 when there was oncoming traffic," Miranda said in an emailed statement.

Miranda didn't say why Haskins was on the highway at the time. The accident caused the highway to be shut down for several hours, and Miranda said it's "an open traffic homicide investigation."

A 2019 first-round draft pick by Washington, Haskins was released by the team after going 3-10 over two seasons. He was signed by Pittsburgh as a developmental QB, but he didn't appear in a game last season.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 69 of 87

Haskins appeared to be in South Florida this week with several teammates, including fellow quarterback Mitch Trubisky, running back Najee Harris and tight end Pat Freiermuth.

Haskins' death sparked an outpouring of grief from multiple corners of the NFL, particularly from former teammates with the Steelers and Commanders.

"I am devastated and at a loss for words with the unfortunate passing of Dwayne Haskins," Steelers coach Mike Tomlin said. "He quickly became part of our Steelers family upon his arrival in Pittsburgh and was one of our hardest workers, both on the field and in our community. Dwayne was a great teammate, but even more so a tremendous friend to so many. I am truly heartbroken.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Kalabrya, and his entire family during this difficult time."

Washington coach Ron Rivera said he was "absolutely heartbroken" to learn of Haskins' death.

"Dwayne was a talented young man who had a long life ahead of him," Rivera said in a release. "This is a very sad time and I am honestly at a loss for words. I know I speak for the rest of our team in saying he will be sorely missed. Our entire team is sending our heartfelt condolences and thoughts and prayers to the Haskins family at this time."

Ohio State posted a photo of Haskins on its Twitter feed, topped by the description "Leader. Legend. Forever a Buckeye."

At Ohio State, Haskins set single-season records for touchdowns passing with 50 and yards passing with 4,831. He was the 2019 Rose Bowl MVP as the Buckeyes went 13-1.

Ohio State coach Ryan Day, who was the quarterbacks coach during Haskins' final season at the school, called Haskins' death "beyond tragic."

"For those who knew him closely, he was much more than a great football player," Day posted on Twitter. "He had a giant heart, old soul and an infectious smile. The Ohio State community and our entire football program are heartbroken."

The Steelers gave Haskins a chance to resurrect his career in January 2021 when they signed him a month after being released by Washington. Humbled by the decision, Haskins stressed he was eager to work hard and absorb as much as he could from Ben Roethlisberger and Mason Rudolph.

Haskins made the roster as the third-stringer but only dressed once, serving as the backup in a tie with Detroit after Roethlisberger was placed into the COVID-19 protocol the night before the game.

"The world lost a great person today," Steelers star T.J. Watt posted on Twitter. "When Dwayne first walked into the locker room I could tell he was an upbeat guy. He was always making people smile, never taking life for granted."

Tomlin and general manager Kevin Colbert both praised Haskins for his improvement since joining the team, and the Steelers re-signed him to a one-year deal as a restricted free agent in March. He was expected to compete with Rudolph and Trubisky at training camp.

"Dwayne meant so much to so many people," Steelers defensive lineman Cameron Heyward posted on Twitter. "His smile was infectious and he was a guy you wanted to be around. We are all in shock about losing him. We are going to miss the heck out of him as well. We lost you way too early. Luckily I got a chance to get to know you. RIP DH."

ESPN was the first to report Haskins had died.

"Devastated," Rudolph said on social media.

## Anxious about refugees, Polish cities reject memorial sirens

By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Anxious about the wellbeing of their Ukrainian refugees, city mayors across Poland are refusing the government's instructions to sound air raid alarm sirens Sunday as part of memorial observances for Poland's 2010 presidential plane crash.

The right-wing central government wants the sirens to go off at 0641 GMT Sunday, the exact time the plane crashed in Russia 12 years ago, killing President Lech Kaczynski and 95 other prominent Poles.

Kaczynski was the twin of Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who is the ruling Law and Justice party's leader and Poland's key politician.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 70 of 87

But city mayors, who represent local governments, are refusing to do that, saying it will be an unnecessary trauma for people — especially children — who recently fled their homes at the sound of air raid sirens and headed to shelters to avoid Russian bombings since it attacked Ukraine on Feb. 24.

More than 2.5 million refugees from Ukraine have sought security in neighboring Poland and are staying at special reception centers or with private people. Many need psychological assistance to deal with their trauma.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki insisted Saturday that the 2010 plane crash was a national tragedy and its victims merit every form of commemoration. He said text messages were being sent to refugees to explain that the sirens mean no danger.

Amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Polish government is reviving its controversial allegation that the crash on April 10, 2010, which killed the president, the first lady and other leading political figures, was a Kremlin assassination plan. Sunday's observances are being given special attention.

But local governments, often run by opposition politicians, say the use of air raid sirens for the anniversary is "extremely irresponsible."

The sirens also bring frightful associations to many Poles who either experienced World War II as small children or watched documentaries of the country's destruction during the war.

"We will not sound the sirens on the anniversary," said Rafal Bruski, mayor of the central city of Bydgoszcz. "I have seen too many children terrified by war."

Bruski said he has grown accustomed to many "unwise" decisions by the current right-wing government "but there are limits to stupidity."

## Jack White marries musician Olivia Jean at Detroit show

DETROIT (AP) — Jack White surprised fans by marrying musician Olivia Jean on stage during his Detroit homecoming show Friday.

The Detroit-born singer, songwriter and producer invited Jean onstage to join his performance and introduced her as his girlfriend.

White asked her to marry him during a rendition of song 'Hotel Yorba' and right before the lyric "let's get married."

Jean, a fellow Detroit native, teared up and said yes, the Detroit Free Press reported. White then carried her offstage.

The two later re-emerged for an encore and married in an onstage ceremony officiated by Ben Swank, a co-founder of White's record label.

Jean is part of the label's garage goth rock band Black Belles, which is on hiatus, and is also signed by his label as a solo artist.

White, who founded the White Stripes, was previously married twice. His Friday show was his first hometown solo show since 2018, and kicked off his Supply Chain Issues Tour and release of his new album "Fear of the Dawn."

## Israeli forces kill Palestinian militant in West Bank raid

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli troops on Saturday raided the hometown of a Palestinian who carried out a deadly shooting in Tel Aviv, sparking a gunbattle in the occupied West Bank that left at least one Palestinian militant dead, according to Israeli and Palestinian accounts.

The arrest raid was the latest in a series of events that have escalated tensions during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Clashes and protests in Jerusalem last year helped spark an 11-day war with Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

In Saturday's raid, the Israeli military said it conducted what it described as a counterterrorism operation in and around the city of Jenin — the area in the northern West Bank where the gunman in Thursday's attack had lived. It said troops were surveying the attacker's home "to examine the potential demolition of the house." Israel often demolishes the homes of Palestinian attackers in a controversial practice that

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 71 of 87

it says deters future attackers but which critics dismiss as collective punishment.

The army said it also conducted an arrest operation on people suspected of militant activity.

During the raids, it said soldiers came under fire. Troops fired back, killing one militant. The Islamic Jihad militant group identified the man as a member.

The army said a second gunman was shot and wounded and taken away for medical treatment. It said the man's weapon was confiscated.

Jenin is considered a stronghold of Palestinian militants. Israeli forces often come under fire when operating in the area. Even the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the occupied West Bank and coordinates with Israel on security matters, appears to have little control.

In Thursday's shooting, a Palestinian gunman opened fire in central Tel Aviv, killing three people. The attacker, identified as Raad Hazem, 28, of Jenin, was later killed by Israeli forces.

It was the fourth deadly attack in Israel by Palestinians in three weeks and came at a time of heightened tensions around the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Two of those attacks were carried out by men from Jenin.

Despite the violence, Israel has been taking steps to ease tensions, including the granting of thousands of work permits to residents of the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip and allowing thousands of Palestinians to enter Jerusalem for Ramadan prayers on Friday.

But on Saturday, Israel announced further restrictions on Jenin and its residents. The measures included banning Arab residents of Israel from entering the city for shopping, halting entry permits to Israel held by Jenin's senior businessmen, and depriving Jenin residents from visiting relatives in Israel as part of Ramadan's goodwill gestures granted to West Bank Palestinians.

## **Feds accused of ignoring asbestos, mold at women's prison**

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A government watchdog has found a "substantial likelihood" the federal Bureau of Prisons committed wrongdoing when it ignored complaints and failed to address asbestos and mold contamination at a federal women's prison in California that has already been under scrutiny for rampant sexual abuse of inmates.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel now wants Attorney General Merrick Garland to step in to investigate the allegations after multiple whistleblower complaints were filed earlier this year. The office detailed its findings in a letter this past week and has asked Garland to submit a report within 60 days.

The whistleblower complaints, filed by union officials at the Federal Correctional Institution in Dublin, California, alleged that senior Bureau of Prisons officials had failed to act to resolve the allegations of workplace contamination. The union had repeatedly complained that correctional officers and other prison workers and inmates were being exposed to potentially hazardous mold and asbestos but says those concerns were ignored.

"Management's failure to address unsafe and dangerous working conditions at FCI Dublin has put the health and safety of both employees and inmates at considerable risk," Dublin union president Edward Canales said. "We look forward to the outcome of this investigation, which we hope will result in the unsafe conditions being remedied and appropriate disciplinary actions being taken against the managers who failed to act."

The Justice Department has already been investigating serious misconduct at Dublin, where five employees — including the former warden — have been charged with sexually abusing inmates. An Associated Press investigation this year revealed a pattern of sexual misconduct and detailed a toxic culture that enabled it to continue for years.

After the AP's investigation was published, whistleblowers at the prison said they were being attacked for speaking up. The Bureau of Prisons launched a task force of 18 senior executives who visited the prison in March to assess the conditions there and work to reform the facility. The agency's director, Michael Carvajal, also visited the prison.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 72 of 87

The Justice Department said Saturday it had received the letter and "appreciates OSC's responsiveness to these concerns." It said the Bureau of Prisons was "addressing concerns raised by staff at Dublin and working to ensure that all facilities are operating under safe, healthy conditions."

In a statement, the Bureau of Prisons said its staff members perform weekly fire, safety and sanitation inspections and staff members are encouraged to report unsafe or unhealth conditions to their supervisors. It said anyone who believes that such a condition exists could report it to the warden, other prison system officials or the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

"All safety concerns reported by staff at Dublin are being addressed," Bureau of Prisons spokesman Emery Nelson said in a statement.

The Office of Special Counsel said that while it found "a substantial likelihood of wrongdoing" based on the complaint that was filed, the referral to Garland does not constitute its final determination. The case remains open until the agency submits its final report, which is then forwarded to President Joe Biden and Congress.

## Jennifer Lopez posts 'special story,' an engagement ring

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jennifer Lopez has an engagement ring on her finger, and Ben Affleck may be the one who put it there.

"So, I have a really exciting and special story to share," a giggling Lopez said in a video posted Friday on her Twitter feed. She said more could be found on the website for her "inner circle," OnTheJLo.com, which requires visitors to sign up.

A video posted there showed an emotional Lopez gazing at the left-hand ring, which held a large green gem that matched her tank top.

Lopez's representatives declined to confirm an engagement, directing inquiries to the actor-singer's online post. A representative for Affleck didn't respond to a request for comment Saturday.

Lopez and Affleck rekindled their romance 17 years after they broke off their engagement in 2004. The pair, who met making the 2003 movie "Gigli," had moved on to other marriages and divorce before going public with their reunion last year.

## Accounts deceivable: Email scam costliest type of cybercrime

By ALAN SUDERMAN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — A shopping spree in Beverly Hills, a luxury vacation in Mexico, a bank account that jumped from \$299.77 to \$1.4 million overnight.

From the outside, it looked like Moe and Kateryna Abourched had won the lottery.

But this big payday didn't come from lucky numbers. Rather, a public school district in Michigan was tricked into wiring its monthly health insurance payment to the bank account of a California nail salon the Abourcheds owned, according to a search warrant application filed by a Secret Service agent in federal court.

The district — and taxpayers — fell victim to an online scam called Business Email Compromise, or BEC for short, police say. The couple deny any wrongdoing and have not been charged with any crimes.

BEC scams are a type of crime where criminals hack into email accounts, pretend to be someone they're not and fool victims into sending money where it doesn't belong. These crimes get far less attention than the massive ransomware attacks that have triggered a powerful government response, but BEC scams have been by far the costliest type of cybercrime in the U.S. for years, according to the FBI — siphoning untold billions from the economy as authorities struggle to keep up.

The huge payoffs and low risks associated with BEC scams have attracted criminals worldwide. Some flaunt their ill-gotten riches on social media, posing in pictures next to Ferraris, Bentleys and stacks of cash.

"The scammers are extremely well organized and law enforcement is not," said Sherry Williams, a director of a San Francisco nonprofit recently hit by a BEC scam.

Losses in the U.S. to BEC scams in 2021 were nearly \$2.4 billion, according to a new report by the FBI.



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 73 of 87

That's a 33% increase from 2020 and more than a tenfold increase from just seven years ago.

And experts say many victims never come forward and the FBI's numbers only show a small fraction of how much money is stolen.

"It's one of the most lucrative things out there," said Shalabh Mohan, chief product officer at Area 1 Security.

In the nail salon case involving Grand Rapids, police say \$2.8 million was stolen. Banks were able to recall about half that amount once the scam was discovered, court records show.

A Secret Service agent said in an affidavit as part of a search warrant application that someone hacked into the email account of one of the school district's human resource employees and sent emails that persuaded a colleague in the finance department to change the bank account where the health insurance payments were sent.

The emails were brief and unfailingly polite. "Please kindly update" the records, one of them said — words the real HR employee would later tell police she never uses, according to the affidavit.

Police tracked the money to the salon's bank account owned by the Abourcheds, the affidavit says. After the theft was detected, Moe Abourched contacted a Grand Rapids police detective and said he'd been fooled by a European woman named "Dora" into accepting the funds and forwarding them to other accounts, according to the affidavit.

The Secret Service agent said Abourched's claims were false and he'd used a similar ruse with police after he received money from a BEC scam targeting a Florida storage company.

Police put the couple under surveillance and in October searched their apartment, offices and BMW, court records show. Police said earlier this year they needed more time to examine the data in the couple's phones and computers.

The Abourcheds' lawyer, Kevin Gres, said his clients have done nothing wrong and no charges should be filed.

"My clients were unwitting victims in this scheme," he said.

BEC scammers use a variety of techniques to hack into legitimate business email accounts and trick employees to send wire payments or make purchases they shouldn't. Targeted phishing emails are a common type of attack, but experts say the scammers have been quick to adopt new technologies, like "deep fake" audio generated by artificial intelligence to pretend to be executives at a company and fool subordinates into sending money.

In the case of Williams, the San Francisco nonprofit director, thieves hacked the email account of the organization's bookkeeper, then inserted themselves into a long email thread, sent messages asking to change the wire payment instructions for a grant recipient, and made off with \$650,000.

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The FBI told her the local U.S. attorney's office won't take her case. She flew to Odessa, Texas, where the bank that initially received the stolen money was located. The money by then was long gone and the local detective was powerless to help. Williams asked her U.S. senators for help and later learned the Secret Service was investigating, but said it hasn't given her any updates.

Crane Hassold, an expert on BEC scams and former cyber analyst with the FBI, has heard of federal prosecutors declining to take BEC cases unless several million dollars were stolen, a minimum threshold that speaks to how out of control the problem is.

"There's so many of them they can't possibly work them all," said Hassold, now director of threat intelligence at Abnormal Security.

Almost every enterprise is vulnerable to BEC scams, from Fortune 500 companies to small towns. Even the State Department got duped into sending BEC scammers more than \$200,000 in grant money meant to help Tunisian farmers, court records show.

The Justice Department has launched months-long operations in recent years that have netted hundreds of arrests worldwide.

"Our message to criminals involved in these types of BEC schemes will remain clear: The FBI's memory

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 74 of 87

and reach is long and wide-ranging, we will relentlessly pursue you no matter where you may be located," said Brian Turner, executive assistant director of the FBI's Criminal, Cyber, Response, and Services Branch.

But security experts say the wave of arrests has had little impact, and the FBI's own numbers show that BEC scams continue to grow at a rapid clip.

"You can arrest 100 of the guys and there's no ripple effect," said Hassold.

Many of those arrested by U.S. authorities are lower-level "money mules," who move stolen money around the banking system until it's out of reach to authorities.

"Mules" don't need hacking skills and come from a variety of backgrounds. A South Florida man, Alfredo Veloso, pleaded guilty in 2019 after prosecutors say he recruited women he met through his business making "kink pornography" videos to be money mules for BEC and other cyber scams.

Sophisticated BEC scams targeting businesses and other organizations started taking off in the mid-2010s. It was also around that time when ransomware attacks — in which hackers break into networks and encrypt data — started to grow in frequency and severity.

For years both BEC scams and ransomware attacks were treated largely as a law enforcement problem. That's still true for BEC attacks, but ransomware is now a key national security concern after a series of disruptive attacks on critical infrastructure like the one last year against the biggest fuels pipeline in the U.S. that led to gas shortages along the East Coast.

The National Security Agency's hackers have taken action to disrupt ransomware operators' networks. The Justice Department set up a ransomware task force to better organize the law enforcement response. And U.S. President Joe Biden has pressed the issue directly with President Vladimir Putin of Russia, where many ransomware operators are located.

Nothing close to those efforts has been deployed against BEC fraud despite the huge financial losses.

"It's a bunch of tiny little silos, and they still haven't figured out a way to have just a single source that goes after these things," said John Wilson, a threat researcher at the cybersecurity firm Agari.

If the U.S. were to launch a whole-of-government response to BEC fraud, it almost certainly would focus heavily on Nigeria.

Nowhere are BEC fraudsters more active than in Africa's most populous nation, where scammers have able to operate almost unchecked for decades. The well-worn Nigerian Prince scam may now be a global punchline, but a new generation is making fortunes through sophisticated BEC fraud.

BEC scammers from Nigeria are glorified in pop songs and show off their wealth on Instagram and Facebook, posing with expensive cars or piles of money.

Ramon Abbas, a well-known Nigerian social media influencer who went by Ray Hushpuppi, had more than 2 million followers on Instagram before he was arrested in Dubai. Abbas' social media posts showed him living a life of total luxury, complete with private jets, ultra-expensive cars and high-end clothes and watches.

"I hope someday I will be inspiring more young people to join me on this path," read one Instagram post by Abbas, who pleaded guilty in the U.S. to international money laundering related to BEC and other cybercrimes last year. His sentencing is currently set for July.

Pete Renals, a threat researcher at Palo Alto's Unit 42, said tech-savvy Nigerian criminals started learning how to use available malware to steal victims' credentials around 2014. As the software changed, the scammers changed too. In 2018, he said, researchers started seeing Nigerian malware being developed in-country by the BEC scammers themselves.

"It does not seem like there's a whole lot slowing them down," he said. They see "no reason to stop."

Obinwanne Okeke was one of Nigeria's best known young entrepreneurs when he was a featured panelist at an event hosted by the prestigious London School of Economics.

"If it's not born in you to take up challenges, you cannot do it," Okeke said at the 2018 event when discussing his entrepreneurial drive.

But just days before he made those comments, Okeke had been busy sending fake invoices and defrauding the British sales office of the heavy equipment manufacturer Caterpillar out of \$11 million through a

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 75 of 87

BEC scam, according to the FBI. He was arrested at Dulles Airport outside Washington in 2019, pleaded guilty to wire fraud a year later and is now serving a 10-year prison sentence.

BEC scammers arrested by police in Nigeria often have better luck and win back their freedom by paying fines or bribes, experts say. Adedeji Oyenuka, a sociology professor at Lagos State University who has studied cybercrime culture, said there's little fear by BEC scammers of being punished if caught.

"The person will walk around the streets freely knowing nobody is going to say anything about what he or she is doing," Oyenuka said.

In the Hushpuppi case, U.S. prosecutors have also charged Abba Kyari, a top Nigerian law enforcement official who prosecutors say falsely imprisoned one of Abbas' criminal rivals. Kyari remains in Nigeria, where media reports say he's been arrested on a separate charges related to alleged drug smuggling.

Doug Witschi, an assistant director at the global police organization Interpol, said tech companies that help facilitate BEC crimes need to be more active in stopping such behavior.

"We can't arrest our way out of this challenge," he said.

Unlike ransomware operators who try to keep their communications private, BEC scammers often openly exchange services, share tips or show off their wealth on social media platforms like Facebook and Telegram.

A Facebook group called Wire Wire.com, which was until recently available to anyone with a Facebook account, acted as a message board for people to offer BEC-related services and other cybercrimes.

The page, which had a profile picture of a duffle bag filled with cash, was created in 2015 and had more than 1,400 members. It was taken down shortly after The Associated Press asked Facebook about it last month. The company declined comment.

In the case of the stolen Grand Rapids money, it was social media that helped law enforcement when seeking a federal judge's approval for a search warrant.

Included in the application was a vacation Instagram post by Kateryna Abourched, which linked the timing of her trip with a \$3,503 payment to a luxury resort in Mexico made from the bank account that had received the stolen Grand Rapids money.

"Vacation is always inspiring," she wrote in her Instagram post.

## Accounts deceivable: Email scam costliest type of cybercrime

By ALAN SUDERMAN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — It's a crime that siphons untold billions from the economy — but many people have never heard of it.

Business Email Compromise scams involve criminals hacking into email accounts, pretending to be someone they're not and fooling victims into sending money where it doesn't belong.

Although they get far less attention than the massive ransomware attacks that have triggered a powerful government response, BEC scams have been by far the costliest type of cybercrime in the U.S. for years, according to the FBI.

The huge payoffs and low risks associated with BEC scams have attracted criminals worldwide. Some flaunt their ill-gotten riches on social media, posing in pictures next to Ferraris, Bentleys, and stacks of cash.

Almost every enterprise is vulnerable to BEC scams, from Fortune 500 companies to small towns. Even the U.S. State Department got duped into sending BEC scammers more than \$200,000 in grant funds meant to help Tunisian farmers, court records show.

"The scammers are extremely well organized and law enforcement is not," said Sherry Williams, a director of a San Francisco nonprofit that recently fell victim to a BEC scam.

Losses in the U.S. due to BEC scams in 2021 were nearly \$2.4 billion, according to a new report by the FBI. That's a 33% increase from 2020 and more than a tenfold increase from just seven years ago.

And experts say many victims never come forward and the FBI's numbers only show a small fraction of just how much money is stolen each year.

BEC scammers use a variety of techniques to hack into legitimate business email accounts and trick employees to send wire payments or make purchases they shouldn't. Targeted phishing emails are a

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 76 of 87

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The Justice Department has launched months-long operations in recent years that have netted hundreds of arrests worldwide.

“Our message to criminals involved in these types of BEC schemes will remain clear: The FBI’s memory and reach is long and wide-ranging, we will relentlessly pursue you no matter where you may be located,” said Brian Turner, executive assistant director of the FBI’s Criminal, Cyber, Response, and Services Branch.

But security experts say the wave of arrests has had little impact, and the FBI’s own numbers show that BEC scams continue to grow at a rapid clip.

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For years both BEC scams and ransomware attacks were treated largely as a law enforcement problem. That’s still true for BEC attacks, but ransomware is now a key national security concern after a series of disruptive attacks on critical infrastructure like the one last year against the biggest fuels pipeline in the U.S. that led to gas shortages along the East Coast.

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## Florida groups canvass spring breakers to warn of fentanyl

By FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — In the days after a group of West Point cadets on spring break were sickened by fentanyl-laced cocaine at a South Florida house party, community activists sprang into action.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 77 of 87

They blitzed beaches, warned spring breakers of a surge in recreational drugs cut with the dangerous synthetic opioid and offered an antidote for overdoses, which have risen nationally during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Street teams stood under the blistering sun, handing out beads, pamphlets and samples of naloxone, a drug known by the brand name Narcan, which can revive overdose victims.

"We weren't sure how people would react," said Thomas Smith, director of behavioral health services for The Special Purpose Outreach Team, a local mobile medical program. "But the spring breakers have been great. Some say, 'I don't do drugs, but my buddy sometimes does something stupid.' They are happy to get Narcan."

Smith's team pulls up to Fort Lauderdale beach in a brightly colored mobile clinic van. They walk the sidewalks that run parallel to the beach, across the main drag from the bustling oceanfront clubs and restaurants.

"Have you heard of Narcan?" Huston Ochoa, a clinical counselor for The SPOT, asked Tristan Gentles on a recent afternoon as music blared from the Elbo Room, a bar at the heart of Fort Lauderdale Beach.

Gentles, who worked as a bartender and bouncer in New York City before moving to Fort Lauderdale, said he appreciates their efforts.

"There's only so much you can do when you see someone on the floor," he said, adding that he had witnessed numerous overdoses during his days in New York.

Fentanyl and other synthetic drugs, which can be 50 to 100 times more potent than heroin or prescription opioids, are what make the overdoses so dangerous, said David Scharf, who oversees community programs for the Broward Sheriff's Office and is the chairman of the county's Opioid Community Response Team.

Last year, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that for the first time more than 100,000 Americans had died of drug overdoses over a 12-month period. About two-thirds of the deaths were linked to fentanyl and other synthetic drugs. Stress from the coronavirus pandemic and the use of fentanyl are considered factors in the increase in deaths, according to preliminary reports by the CDC.

Broward County led the state in fentanyl deaths in 2020, the latest year for which statistics are available from the Florida Medical Examiners Commission. In the vast majority of the deaths, fentanyl was combined with another drug, the sheriff's office said.

"One snort, one swallow, one shot can kill," said Jim Hall, a retired epidemiologist from Nova Southeastern University, who has worked with the county's opioid response team. "It is not just in Florida but anywhere in North America."

For the first three months of 2022, Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue responded to 373 calls involving a possible overdose, where Narcan was administered, Battalion Chief Stephen Gollan said. That's an average of more than four per day.

The reaction in Broward was swift after the five U.S. Military Academy cadets overdosed in Wilton Manors on March 10, just as thousands of college students were heading to Fort Lauderdale for spring break.

The following Monday, more than 100 people representing agencies from law enforcement to social service organizations and hospitals met via Zoom to devise a plan to keep spring breakers safe.

Groups such as The SPOT and the South Florida Wellness Network, which partner with the United Way of Broward County, agreed to hit the beaches to talk with people about the dangers associated with fentanyl-laced drugs. They also talked to restaurant and bar owners who could distribute Narcan if "someone went down," Scharf said.

The groups have so far distributed more than 2,000 doses of Narcan supplied by state grants. The SPOT volunteers handed out packages with two doses of the nasal spray plus instructions.

"It was kind of a blitz operation to get out there as quickly as possible, and to get as much information and Narcan out on the streets," Scharf said.

The volunteer groups and sheriff's office don't have figures on how many of the distributed doses were actually used but believe the program has succeeded in raising awareness.

The region isn't yet out of the spring break period, which runs until mid-April, but Scharf said organizers

have been heartened to see a couple of weekends pass without any overdoses that resulted in emergency calls.

"We had zero, which is like the first time in forever that we had none," Scharf said.

"We had a terrible situation," with overdoses of the cadets and others, and turned it into "an opportunity to really beef up our education and prevention efforts by flooding the beaches and the streets," Scharf said.

Smith, of The SPOT, said spring breakers were "grateful and appreciative" and his group now has to plan how to "keep the momentum going."

To that end, the street teams plan to continue working events that bring in large crowds, such as this weekend's sold out Tortuga Music Festival on Fort Lauderdale Beach.

"It's about saving lives," said Emy Martinez, who manages a safe syringe program for The SPOT. "It's all about saving one life at a time."

## Treatment for opioid addiction often brings discrimination

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Danielle Russell was in the emergency department at an Arizona hospital last fall, sick with COVID-19, when she made the mistake of answering completely when she was asked what medications she was on.

"I said yes, I was taking methadone," said Russell, a doctoral student who also was in recovery from heroin use. "The smart thing to do, if I wanted to be treated like a human, would be to say no."

Even though her primary doctor had sent her to the ER, she said she was discharged swiftly without being treated and given a stack of papers about the hospital's policies for prescribing pain medications — drugs she was not asking for.

"It becomes so absurd and the stigma against methadone especially is so strong," she said, noting that other people in recovery have had it worse. "You're getting blocked out from housing resources, employment."

It's a problem people in the addiction recovery community have dealt with for decades: On top of the stigma surrounding addiction, people who are in medical treatment for substance abuse can face additional discrimination — including in medical and legal settings that are supposed to help.

This week, the U.S. Department of Justice published new guidelines aimed at dealing with the problem: They assert that it's illegal under the Americans with Disabilities Act to discriminate against people because they are using prescribed methadone or other medications to treat opioid use disorder.

The guidelines don't change federal government policy, but they do offer clarification and signal that authorities are watching for discrimination in a wide range of settings. The Justice Department's actions this year also show it's taken an interest in the issue, reaching multiple legal settlements, filing a lawsuit and sending a warning letter alleging other violations.

One of the government's recent settlements was with a Colorado program that helps house and employ people who are homeless. A potential client filed a complaint claiming she was denied admission because she uses buprenorphine to treat her addiction. As part of the settlement, Ready to Work is paying the woman \$7,500. Stan Garnett, a lawyer for the organization, said Thursday that the organization's staff is being trained to comply with the law.

"It's terrifying to be told by some authority — whether it's a judge, or a child welfare official, or a skilled nursing facility — someone who has something you need is telling you you have to get off the medication that is saving your life," said Sally Friedman, senior vice president of legal advocacy at the Legal Action Center, which uses legal challenges to try to end punitive measures for people with health conditions, including addiction.

Friedman said advocates and lawyers will cite the new guidelines when they're making discrimination claims.

Dan Haight, president of The LCADA Way, which runs addiction treatment programs in the Cleveland area, said a suburb where they wanted to put a clinic at one point nixed the idea because of a moratorium

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 79 of 87

in place on new drug counseling centers.

"We're not looked at as another medical facility or counseling office," Haight said. "We're looked at because we do addiction."

The new guidelines suggest that such broad denials could be violations of the ADA.

Overdoses from all opioids, including prescription drugs containing oxycodone, heroin and illicit laboratory-made varieties including fentanyl, have killed more than 500,000 Americans in the last two decades, and the problem has been growing only worse. That has frustrated advocates, treatment providers and public health experts who see the deaths as preventable with treatment.

Even as the crisis has deepened, there have been glimmers of hope. Drugmakers, distribution companies and pharmacy chains have announced settlements since last year to pay government entities about \$35 billion over time plus provide drugs to treat addictions and reverse overdoses. Most of the money is required to be used to fight the epidemic.

It's still to be determined how the money will be deployed, but one priority for many public health experts is expanding access to medication-based treatments, which are seen as essential to helping people recover.

But there's still a stigma associated with the treatment programs, which use the medication naltrexone or drugs that themselves are opioids, such as methadone and buprenorphine.

Marcus Buchanan used methadone from 2016 through 2018 to help end a decadelong heroin habit. During that time, he was looking for work near his home in Chouteau, Oklahoma — mostly at factories — and could never land one.

"I can nail an interview. It would be the drug-screen process" when he'd explain why the results showed he was using methadone, said Buchanan, who is now an outreach coordinator for an opioid prevention program. "Every job, more than 20 probably, during those two years, was a door shut in the face."

Dr. Susan Bissett, president of the nonprofit West Virginia Drug Intervention Institute, said people who are in treatment programs often hide it out of fear that they could lose their jobs.

She said she wants to reach out to business leaders and encourage them to hire and retain people who are using the medications.

"The next step is helping employers understand this is a disease instead of a moral failing," Bissett said. "We don't think about substance abuse disorder the way we think about diabetes, for example."

One of the places where medication-assisted treatment is sometimes restricted or banned is in state drug diversion court programs, which are intended to get people help for addiction rather than incarcerate them.

Fewer than half the states have specific language that prohibits judges from excluding people who are taking the medications from participating in diversion programs or requires that they allow its use as part of the programs. That finding is based on an Associated Press review of legislation, administrative court orders and drug court handbooks that guide state drug diversion court programs.

Some states allow individual courts to make their own rules, while others only include language saying people can't be excluded. Judges in some states still require defendants to taper off the medications and allow the diversion programs to decide whether the medications are appropriate for each person enrolled.

The Center for Court Innovation is trying to steer the drug courts into creating policies and programs that support people taking those medications instead of incentivizing them to stop.

"It can be frustrating, because nobody needs to tell a judge they need to allow someone to take blood pressure medication," said Sheila McCarthy, a senior program manager for the Center for Court Innovation. "But for some, there is just a disconnect about the real effect these medications have on a person's daily life."

Veronica Pacheco has been off methadone for nearly a year after being on it for more than six years to treat an addiction to pain pills.

She said some people in the medical field — a physician, a dentist, a pharmacist — seemed to treat her differently after they learned she was on methadone treatment. They sometimes assume she was going to ask for new prescriptions for pain medications.

"I felt like I had a sign on my forehead saying, 'I am a methadone person.' The minute someone has your medical record, everything changes," said Pacheco, who lives in the Minneapolis suburb of Dayton.

"Now that I've been off it, I can see the night-and-day difference."

## **EXPLAINER: What to do with closed nuke plant's wastewater?**

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

One million gallons of radioactive water is inside a former nuclear power plant along Cape Cod Bay and it has got to go.

But where, is the vexing question, and will the state intervene as the company dismantling the plant decides?

Holtec International is considering treating the water and discharging it into the bay, drawing fierce resistance from local residents, shell fishermen and politicians. Holtec is also considering evaporating the contaminated water or trucking it to a facility in another state.

The fight in Massachusetts mirrors a current, heated debate in Japan over a plan to release more than 1 million tons of treated radioactive wastewater into the ocean from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant in spring 2023. A massive tsunami in 2011 crashed into the plant. Three reactors melted down.

Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in Plymouth, Massachusetts, closed in 2019 after nearly half a century providing electricity to the region. U.S. Rep. William Keating, a Democrat whose district includes the Cape, wrote to Holtec with other top Massachusetts lawmakers in January to oppose releasing water into Cape Cod Bay. He asked the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to examine its regulations.

Keating said in late March that Holtec's handling of the radioactive water could set a precedent because the U.S. decommissioning industry is in its infancy. Most U.S. nuclear plants were built between 1970 and 1990.

"If they're listening, sensitive and work with these communities, it's important," he said. "That's the message for future decommissioning sites."

Holtec has acquired closed nuclear plants across the country as part of its dismantling business, including the former Oyster Creek Generating Station in New Jersey and Indian Point Energy Center in New York. It's taking ownership of the Palisades Nuclear Plant on Lake Michigan, which is closing this year.

Pilgrim was a boiling water reactor. Water constantly circulated through the reactor vessel and nuclear fuel, converting it to steam to spin the turbine. The water was cooled and recirculated, picking up radioactive contamination.

Cape Cod is a tourist hotspot. Having radioactive water in the bay, even low levels, isn't great for marketing, said Democratic state Rep. Josh Cutler, who represents a district there. Cutler is working to pass legislation to prohibit discharging radioactive material into coastal or inland waters.

Holtec said Pilgrim already discharged water into the bay for 50 years while the plant was operating and environmental studies, conducted by the plant operators and now Holtec, have shown little or no environmental impact. Radiological environmental reports are shared with the NRC annually.

"We are working to provide scientific data, educate the public on the reality of radiation in everyday life, and working to have experts explain the true science versus the emotional fear of the unknown," spokesperson Patrick O'Brien wrote in an email in March.

### **WHAT ARE HOLTEC'S OPTIONS?**

Holtec could treat the water and discharge it in batches over multiple years, likely the least expensive option. Or, it could evaporate the water on site, as it says it has done with about 680,000 gallons (2,600 kiloliters) over the past two years.

Evaporating the water would be more challenging to do now because the spent nuclear fuel is in storage, and couldn't be used as a heat source. Holtec would have to use a different — likely more expensive — method that would release gas.

Or, Holtec could truck the water to an out-of-state facility, where it could be mixed with clay and buried or placed in an evaporation pond, or released into local waterways. That's what Keating wants.

Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station, another boiling water reactor, was shut down in Vernon, Vermont, in 2014. It's sending wastewater to disposal specialists in Texas and other states. Entergy operated and



# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 81 of 87

sold both Vermont Yankee and Pilgrim. NorthStar, a separate and competing corporation in the decommissioning business, is dismantling Vermont Yankee.

Nuclear plants occasionally need to dispose of water with low levels of radioactivity when they're operating, so a process to release it in batches into local waterways was developed early in the nuclear industry.

In recent years at Pilgrim, the two largest releases were in 2011, with 29 releases totaling about 325,000 gallons (1,500 kiloliters), and 2013, with 21 releases totaling about 310,000 gallons.

The water from those releases was well below the federal limits for the amount of radionuclides in millirems a person would be exposed to in a year if they ate local seafood or swam in nearby waters, according to the NRC.

NRC spokesperson for the Northeast Neil Sheehan said the limits are set very conservatively and are believed to be protective of the public and environment. He said it's important to consider the role of dilution — once the discharges mix with vast quantities of water any radioactivity is typically not detectable.

## WHY ARE PEOPLE WORRIED?

In Duxbury, Kingston and Plymouth Bays, there are 50 oyster farms — the largest concentration in the state, worth \$5.1 million last year, according to the Massachusetts Seafood Collaborative. The collaborative said dumping the water would devastate the industry, and the local economy along with it.

Diane Turco, a Harwich resident and longtime Pilgrim watchdog, questions if the water is heavily contaminated, especially from the pool that covered the stored, spent fuel for cooling and shielded workers from radiation.

"Isn't this a crazy idea for Holtec to use our bay as their dump? No way," she said.

Others didn't know Pilgrim's water went into the bay in previous years and they don't want it to happen again.

"We can't change that, but we can change what's happening in the future," said Cutler, the state lawmaker. "It's the first time it has ever been decommissioned, so to compare this to the past is a convenient excuse. 'Well, we did it in the past,' that sounds like my kid."

Towns on the Cape are trying to prohibit the dispersal of radioactive materials in their waters. Tribal leaders, fishermen, lobstermen and real estate agents have publicly stated their opposition as well.

Sheehan, the NRC spokesperson, said the water is not different or distinct, compared to water released during the plant's operations. Holtec would have to handle it the same way, by filtering it, putting it into a tank, analyzing the radio isotopes and calculating the environmental impacts if it was released in batches, he added.

## WHO GETS THE FINAL SAY?

Holtec wouldn't need a separate approval from the NRC to discharge the water into the bay. However, Holtec would need permission from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency if the water contained pollutants regulated by the Clean Water Act, such as dissolved metals.

If the water contained only radioactive materials regulated by the NRC, Holtec wouldn't need to ask the EPA for a permit modification, according to the EPA's water division for New England. Holtec has never given the EPA a pollutant characterization of the water associated with decommissioning, the division's director said.

Mary Lampert, of Duxbury, is on a panel created by the state to look at issues related to the Pilgrim's decommissioning. She believes the state could use its existing laws and regulations to stop the dumping and plans to press the Massachusetts attorney general to file a preliminary injunction to do so.

The attorney general's office said it's monitoring the issue and would take any Clean Water Act violations seriously.

Holtec said this week it's examining the water for possible pollutants but the lab results won't be available for awhile.

The company expects to decide what to do with the water later this year. Discharge, evaporation and some limited transportation will likely all be part of the solution, Holtec added.

## Pension hike not enough for Venezuelans to afford basic food

By SHAYLIM VALDERRAMA Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — When lunchtime comes, Maybel Sequera and Juan González share a plate of noodles and beans at their home in a low-income neighborhood west of Venezuela's capital. Their meager lunch was a gift from a nonprofit organization as the couple cannot afford to feed themselves.

Sequera, 72, and González, 74, worked for years as a seamstress and driver to build their two houses and raise their four children. But now, after 50 years of marriage, they rely on donations for food, medicines and clothing.

The government raised their combined monthly pensions from about \$4 to roughly \$60 last month. But it would have to be multiplied by six for them to be able to buy a basket of goods.

"Now that they have increased us to 130 (each), we are going to see how we manage with those 130 because it is not enough either," Sequera said referring to the pension in bolívares, Venezuela's official currency and in which pensions are paid.

In Venezuela, the pension is the amount paid monthly to workers who retire after reaching 750 weeks of Social Security contributions and turning 55, in the case of women, and 60 for men.

Since 1995 — years before Hugo Chavez imposed in the South American country what he considered socialism — a pension is equal to the monthly minimum wage. Workers contribute between 2% and 4% of their salary to Social Security while employers pay an additional 9% to 11% on behalf of workers.

The pensions of Sequera, González and millions of other similarly situated retirees went up last month because President Nicolás Maduro increased the monthly minimum wage from roughly \$2 to about \$30, an amount insufficient to pay basic goods, whose cost in February was estimated at \$365, according to the Venezuelan Finance Observatory, an organization specializing in economic studies.

Venezuela has just over five million pensioners, according to official figures. Annual inflation, which slowed last year but still reached 686.4%, has eaten up their pensions for years.

Although the country in the second half of the last decade experienced a severe shortage of food and hygiene items, prompting people to stand in long lines outside supermarkets to buy whatever they could, store shelves are now well stocked and display imported products. But high prices set in dollars make it impossible for much of the population to afford goods.

This dynamic leaves many older adults dependent on remittances from the more than six million Venezuelans who have migrated due to the economic, political and social crises of recent years.

Nonprofit organizations and churches fill some gaps, but it is not uncommon to see the elderly on the sidewalks of Caracas, the capital, selling candy or begging for money.

"I have to manage to get food. It's not easy, because you're of an age, you go out on the street and many people look at you with contempt," Miriam Jiménez, 68, told The Associated Press after picking up a plate of food at a soup kitchen for the elderly in western Caracas. "One has to beg in the streets. Sometimes, a neighbor gives me something."

In other South American countries, pensions range from \$230 to \$650, but the amounts are also usually below the cost of a basket of basic goods or the monthly minimum wage. In Chile, new President Gabriel Boric promised to raise the amount to \$310, although it will remain below the \$435 monthly minimum wage.

Luis Francisco Cabeza, director of Convite, a non-governmental organization focused on care for the elderly in Venezuela, said social security for the elderly population should not just be a pension. He said it should also include access to medicines, medical care and recreation.

"The pension is a system that seeks to protect you against the contingency of reaching old age," he added. In Venezuela, the hospital system is precarious, so patients must bring all medical supplies to be treated.

Sequera has been diagnosed with two types of cancer this year, including a type of skin cancer that required an operation on her face. To pay for medical supplies, she sold two of her three sewing machines, which she used to mend neighbors' clothes in exchange for money.

Pensioners protested dozens of times across the country last year. At the protests in the capital, some could be seen wearing broken shoes and worn clothes.

Sequera and González had a cup of coffee after finishing the plate of noodles and beans for lunch.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 83 of 87

"Today, (at breakfast) we ate the last little egg. We are going to wait for another blessing to come out there," González said.

"For the night, God will provide," his wife interjected. "And if not, a glass of water and go to sleep," González lamented.

## Abrams-backed election lawsuit goes to trial in Georgia

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — When she ended her first bid to become Georgia governor in 2018, Stacey Abrams announced plans to sue over the way the state's elections were managed. More than three years later, as she makes another run at the governor's mansion, the lawsuit is going to trial.

Filed in November 2018 by Abrams' Fair Fight Action organization, the suit alleged that state officials "grossly mismanaged" the election, depriving some citizens, particularly low-income people and people of color, of their right to vote. The lawsuit originally called for a sweeping overhaul of the state's elections, but its scope was considerably narrowed after the state made changes that addressed some allegations and others were dismissed by the court. The trial is set to begin Monday.

Even if U.S. District Judge Steve Jones sides with the plaintiffs, it's unclear whether that will affect elections this year. Jones and other federal judges have been reluctant to order last-minute changes, noting that the Supreme Court has repeatedly said federal judges shouldn't alter rules "on the eve of an election."

In the months preceding the 2018 election, Abrams, a Democrat, accused her Republican opponent in the governor's race, then-Secretary of State Brian Kemp, of using his position as Georgia's chief elections officer to promote voter suppression, an allegation Kemp has vehemently denied.

In the more than three years since that fiercely fought contest captured national attention, the focus on Georgia's elections has only intensified. Problems during the 2020 primary drew sharp criticism. Later that year, former President Donald Trump hurled insults at state officials who declined to overturn his narrow general election loss in the state. And the nation watched closely in January 2021 as a pair of Democrats unseated the state's two incumbent Republican U.S. senators.

Numerous GOP-led state legislatures passed election bills last year after Trump stoked false claims that widespread fraud led to his 2020 defeat. Georgia's bill, which Kemp signed into law a year ago, was one of the broadest. Among other things, the state's measure reduced the window to request an absentee ballot, stripped power from the secretary of state and sharply curtailed the use of absentee ballot drop boxes in populous and Democratic-voting metro Atlanta counties. Voting rights groups and the U.S. Department of Justice promptly sued; those lawsuits are pending.

Republicans in Georgia this year passed legislation to let the Georgia Bureau of Investigation initiate probes into alleged election wrongdoing.

Meanwhile, Abrams, a state lawmaker who was little known outside Georgia when she ran four years ago, has become a household name and Democratic Party star. The only Democrat running for governor, she'll face Kemp again in November if he fends off a primary challenge from former U.S. Sen. David Perdue.

Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger accused Abrams and her allies of trying to undermine the integrity of Georgia elections.

"Her 3-year 'stolen election' campaign has been nothing more than a political stunt to keep her in the national spotlight, and it's a disservice to Georgia voters," he said in an emailed statement.

Fair Fight says it works to promote voting rights and support progressive candidates around the country, and its PAC has raised more than \$100 million since its founding. It filed the lawsuit along with Care in Action, a nonprofit that advocates for domestic workers. Several churches have also joined as plaintiffs.

Fair Fight collected statements from people who said they had problems voting. The lawsuit cited multiple alleged problems, including the purging of eligible voters from voter rolls under a "use it or lose it" policy; the state's so-called exact match voter registration rules; an insufficient number of voting machines at some precincts; and a lack of sufficient training for election officials. It asked a federal judge to find that Georgia's elections processes violated the U.S. Constitution and federal law.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 84 of 87

"Since the start of this lawsuit, we have highlighted real voters and their challenges because we believe that is one of the most effective ways to demonstrate the barriers in Georgia's elections system," Fair Fight executive director Cianti Stewart-Reid said in an emailed statement. She added that voters from around the state will testify at trial about obstacles faced while trying to vote.

Some of the alleged problems were addressed by changes in state law. For example, a 2019 law called for replacing the state's outdated voting machines. The new system was implemented statewide in 2020.

In February 2021, Jones threw out parts of the lawsuit, saying some allegations were made irrelevant by changes in state law or the plaintiffs' lack of standing. Among them were some of the claims about voting machines and election technology, as well as the security of voter lists and polling place issues. The following month, Jones dismissed claims targeting the "use it or lose it" policy and some allegations of inadequate training of poll workers. He also dismissed some claims relating to provisional and absentee ballots.

The issues remaining for the trial have to do with the "exact match" policy, the statewide voter registration list and in-person cancellation of absentee ballots. The plaintiffs claim that Georgia's secretary of state and State Election Board members are "denying and abridging Georgians' right to vote" in violation of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the U.S. Constitution.

Under the "exact match" policy, information from voter registration applications is checked against information held by the state Department of Driver Services or the federal Social Security Administration. If there's a discrepancy, the would-be voter must show identification to county officials before being able to cast a regular ballot.

The plaintiffs say data entry errors or differences as minor as a missing hyphen or apostrophe can trigger a non-match and that naturalized citizens can also be wrongly flagged as noncitizens if records are outdated. These problems disproportionately affect people of color and can depend on where a person lives because counties do things differently, the plaintiffs say.

The statewide voter registration database is "error-ridden," the plaintiffs say, resulting in the erroneous deletion of eligible voters' registration or critical information being incorrect. That can prevent eligible voters from being able to vote or force them to overcome undue burdens to do so, the plaintiffs say.

The plaintiffs also say election officials aren't sufficiently trained on canceling an absentee ballot if someone chooses to vote in person instead, which can cause voters to be turned away or forced to cast a provisional ballot.

Lawyers for the state argue the claims in the lawsuit "are not supported by the evidence." The number, geographic scope and severity of the alleged problems experienced by voters identified by the plaintiffs "do not rise to a level sufficient to demonstrate an unconstitutional burden on voting in Georgia," state lawyers wrote in a filing. Additionally, they argue, the alleged problems cited are not the responsibility of the state officials named in the lawsuit.

## Jackson, COVID and a retirement show Congress' partisan path

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A milestone Supreme Court confirmation that endured a flawed process. The collapse of a bipartisan compromise for more pandemic funds. The departure of a stalwart of the dwindling band of moderate House Republicans.

Party-line fights on Capitol Hill are as old as the republic, and they routinely escalate as elections approach. Yet three events from a notable week illustrate how Congress' near- and long-term paths point toward intensifying partisanship.

### THE SENATE'S SUPREME COURT BATTLE

Democrats rejoiced Thursday when the Senate by 53-47 confirmed Ketanji Brown Jackson as the first Black female justice. They crowed about a bipartisan stamp of approval from the trio of Republicans who supported it: Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Mitt Romney of Utah.

Yet by historical standards, the three opposition party votes were paltry and underscored the recent

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 85 of 87

trend of Supreme Court confirmations becoming loyalty tests on party ideology. That's a departure from a decades-long norm when senators might dislike a nominee's judicial philosophy but defer to a president's pick, barring a disqualifying revelation.

Murkowski said her support for Jackson was partly "rejection of the corrosive politicization" of how both parties consider Supreme Court nominations, which "is growing worse and more detached from reality by the year."

Republicans said they would treat Jackson respectfully, and many did. Their questions and criticisms of her were pointed and partisan, with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., saying "the Senate views itself as a co-partner in this process" with the president.

Yet some potential 2024 GOP presidential contenders seemed to use Jackson's confirmation to woo hard-right support. Sens. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Josh Hawley, R-Mo., misleadingly accused her of being unusually lenient on child pornography offenders. Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., suggested she might have defended Nazis at the Nuremberg trials after World War II, before she was born.

Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Richard Durbin, D-Ill., said some Republicans "went overboard, as far as I'm concerned, to the extreme," reflecting "the reality of politics on Capitol Hill." Cotton was "fundamentally unfair, but that is his tradition," said Durbin.

## SUPREME COURT BATTLES PAST

Senate approval of high court nominees by voice vote, without bothering to hold roll calls, was standard for most of the 20th century. Conservative Antonin Scalia sailed into the Supreme Court by 98-0 in 1986, while liberal Ruth Bader Ginsburg won 96-3 approval seven years later.

There were bitter fights. Democrats blocked conservative Robert Bork's nomination in 1987 and unsuccessfully opposed Clarence Thomas' ascension in 1991 after he was accused of sexual harassment.

Hard feelings intensified in early 2016. McConnell, then majority leader, blocked the Senate from even considering President Barack Obama's pick of Merrick Garland to replace the deceased Scalia. McConnell cited the presidential election nearly nine months away, infuriating Democrats.

Donald Trump was elected and ultimately filled three vacancies over near-unanimous Democratic opposition.

Democrats opposed Brett Kavanaugh after he was accused of sexually assaulting a woman decades earlier, which he denied. They voted solidly against Amy Coney Barrett after Trump and McConnell rushed through her nomination when a vacancy occurred just weeks before Election Day 2020, a sprint Democrats called hypocritical.

## COVID SPENDING FIGHT, TRANSFORMED

Senators from both parties agreed to a \$10 billion COVID-19 package Monday that President Joe Biden wants for more therapeutics, vaccines and tests. With BA.2, the new omicron variant, washing across the country, it seemed poised for congressional approval.

Hours later, bargainers led by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, seemed blindsided when their compromise was derailed. Republicans wanted to add an extension of an expiring crackdown on migrants crossing the Mexican border that Trump imposed in 2020, citing the pandemic's public health threat.

Many Republicans were skeptical that more COVID-19 money was necessary. But their demand for an immigration amendment transformed a fight over how much more to spend on a disease that's killed 980,000 people in the U.S. into a battle over border security, tailor-made for GOP political campaigns ahead.

Immigration divides Democrats, and Republicans believe the issue can further solidify their chances of winning congressional control in November's elections. Playing defense, Schumer postponed debate on the COVID-19 bill.

Democrats deserved some blame for being outmaneuvered. House Democrats shot down a \$15 billion agreement in March, rejecting compromise budget savings to pay for it.

And in glaringly tone-deaf political timing, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced April 1, just as bargainers were completing their latest compromise, that the Trump-era immigration curbs would lapse May 23.

# Groton Daily Independent

Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 86 of 87

That gave Republicans an irresistible political gift to pursue.

## A MODERATE'S FAREWELL

Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich., announced his retirement Tuesday. He's the fourth of the 10 House Republicans who voted to impeach Trump last year to say they won't seek reelection.

Upton attributed his departure to running in a new district, but that didn't stop Trump from proclaiming: "UPTON QUILTS! 4 down and 6 to go." The House impeached Trump over his incitement of supporters who attacked the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, but the GOP-run Senate acquitted him.

Now in his 18th term, Upton's departure subtracts another moderate from a GOP that's shifted rightward in recent years, particularly when it comes to showing fealty to Trump.

The pro-business Upton, 68, was a driving force on one law spurring pharmaceutical development and has worked with Democrats on legislation affecting energy and the auto industry. His bipartisan work and affability placed him in the ever-smaller group of Republicans who draw Democrats' praise.

"To him, bipartisan and compromise are not forbidden words," said Rep. Debbie Dingell, D-Mich.

## PARTY DIFFERENCES, THEN AND NOW

Pitched battles are now habitual over bills financing federal agencies and extending the government's borrowing authority. When those disputes are resolved and federal shutdowns and defaults averted, lawmakers hail as triumphs what is their most rudimentary task — keeping government functioning.

Despite the divisions over COVID-19 money and Jackson, there has also been cooperation.

Congress overwhelmingly voted Thursday to ban Russian oil and downgrade trade relations with that country following its invasion of Ukraine. There's progress on bipartisan trade and technology legislation, and a bipartisan \$1 trillion infrastructure measure became law last year.

## Today in History: April 10, Titanic sets sail

By The Associated Press undefined

### Today in History

Today is Sunday, April 10, the 100th day of 2022. There are 265 days left in the year.

### Today's Highlight in History:

On April 10, 1912, the British liner RMS Titanic set sail from Southampton, England, on its ill-fated maiden voyage.

### On this date:

In 1866, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was incorporated.

In 1932, German President Paul Von Hindenburg was reelected in a runoff, with Adolf Hitler coming in second.

In 1947, Brooklyn Dodgers President Branch Rickey purchased the contract of Jackie Robinson from the Montreal Royals.

In 1963, the fast-attack nuclear submarine USS Thresher (SSN-593) sank during deep-diving tests east of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, in a disaster that claimed 129 lives.

In 1971, a table tennis team from the United States arrived in China at the invitation of the communist government for a goodwill visit that came to be known as "ping-pong diplomacy."

In 1972, the United States and the Soviet Union joined some 70 nations in signing an agreement banning biological warfare.

In 1974, Golda Meir announced her resignation as prime minister of Israel.

In 1998, the Northern Ireland peace talks concluded as negotiators reached a landmark settlement to end 30 years of bitter rivalries and bloody attacks.

In 2005, Tiger Woods won his fourth Masters with a spectacular finish of birdies and bogeys.

In 2010, Polish President Lech Kaczynski (lehk kah-CHIN'-skee), 60, was killed in a plane crash in western Russia that also claimed the lives of his wife and top Polish political, military and church officials.

In 2019, scientists released the first image ever made of a black hole, revealing a fiery, doughnut-shaped object in a galaxy 53 million light-years from earth.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Sunday, April 10, 2022 ~ Vol. 30 - No. 277 ~ 87 of 87**

In 2020, on Good Friday, Pope Francis presided over a torch-lit procession in St. Peter's Square, which was otherwise empty because of the coronavirus; nurses and doctors were among those holding a cross.

Ten years ago: Rick Santorum quit the presidential race, clearing the way for Mitt Romney to claim the Republican nomination. Syrian troops defied a U.N.-brokered cease-fire plan, launching fresh attacks on rebellious areas.

Five years ago: Justice Neil Gorsuch took his place as the newest addition on the bench of the Supreme Court, restoring a narrow conservative majority. Alabama Republican Gov. Robert Bentley resigned rather than face impeachment and pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor campaign violations that arose during an investigation of his alleged affair with a top aide. The New York Daily News and ProPublica won the Pulitzer Prize for public service for uncovering how police abused eviction rules to oust hundreds of people, mostly poor minorities, from their homes; Colson Whitehead's novel "The Underground Railroad" won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

One year ago: Speaking to Republican donors at his new home inside his Mar-a-Lago resort, former President Donald Trump slammed Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell as a "stone-cold loser" and mocked McConnell's wife, Elaine Chao, who had been Trump's transportation secretary. Reports from Myanmar said at least 82 people had been killed the previous day in a crackdown by security forces on pro-democracy protesters. Rachael Blackmore became the first female jockey to win the grueling Grand National horse race, riding Minella Times to victory at the race in England.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Liz Sheridan is 93. Actor Steven Seagal is 70. Folk-pop singer Terre Roche (The Roches) is 69. Actor Peter MacNicol is 68. Actor Olivia Brown is 65. Rock musician Steven Gustafson (10,000 Maniacs) is 65. Singer-producer Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds is 64. Rock singer-musician Brian Setzer is 63. Rock singer Katrina Leskanich (les-KAH'-nich) is 62. Olympic gold medal speedskater Cathy Turner is 60. Rock musician Tim "Herb" Alexander is 57. R&B singer Kenny Lattimore is 55. Actor-comedian Orlando Jones is 54. Rock musician Mike Mushok (Staind) is 53. Rapper Q-Tip (AKA Kamaal) is 52. Actor David Harbour is 47. Blues singer Shemekia Copeland is 43. Actor Laura Bell Bundy is 41. Actor Harry Hadden-Paton is 41. Actor Chyler Leigh is 40. Pop musician Andrew Dost (fun.) is 39. Actor Ryan Merriman is 39. Singer Mandy Moore is 38. Actor Barkhad Abdi (BAHRK'-hahd AHB'-dee) is 37. Actor Shay Mitchell is 35. Actor Haley Joel Osment is 34. Actor Molly Bernard (TV: "Younger") is 34. Country singer Maren Morris is 32. Actor Alex Pettyfer is 32. Actor-singer AJ (AKA Amanda) Michalka (mish-AL'-kah) is 31. Actor Daisy Ridley is 30. Singer-actor Sofia Carson is 29. Actor Audrey Whitby is 26. Actor Ruby Jerins is 24.