

Groton Daily Independent

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UpComing Events

Saturday, April 16

Groton High School Baseball vs. Howard at 2 p.m. and Oldham/Ramona/Rutland/Arlington at 4 p.m.

Emmanuel: 10 a.m.: Rosewood Court

SEAS Confession: 3:45-4:15 p.m.

SEAS Mass: 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 17 - EASTER SUNDAY

Emmanuel: 7 a.m. Worship with communion and breakfast, 9:30 a.m. Worship with communion, 3 p.m. worship at Avantara (serving group)

St. John's: 8 a.m. Bible Study, Worship with communion at 9 a.m. at St. John's and 11 a.m. at Zion, 10 a.m. Sunday School

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.

Monday, April 18 - Easter Monday

No School, Groton City & States offices closed
10 a.m.: Girls Golf at Whetstone Creek GC in Milbank

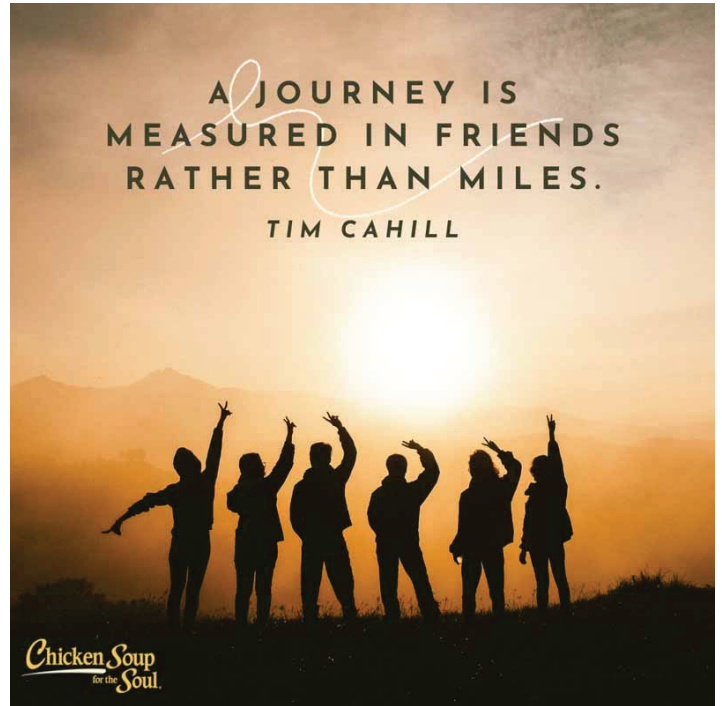
1 p.m.: Senior Citizens meet at Groton Community Center

St. John's: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, peas, mandarin oranges, cookie.

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.



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

Tuesday, April 19

7 p.m.: City Council Meeting

St. John's: 9 a.m.: Quilting

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Pulled pork sandwich, tater tots.

Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes/gravy, coleslaw, fruit, frosted brownie, whole wheat bread.

Wednesday, April 20

6 p.m.: FCCLA Banquet in GHS Arena Lobby

Emmanuel: 6 p.m. Confirmation, Newsletter deadline

School Breakfast: Hash browns, pizza.

School Lunch: Grilled cheese sandwich, cooked carrots.

Truss Pros Help Wanted

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

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

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Missouri River Levels

This Week



US Army Corps
of Engineers®

Northwestern Division, Omaha District
Mainstem and Tributary Reservoir Bulletin
Project Data Date/Time: 04-16-2022 00:00
Last Updated Date/Time: 04-16-2022 06:35



Project	Project Information				Current Data					Occupied Storage		
	Elevations (ft)		Cumulative Stor (ac-ft)		Elev (ft)	Daily Elev Change (ft)	Storage (ac-ft)	Inflow (cfs)	Release (cfs)	MP (%)	FC (ac-ft)	FC (%)
	MP	FC	MP	FC								
Missouri River Mainstem Projects												
Fort Peck Dam	2234.0	2250.0	14,788,340	18,462,840	2222.73	-0.07	12,576,000	5,000	6,100	85.0	0	0.0
Garrison Dam	1837.5	1854.0	17,744,640	23,451,300	1827.71	-0.14	14,939,000	16,000	14,400	84.2	0	0.0
Oahe Dam	1607.5	1620.0	18,667,635	22,982,900	1595.80	-0.05	15,311,000	17,000	25,200	82.0	0	0.0
Big Bend Dam	1420.0	1423.0	1,631,474	1,810,414	1420.39	-0.51	1,660,000	26,000	27,900	100.0	28,526	15.9
Fort Randall Dam	1350.0	1375.0	3,000,732	5,293,473	1354.92	0.12	3,406,000	29,000	22,200	100.0	405,268	17.7
Gavins Point Dam	1204.5	1210.0	295,406	428,033	1206.18	-0.07	331,000	23,000	23,900	100.0	35,594	26.8
System Totals	--	--	56,128,227	72,428,960	--	--	48,223,000	--	--	85.9	0	0.0

Last Week



US Army Corps
of Engineers®

Northwestern Division, Omaha District
Mainstem and Tributary Reservoir Bulletin
Project Data Date/Time: 04-09-2022 00:00
Last Updated Date/Time: 04-09-2022 07:05



Project	Project Information				Current Data					Occupied Storage		
	Elevations (ft)		Cumulative Stor (ac-ft)		Elev (ft)	Daily Elev Change (ft)	Storage (ac-ft)	Inflow (cfs)	Release (cfs)	MP (%)	FC (ac-ft)	FC (%)
	MP	FC	MP	FC								
Missouri River Mainstem Projects												
Fort Peck Dam	2234.0	2250.0	14,788,340	18,462,840	2222.81	-0.03	M	M	5,700	M	M	M
Garrison Dam	1837.5	1854.0	17,744,640	23,451,300	1827.62	-0.09	M	M	14,600	M	M	M
Oahe Dam	1607.5	1620.0	18,667,635	22,982,900	1596.08	-0.39	M	M	26,000	M	M	M
Big Bend Dam	1420.0	1423.0	1,631,474	1,810,414	1420.65	-0.17	M	M	29,500	M	M	M
Fort Randall Dam	1350.0	1375.0	3,000,732	5,293,473	1354.26	-0.09	M	M	17,000	M	M	M
Gavins Point Dam	1204.5	1210.0	295,406	428,033	1206.67	-0.37	M	M	23,000	M	M	M
System Totals	--	--	56,128,227	72,428,960	--	--	M	--	--	M	M	M

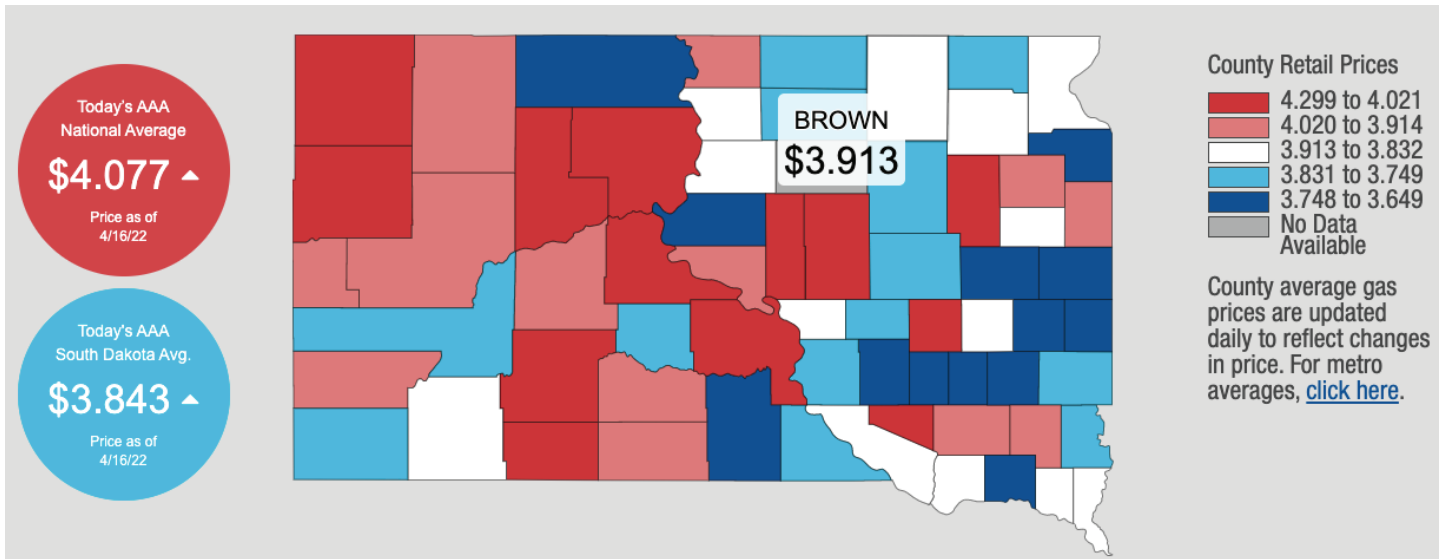
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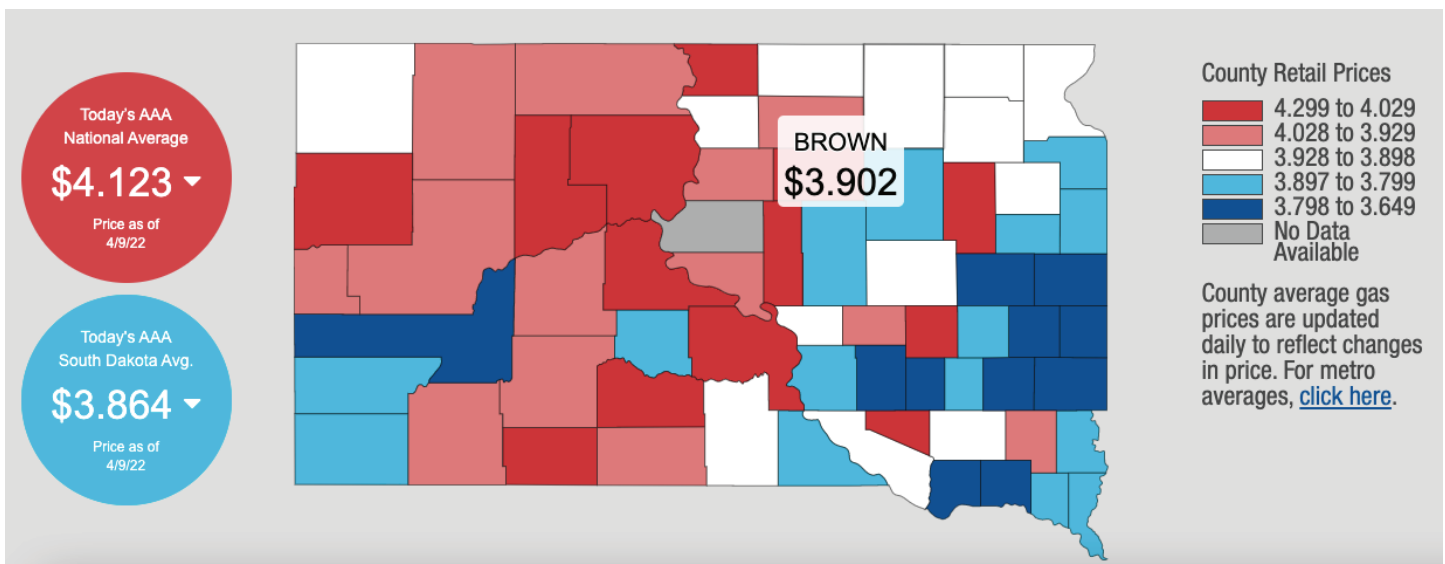
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.843	\$3.984	\$4.326	\$4.794
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.838	\$3.959	\$4.305	\$4.772
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.864	\$3.974	\$4.356	\$4.817
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.981	\$4.082	\$4.464	\$4.676
Year Ago Avg.	\$2.844	\$2.936	\$3.275	\$3.079

This Week



Last Week



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A reddish sunset for Good Friday. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Senior Legion Coach Wanted



Groton Legion Post #39 is seeking qualified applicants for Head Coach for the Groton Legion Post #39 Senior Baseball Team. The applicant must have previous coaching experience. The application period will close on April 29, 2022.

Applications can be picked up at Groton City Hall and mailed to:

**Doug Hamilton
411 N. 4th St.
Groton, SD 57445**

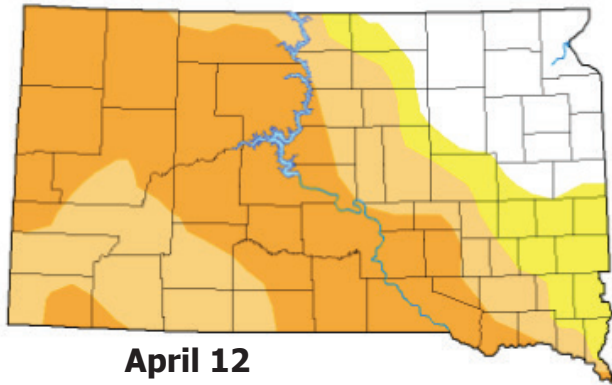
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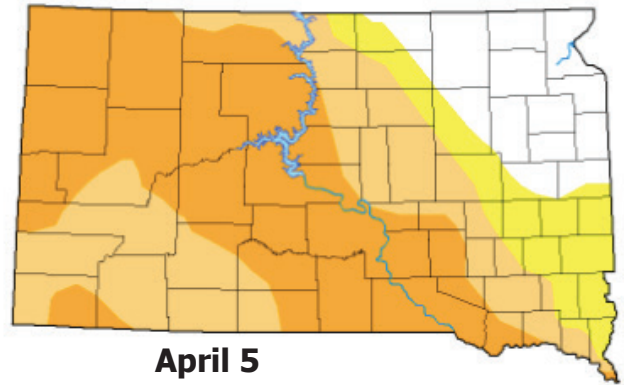
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



April 12



April 5

High Plains

An inch or two of precipitation fell on northwestern South Dakota, a small part of eastern North Dakota, and the highest elevations of north-central Colorado. Elsewhere, a few areas of 0.5 to 1.0 inch was observed in parts of the central and southern Dakotas, northwestern Nebraska, and several swaths scattered across Wyoming. A few tenths of an inch, at best, fell elsewhere. Dryness and drought cover a large majority of the High Plains Region; only the east-central and northeastern Dakotas and eastern Kansas are free of any significant dryness. D2 to D3 cover central and western parts of the Region, including all of Wyoming, Colorado, and most of Nebraska. Slow intensification and expansion has been noted across many areas over the past several months, and D3 expanded to cover additional portions of north-central Wyoming, central Nebraska, and an area near the western Kansas/Nebraska border. Elsewhere, few changes were introduced. Recently, strong winds and low humidity have made dryness more acute, especially in southern parts of the Region.

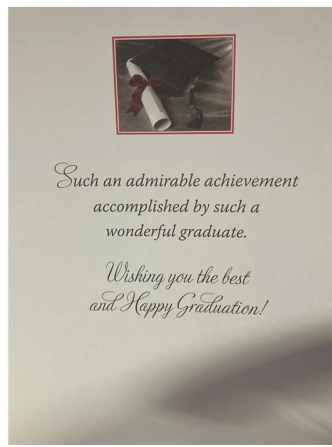
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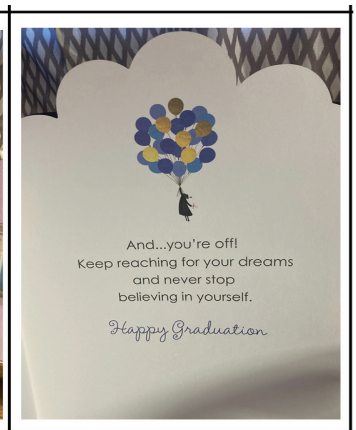
Jumbo Graduation Cards

Only \$7.99 each ~ Card Size: 16.25" x 24"

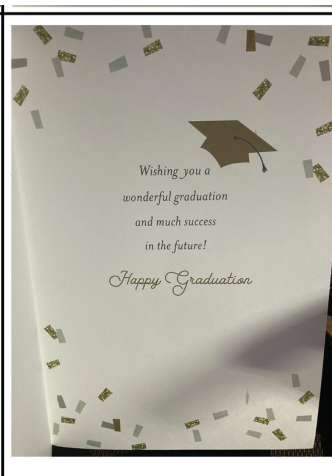
Can now be ordered on-line at 397news.com - Link on Black Bar
Or Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460 or Tina at 605-397-7285
to reserve your card(s)



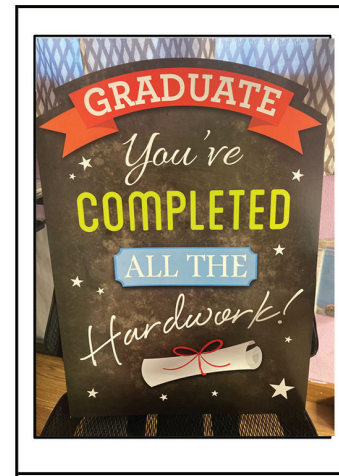
50-9903-C
\$7.99



50-9666-C
\$7.99



50-10977JM-C
\$7.99



50-9360-C
\$7.99

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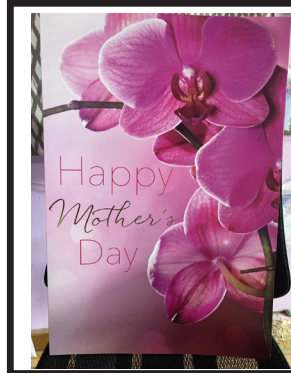
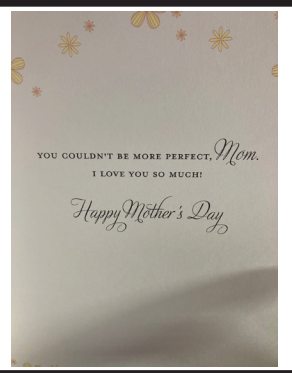
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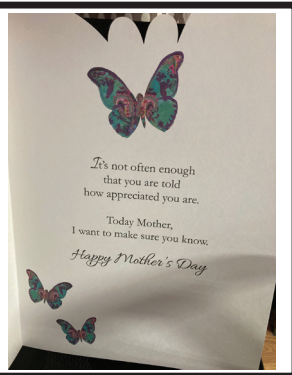
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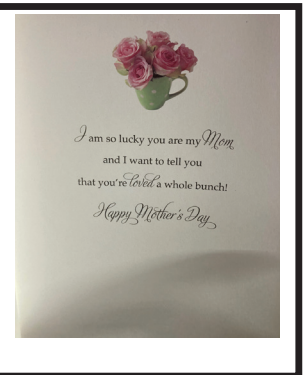
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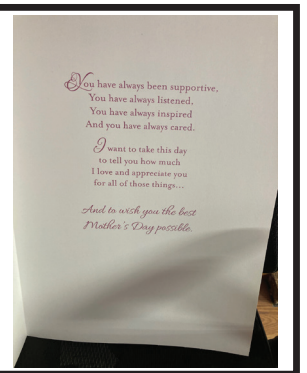
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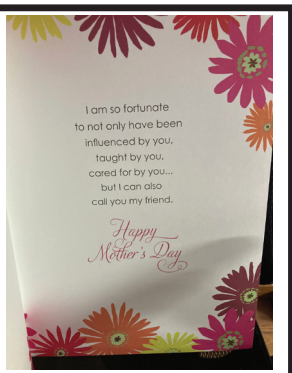
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26477-73609



26477-75579



26477-75402





We wanted to thank everyone who has helped us out in the weeks following our house fire...the firefighters who spent the wee hours of the morning with us (Ortonville, Big Stone City, Odessa, and Clinton), our wonderful lake neighbors who helped us with housing, food, and big shoulders, and our loving families and friends who come to the lake or called just to chat us up and lightened our load. We have leaned heavy on our second families at Appleton Area Health and Valley Queen Cheese Factory, and they continue to prop us up every day. To our family and friends far and wide...Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado and Arizona we have heard and felt your prayers.

We are grateful to have you all in our lives.

*Mickey and Cherie Johnson
Rocky Ridge on Big Stone*

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- NEWS
- LIVE
- FIT
- CLEAN
- RENT

Scan Code Below for More Details



15 N Main St., Groton
PO Box 34, Groton, SD
57445-0034

www.397news.com
Call/Text Paul: 605/397-7460
Call/Text Tina: 605/397-7285
paperpaul@grotonsd.net



New at the
GDI FIT
The Stairmaster
and Air Bike



Call/Text Paul at 605/397-7460
or Tina at 605/397-7285
for membership info

Order your Graduation Balloons while we have a good supply!



#1 - \$5



#2 - \$5



#3 - \$6



#4 - \$10 - 45"



#5 - \$5



#6 - \$6



\$3.50 - 9" on a stick



#7 - \$10 - 36"



#8 - \$5



#9 - \$5



#10 - \$5



#11 - \$5



#12 - \$5



#13 - \$8 35"



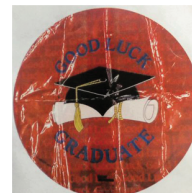
#14 - \$5



#15 - \$5



#16 - \$5



#17 - \$5



#18 - \$5



#19 - \$5



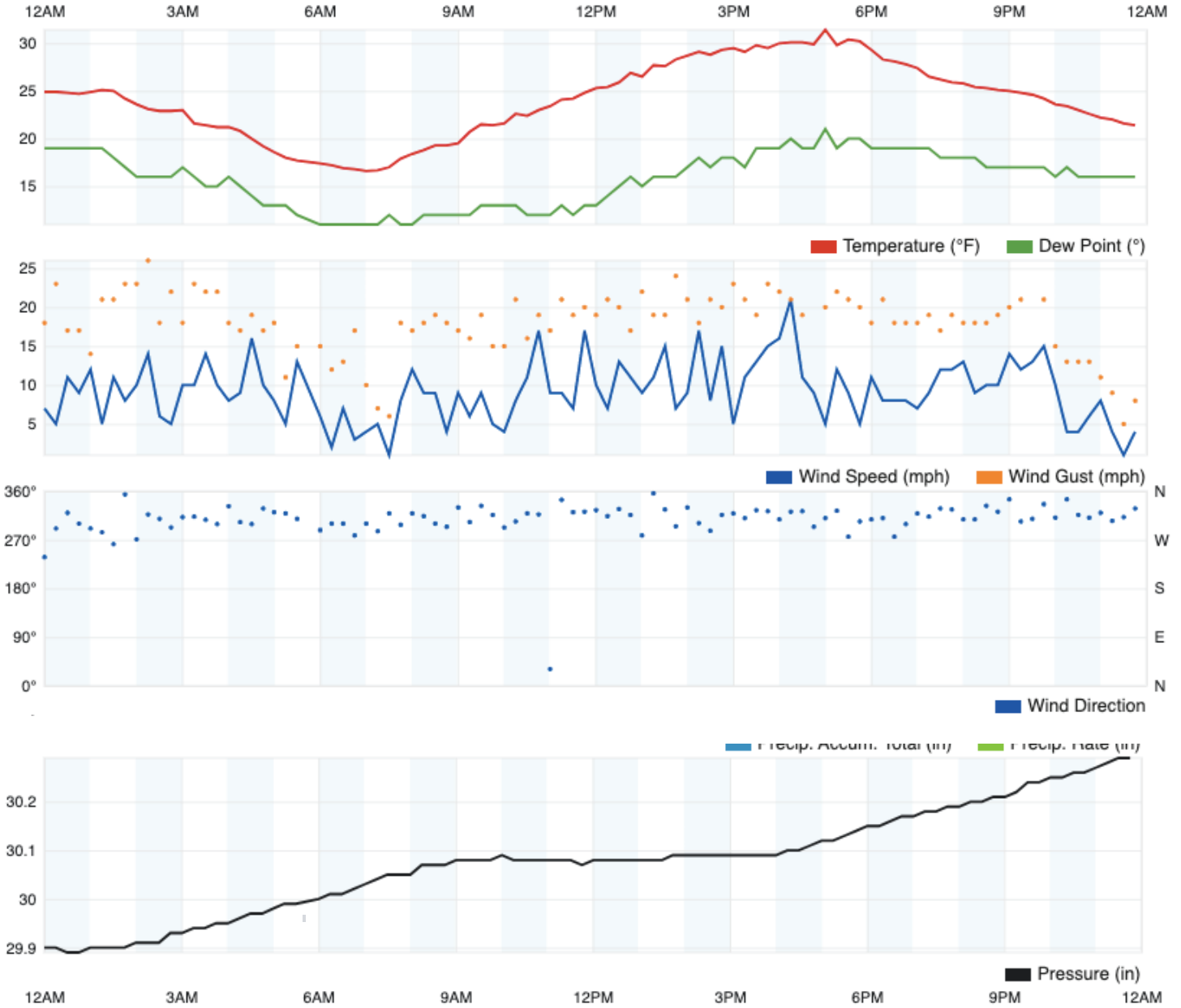
#20 - \$5

We have many other balloons available as well. We now offer locker pickup in the laundromat so you can pick up your order ANY TIME once the order is completed!

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 37 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance Snow

Low: 25 °F

Sunday



Breezy. Snow
Likely then
Chance
Rain/Snow

High: 45 °F

Sunday
Night



Partly Cloudy
and Breezy

Low: 22 °F

Monday



Sunny and
Breezy

High: 40 °F



Today _____

Highs Between 30 and 44 Degrees
Light Winds

Windy With Light Snow Sunday



Sunday _____

Highs Between 40 and 54 Degrees

Morning Winds: Southerly 30 to 40mph
Afternoon Winds: Westerly 40 to 50mph



1-2 Inches Accumulation

High pressure today, but we have a weak system crossing the region that will generate gusty winds and a band of light snow. Accumulations will only top an inch or two before winds shift to westerly and we dry out again.

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Stronger Winds Returning This Weekend

April 15, 2022
3:44 PM

Wind

- Gusty southeast breezes Saturday night into Sunday morning.
- Becoming west to northwest Sunday afternoon into Sunday night and Monday.
- Strongest winds across the Missouri Valley Sunday afternoon and evening with gusts of 45-50 mph possible.

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

	4/16 Sat		4/17 Sun								4/18 Mon						
	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm
Aberdeen	17	15	21	22	30	37	37	35	33	33	35	35	33	33	33	31	24
Britton	18	14	18	22	29	35	37	37	35	32	36	36	35	35	35	33	29
Eagle Butte	29	29	33	36	38	33	40	45	46	40	32	29	25	25	22	18	17
Eureka	20	22	29	32	38	39	36	40	39	39	37	36	32	30	29	25	17
Gettysburg	18	24	32	33	41	41	37	43	44	38	36	35	32	31	31	26	18
Kennebec	21	23	30	31	35	37	37	40	39	36	30	30	26	28	28	25	20
McIntosh	28	29	37	38	40	39	44	49	48	41	36	31	25	24	23	21	18
Milbank	18	12	14	16	18	24	29	29	25	25	31	31	32	33	32	32	29
Miller	16	17	21	28	35	38	37	36	35	32	31	31	28	30	31	29	20
Mobridge	20	22	30	32	37	36	35	40	40	35	32	29	23	25	25	22	18
Murdo	29	31	36	36	36	36	44	44	44	37	29	29	23	25	24	22	18
Pierre	21	23	30	30	35	33	36	41	41	36	29	29	23	25	25	22	18
Redfield	15	16	21	25	33	39	39	36	32	31	31	31	31	35	35	32	22
Sisseton	17	13	13	18	24	28	33	32	32	31	33	36	36	37	37	35	30
Watertown	16	15	20	20	24	32	36	35	30	29	31	32	33	35	35	33	29
Wheaton	17	12	10	16	20	24	29	29	28	24	28	30	33	33	32	31	29

*Table values in mph

**Created: 3 pm CDT Fri 4/15/2022

***Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Increasing winds before and on the backside of a low pressure system that slated to move through the region Saturday night through Sunday night. Strongest gusts will be felt across the Missouri Valley Sunday afternoon and Sunday evening as northwesterly winds kick in behind the storm system.

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Today in Weather History

April 16, 1967: Severe thunderstorms moved through areas of central and eastern South Dakota, producing large hail, damaging winds, and even a few tornadoes. The event began in the mid-afternoon hours and lasted into the evening. One of the tornadoes, an F1, formed over Lake Poinsette in Hamlin County. From there it moved from southwest to northeast, toward the northern shore, then made a loop and traveled toward the southeast. Two trailer houses and a few small buildings were damaged. 11 people were injured when a trailer house was turned over to one side, and then turned over on the other side. In Brown County, the storms produced hail 1.75 inches in diameter and 61mph winds.

April 16, 1976: A deepening low-pressure system moved northward out of Nebraska and across western South Dakota. Winds of 60 to 80 mph were reported across the area with gusts over 90 mph in southwest Minnesota. Some recorded wind speeds included 62 mph at Sioux Falls, 70 mph at Brookings, and 82 mph at Watertown. Many buildings were damaged, and many roofs were blown off and at Sioux Falls, and Huron airports planes were overturned. Across southwest Minnesota, many trees were uprooted, and several trucks were blown off of the highway. Across the area, many, barns, outbuildings, sheds, and older structures were demolished.

April 16, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 9 inches fell across parts of central and northeast South Dakota during the morning hours. The heavy snow caused many roads to become slushy and difficult to travel. The heavy snow also downed some tree branches. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Ferney, Miller, and Webster; 7 inches at Agar, Mellette, and Twin Brooks; 8 inches at Gettysburg, and 9 inches at Faulkton.

1849: Charleston, South Carolina recorded their latest freeze ever with a temperature of 32 degrees while 6 inches of snow fell at Wilmington, North Carolina. Snow fell as far south as Milledgeville, Georgia. A damaging hard freeze occurred from Texas to Georgia devastating the cotton crop.

1851: "The Lighthouse Storm" of 1851 struck New England on this date. Heavy gales and high seas pounded the coasts of New Hampshire and eastern Massachusetts. The storm arrived at the time of a full moon, and high tide was producing unusually high storm tides. The storm was so named because it destroyed the lighthouse at Cohasset, Massachusetts. Two assistant lighthouse keepers were killed there when the structure was swept away by the storm tide.

1880 - A tornado near Marshall, MO, carried the heavy timbers of an entire home a distance of twelve miles. (The Weather Channel)

1933 - Franklin Lake, NH, was buried under 35 inches of snow. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1960 - A wind gust of 70 mph was measured at the Stapleton International Airport in Denver CO, their highest wind gust of record. (The Weather Channel)

1988 - A storm in the northeastern U.S. produced a foot of snow at Pittsburg VT. Severe thunderstorms produced baseball size hail and spawned five tornadoes in the Southern High Plains Region. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A cold front, ushering sharply colder air into the north central U.S., brought snow to parts of Montana and North Dakota. At midday the temperature at Cutbank MT was just 22 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front produced large hail and damaging winds across Oklahoma, with 99 reports of large hail and damaging winds during the evening and early nighttime hours. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail south of Carney, and wind gusts to 100 mph in the Oklahoma City area which swept away many Federal tax returns being transported from a mail cart to a waiting truck about the time of the midnight deadline. Will Rogers Airport in Oklahoma City reported a record wind gust of 92 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2008: Typhoon Neoguri forms over the South China Sea on the 15th and rapidly intensifying to attain typhoon strength by the 16th, reaching its peak intensity on the 18th with maximum sustained winds near 109 mph. More than 120,000 people are evacuated from Hainan when heavy rains cause flash floods in low-lying areas. Three fatalities are attributed to the storm, though 40 fishermen are reported missing. Neoguri made landfall in China earlier than any other tropical cyclone on record, about two weeks before the previous record set by Typhoon Wanda in 1971.

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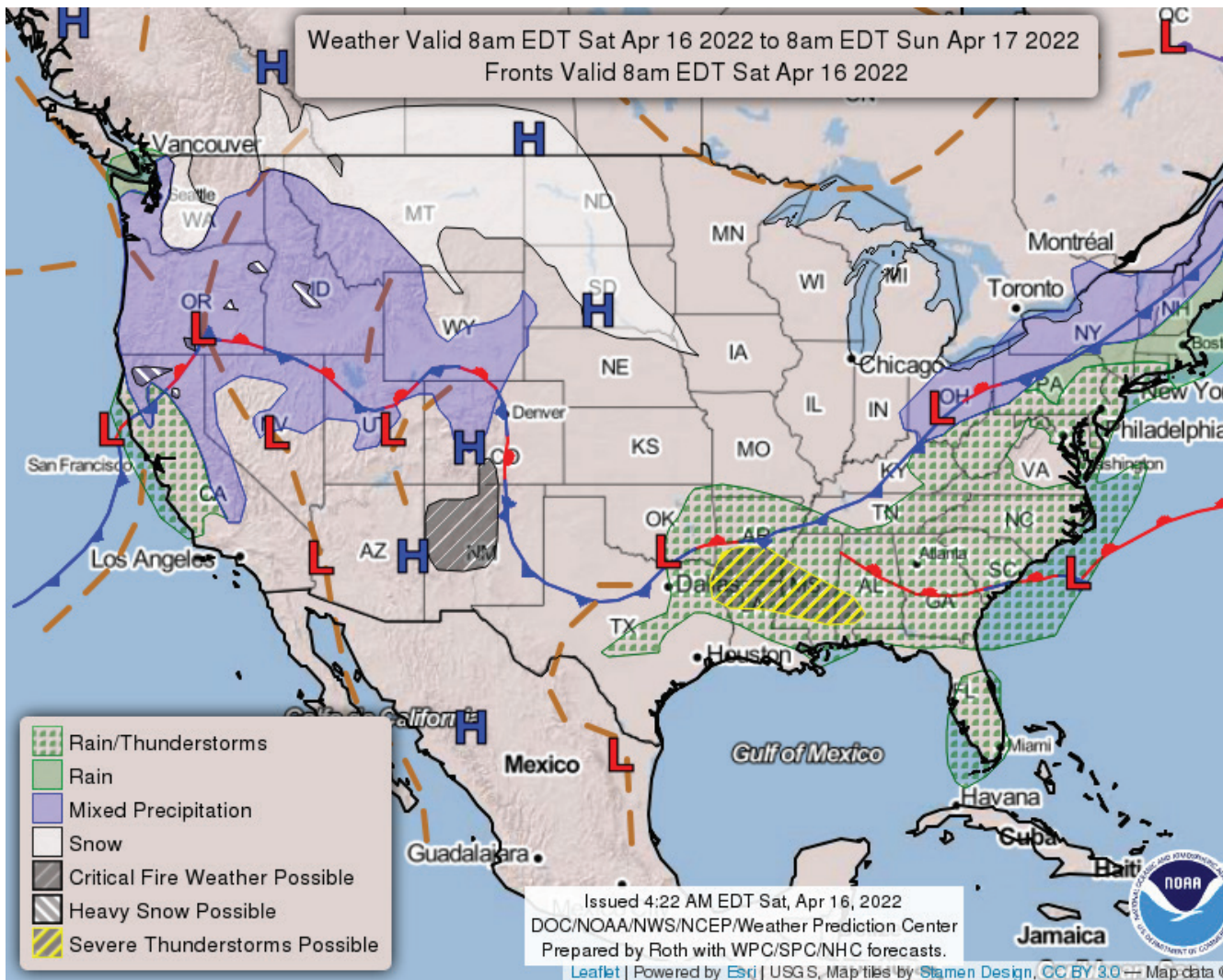
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 32 °F at 5:02 PM
Low Temp: 16 °F at 7:07 AM
Wind: 26 mph at 2:07 AM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 38 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 91 in 1913
Record Low: 14 in 1953
Average High: 58°F
Average Low: 32°F
Average Precip in April.: 0.79
Precip to date in April.: 1.79
Average Precip to date: 2.85
Precip Year to Date: 3.59
Sunset Tonight: 8:21:14 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:41:16 AM



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ALWAYS ON HIS MIND

Mrs. Hattie Hollowell is known as "The Forgotten Woman of New York City." She spent three years, four months and sixteen days in jail without a member of her family, a friend or an attorney visiting her.

When she was finally "discovered," an investigation revealed that she had never been brought to trial. Instead of being helped, she was forgotten and ignored by "the system." When she finally was discovered, the legal machinery moved swiftly to release her.

Others may forget and ignore us, but not the Lord. In Psalm 136:23 we read, "He remembered us in our low estate and weaknesses. His faithful love endures forever."

One day Jesus was teaching a group of followers. He wanted to get them involved in his lesson, so He asked, "What is the price of five sparrows?" Then, He answered his question by saying, "A couple of pennies? Not much more than that." He continued, "And yet God does not forget a single one of them. And He even knows the number of hairs on your head. In fact, He knows all about you - your weaknesses, your wants, and even your worries. And never forget that He cares for every one of you!"

If a little bird is the object of His love, how much more does He love each one of us, no matter who or what or where we are. We may be forsaken by our family and friends, but not the Lord. He remembers us in our "low estate," and His faithful love endures forever.

Jesus promised, "Remember, I am always with you!"

Prayer: We thank You, Father, for the promise of Your presence and the fact that Your love for us will never end. We are blessed to always be remembered. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: He remembered us in our low estate and weaknesses. His faithful love endures forever. Psalm 136:23

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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)

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

04-17-20-46-64, Mega Ball: 23, Megaplier: 4

(four, seventeen, twenty, forty-six, sixty-four; Mega Ball: twenty-three; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$20 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$325 million

Judge sentences Box Elder man to 15 years in fatal stabbing

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A judge has sentenced a Box Elder man to 15 years in prison for stabbing a man to death.

The Rapid City Journal reported that Pennington County Judge Matt Brown handed down 31-year-old Barry Allman's sentence on Thursday. Prosecutors accused Allman of stabbing 33-year-old Lance Baumgarten at a Rapid City house on Aug. 6, 2020.

They initially charged Allman with second-degree murder but he ultimately pleaded guilty to aggravated assault in a plea deal after his trial was declared a mistrial just two days in. Brown ordered the mistrial after prosecutors failed to inform defense attorneys that some witnesses had been granted immunity.

Allman told the judge on Thursday that Baumgarten was a "good dude" and he was sorry.

Some state lawmakers calling it quits, can't afford to serve

By SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — When trying to decide whether to seek a fourth term in the Connecticut House of Representatives, Rep. Joe de la Cruz ran the question by his wife, who he jokingly refers to as his lawyer and financial advisor.

While Tammy de la Cruz didn't want to discourage her 51-year-old husband from stepping away from the part-time job he has grown to love, she acknowledged it didn't make financial sense for him run again in November.

"The retirement planner in her didn't even have to use a calculator to do the math," Joe de la Cruz, a Democrat, told fellow House members when he announced in February that he's not seeking reelection. "The \$30,000 a year we make to do this illustrious job, the one that we all really care for, is truly not enough to live on. It's truly not enough to retire on."

Lawmakers in other states, often those with part-time "citizen" legislatures, have raised similar complaints. In Oregon, where the base pay is about \$33,000 a year, three women state representatives announced in March they are not seeking reelection because they can't afford to support their families on a part-time salary for what's really full-time work. They called the situation "unsustainable" in a joint resignation letter.

Connecticut legislators haven't seen an increase in their \$28,000 base pay in 21 years.

While it varies by state as to how legislative salaries are adjusted, bills increasing legislator pay were proposed in several states this year, including Connecticut, Georgia, Oregon, and New Mexico, which is the nation's only unsalaried legislature. So far the bills have faltered as some lawmakers fear rankling voters by approving their own pay raises.

It's also not clear whether higher salaries ultimately lead to more diversified legislatures, something proponents of pay raises say is at risk. A 2016 study published in the American Political Science Review determined there was "surprisingly little empirical evidence" that raising politicians' salaries would encour-

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age more working-class people to run for political office. The study found that higher salaries “don’t seem to make political office more attractive to workers; they seem to make it more attractive to professionals who already earn high salaries.”

Arturo Vargas, CEO of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, said he believes that low pay, coupled with the threats and picketing some lawmakers and their families have received over issues like COVID-19 rules, will discourage people of modest means from running. And that often means people of color.

“It makes it more challenging for people who don’t have a lot of free time and need to rely on income to be able to perform their public service,” he said. “And it does make it an occupation that becomes more limited to the wealthy. And the wealthy in this country tend to be more white than people of color.”

In Washington, Democratic Sen. Mona Das, a child of immigrants from India who was first elected in 2018, recently announced on Facebook that she’s not seeking reelection. Part of the reason, she said, is the difficulty she’s had in meeting her financial obligations on a state Senate salary. Senators in Washington earn \$56,881 a year plus a per diem to offset living expenses when the legislature is in session. That per diem jumped from up to \$120 a day to up to \$185 a day this year while the salary is scheduled to increase to \$57,876 on July 1.

This year, roughly 71% of state legislators are white, 9% Black, 6% Hispanic and 2% Asian or Hawaiian, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Legislative chambers continue to remain male-dominated on average. Nationally, around 29% of state lawmakers are women, up from about 25% five years ago.

There are roughly 1,600 millennial and Gen Z individuals serving in state legislatures and in Congress nationwide, and the Millennial Action Project said that number has grown in recent years. Reggie Paros, chief program officer for the nonpartisan organization supports legislators and members of Congress born after 1980, said younger lawmakers haven’t been in the workforce long enough to establish the financial stability needed to make up for a low-paying legislative job.

“That financial barrier is one of the biggest struggles for getting into public office,” Paros said.

Political polarization is another potential deterrent for new participants.

“I think it becomes harder to make an argument for a lot of people that they should put themselves into the political maelstrom at what could come as a considerable cost to their families,” said Peverill Squire, professor of political science at the University of Missouri.

His research on how and why legislatures change over time has found a “greater diversity on a range of different dimensions” in recent years. In Oregon, for example, women held the majority of seats in the state’s House of Representatives for the first time in 2021.

“But that change,” he said, “is perhaps going to be more difficult to achieve in the future if, in fact, the compensation that often gets offered for legislative services is lagging behind what most people during their working years would need to support themselves and their families.”

When De la Cruz, a union sheet metal worker, leaves office, he said there will be no employed construction workers serving in the Connecticut General Assembly, never mind anyone who works as a cashier at Walmart or an attendant at a gas station. He contends it’s important to have those voices of “laymen” represented at the state Capitol.

“It’s a huge concern of mine,” de la Cruz said. “Regular folks, like regular working folks, they don’t see the value in other working folks up there for them ... They don’t understand that my voice ... is about as close to a voice that they’re going to have.”

Connecticut Rep. Bob Godfrey, a 17-term Democrat from Danbury who has proposed legislation increasing salaries for at least five years, recalled a plumber, manufacturing assembly line worker and a meter reader serving with him in the House during his early days. Godfrey, who relies on his legislative pay and Social Security to pay his bills, said he fears the lack of blue-collar workers “skews policymaking toward the affluent” in Connecticut.

“We don’t look like the state,” he said.

In New Mexico, a Senate panel this year endorsed a proposed constitutional amendment to provide a

salary to legislators who currently collect a daily stipend of approximately \$165 during legislative sessions and for travel. Democratic Sen. Katie Duhigg of Albuquerque argued that a salary would “really expand the universe of people who are able to serve,” noting the legislature is “largely the rich and retired.” But action on the proposal was postponed indefinitely.

Earlier this year in Alaska, lawmakers rejected a plan that would have raised their annual base salary from \$50,400 to \$64,000. It hasn’t been changed since 2010. But the same proposal would have capped their daily \$307 per diem for expenses like food and lodging at \$100 and required receipts for claims. Some legislators complained \$100 wouldn’t be enough to cover the cost of living in Juneau, the state’s capital, during session.

Sen. Mike Shower, a Republican from Wasilla, Alaska, raised concerns about the ramifications of low pay in a letter to the State Officers Compensation Commission, which proposed the revised salary and per diem plan.

“If there isn’t a good compensation package,” he wrote, “how do we get decent public servants who aren’t wealthy, retired or have the luxury of a spouse with a good enough job to support someone being a legislator?”

North Korea’s Kim attends parade honoring grandfather

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attended a massive civilian parade in the capital, Pyongyang, celebrating a milestone birth anniversary of his state-founding grandfather in which thousands marched in a choreographed display of loyalty to the Kim family, state media said Saturday.

The reports didn’t mention any speech or comments made by Kim during Friday’s event and it appeared the country passed its biggest holiday without showcasing its military hardware, amid heightened tensions over its nuclear program.

Commercial satellite images in recent weeks have indicated preparations for a large military parade in Pyongyang, which could take place on the April 25 founding anniversary of North Korea’s army and display the most advanced weapons in Kim’s nuclear arsenal, such as intercontinental ballistic missiles.

There’s also expectation that Pyongyang will further escalate its weapons testing in the coming weeks or months, possibly including a resumption of nuclear explosive tests or test-flying missiles over Japan, as it attempts to force a response from the Biden administration while it’s preoccupied with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and a rivalry with China.

State media images showed Kim waving from a balcony looking over Kim Il Sung Square, which is named after his grandfather, as huge columns of people carrying red plastic flowers and floats with political slogans marched below.

Ri Il Hwan, a member of the ruling Workers’ Party Politburo, issued a call for loyalty, saying in a speech that North Koreans will “always emerge victorious” under Kim’s guidance. It appeared Kim didn’t deliver a speech and state media didn’t mention any comments regarding the United States or rival South Korea.

The parade came hours before thousands of young people performed a mass dance in the square as fireworks launched from a nearby riverbank lit up the night sky.

Kim Il Sung’s birthday is the most important national holiday in North Korea, where the Kim family has ruled under a strong personality cult since the nation’s founding in 1948. This week’s celebrations marking the 110th anniversary of his birth came as his grandson revives nuclear brinkmanship aimed at forcing the United States to accept the idea of North Korea as a nuclear power and remove crippling economic sanctions.

North Korea has opened 2022 with a slew of weapons tests, including its first flight test of an ICBM since 2017. South Korea’s military has also detected signs that North Korea is rebuilding tunnels at a nuclear testing ground it partially dismantled weeks before Kim’s first summit with then-U.S. President Donald Trump in June 2018.

Kim Jong Un’s defiant displays of his military might are also likely motivated by domestic politics, experts

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say, as he doesn't otherwise have significant accomplishments to trumpet to his people after a decade in power.

His stated goals of simultaneously developing nuclear weapons and bringing economic prosperity to his impoverished populace derailed after the collapse of his second summit with Trump in 2019, when the Americans rejected North Korea's demands for major sanctions relief in exchange for a limited surrender of its nuclear capabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic unleashed further shock on his broken economy, forcing him to acknowledge last year that the North was facing its "worst-ever situation."

Sung Kim, the top U.S. official on North Korea, is scheduled to visit South Korea next week for talks on the international community's response to the North's recent missile tests.

North Korea has recently resumed its trademark harsh rhetoric against its rivals. One of its international affairs commentators labeled U.S. President Joe Biden as "an old man in senility," while Kim's powerful sister, Kim Yo Jong, called South Korea's defense minister "a scum-like guy" and threatened to annihilate South Korea with nuclear strikes.

"Kim Jong Un's stated goal of deploying tactical nuclear weapons, Kim Yo Jong's recent threats toward Seoul and satellite imagery of tunneling activity at Punggye-ri all point to an upcoming nuclear test," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul. "Additional missile launches are also expected for honing weapons delivery systems."

Chinese astronauts land after 6 months on space station

BEIJING (AP) — Three Chinese astronauts returned to Earth on Saturday after six months aboard their country's newest orbital station in the longest crewed mission to date for China's ambitious space program.

The Shenzhou 13 space capsule landed in the Gobi desert in the northern region of Inner Mongolia, shown live on state TV.

During the mission, astronaut Wang Yaping carried out the first spacewalk by a Chinese woman. Wang and crewmates Zhai Zhigang and Ye Guangfu beamed back physics lessons for high school students.

China launched its first astronaut into space in 2003 and landed robot rovers on the moon in 2013 and on Mars last year. Officials have discussed a possible crewed mission to the moon.

On Saturday, state TV showed images from inside the capsule as it traveled at 200 meters per second over Africa before entering the atmosphere.

The trio were the second crew aboard Tiangong, or Heavenly Palace. Its core module, Tianhe, was launched in April 2021. Plans call for completing construction this year by adding two more modules.

Authorities have yet to announce a date for launching the next Tiangong crew.

China is excluded from the International Space Station due to U.S. unease that its space program is run by the ruling Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army.

China was the third nation to launch an astronaut into space on its own after the former Soviet Union and the United States. Tiangong is China's third space station following predecessors launched in 2011 and 2016.

The government announced in 2020 that China's first reusable spacecraft had landed following a test flight but no photos or details of the vehicle have been released.

On Tuesday, President Xi Jinping visited the launch site in Wenchang on the southern island of Hainan from which the Tianhe module was fired into orbit.

"Persist in pursuing the frontiers of world aerospace development and the major strategic needs of national aerospace," Xi told staff at the site, all of them in military uniform.

Ukraine war far from over as Russia renews strikes in Kyiv

By ADAM SCHRECK and MSTYSLAV CHERNOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces resumed scattered attacks on Kyiv, western Ukraine and beyond Saturday in an explosive reminder to Ukrainians and their Western supporters that the whole country remains under threat despite Russia's pivot toward mounting a new offensive in the east.

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Stung by the loss of its Black Sea flagship and indignant over what it alleged were Ukrainian strikes on Russian territory, Russia's military command had warned a day earlier of renewed attacks on Ukraine's capital and said it was targeting military sites.

Associated Press reporters documented civilian deaths in strikes this week on the eastern city of Kharkiv, and each day brings new discoveries of civilian victims in a war that has shattered European security. In the Kyiv region alone, Ukrainian authorities have reported finding the bodies of more than 900 civilians, most shot dead, after Russian troops retreated two weeks ago.

Smoke rose early Saturday from eastern Kyiv as Mayor Vitali Klitschko reported a strike on the the city's Darnytski district. He said rescuers and paramedics were at the scene, and information about possible deaths would be provided later. The mayor advised residents who fled the city earlier in the war not to return for their safety.

It was not immediately clear from the ground what was hit in the attack. Darnytskyi is a sprawling district on the southeastern edge of the capital, containing a mixture of Soviet-style apartment blocks, newer shopping centers and big-box retail outlets, industrial areas and railyards.

The spokesman for Russia's Defense Ministry said Russian forces used "air-launched high-precision long-range weapons" to target an armored vehicle plant in Kyiv. He didn't specify where exactly the plant in Kyiv is located, but there is one in the Darnytskyi district.

It was the second strike in the Kyiv area in two days. Another hit a missile plant on Friday as tentative signs of prewar life began to resurface in the capital after Russian troops failed to capture the city and withdrew to concentrate on launching a full-scale assault in eastern Ukraine.

Kyiv was not the only target Saturday. In eastern Ukraine, an explosion believed to be caused by a missile struck Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, according to firefighters and AP journalists at the scene.

The strike near an outdoor market along with residential and industrial buildings killed one person and wounded at least 18, according to rescue workers who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to release the information.

Meanwhile, the governor of the Lviv region in western Ukraine – far from the Russian border and an area long seen as a safe zone – reported airstrikes on the region by Russian Su-35 aircraft that took off from neighboring Belarus. Maksym Kozytskyy didn't provide details about possible casualties or damage.

Fighting continued in the pummeled southern port city of Mariupol, where locals reported seeing Russian troops digging up bodies. In the northeastern city of Kharkiv, the shelling of a residential area killed seven people, including a 7-month-old child, and wounded 34, according to regional Gov. Oleh Sinehubov.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russian troops occupying parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions in the south of terrorizing civilians and hunting for anyone who served in Ukraine's military or government.

"The occupiers think this will make it easier for them to control this territory. But they are very wrong. They are fooling themselves," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address. "Russia's problem is that it is not accepted — and never will be accepted — by the entire Ukrainian people. Russia has lost Ukraine forever."

Officials think 2,500 to 3,000 Ukrainian troops have died in the war, Zelenskyy told CNN in an interview. He said about 10,000 have been injured and it's "hard to say how many will survive."

The United Nations' human rights office said it has confirmed the deaths of 1,982 civilians but cautioned that the figure does not include people killed in blockaded cities like Mariupol and the actual number is almost sure to be considerably higher.

Russia's warning of stepped-up attacks on the capital came after Russian authorities accused Ukraine on Thursday of wounding seven people and damaging about 100 residential buildings with airstrikes in Bryansk, a region bordering Ukraine. Authorities in another border region of Russia also reported Ukrainian shelling.

Ukrainian officials have not confirmed striking targets in Russia, and the reports could not be independently verified.

However, Ukrainian officials did strike a key Russian warship with missiles earlier this week, in an important victory for Ukraine and symbolic defeat for Russia.

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A senior U.S. defense official said the U.S. believes the Moskva was hit by at least one Neptune anti-ship missile. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an intelligence assessment.

The Moskva, named for the Russian capital, sank while being towed to port Thursday after taking heavy damage. Moscow did not acknowledge any attack, saying only that a fire had detonated ammunition on board.

The sinking reduces Russia's firepower in the Black Sea and seemed to symbolize Moscow's fortunes in an eight-week invasion widely seen as a historic blunder following the Russian retreat from the Kyiv region and much of northern Ukraine.

After the withdrawal, bodies were abandoned in the streets of towns around Kyiv or given temporary burials. Andriy Nebytov, who heads the region's police force, cited police data indicating 95% died from gunshot wounds.

"Consequently, we understand that under the (Russian) occupation, people were simply executed in the streets," Nebytov said.

More bodies are being found every day under rubble and in mass graves, he added, with the largest number found in Bucha, more than 350. According to Nebytov, utility workers gathered and buried bodies in the Kyiv suburb while it remained under Russian control. Russian troops, he added, had been "tracking down" people who expressed strong pro-Ukrainian views.

In Mariupol, the city council said Friday that locals reported seeing Russian troops digging up bodies buried in residential courtyards and not allowing new burials "of people killed by them."

"Why the exhumation is being carried out and where the bodies will be taken is unknown," the council said on the Telegram messaging app.

Fighting continued in industrial areas and the port, and Russia for the first time used the Tu-22M3 long-range bomber to attack the city, said Oleksandr Motuzyanyk, a spokesman for the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense.

Mariupol has been blockaded by Russian forces since the early days of the invasion, and dwindling numbers of Ukrainian defenders have held out against a siege that has come at a horrific cost to trapped and starving civilians.

The mayor said this week that the city's death toll could surpass 20,000. Other Ukrainian officials have said they expect to find evidence in Mariupol of atrocities like the ones discovered in Bucha and other towns outside Kyiv.

Mariupol's capture would allow Russian forces in the south, which came up through the annexed Crimean Peninsula, to fully link up with troops in the Donbas region, Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland and the target of the looming offensive.

It's not certain when Russia will launch a full-scale campaign.

Also Friday, a regional Ukrainian official said seven people were killed and 27 wounded when Russian forces fired on buses carrying civilians in the village of Borovaya, near Kharkiv. The claim could not be independently verified.

Dmytro Chubenko, a spokesman for the regional prosecutor's office, told the Suspilne news website that authorities had opened criminal proceedings in connection with a suspected "violation of the laws and customs of war, combined with premeditated murder."

'I feel so lost': The elderly in Ukraine, left behind, mourn

By CARA ANNA and RODRIGO ABD Associated Press

MYKULYCHI, Ukraine (AP) — This is not where Nadiya Trubchaninova thought she would find herself at 70 years of age, hitchhiking daily from her village to the shattered town of Bucha trying to bring her son's body home for burial.

The questions wear her down, heavy like the winter coat and boots she still wears against the chill. Why had Vadym gone to Bucha, where the Russians were so much harsher than the ones occupying their village? Who shot him as he drove on Yablunska Street, where so many bodies were found? And why did

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she lose her son just one day before the Russians withdrew?

Now 48-year-old Vadym is in a black bag in a refrigerated truck. After word reached her that he had been found and buried by strangers in a yard in Bucha, she has spent more than a week trying to bring him home for a proper grave. But he is one body among hundreds, part of an investigation into war crimes that has grown to global significance.

Trubchaninova is among the many elderly people left behind or who chose to stay as millions of Ukrainians fled across borders or to other parts of the country. They were the first to be seen on empty streets after the Russians withdrew from communities around the capital, Kyiv, peering from wooden gates or carrying bags of donated food back to freezing homes.

Some, like Trubchaninova, survived the worst of the war only to find it had taken their children.

She last saw her son on March 30. She thought he was taking a walk as part of his long recovery from a stroke. "It would be crazy to go farther," she said. She wonders whether he went driving to search for a cellphone connection to call his own son and wish him happy birthday.

She wonders whether Vadym thought the Russians in Bucha were like those occupying their village, who told them they wouldn't be harmed if they didn't fight back.

More than a week later, she found his makeshift grave with the help of a stranger with the same name and age as her son. The following day, she spotted the body bag containing Vadym at a Bucha cemetery. He always stood out as tall, and his foot stuck out from a hole in the corner. Anxious not to lose him, she found a scarf and tied it there. It is her marker.

She believes she knows where her son's body is now, in a refrigerator truck outside Bucha's morgue. She is desperate to find an official to hurry the process of inspecting her son and issuing the documents needed to release him.

"I get worried, where he'd go, and whether I'd be able to find him," she said.

Once she collects his body, she'll need a casket. A casket equals a month of her pension, or about \$90. She, like other elderly Ukrainians, hasn't received her pension since the war began. She gets by selling the vegetables she grows, but the potatoes she meant to plant in March withered while she was hiding in her home.

Her aging cellphone keeps losing battery life. She forgets her phone number. Her other son, two years younger than Vadym, is unemployed and troubled. Nothing is easy.

"I would walk out of this place because I feel it's so hard to be here," Trubchaninova said, sitting at home under a tinted black-and-white photo of herself at age 32, full of determination.

She recalled watching her television, when it still worked, in the early days of the war, as broadcasts showed so many Ukrainians fleeing. She worried about them. Where are they going? Where will they sleep? What will they eat? How will they remake their lives again?

"I felt so sorry for them," she said. "And now, I'm in that situation. I feel so lost inside. I don't even know how to describe how lost I am. I'm not even sure I'll put my head on this pillow tonight and wake up tomorrow."

Like many Ukrainians of her age, she worked without taking time for herself, determined to give her children an education and a better life than her own. "Those were my plans," she said, agitated. "What plans do you want me to have now? How do I make new plans if one of my sons is lying there in Bucha?"

The cemetery where she wants to place her son can be seen from Vadym's old room, where his canes are still propped against the door.

On Thursday, she waited outside the Bucha morgue again. After another long day without progress, she sat on a bench in the sun. "I just wanted to sit in nice weather," she said. "I'm going to go home. Tomorrow I'll come again."

Across town was the kind of closure that Trubchaninova wants so badly. At a cemetery, two 82-year-old women rose from a bench and crossed themselves as the now-familiar white van arrived carrying another casket.

The women, Neonyla and Helena, sing at funerals. They have performed at 10 since the Russians with-

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drew. "The biggest pain for a mother is to lose her son," Neonyla said. "There is no word to describe it." Like Trubchaninova, they hadn't fled ahead of the Russians. This is our land, they said.

They joined the priest at the foot of the grave. Two men with handfuls of tulips attended, along with a man with cap in hand. "That's it," a gravedigger said when the exhausted-looking priest was finished.

Another man with a gold-ink pen wrote basic details on a temporary cross. It was for a woman who had been killed by shelling as she cooked outside. She was 69.

A row of empty graves lay waiting.

Pelicans earn 105-101 win over Clippers, claim No. 8 seed

By BETH HARRIS AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A franchise player out for the season. A first-year head coach. A 1-12 start. The New Orleans Pelicans overcame it all and stormed back to make the playoffs.

Brandon Ingram scored 30 points and the Pelicans rallied from a 13-point deficit in the fourth quarter to beat the depleted Los Angeles Clippers 105-101 in a play-in Friday night and earn the West's No. 8 seed.

"That win was big-time," Pelicans coach Willie Green said.

New Orleans blew a 16-point lead in the first half and didn't grab the lead for good until the game's final 4 1/2 minutes.

"It was an emotional game, a ton of highs and lows," Green said. "But for us, our mentality is we're going to continue to fight. We're not going to fade out."

The Pelicans made the playoffs for the first time since 2017-18, guided by Green, a former Clipper. They've been without Zion Williamson all season because of a foot injury.

"Starting off 1-12 and 3-16, you're thinking when is it going to pick up?" rookie Trey Murphy said. "Being my first year, I don't know what winning is like. Look at us now."

CJ McCollum added 19 points and Larry Nance Jr. had 14 points and 16 rebounds for New Orleans, which will play No. 1 seed Phoenix in the first round. Game 1 is Sunday in the desert.

"This team is resilient," said Nance, who was traded, along with McCollum, from Portland in February and recently returned from knee surgery. "They started 1-12. That's so hard to pick yourself up from. I've been in seasons like that, it's hard to keep going and keep striving for it."

The Clippers were dealt a huge blow earlier in the day when Paul George entered the league's health and safety protocols. They'd already been without Kawhi Leonard all season while he rehabbed an ACL injury. He watched from the bench early in the game.

Marcus Morris and Reggie Jackson each had 27 points for the Clippers.

"I am disappointed in us not being able to make the playoffs, no matter who was playing," said Clippers coach Tyronn Lue, who is missing the postseason for the first time as a head coach.

The Pelicans shot 57% in the first half and were better on the boards, in the paint and off the bench. They led by 16 in the second quarter before the Clippers cut their deficit to 56-46 at halftime.

The Clippers roared back in the third, outscoring the Pelicans 38-18. They opened with a 20-2 run that had the crowd on its feet. Jackson scored 10 points and Morris added six in the spurt.

Robert Covington started the third in place of 7-footer Ivica Zubac and his three-point play gave the Clippers a 75-62 lead, their largest of the game.

Ingram scored five of the Pelicans' final 12 points to send them into the fourth trailing 84-74.

"Just having faith in each other and staying connected," Green said of the Pelicans' mindset. "Knowing we took their best shot and we're only down 10 going into the fourth."

That's when New Orleans staged a rally of its own.

After the Clippers scored to go up by 13 points, the Pelicans ran off 11 straight points and then McCollum hit a 3-pointer to tie it, 88-all.

Murphy hit his second 3-pointer of the quarter for another tie at 94-all.

That sparked a 10-0 run that gave the Pelicans a 101-94 lead, capped by Murphy's 3-pointer that bounced on the rim and went in. He was one of three rookies who contributed.

"Murphy had huge stones to come in and make those big shots they needed when they were struggling to score the basketball," Lue said.

The Clippers twice closed within two in the final 1:17, but they missed 2 of 4 free throws and Jackson and Morris missed shots down the stretch to see their season slip away.

"I thought our guys got a little tired," Lue said. "We didn't continue to keep attacking."

The Clippers, who made the Western Conference finals for the first time in franchise history last year, also were missing Luke Kennard. The league's 3-point percentage leader didn't play because of a sore right hamstring that kept him out of the loss at Minnesota on Tuesday in the team's first play-in game.

TIP-INS

Pelicans: They had won the season series, 3-1.

Clippers: Hadn't missed the playoffs since 2017-18 season. ... Nicolas Batum and Terance Mann started in place of George and Kennard ... Lawrence Frank, president of basketball operations, said Leonard "continues to progress with his rehab," but there is no timetable for his return.

UP NEXT

The Pelicans were 1-3 against the Suns this season.

Palestinians in Jenin evoke painful past as violence flares

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JENIN REFUGEE CAMP, West Bank (AP) — The journey of the Palestinian who opened fire at a street-side bar in Tel Aviv last week, killing three young Israeli men and sending the city into lockdown, began a two-hour drive away in an impoverished refugee camp deep inside the occupied West Bank.

Twenty years after Jenin saw one of the biggest battles of the second Palestinian uprising, Israel is once again launching near-daily raids into the camp and trading fire with local fighters. Decades of dispossession, poverty and violence have only deepened the camp's reputation as a bastion of armed struggle against Israeli rule.

Tires, gutted appliances and other rubble are piled up near the entrances to the camp, which is transformed into a fortress at night, when the raids usually occur. Narrow roads wind through a confusion of squat concrete homes built on a hillside, some adorned with portraits of slain Palestinians and the flags of armed factions.

Palestinian assailants have killed 14 Israelis in a series of attacks in recent weeks, and clashes at a major Jerusalem holy site on Friday have raised tensions further.

Last Thursday, Raad Hazem, a 28-year-old from the Jenin camp, attacked the bar in central Tel Aviv and eluded a massive manhunt for hours before police shot and killed him near a mosque.

A large poster celebrating Hazem as a martyr to the Palestinian cause was hung over the main entrance to the camp after the attack, praising him for "imposing a curfew" on the seaside metropolis.

Israel has launched a wave of arrest raids across the West Bank, igniting clashes with Palestinian militants. At least 25 Palestinians have been killed, many of whom had carried out attacks or were involved in the clashes, but also an unarmed woman and a lawyer who appears to have been killed by mistake. Twelve were from in or around Jenin.

The renewed violence came as little surprise to Ahmed Tobasi, the artistic director of the Freedom Theater, which was co-founded by a famous militant and offers drama classes, performance facilities and a safe space for young Palestinians in the camp.

"What do you expect from a child who grows up in a refugee camp, who sees army raids morning, noon and night?" he said. "His father's a prisoner, his brother's a prisoner, his mother has been detained, his friends are prisoners or martyrs."

"There's no opportunity to be anything else," he said.

The camp is home to Palestinian families who fled or were driven out of what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. Like other camps across the Middle East, it has grown into a

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crowded, built-up neighborhood where a U.N. agency provides basic services.

Jenin emerged as a militant stronghold during the 2000-2005 intifada, when Palestinians launched scores of suicide bombings and other attacks against civilians, and Israel imposed closures and carried out deadly raids. On March 27, 2002, a suicide bomber struck a large Passover gathering in the coastal city of Netanya, killing at least 30 people and wounding 140.

Days later, Israeli troops launched a massive operation in the Jenin camp. For eight days and nights they fought militants street by street, using armored bulldozers to destroy rows of homes, many of which had been booby-trapped. An AP reporter who visited the camp immediately afterward said it looked like an earthquake had hit.

At least 52 Palestinians, up to half of whom may have been civilians, were killed in the fighting, according to the U.N. Twenty-three Israeli soldiers were killed, including 13 in a single ambush.

Two decades later, the Palestinians' dream of an independent state in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza — territories Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war — is more remote than ever.

Peace talks ground to a halt more than a decade ago, and Israel continues to build and expand Jewish settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, which it unilaterally annexed and considers part of its capital. Gaza is ruled by the Islamic militant group Hamas, and the Palestinian Authority's limited self-rule is confined to West Bank cities and towns.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett is opposed to Palestinian statehood, but his government has taken steps to improve economic conditions, including easing some movement restrictions and issuing thousands of work permits to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israel had hoped such measures would help prevent a repeat of last year, when protests and clashes in Jerusalem during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan ignited an 11-day Gaza war.

Now, in the wake of the attacks, Israel is tightening restrictions around Jenin and calling on the PA, which coordinates with it on security matters, to take action.

But the increasingly corrupt and authoritarian PA is mired in a crisis of legitimacy that would grow even worse if it is seen to be fighting alongside Israel. Palestinian officials say the relentless Israeli raids in Jenin only undermine it further.

"We are ready in principle to work on enforcing law and order, and to implement our agreements with the Israelis, but in exchange for what?" Jenin's governor, Akram Rajoub, told The Associated Press. "I don't work for the Israelis. If I don't see a political solution on the horizon, then why should I do anything?"

Yossi Kuperwasser, a retired Israeli general who held senior positions in the West Bank during the intifada and is now at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, says it's the other way around.

"You're looking at the chicken and the egg here. We operate there because they don't," he said.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas condemned the Tel Aviv attack, but other officials did not. Rajoub visited the mourning tent of the attacker's family and gave a speech filled with praise that he later posted to Facebook.

"That's something very disturbing," Kuperwasser said. "The Palestinian Authority still thinks it's in an ongoing struggle against Zionism and against Israel as the state of the Jewish people."

In the Jenin camp, the PA is seen as a public service provider at best, and at worst as collaborators with the occupation.

"The Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian resistance are on opposite sides," said Osama Hroub, a local leader with the Islamic Jihad militant group, which has a strong presence in Jenin.

"The Palestinian Authority performs its specific security duties in exchange for economic favors, with no regard for the Palestinian people," he said.

Few expect another full-blown uprising. Israeli officials say the recent attacks appear to have been carried out by lone assailants with perhaps some accomplices, rather than by militant groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

On the streets of Jenin, the tires are piled up in anticipation of the next confrontation.

"We are going to live on our land and die with dignity, and we aren't going to surrender to the occupation," Rajoub said.

5,000 under evacuation orders as New Mexico wildfire rages

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

Douglas Siddens' mother was among those who made it out with just the clothes on her back when a deadly, wind-fueled wildfire ripped through a mountain community in southern New Mexico.

The RV park where she lived was reduced to "metal frame rails and steel wheels," said Siddens, who managed the site

"I had like 10 people displaced. They lost their homes and everything, including my mom," he said.

The fire has destroyed more than 200 homes and killed two people since it broke out Tuesday near the village Ruidoso, a vacation spot that draws thousands of tourists and horse racing fans every summer.

Hundreds of homes and summer cabins dot the surrounding mountainsides. The RV park that Siddens managed is near where an elderly couple was found dead this week outside their charred residence.

Elsewhere in the U.S., crews have been battling large fires this week in Texas, Oklahoma and Colorado, where a new blaze forced evacuations Friday along the Rocky Mountain's eastern front near Lyons about 18 miles (29 kilometers) north of Boulder.

That fire was burning in the Blue Mountains near the Larimer-Boulder county line about 20 miles (32 kilometers) southeast of Estes Park, the east entrance to Rocky Mountain National Park.

In New Mexico, power was restored to all but a few hundred customers, but evacuation orders for close to 5,000 people remained in place.

Donations poured in from surrounding communities all too familiar with just how devastating wildfires can be.

It was a decade ago that fire ripped through part of the village of Ruidoso, putting the vacation spot on the map with the most destructive wildfire in New Mexico's recorded history when more than 240 homes burned and nearly 70 square miles (181 square kilometers) of forest were blackened by a lightning-sparked blaze.

On Friday, Mayor Lynn Crawford was rallying heartbroken residents once again as firefighters tried to keep wind-whipped flames from making another run at the village. She said the response from their neighbors has been amazing.

"So we have plenty of food, we have plenty of clothes, those kinds of things but we still appreciate and need your prayers and your thoughts," the mayor said during a briefing. "Again, our hearts go out to the family of the deceased, to those that have lost their homes."

Authorities have yet to release the names of the couple who died. Their bodies were found after worried family members contacted police, saying the couple had planned to evacuate Tuesday when the fire exploded but were unaccounted for later that day.

While many older residents call Ruidoso home year round, the population of about 8,000 people expands to about 25,000 during the summer months as Texans and New Mexicans from hotter climates seek respite.

Fans also flock to Ruidoso Downs, home to one of the sport's richest quarter-horse competitions. The racing season was expected to start May 27, and horses that board there aren't in any danger as fire officials use the facility as a staging ground.

Part-time residents have taken to social media over the last few days, pleading with fire officials for updates on certain neighborhoods, hoping their family cabins weren't among those damaged or destroyed.

The hotlines lit up Friday afternoon as people in the village called in to report more smoke. Fire information officer Mike DeFries said that was because there were flare-ups within the interior of the fire as the flames found pockets of unburned fuel.

While the fire didn't make any runs at the lines crews had established, he said it was still a tough day for firefighters due to single-digit humidity, warmer temperatures and the wind.

Authorities reiterated that it was still too early to start letting people in to see the damage. They asked for patience as fire crews put out hot spots and tried to build a stronger perimeter around the blaze.

"It's still an active fire area in there and it's not a safe place," DeFries said. "It's going to require patience."

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At the same time, every step that we're taking is designed to suppress this fire and to get people back home as soon as possible."

New Mexico authorities said they suspect the fire, which has torched more than 9.5 square miles (24 square kilometers) of forest and grass, was sparked by a downed power line and the investigation continued Friday.

Hotter and drier weather coupled with decades of fire suppression have contributed to an increase in the number of acres burned by wildfires, fire scientists say. The problem is exacerbated by a more than 20-year Western megadrought that studies link to human-caused climate change.

Josh Mandel runs Ohio GOP Senate campaign 'through churches'

By JILL COLVIN and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

NORTH OLMSTED, Ohio (AP) — Before digging into his six-egg omelet at a bustling northeast Ohio diner, Republican Senate candidate Josh Mandel stopped to bow his head.

"Bless our food, our time, our conversation, in Jesus' name," said Pastor J.C. Church, who joined Mandel after a campaign event at a local church. "Amen."

The scene encapsulated Mandel's campaign strategy as he competes in a crowded field of Republican contenders ahead of Ohio's May 3 primary. He is a Jewish candidate who makes no secret of his faith, but who is centering his campaign around evangelical churches as he tries to win over religious, conservative voters.

"Usually, when someone's running for U.S. Senate or governor or Congress, they'd go to all the Republican rubber chicken dinners and clam bakes and hog roasts, stuff like that," Mandel said in a recent interview between campaign stops. "We're blowing up the playbook. I'm sidestepping all of the Republican Party groups and, instead, I'm running a campaign through churches."

Indeed, Mandel's campaign is steeped in Christianity. His website features a picture of a cross and an American flag. He pledges to make decisions in Washington with "the Bible in one hand and the Constitution in the other." And he holds most of his campaign events at evangelical churches.

Raised in the Cleveland suburb of Beachwood, Mandel is the grandson of Holocaust survivors, attended B'nai B'rith Perlman summer camp and was married in Israel. His children are enrolled at a modern orthodox Jewish day school where they study Torah half the day.

Mandel describes himself as a "proud Jew" and dismisses those, including some GOP primary rivals, who have portrayed him as insincere in his emphasis of conservative Christian values.

Some critics say they're more concerned with Mandel's history of controversial statements. He was briefly kicked off Twitter after running a poll on which "illegals" would commit the most crimes, "Muslim Terrorists" or "Mexican Gangbangers," and has characterized Black Lives Matter protesters as "thugs."

The Rev. Tim Ahrens, senior minister of the First Congregational Church of Columbus, said Jesus dedicated his life to caring for those who had been forsaken and forgotten, "so to use his name to further divide people is really sick."

"The problem that I have is when you literally take what is the Christian faith and turn it into a political campaign, it's abusive of the faith," he said.

Still, Mandel's alliance is part of a broader shift in U.S. politics, with Republicans like former President Donald Trump working to win over conservative Christians by aligning themselves with pro-Israel policies. With Jewish Americans overwhelmingly voting Democratic, according to Pew Research Center, some conservative Jewish groups have banded with white evangelical Protestants — who are more likely than Jews to favor stronger U.S. support for Israel — to form new allegiances on the right.

It's unclear whether that shift will benefit Mandel. In a major blow to his campaign, Trump endorsed rival JD Vance on Friday.

Mandel sees no contradiction between his faith and his campaign approach.

At his events, the boyish Marine veteran often introduces himself by telling the story of how "courageous Christians" sheltered his grandmother during the Holocaust, saving her life. And he explains that,

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when it comes to his support for Israel, he often has more in common with evangelical Christians than he does with liberal Jews.

"From my perspective, you know for me, I'm a proud American, I'm a proud Marine Corps vet and I'm a proud Jew," he explained. "And when I look at the U.S.-Israel relationship, I think liberal Jews in America should be ashamed of themselves for supporting anti-Israel groups like J Street. And I think the best friends of the U.S.-Israel relationship in America are evangelical Christians."

Mandel touts his opposition to abortion and a belief that "there is no separation between church and state," signaling a willingness to support policies such as prayer in public schools and permitting private businesses to turn away customers based on their religious beliefs.

"You know, people want faith instilled in the classroom, in the workplace, in all aspects of society," Mandel said.

Fred Zeidman, a longtime GOP donor and Mandel supporter who worked on Jewish outreach for multiple Republican presidential campaigns, noted that evangelicals are among the party's most consistent voters.

"If you want to win an election, you've got to go where the voters are," he said. "So I think it's essential for him, if he wants to win, that he lets the faith-based community know that he thinks like they do. He doesn't think like 80% of the Jewish community that votes Democrat no matter what."

The strategy has also garnered him attention. In a world where tweets equal visibility for a politician, Mandel's particular take on religious topics gained him more than 27,000 mentions on Twitter from October to December -- more than religion-related mentions for all other candidates, Republican or Democrat, combined, according to an analysis for The Associated Press by Signal Labs.

Stephanie A. Martin, a professor of communications at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, said Mandel's embrace of Christianity may serve to neutralize worries among Republicans about his Jewishness in a country where antisemitism is still a potent force.

When Mandel describes his platform as protecting "the Judeo-Christian bedrock of America," he is invoking what scholars term "founders rhetoric," she said, which creates "a kind of narrative logic that positions evangelicals as the rightful heirs and the rightful defenders of authentic American values."

"It's a very smart way to orient around a shared understanding of the founding narrative and what it means to have a traditional outlook on what the country means," she said, noting that vision leaves little room for versions of history that aren't white, patriarchal and Christian.

Some of Mandel's longtime Jewish friends and supporters described feeling out of place when they first attended his events. But they said they came to see the evangelicals as a natural base of support for Mandel, given their shared support for Israel, even if his efforts may make others in the Jewish community feel uncomfortable.

"I wouldn't say it feels weird, but it definitely feels different. But a great difference," said Yoel Mayerfeld, a longtime friend and supporter who lives in Mandel's native Beachwood, which boasts the second largest Jewish population per capita outside Israel. Mayerfeld, who is Jewish, said he'd been to Mandel events where he'd met religious and evangelical Christians who share many of his values.

"I think it's really unique. I think it's really beautiful in many ways," he said.

Rich Soclof, another Jewish Mandel friend and supporter, said he "was admittedly a little hesitant, not about the concept, but even what it's going to be like when I got to this event." But he, too, was pleasantly surprised, especially by the fact that Mandel has not tried to downplay his own religion.

"I love it. I can't tell you if I would have loved it 10 years ago," he said. "He's finding this synergy, in a creative way, by 'running it through churches' and being embraced by them."

Texts show Utah Sen. Lee's early work to overturn election

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Utah Sen. Mike Lee worked on early efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election, helping push legally dubious schemes to keep then-President Donald Trump in power, before he shifted course and quickly backed away.

His efforts, revealed in text messages obtained by the House panel investigating the deadly insurrec-

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tion at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, drew quick condemnation Friday from his reelection challengers.

Text messages between the Republican senator and then-White House chief of staff Mark Meadows detail how Lee encouraged top Trump advisers to embrace Sidney Powell, a Republican lawyer who later spread wild and baseless claims of a rigged election.

The messages from Lee to Meadows — and messages from Texas Republican Rep. Chip Roy to Meadows — were reported on and published Friday by CNN.

They show Lee's efforts to assist Trump began Nov. 7 and included early support for Powell. Later, Lee explored a plan to encourage state legislatures to alter the outcome of the 2020 election by appointing alternate electors.

At one point, Lee said he was working "14 hour days" assisting Trump. At another he asked Meadows, "Please tell me what I should be saying."

By mid-November, however, the messages show Lee beginning to lose confidence in Powell and, eventually, the alternate electors plan. He also questioned efforts to object to the vote certification after no evidence of widespread fraud emerged.

"I only know that this will end badly for the President unless we have the Constitution on our side," Lee wrote to Meadows.

He and Roy did not join congressional Republicans who objected to the results when they were certified in January.

Still, Lee's Republican primary opponent Becky Edwards, a former state lawmaker, said the messages show Lee "researched overturning a lawful, democratic election for partisan and political gain ... he allowed the situation to continue and enabled those seeking to keep themselves in power, no matter the consequences."

Ally Isom, a former gubernatorial deputy chief of staff who is also challenging Lee, said the messages show he is "more concerned with playing DC games" than with representing people in Utah. "I am a classic conservative," she said in a statement.

Independent Evan McMullin, a former presidential candidate, also criticized Lee on Twitter.

Lee's spokesman, for his part, said the senator did follow the Constitution and the messages "tell the same story Sen. Lee told from the floor of the Senate the day he voted to certify the election results."

Lee's messages are the latest example of high-profile Republicans pushing Meadows to challenge the election results.

Last month, The Washington Post and CBS reported that Ginni Thomas, wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, also texted Meadows repeatedly imploring him to act to overturn the 2020 election. Her involvement in the efforts have raised concerns about her husband's potential involvement in any cases involving the election or the Jan. 6 insurrection.

Man, 21, arrested a week after 3 killed at Georgia gun range

GRANTVILLE, Ga. (AP) — A 21-year-old man has been arrested in connection with a fatal armed robbery at a Georgia gun range that left three members of a family dead last week.

Jacob Christian Muse, of College Park, is charged with three counts of malice murder, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation said in a news release Friday.

When Grantville officers arrived at the scene of Lock Stock & Barrel Shooting Range on the night of April 8, they discovered the bodies of the gun range's owner, along with his wife and grandson. The victims were identified as Thomas Hawk, 75; Evelyn Hawk, 75; and Luke Hawk, 17.

Investigators said that as many as 40 guns and the range's surveillance camera were also stolen.

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

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.

Muse was booked into the Coweta County Jail, officials said. Authorities did not release additional informa-

tion about his arrest and it was not immediately clear whether Muse had an attorney who could comment.

States scale back food stamp benefits even as prices soar

By SCOTT McFETRIDGE Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Month by month, more of the roughly 40 million Americans who get help buying groceries through the federal food stamp program are seeing their benefits plunge even as the nation struggles with the biggest increase in food costs in decades.

The payments to low-income individuals and families are dropping as governors end COVID-19 disaster declarations and opt out of an ongoing federal program that made their states eligible for dramatic increases in SNAP benefits, also known as food stamps. The U.S. Department of Agriculture began offering the increased benefit in April 2020 in response to surging unemployment after the COVID-19 pandemic swept over the country.

The result is that depending on the politics of a state, individuals and families in need find themselves eligible for significantly different levels of help buying food.

Nebraska took the most aggressive action anywhere in the country, ending the emergency benefits four months into the pandemic in July 2020 in a move Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts said was necessary to “show the rest of the country how to get back to normal.”

Since then, nearly a dozen states with Republican leadership have taken similar action, with Iowa this month being the most recent place to slash the benefits. Benefits also will be cut in Wyoming and Kentucky in the next month. Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Missouri, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, Nebraska, South Dakota and Tennessee have also scaled back the benefits.

Republican leaders argue that the extra benefits were intended to only temporarily help people forced out of work by the pandemic. Now that the virus has eased, they maintain, there is no longer a need to offer the higher payments at a time when businesses in most states are struggling to find enough workers.

But the extra benefits also help out families in need at a time of skyrocketing prices for food. Recipients receive at least \$95 per month under the program, but some individuals and families typically eligible for only small benefits can get hundreds of dollars in extra payments each month.

The entire program would come to a halt if the federal government decides to end its public health emergency, though the Biden administration so far hasn't signaled an intention to do so.

For Tara Kramer, 45, of Des Moines, the decision by Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds to end the emergency payments starting April 1 meant her monthly SNAP benefit plunged from \$250 in March to \$20 in April. Kramer, who has a genetic disorder that can cause intense pain, said the extra money enabled her to buy healthier food that made her feel better and help her to live a more active life.

“My heart sank,” Kramer said. “All the memories from before the emergency allotment came rushing back.”

Alex Murphy, a spokesman for Reynolds, noted the extra benefits were always intended to help people who lost jobs because of the pandemic and said, “we have to return to pre-pandemic life.” Murphy pointed out that Iowa has over 86,000 job openings listed on a state unemployment website.

But Kramer said she's not able to work and that even getting out of her apartment can be a struggle at times.

Vince Hall, who oversees public policy for the nationwide food bank network Feeding America, said ending the extra benefits ignores the reality that even as the pandemic wanes there hasn't been a decline in demand at food banks.

Wages have been increasing in the United States and the national unemployment rate in March dropped to 3.6%, but those gains have been offset by an 8.5% increase in inflation compared to a year ago. Food is among items rising the fastest, leaving many families unable to buy enough groceries.

“The COVID pandemic is giving way to a hunger pandemic,” Hall said. “We're in a real, real struggle.”

Feeding America, which represents 200 food banks, reports that demand for food has increased just as these organizations are seeing individual donations dwindle and food costs rise. The organization estimates the nation's food banks will spend 40% more to buy food in the fiscal year ending June 2022 as

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in the previous year.

For people like Annie Ballan, 51, of Omaha, Nebraska, the decision by Ricketts to stop participating in the program reduced the SNAP payments she and her son receive from nearly \$500 a month to \$41. Both have health problems and can't work.

"From the middle of the month to the end of the month, people have no food," Ballan said, her voice rising in anger. "This is all the governor's fault. He says he loves Nebraskans, that Nebraskans are wonderful, but he's cut off our food."

The demand on food banks will only grow as more states reduce their SNAP payments, which typically provide nine meals for every one meal offered by food banks, Hall said.

Valerie Andrews, 59, of St. Charles, Missouri, said the SNAP benefits that she and her husband rely on fell from \$430 a month to \$219 when Missouri ended the extra payments in August 2021. Andrews, who is disabled, said she tries to budget carefully and gets food regularly from a food pantry but it's difficult.

"We're barely making it from paycheck to paycheck," she said. "It gets pretty rough most of the time."

Officials at food banks and pantries said they will do their best to meet increased demand but there is no way they can fully offset the drop in SNAP benefits.

Matt Unger, director of the Des Moines Area Religious Council network of food pantries in Iowa's capital city, noted the pantry's cost for a 5-ounce can of chicken as jumped from 54 cents in March 2019 to a current price of \$1.05.

"Costs are just going through the roof," he said.

Police: More than 900 civilian bodies found in Kyiv region

By ADAM SCHRECK, ROBERT BURNS and YESICA FISCH Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The bodies of more than 900 civilians have been discovered in the region surrounding the Ukrainian capital following Russia's withdrawal — most of them fatally shot, police said Friday, an indication that many people were "simply executed."

The jarring number emerged shortly after Russia's Defense Ministry promised to step up missile attacks on Kyiv in response to Ukraine's alleged assaults on Russian territory. That ominous warning followed the stunning loss of Moscow's flagship in the Black Sea, which a senior U.S. defense official said Friday was indeed hit by at least one Ukrainian missile.

Amid its threats, Moscow continued preparations for a renewed offensive in eastern Ukraine. Fighting also went on in the pummeled southern port city of Mariupol, where locals reported seeing Russian troops digging up bodies. In the northeastern city of Kharkiv, shelling of a residential area killed seven people, including a 7-month-old child, and wounded 34, according to regional Gov. Oleh Sinehubov.

Around Kyiv, Andriy Nebytov, the head of the capital's regional police force, said bodies were abandoned in the streets or given temporary burials. He cited police data indicating 95% died from gunshot wounds.

"Consequently, we understand that under the (Russian) occupation, people were simply executed in the streets," Nebytov said.

More bodies are being found every day under rubble and in mass graves, he added, with the largest number found in Bucha, where there were more than 350.

According to Nebytov, utility workers gathered and buried bodies in the Kyiv suburb while it remained under Russian control. Russian troops, he added, were "tracking down" people who expressed strong pro-Ukrainian views.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russian troops occupying parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions in the south of terrorizing civilians and hunting for anyone who served in Ukraine's military or government.

"The occupiers think this will make it easier for them to control this territory. But they are very wrong. They are fooling themselves," Zelenskyy said. "Russia's problem is that it is not accepted — and never will be accepted — by the entire Ukrainian people. Russia has lost Ukraine forever."

In his nightly video address to the nation, Zelenskyy also said he discussed the fate of Mariupol with

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top military and intelligence officials. He said he couldn't offer details, "but we are doing everything we can to save our people."

Zelenskyy said peace and "how many more Ukrainians the occupiers have time to kill" depend on Ukraine receiving more outside support, and echoed calls for more and faster military aid, as well as an oil embargo on Russia.

More violence could be in store for Kyiv after Russian authorities accused Ukraine of wounding seven people and damaging about 100 residential buildings with airstrikes in Bryansk, a region bordering Ukraine. Authorities in another border region of Russia also reported Ukrainian shelling Thursday.

"The number and the scale of missile attacks on objects in Kyiv will be ramped up in response to the Kyiv nationalist regime committing any terrorist attacks or diversions on the Russian territory," Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said.

Russia used missiles to destroy a facility for the repair and production of missile systems in Kyiv, Konashenkov said.

Ukrainian officials have not confirmed striking targets in Russia, and the reports could not be independently verified.

However, Ukrainian officials said forces did strike a key Russian warship with missiles. A senior U.S. defense official backed up the claim, saying the U.S. now believes the Moskva was hit by at least one Neptune anti-ship missile, and probably two. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an intelligence assessment.

The Moskva, named for the Russian capital, sank while being towed to port Thursday after taking heavy damage. Though Moscow did not acknowledge any attack, saying only that a fire had caused ammunition on board to detonate, the loss of the ship represents an important victory for Ukraine and a symbolic defeat for Russia.

The sinking reduces Russia's firepower in the Black Sea, although military analysts disagreed on the event's significance to the course of the war. Either way, the loss was viewed as emblematic of Moscow's fortunes in an eight-week invasion widely seen as a historic blunder following the retreat from the Kyiv region and much of northern Ukraine.

"A 'flagship' Russian warship is a worthy diving site. We have one more diving spot in the Black Sea now. Will definitely visit the wreck after our victory in the war," Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov tweeted Friday.

Russia's warning of renewed airstrikes did not stop Kyiv residents from taking advantage of a sunny and slightly warmer spring Friday as the weekend approached. More people than usual were out on the streets, walking dogs, riding electric scooters and strolling hand in hand.

In one central park, a small group of people including a woman draped in a Ukrainian flag danced to the music of a portable speaker.

Such tentative signs of prewar life have resurfaced in the capital after Russian troops failed to capture the city and retreated to concentrate on eastern Ukraine, leaving behind evidence of possible war crimes. But a renewed bombardment could mean a return to the steady wail of air raid sirens heard during the early days of the invasion and to fearful nights sheltering in subway stations.

In Mariupol, the city council said Friday that locals reported seeing Russian troops digging up bodies buried in residential courtyards and not allowing new burials "of people killed by them."

"Why the exhumation is being carried out and where the bodies will be taken is unknown," the council said on the Telegram messaging app.

Fighting continued in industrial areas and the port, and Russia for the first time used the Tu-22M3 long-range bomber to attack the city, said Oleksandr Motuzyanyk, a spokesman for the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense.

Mariupol has been blockaded by Russian forces since the early days of the invasion, and dwindling numbers of Ukrainian defenders have held out against a siege that has come at a horrific cost to trapped and starving civilians.

The mayor said this week that the city's death toll could surpass 20,000. Other Ukrainian officials have

said they expect to find evidence in Mariupol of atrocities like the ones discovered in Bucha and other towns outside Kyiv.

Mariupol's capture would allow Russian forces in the south, which came up through the annexed Crimean Peninsula, to fully link up with troops in the Donbas region, Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland and the target of the looming offensive.

It's not certain when Russia will launch a full-scale campaign.

Moscow-backed separatists have fought Ukrainian forces in the Donbas since 2014, the same year Russia seized Crimea from Ukraine. Russia has recognized the independence of two rebel-held areas of the region.

Also Friday a Russian rocket hit an airport at night in the central city of Oleksandriia, Mayor Serhiy Kuzmenko said via Facebook. He made no mention of casualties.

And a regional Ukrainian official said seven people were killed and 27 wounded when Russian forces fired on buses carrying civilians in the village of Borovaya, near Kharkiv. The claim could not be independently verified.

Dmytro Chubenko, a spokesman for the regional prosecutor's office, told the Suspilne news website that authorities had opened criminal proceedings in connection with a suspected "violation of the laws and customs of war, combined with premeditated murder."

Russia's Defense Ministry said strikes in the Kharkiv region had "liquidated a squad of mercenaries from a Polish private military company" of up to 30 people and "liberated" an iron and steel factory in Mariupol. The claims could not be independently verified.

Trump backs GOP's JD Vance in US Senate primary in Ohio

By JILL COLVIN and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Former President Donald Trump on Friday endorsed "Hillbilly Elegy" author JD Vance in Ohio's bitterly competitive Republican Senate primary, ending months of jockeying in a race where his backing could be pivotal.

In a statement, Trump described Vance as "the candidate most qualified and ready to win in November." "It is all about winning!" he wrote.

The decision marks a major blow for Vance's top rivals — former state treasurer Josh Mandel, investment banker Mike Gibbons and former Ohio Republican Party chair Jane Timken — who have been locked in a heated and contentious race for both the nomination and Trump's backing in a primary that is now less than three weeks away.

On Thursday night, dozens of Republican leaders in Ohio mounted a last-minute effort to urge Trump not to endorse Vance following a news report that said Trump had made a decision.

While Trump lost his reelection campaign in 2020 after two impeachments, he remains deeply popular with the GOP base, including in Ohio, a state he won twice. While Gibbons and Mandel had been leading in recent polls, strategists in the state had long conceded that the former president's support would likely push his pick to the front of the pack in a race that has revolved, to a large extent, around him.

In addition to making frequent trips to Mar-a-Lago, echoing his election lies, and hiring a coterie of former Trump aides, the candidates and their affiliated super PACs have also spent millions trying to present themselves to voters as Trump's favored option and paint one another as insufficiently loyal to the former president.

Vance, in particular, has come under fire for old audio and since-deleted tweets in which he called himself a "never-Trump guy," called Trump an idiot, and said he might have to hold his nose and vote for Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016.

But the author, venture capitalist and Marine veteran has since changed his tune, saying he regretted his past comments. In the race, he has closely aligned himself with the former president, making frequent appearances on Fox News and former Trump strategist Steve Bannon's podcast, where he has echoed Trump's rhetoric on issues including trade and immigration.

Trump, in his statement, acknowledged that Vance "may have said some not so great things about me

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in the past." But he said that Vance, with whom he has been in frequent touch, "gets it now, and I have seen that in spades."

Trump also referenced the other candidates who have gone to extreme lengths to win his backing. "This is not an easy endorsement for me to make because I like and respect some of the other candidates in the race—they've said great things about 'Trump,'" he wrote, while calling on his supporters to unite behind Vance.

Trump had told allies this week that he had settled on Vance, according to two people familiar with his thinking who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations, and moved forward despite a desperate, last minute effort to change his mind by rivals and some party leaders.

While Trump had long been worried about Vance's standing in the polls, he decided, in the end, that Vance was the candidate best positioned to take on U.S. Rep Tim Ryan, the Democratic frontrunner, whom he expects to be an especially tough competitor this fall. Trump, an avid TV viewer, also felt Vance presented best on television and was particularly impressed with his performance during the candidates' last debate. He was equally turned off by what one person described as the "debate debacles" between Mandel and Gibbons, in which the two men nearly came to blows during an earlier face-off.

In addition to their own rapport, Vance also had the backing of Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., Fox News host Tucker Carlson and others who had advocated on his behalf.

In an interview earlier this week, Vance told talk radio host Hugh Hewitt that he wasn't sure whether Trump would end up endorsing in the race, but thought if he did it would come before Trump returns to the state for an April 23 rally.

"He wants to endorse the person he thinks can beat Tim Ryan," Vance said.

The endorsement is the second long-awaited nod that Trump has made this week as primary elections draw near. Last Saturday, he backed Mehmet Oz in Pennsylvania's May 17 Republican primary, months after his first endorsed candidate, Sean Parnell, withdrew amid allegations of abuse from his estranged wife.

In Ohio, the candidates had long prepared for the possibility that Trump, torn between candidates, might choose to sit out the race entirely or, perhaps endorse more than one person to avoid deciding.

But even those he passed by continued to align themselves with Trump on Friday.

Mandel, in a tweet, said he would "continue to be a proud supporter of President Trump and the America First agenda" and looked forward to earning his endorsement in the general election, while Timken, in a statement, called the decision "disappointing," even as she continue to tout Trump's past endorsement for state party chair.

Meanwhile, State Sen. Matt Dolan, the only major candidate in the race who did not aggressively court Trump, accused his rivals of having "embraced lies and undermined the Constitution to go all-in for one endorsement."

"They cheapened their candidacies and the integrity of the office they wish to attain with campaigns that are now in chaos as ballots are being cast," he said.

The winner of the May 3 primary is likely to face Tim Ryan in November for the seat being vacated by retiring Republican Sen. Rob Portman. ___ Colvin reported from New York. Associated Press writer Meg Kinnard in Roanoke Rapids, N.C. contributed to this report.

New Mexico village seeks prayers as deadly wildfire rages

By SUSAN MONTROYA BRYAN Associated Press

With towering pine trees and cool mountain breezes, a pocket of southern New Mexico draws thousands of tourists and horse racing fans every summer. It's also a community that knows how devastating wildfires can be.

It was a decade ago that fire ripped through part of the village of Ruidoso, putting the vacation spot on the map with the most destructive wildfire in New Mexico's recorded history when more than 240 homes burned and nearly 70 square miles (181 square kilometers) of forest were blackened by a lightning-sparked blaze.

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Now, Mayor Lynn Crawford is rallying heartbroken residents once again as firefighters on Friday tried to keep wind-whipped flames from making another run at the village and the hundreds of homes and summer cabins that dot the surrounding mountainsides.

More than 200 homes already have burned, and an elderly couple was found dead this week outside their charred residence. While power has been restored to all but a few hundred customers in the area, evacuations for close to 5,000 people remain in place.

Crawford said the village is overflowing with donations from surrounding communities.

"So we have plenty of food, we have plenty of clothes, those kinds of things but we still appreciate and need your prayers and your thoughts," the mayor said during a briefing. "Again, our hearts go out to the family of the deceased, to those that have lost their homes."

Authorities have yet to release the names of the couple who died. Their bodies were found after worried family members contacted police, saying the couple had planned to evacuate Tuesday when the fire exploded but were unaccounted for later that day.

Near where the bodies were recovered, in Gavilan Canyon, the fire reduced homes to ash and metal. An 18-home RV park was completely destroyed.

"I had like 10 people displaced, they lost their homes and everything, including my mom," said Douglas Siddens, who managed the park.

Siddens said his mother was at work when the fire broke out "with just the clothes she had on and that's all she has left."

Everyone got out of the RV park safely before the flames hit but "it's completely leveled. Like, all that's left are metal frame rails and steel wheels," Siddens said.

While many older residents call Ruidoso home year round, the population of about 8,000 people expands to about 25,000 during the summer months as Texans and New Mexicans from hotter climates come seeking respite. Horse races at the Ruidoso Downs also draw crowds, as it's home to one of the sport's richest quarter-horse competitions. The racing season was expected to start May 27, and horses that board there aren't in any danger as fire officials use the facility as a staging ground.

Part-time residents have taken to social media over the last few days, pleading with fire officials for updates on certain neighborhoods, hoping their family cabins weren't among those damaged or destroyed.

The hotlines lit up Friday afternoon as people in the village called in to report more smoke. Fire information officer Mike DeFries said that was because there were flare-ups within the interior of the fire as the flames found pockets of unburned fuel.

While the fire didn't make any runs at the lines crews had established, he said it was still a tough day for firefighters due to single-digit humidity, warmer temperatures and the wind.

Authorities reiterated that it was still too early to start letting people in to see the damage. They asked for patience as fire crews continued to put out hot spots and tried to build a stronger perimeter around the blaze.

"It's still an active fire area in there and it's not a safe place," DeFries said. "It's going to require patience. At the same time, every step that we're taking is designed to suppress this fire and to get people back home as soon as possible."

New Mexico authorities said they suspect the fire, which has torched more than 9.5 square miles (24 square kilometers) of forest and grass, was sparked by a downed power line and the investigation continued Friday.

Elsewhere in the U.S., large fires were reported this week in Texas, Colorado and Oklahoma.

Hotter and drier weather coupled with decades of fire suppression have contributed to an increase in the number of acres burned by wildfires, fire scientists say. The problem is exacerbated by a more than 20-year Western megadrought that studies link to human-caused climate change.

The National Interagency Fire Center reported Thursday that since the start of the year, 18,550 wildfires have burned about 1,250 square miles (3,237 square kilometers). That's well above the 10-year U.S. average of 12,290 wildfires and 835 square miles (2,163 square kilometers) burned for the same period.

After bullets flew, NYC subway workers kept their cool

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When smoke bombs and bullets were unleashed on a subway full of morning commuters as it crawled toward a stop in Brooklyn, the train's driver, David Artis, couldn't hear the shots.

His first indication something was wrong was when passengers crowded near the door to his operator's compartment to report chaos, one car back.

Artis said after a moment of shock, his thoughts quickly shifted from, "Oh my God!" to concern for his passengers. He leaned on his emergency training.

"Then it kicked in. Get them out," he said Friday after he and fellow transit workers were honored by the mayor for their response to Tuesday's shooting.

In a few minutes of lightning-quick decisions, Artis and train conductor Raven Haynes radioed in the attack, threw open the train doors and evacuated all of the passengers to another train on the same platform, then began getting aid to the wounded.

Photos and video taken by passengers captured the pair calmly but authoritatively herding stunned commuters onto the other train, which sped away.

"This week New York City showed the entire globe what our city has always been about, courage, heroism, quick thinking and decisive action," Mayor Eric Adams said.

Adams, who appeared at the City Hall ceremony virtually because he is isolating after having tested positive for COVID-19, had the workers presented Friday with proclamations to honor them for their heroism.

The ceremony came a day after the man authorities say was responsible for the carnage, Frank James, made an initial court appearance in a federal courthouse a few stops up the line from where the attack took place.

Prosecutors say he dressed as a construction worker and set off smoke grenades then pulled a handgun and fired 33 times, reloading once before his gun jammed.

The subway workers said that amidst the chaos, they didn't see the gunman in the crowd and were just focused on getting people out.

"I was shouting to the people, 'Get on the train! Get on the train! Get on the train!'" Artis said.

Haynes, the conductor, said she didn't feel any fear, having worked at an airport before joining the Metropolitan Transportation Authority several years ago and was already used to reacting to unpredictable situations.

"I can't stress enough the importance of having a stoic attitude in a moment of chaos. You having a calm demeanor helps your passengers become calm, which helps them get out as safely and quickly as possible," she said.

The shooting victims ranged in age from 16 to 60. Most of the wounds were to the legs, back and buttocks. A 16-year-old boy was shot in the hand. They are all expected to survive.

As the wounded passengers limped on to the platform, several knelt to assist the injured. One took off a shirt to create a tourniquet for someone shot in the leg.

Artis said that when he checked the subway car to ensure it was empty, he found blood on the floor, luggage the gunman left behind and bullet casings, which he said he immediately reported to the transit operators so police could be called.

Haynes described the moment she took in the scene, just after directing the passengers to escape.

"I finally looked down toward the front of the train and I saw the whole entire second car engulfed in smoke, along with the whole north side of the platform," she said.

Investigators said that in the confusion, James slipped away on the rescue train with the other passengers, exiting one station down having ditched his construction worker outfit and helmet.

He was arrested a day later in Manhattan after a citywide manhunt that ended shortly after he called a police tip line and gave his location.

The NYPD said Friday that a \$50,000 reward for information leading to James' capture would be split

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evenly among five people whose tips it said "contributed directly to the arrest." Because the tip process is anonymous, the department did not release the names of the people receiving the reward money, which was contributed by the New York City Police Foundation, a nonprofit supporting the NYPD's work, the MTA, and the transit workers union.

So much is yet unknown about the motives behind Tuesday's shooting, as the suspect's previous brushes with the law come under scrutiny.

Among his first contacts with law enforcement was when he was fired from his maintenance job at Bridgeway Behavioral Health Services in Elizabeth, New Jersey, where he had been a client more than 15 years ago, the organization's chief executive officer said in a statement.

"At the time of his termination, we referred Mr. James for additional mental health services, and contacted the Elizabeth, New Jersey police department who conducted their own investigation. Since that time he has not been engaged with our organization," said Cory Storch, Bridgeway's chief executive officer.

"This devastating incident highlights the urgent need to increase access to mental health treatment and follow-up services for those in crisis so that future acts of violence may be avoided," Storch said.

At a brief court appearance Thursday, Assistant U.S. Attorney Sara K. Winik said James' premeditated, carefully planned attack "caused terror among the victims and our entire city."

James was ordered jailed without bail. At the request of James' lawyers, Magistrate Roanne Mann said she would ask for James to get "psychiatric attention."

Hourari Benkada, a passenger who was shot in the leg, told The Associated Press in an interview that he was just feet away from the gunman.

Benkada said he was listening to music on his headphones when smoke began filling the car and he thought it was a small fire.

But the smoke "kept escalating to black, black smoke like 9/11," he said, "and the whole train was pitch-black."

Benkada said he heard gunshots and screams and he tried to shield a pregnant woman from getting hit during the mayhem, and as people pushed forward, a gunshot tore into his knee.

Investigators were scouring dozens of videos that James posted on social media as they work to determine a motive for the shooting. The videos include profanity-filled diatribes about racism, society's treatment of Black people, homelessness and violence.

James, a New York City native, also discussed his history of psychiatric treatment and complained about how New York's mayor is dealing with homeless people on subways and with gun violence. He also talked about shooting people, prosecutors noted in court papers.

Investigators say James, who recently left Milwaukee and was living at a short-term rental in Philadelphia, rented a U-Haul van in Philadelphia and drove it to New York City hours before the shooting.

Texas halts truck inspections that caused border gridlock

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Gov. Greg Abbott on Friday repealed his traffic-clogging immigration order that backed up commercial trucks at the U.S.-Mexico border, after a week of intensifying backlash and fears of deepening economic losses.

The Republican governor dropped his new rules that had required all commercial trucks from Mexico to undergo extra inspections to curb the flow of migrants and drugs and ratcheted up a fight with the Biden administration over immigration policy.

Some truckers reported waiting more than 30 hours to cross. Others blocked one of the world's busiest trade bridges in protest.

Abbott, who is up for reelection in November and has made the border his top issue, fully lifted the inspections after reaching agreements with neighboring Mexican states that he says outline new commitments to border security. The last one was signed with the governor of Tamaulipas, who earlier this week said the inspections were overzealous and created havoc. On Friday, he joined Abbott and said they

were ready to work together.

When Abbott first ordered the inspections, he did not say lifting them was conditional on such arrangements with Mexico.

Pressure was building on Abbott to retreat as gridlock on the border worsened. The American Trucking Association called the inspections "wholly flawed, redundant and adding considerable weight on an already strained supply chain." One customs agency in Mexico estimated the losses at millions of dollars a day, and produce distributors warned of empty shelves and higher prices if the order was not rescinded soon.

Abbott acknowledged the trade slowdowns but showed no sign of regret. He said he was prepared to reimpose the inspections if Mexican states don't hold up their end of the deal.

"I'm not hesitant to do so whatsoever," Abbott said.

The U.S.-Mexico border is crucial to the U.S. economy and more of it is in Texas — roughly 1,200 miles (1,931 kilometers) — than any other state. The United States last year imported \$390.7 billion worth of goods from Mexico, second only to China.

Trucks are inspected by U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents upon entering the country. Texas began its own inspections after the Biden administration said pandemic-related restrictions on claiming asylum at the border would be lifted May 23.

Abbott called the inspections a "zero tolerance policy for unsafe vehicles" smuggling migrants. He said Texas would take several steps in response to the end of the asylum restrictions, which is expected to lead to an increase in migrants coming to the border.

State troopers inspected more than 6,000 commercial vehicles over the past week, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety. Nearly 1 in 4 trucks were pulled off the road for what the agency described as serious violations that included defective tires and brakes.

Troopers did not turn up any human or drug trafficking during the inspections, said Department of Public Safety Director Steve McCraw. He described it as unsurprising, saying cartels knew the inspections were taking place.

But migrants are stopped at ports of entry in only about 5% of CBP encounters. The vast majority cross in mountains, deserts and cities between official crossings.

The dynamic with drug seizures is different, with fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine and other hard narcotics being seized overwhelmingly at official crossings instead of between them. Their compact size and lack of odor make them extremely difficult to detect.

Abbott has also chartered buses to Washington, D.C., for migrants who wanted to go. The first drop-offs happened Wednesday, drawing criticism from the Biden administration. On Thursday, CBP Commissioner Chris Magnus said Texas was moving migrants without "adequately coordinating" with the federal government.

Officer's camera misses key moment of Patrick Lyoya's death

By AMY FORLITI Associated Press

Body camera footage of Patrick Lyoya's fatal encounter with a Michigan police officer shows a close-up view of an intense struggle, but the video goes dark 42 seconds before the officer shoots the Black man in the head.

It's the latest high-profile case in which body cameras — touted as tools to hold police accountable — have failed, leaving prosecutors and the public to rely on bystander video for a clearer picture of what happened.

One expert said vendors could make changes to avoid accidental camera deactivations, though it's not clear that is what happened in Lyoya's case, and some activists said an accident seems unlikely. Regardless, Lyoya's family and their attorneys say it shows the importance of citizen video. The shooting was captured by Lyoya's passenger, with a cellphone, and a doorbell camera across the street.

"Keep videoing the police because transparency is important for them and it's sure important for us," said Ben Crump, an attorney for Lyoya's family.

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The officer was on top of Lyoya, who was facedown on the ground, when he shot the 26-year-old Congolese refugee in the head April 4.

Body camera video released by police this week shows the initial stop, and the officer saying the car's license plate wasn't registered to the vehicle. It shows Lyoya's attempt to run away and a struggle as the officer repeatedly tells him to stop. At one point, Lyoya has his hand on the officer's stun gun, and the officer yells at him to let go.

The video then goes black. Police dashcam captured some audio but no images of the shooting.

Official sources can have limitations for a variety of reasons, such as the limited view of the dashcam in the Grand Rapids incident, or the fixed viewpoint of a surveillance camera. In the recent Brooklyn subway attack, computer system problems kept authorities from either recording or viewing footage on security cameras in the station where the subway train stopped after Frank James allegedly opened fire.

Other cameras in the system worked, however, and provided critical evidence.

Grand Rapids Police Chief Eric Winstrom said officers have to hold a button on the camera for three seconds to turn it off. He said the button was hit many times during the struggle in this case, but at the point the screen went dark "that was the first moment that it was held down for more than three seconds. That's what deactivated it."

One body camera expert said it appeared to have been unintentional.

"That officer, he is in a full-on struggle with that citizen. And I'm sure turning the camera off would've been the least of his concerns," said Michael White, a professor at the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Arizona State University and co-director of training and technical assistance for the U.S. Department of Justice Body-Worn Camera Policy and Implementation Program.

White couldn't think of another case in which an officer's camera was unintentionally turned off during a struggle.

But cameras are sometimes knocked off officers' uniforms.

The Axon Body 3 camera used by Grand Rapids police has a large circular button on the front surrounded by a ridge, so the button is slightly recessed. Officers tap the button twice to record and hold it down for three seconds to turn it off.

Axon said it remains "committed to developing technology and training for public safety" but declined to comment further, citing the investigation.

Michelle Gross, a Minnesota activist for police accountability and president of Communities United Against Police Brutality, was among those who doubted that the officer's camera was accidentally turned off, citing the recessed button.

An expert in police accountability issues agreed. Sam Walker, a retired professor at the University of Nebraska Omaha, called the camera's deactivation "suspicious" and said it must be investigated.

In the May 2020 killing of George Floyd, bystander video was crucial in bringing attention to and documenting what happened. In that case, Derek Chauvin's body camera fell off as he and other Minneapolis police officers struggled with Floyd, who was Black. Video recorded by a teenage bystander, as well as the other officers' body cameras, was key in convicting Chauvin of murder.

During the 2019 arrest of Elijah McClain, a Black man who died after officers confronted him in suburban Denver, the body cameras of all three officers came off during a struggle. The cameras continued to record audio but there was no video footage to verify a police claim that McClain reached for one of the officers' guns. He was placed in a chokehold and paramedics injected him with the powerful sedative ketamine. He later died at a hospital.

Sometimes officers intentionally turn off the cameras. In the 2019 beating and death of Ronald Greene, another Black man, Louisiana Master Trooper Chris Hollingsworth turned his body camera off during a car chase. It was one of several policy violations for which he was ultimately fired.

White said some body camera models have means to prevent accidental deactivation, such as needing to press a button three times. He said if it is deemed that the camera worn by the officer in Lyoya's death was accidentally deactivated, he wouldn't be surprised if major vendors begin working on modifications, such as additional manual mechanisms or voice activation. He said companies have developed solutions

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to prevent body-worn cameras from being knocked off, such as stronger magnets.

Ayesha Bell Hardaway, an associate professor of law at Case Western Reserve University and co-director of the school's Social Justice Institute, said the lack of video in use-of-force cases can affect whether officers are charged. Without direct evidence such as video, prosecutors must rely on the reasonable-officer standard in bringing charges, examining whether a reasonable officer would have believed his or her life or the lives of others to be in danger.

"The absence of the video at the critical moment gives us no window to put us in that moment," she said. "It now puts us right back where we were — relying on the word of an officer."

Bell Hardaway said bystander video has become increasingly important in these cases.

"I shudder to think of the lack of accountability that exists in a world without this technology," she said.

It's not over: COVID-19 cases are on the rise again in US

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

Yet again, the U.S. is trudging into what could be another COVID-19 surge, with cases rising nationally and in most states after a two-month decline.

One big unknown? "We don't know how high that mountain's gonna grow," said Dr. Stuart Campbell Ray, an infectious disease expert at Johns Hopkins University.

No one expects a peak nearly as high as the last one, when the contagious omicron version of the coronavirus ripped through the population.

But experts warn that the coming wave — caused by a mutant called BA.2 that's thought to be about 30% more contagious — will wash across the nation. They worry that hospitalizations, which are already ticking up in some parts of the Northeast, will rise in a growing number of states in the coming weeks. And the case wave will be bigger than it looks, they say, because reported numbers are vast undercounts as more people test at home without reporting their infections or skip testing altogether.

At the height of the previous omicron surge, reported daily cases reached into the hundreds of thousands. As of Thursday, the seven-day rolling average for daily new cases rose to 39,521, up from 30,724 two weeks earlier, according to data from Johns Hopkins collected by The Associated Press.

Dr. Eric Topol, head of Scripps Research Translational Institute, said the numbers will likely keep growing until the surge reaches about a quarter the height of the last "monstrous" one. BA.2 may well have the same effect in the U.S. as it did in Israel, where it created a "bump" in the chart measuring cases, he said.

Keeping the surge somewhat in check, experts said, is a higher level of immunity in the U.S. from vaccination or past infection compared with early winter.

But Ray said the U.S. could wind up looking like Europe, where the BA.2 surge was "substantial" in some places that had comparable levels of immunity. "We could have a substantial surge here," he said.

Both experts said BA.2 will move through the country gradually. The Northeast has been hit hardest so far — with more than 90% of new infections caused by BA.2 last week compared with 86% nationally. As of Thursday, the highest rates of new COVID cases per capita over the past 14 days were in Vermont, Rhode Island, Alaska, New York and Massachusetts. In Washington, D.C., which also ranks in the top 10 for rates of new cases, Howard University announced it was moving most undergraduate classes online for the rest of the semester because of "a significant increase in COVID-19 positivity" in the district and on campus.

Some states, such as Rhode Island and New Hampshire, saw the average of daily new cases rise by more than 100% in two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins data.

In New Hampshire, the increase in cases comes two weeks after the closure of all 11 state-managed vaccination sites, and the governor is being pressured by some advocates to reverse course.

Joseph Wendelken, spokesperson for the Rhode Island Department of Health, said the metric they are most focused on right now is hospitalizations, which remain relatively low. About 55 COVID-19 patients are hospitalized, compared with more than 600 at one point in the pandemic.

Officials credit high vaccination rates. State statistics show 99% of Rhode Island adults are at least partially vaccinated and 48% have gotten the booster dose that scientists say is key in protecting against

severe illness with omicron.

Vermont also has relatively high levels of vaccination and fewer patients in the hospital than during the height of the first omicron wave. But Dr. Mark Levine, the health commissioner there, said hospitalizations and the numbers of patients in intensive care units are both up slightly, although deaths have not risen.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows that new hospital admissions of patients with confirmed COVID-19 were up slightly in New England and the New York region.

On the West Coast, modelers from Oregon Health & Science University are projecting a slight increase in hospitalizations over the next two months in that state, where cases have also risen steeply.

As the wave moves across the country, experts said states with low rates of vaccination may face substantially more infections and severe cases that wind up in the hospital.

Ray said government leaders must be careful to strike the right tone when talking to people about protecting themselves and others after COVID restrictions have largely been lifted. Philadelphia recently became the first major U.S. city to reinstate its indoor mask mandate after a sharp increase in infections. But Vermont's Levine said there are no plans to bring back any of the restrictions that were imposed earlier during the pandemic.

"It's going to be hard to institute restrictive, draconian measures," Ray said. "Fortunately, we have some tools that we can use to mitigate risk. And so I hope that leaders will emphasize the importance for people to watch the numbers," be aware of risks and consider taking precautions such as wearing masks and getting vaccinated and boosted if they're not already.

Lynne Richmond, a 59-year-old breast cancer survivor who lives in Silver Spring, Md., said she plans to get her second booster and keep wearing her mask in public as cases rise in her state and nearby Washington, D.C.

"I never really stopped wearing my mask...I've stayed ultra-vigilant," she said. "I feel like I've come this far; I don't want to get COVID."

At the 250-bed New Hampshire Veterans Home in Tilton, staff are still wearing masks and social distancing. Veterans are allowed limited excursions to places like an antique race car museum and restaurants where they can have a separate room and the wait staff is masked.

Vigilance is a good strategy, experts said, because the coronavirus is constantly throwing curveballs. One of the latest: even more contagious subvariants of BA.2 found in New York state, known as BA.2.12 and BA.2.12.1. And scientists warn that new and potentially dangerous variants could arise at any time.

"We shouldn't be thinking the pandemic is over," Topol said. "We should still keep our guard up."

EXPLAINER: What Twitter's 'poison pill' is supposed to do

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

Twitter is trying to thwart billionaire Elon Musk's takeover attempt with a "poison pill" — a financial device that companies have been wielding against unwelcome suitors for decades.

WHAT ARE POISON PILLS SUPPOSED TO DO?

The ingredients of each poison pill vary, but they're all designed to give corporate boards an option to flood the market with so much newly created stock that a takeover becomes prohibitively expensive. The strategy was popularized back in the 1980s when publicly held companies were being stalked by corporate raiders such as Carl Icahn — now more frequently described as "activist investors."

Twitter didn't disclose the details of its poison pill Friday, but said it would provide more information in a forthcoming filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission, which the company delayed because public markets were closed Friday.

The San Francisco company's plan will be triggered if a shareholder accumulates a stake of 15% or more. Musk, best known as CEO of electric car maker Tesla, currently holds a roughly 9% stake.

CAN A POISON PILL BE A NEGOTIATING PLOY?

Although they are supposed to help prevent an unsolicited takeover, poison pills also often open the door to further negotiations that can force a bidder to sweeten the deal. If a higher price makes sense

to the board, a poison pill can simply be cast aside along with the acrimony it provoked, clearing the way for a sale to be completed.

True to form, Twitter left its door open by emphasizing that its poison pill won't prevent its board from "engaging with parties or accepting an acquisition proposal" at a higher price.

Adopting a poison pill also frequently results in lawsuits alleging that a corporate board and management team is using the tactic to keep their jobs against the best interests of shareholders. These complaints are sometimes filed by shareholders who think a takeover offer is fair and want to cash out at that price or by the bidder vying to make the purchase.

HOW DID ELON MUSK REACT TO TWITTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT?

Musk, a prolific tweeter with 82 million followers on Twitter, had no immediate reaction to the company's poison pill. But on Thursday he indicated he was ready to wage a legal battle.

"If the current Twitter board takes actions contrary to shareholder interests, they would be breaching their fiduciary duty," Musk tweeted. "The liability they would thereby assume would be titanic in scale."

Musk has publicly said that its \$43 billion bid is his best and final offer for Twitter, but other corporate suitors have made similar statements before ultimately upping the ante. With an estimated fortune of \$265 billion, Musk would seem to have deep enough pockets to raise his offer, although he is still working out how to finance the proposed purchase.

HOW HAS THIS DEFENSE WORKED IN THE PAST?

Takeover tussles often dissolve into gamesmanship that include poison pills and other maneuvers designed to make a buyout more difficult. That's what happened in one of the biggest and most drawn out takeover dances in Silicon Valley history.

After business software maker Oracle made an unsolicited \$5.1 billion offer for its smaller rival PeopleSoft in June 2003, the two companies spent the next 18 months fighting with each other.

As part of its defense, PeopleSoft not only adopted a poison pill that authorized the board to flood the market with more shares, it also created what it called a "customer assurance program." That plan promised to pay customers five times the cost of their software licenses if PeopleSoft was sold within the next two years, creating an estimated liability of up to \$800 million for an acquiring company.

PeopleSoft also got another helping hand when the U.S. Department of Justice filed an antitrust lawsuit seek to block a takeover, although a judge ruled in Oracle's favor.

Even though the company ended up selling to Oracle, PeopleSoft's defense strategy paid off for its shareholders. Oracle's final purchase price was \$11.1 billion — more than twice its original bid.

White House Easter Egg Roll returns after 2-year hiatus

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House hopes to stir up some "egg-citement" when the Easter Egg Roll returns on Monday after a two-year, coronavirus-induced hiatus.

President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden expect to welcome some 30,000 kids and their adult chaperones for the egg roll, an egg hunt and other activities.

The first lady, who is also a teacher, has named it the "Egg-ucation Roll," the White House said, and is turning the South Lawn into a school community with a variety of educational stations.

It's the first Easter Egg Roll to be hosted by the Bidens, who are expected to address the crowd and join in some of the fun, although rain was in Monday's weather forecast.

The COVID-19 pandemic led the White House to cancel the event in 2020 and 2021.

Besides the egg roll and hunt, the all-day event will include a schoolhouse activity area, a reading nook, a talent show, a place to teach children about farming, a photo-taking station, a physical "egg-ucation" zone with an obstacle course and other exercise stations, and a "cafetorium" where children and their families will learn to make treats.

The "egg-stravaganza" will get a celebrity splash through the participation of "Tonight Show" host Jimmy Fallon, singer Ciara and actor-singer Kristin Chenoweth.

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More than two dozen costumed characters will also be on hand, including Dr. Seuss' The Cat in the Hat, the Racing Presidents mascots for the Washington Nationals of Major League Baseball, Rosita and Cookie Monster from "Sesame Street" and Snoopy and Charlie Brown, among others.

Military families will be among the 30,000 participants, including crew members of the USS Delaware and their families. The first lady serves as sponsor of the nuclear attack submarine, which the president commissioned during a ceremony this month in Wilmington, Delaware.

Members of the general public received tickets through an online lottery.

The egg roll is always the largest event at the White House and it will be the Biden's first big event. It will unfold in five waves beginning at 7:30 a.m. and ending at 6:30 p.m.

The return of this Easter tradition is a sign that the White House is opening up again despite a recent spurt of COVID-19 cases among some Cabinet members, White House staff, Vice President Kamala Harris' husband and members of Congress, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Self-guided, public tours of the executive mansion also resumed on Friday in a limited fashion, after they also were halted in 2020 because of the pandemic.

Stewart McLaurin, president of the White House Historical Association, said he was happy that public access to the executive mansion was "front and center" once again.

"As important as security is here, it's also important that we keep the people's house accessible to the people," McLaurin said Friday.

The White House Easter Egg Roll dates to 1878.

Ukrainian mom's pain at watching daughter's burial on phone

By EVGENIY MALOLETKA Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — Viktoria Kovalenko bore witness to the death of her husband and elder daughter when their car was hit by a shell in northern Ukraine.

By the time her loved ones got a proper funeral, she was 500 kilometers away, able to watch the burial only on a cellphone video sent to her by relatives.

Even in the relative peace of Lviv, a city little touched by violence in the war with Russia, it was an ordeal she couldn't endure.

"Tears do not let me watch until the end," she said as she played the video in a wooded area where she was pushing her one year-old daughter Varvara in a stroller.

In early March, Kovalenko and her family were in their car, fleeing the area of the city of Chernihiv, one of the war's most intensely besieged.

At a Russian checkpoint near the village Yahidne, a shell exploded.

The windows of the car shattered, she said, and she and 12-year-old daughter Veronika were injured by the broken glass.

The next thing she remembers is the voice of her husband shouting at them to leave the car.

Then she saw Veronika.

"She already was lying near the car, she was headless. I saw everything clearly, how the blood was coming out of the neck," she said.

It was in those shocking moments that Viktoria's husband had also lost his life.

Viktoria and her younger daughter Varvara escaped, only to be caught by the Russian troops and taken to the basement of a school in Yahidne.

Locals said more than 300 villagers were forced into the basement. Then, during weeks of stress and deprivation, some began to die.

Kovalenko and Varvara spent weeks in the basement of the school, doing their best to stay alive.

Residents of Yahidne told The Associated Press they were made to remain in the basement day and night except for the rare times when they were allowed outside to cook on open fires or to use the toilet.

As people died one by one in the basement, neighbors were allowed from time to time to place the bodies in a mass grave in a nearby cemetery.

Kovalenko's husband Petro and Veronika were at first buried in the woods, but later reinterred in the Yahidne cemetery, carried there in coffins along a rough path as friends and relatives wept and some placed flowers and in the grave and scooped in handfuls of dirt.

The re-burials took place after Russian troops left Yahidne in early April when forces pulled back to concentrate their fight in the eastern part of Ukraine.

Kovalenko's searing memories are enmeshed in the twisted wreckage of their car.

And on a concrete block at a village checkpoint someone has spray-painted a macabre joke: the words "polite people," the term that Russian authorities dubbed the forces who annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.

Mysterious liver illness seen in kids in US, Europe

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Health officials in several countries are investigating mysterious cases of severe liver disease in children, and they think it may be related to a kind of virus usually associated with colds.

The U.K. has been investigating at least 74 cases in which children came down with hepatitis, or liver inflammation, the World Health Organization said Friday. Three similar cases in Spain and a few in Ireland are being investigated, the WHO said.

Meanwhile, U.S. health officials say they are looking into nine similar cases. All were in Alabama, but officials say they are looking to see if there are more elsewhere.

"Given the increase in cases reported over the past one month and enhanced case search activities, more cases are likely to be reported in the coming days," WHO officials said in a statement.

The U.S. children ranged in age from 1 to 6 years old, and two required liver transplants. The European cases are in a similar age range, though some have been older, WHO officials said.

The WHO first became aware of the unusual illnesses early this month, when they learned of 10 children in Scotland with liver problems. One got sick in January and the nine others in March. All became severely ill and were diagnosed with hepatitis after being taken to the hospital.

The liver processes nutrients, filters the blood and fights infections. The infections caused symptoms like jaundice, diarrhea and abdominal pain. Hepatitis can be life-threatening if left untreated.

Since then, British health officials have identified at least 64 more cases. None died, but six needed liver transplants, the WHO said Friday.

Laboratory testing has ruled out the hepatitis type A, B, C and E viruses that usually cause such illnesses. Officials say they are not aware of international travel or other factors that might have put the kids at risk.

But they noted there's been a recent surge in the spread of adenoviruses.

There are dozens of adenoviruses, many of them associated with cold-like symptoms, fever, sore throat and pink eye. But some versions can trigger other problems, including inflammation in the stomach and intestines.

Adenoviruses previously have been linked to hepatitis in children, but mostly in kids with weakened immune systems.

Some of the European children tested positive for adenovirus, and some tested positive for COVID-19. But more lab work is needed to explore any potential associations with specific viruses, the WHO said.

Alabama health officials say they have been looking into an increase in hepatitis in children since November. In each case, the child tested positive for adenovirus. Officials are exploring a link to one particular version — adenovirus 41 — that's normally associated with gut inflammation.

None of the Alabama cases had any underlying health conditions that would seem to put them at risk for liver illness, health officials said.

"At this time adenovirus may be the cause for these, but investigators are still learning more — including ruling out the more common causes of hepatitis," the CDC said in a statement.

Iowa Supreme Court: Finkenauer qualifies for Senate ballot

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By DAVID PITT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The Iowa Supreme Court ruled Friday that Democratic Senate candidate Abby Finkenauer qualifies for the primary ballot, rejecting a lower court decision and allowing her to continue her campaign for the nomination and the chance to face longtime Republican Sen. Charles Grassley.

The court's unanimous decision leaves Finkenauer as the likely front-runner in a race with two lesser-known candidates ahead of Iowa's June 7 primary. The winner will run against Grassley, who is seeking an eighth term in the Senate.

"This is a moment for all advocates for democracy — Democrats, Republicans and Independents — to celebrate the enduring strength of our democratic process and a reminder to never take it for granted," Finkenauer said in a statement.

She said it's more than a victory for her campaign but about justice for Iowans and democracy prevailing over "meritless partisan attacks orchestrated by Washington Republicans and allies of Senator Grassley seeking to silence Iowans and undermine the democratic process."

Her lawyer, Gary Dickey, said the court put politics aside to reach the correct legal result.

The lawyer for the Republican objectors, Alan Ostergren, said the Legislature needs to change the law, listing what must be on a nominating petition and the consequences of failing to do so.

"The only reason these issues were litigated is that the Abby Finkenauer campaign failed to turn in enough signatures to have a comfortable margin — something every other political campaign was able to do this cycle," he said.

Grassley campaign spokeswoman Michaela Sundermann criticized Finkenauer for previously calling the challenge a partisan attack instead of admitting fault. Grassley obtained signatures from each of Iowa's 99 counties, collecting nearly three times more than the 3,500 required by law, she said.

"Sen. Chuck Grassley does not take the people of Iowa for granted. He follows the law and goes above and beyond the requirements to qualify," she said.

The court rejected a lower court's ruling that found that Finkenauer failed to meet a state law that requires candidates to submit at least 100 signatures from at least 19 counties to qualify for the ballot. The justices agreed that a Polk County judge was wrong when he ruled that three signatures from two counties were invalid, leaving Finkenauer without enough signatures.

The court said the Legislature last year passed new sections of the law that identified specific circumstances when objections to petitions should be sustained.

"The legislature did not include missing or incorrect dates as one of the grounds for sustaining an objection to a petition. We conclude that the recent legislation prevails," the court said.

The court acknowledged it wasn't an easy decision.

"Statutory interpretation is not like proving math theorems, and it is sometimes difficult to come up with a neat answer that is intellectually satisfying. In the end, we believe we must be guided by the legislature's last word on the subject," it said.

The ruling affirmed an earlier decision by an election panel that Finkenauer had qualified for the ballot. Two Republican activists had brought the initial challenge and appealed the panel's decision to the district court.

Polk County Judge Scott Beattie ruled against Finkenauer. Beattie was appointed in 2018 by Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds, who also appointed four justices to the Iowa Supreme Court.

Finkenauer, of Cedar Rapids, was one of the first woman elected to the House from Iowa and was the second-youngest female House member in U.S. history, winning election in 2018 at the age of 29 and just 10 months older than Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, of New York.

Others seeking the Democratic nomination are Mike Franken, a retired Navy admiral, and Glenn Hurst, a doctor and Minden City Council member.

Any of the Democrats would be viewed as long shots against Grassley, who has held elected office since 1959. He was elected to the U.S. House in 1974 and to the Senate in 1980.

Column: Remembering Jackie Robinson in town where it started

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP Sports Columnist

Far off the beaten path, way down in southwest Georgia near the Florida state line, a remarkable life began in the most humble of circumstances.

Jackie Robinson was born just outside the small town of Cairo (pronounced "KAY-ro"), the child of sharecroppers struggling to make ends meet in the grinding poverty of the Jim Crow South.

As Major League Baseball honors the 75th anniversary of Robinson's historic breaking of the color barrier, let's not forget where he came from.

Robinson spent the first year of his life near Cairo. For decades, there was nothing to mark that he was ever there — a forgotten first chapter to one of America's most significant stories.

That has changed over the last quarter-century.

There are now a pair of historic signs honoring Robinson — one downtown in front of the library, another at the remnants of the rural shack where he was delivered by his grandmother, a midwife, on Jan. 31, 1919, less than three months after the end of World War I.

Even more significantly, the Jackie Robinson Boys & Girls Club was founded about a dozen years ago, striving to create a better life for Cairo's young people, many of whom still face some of the same challenges that Robinson did a century ago.

Stephen Francis, the club's director, proudly notes that it's the only Boys & Girls Club in the entire world to bear Robinson's name.

Its mission certainly would've met with his approval.

"Being named after Jackie Robinson makes us feel a little more special than the normal Boys & Girls Club," Francis said. "But it's also a great responsibility with what he stood for. We have to uphold that and pass it down to the children in our daily programs and the life skills that we teach. We want to make sure we're instilling the character that Jackie Robinson stood for."

What was that?

"It's OK to fall as long as you get back up," Francis replied. "Failing is not falling. Failing is giving up when you fall. You're gonna go through some things. But if something is worth it, it's worth fighting for."

The Jackie Robinson Boys & Girls Club was at the center of a big celebration Friday.

In a most fitting gesture, the Atlanta Braves brought their World Series championship trophy to Robinson's birthplace on Jackie Robinson Day.

The whole town was buzzing over its appearance.

"People are cleaning their yards like the trophy is coming to their house," Francis said, chuckling. "They're cutting their grass and washing their cars and getting their hair done. It's like a big party."

Dr. Linda Walden was among those who planned to attend the trophy celebration. She wouldn't have missed it for the world.

Walden is a third cousin of Robinson's. A native of Queens, she never met Robinson — who died in 1972 at age 53 — but moved to Cairo in the mid-1990s to start a much-needed medical practice in an area that played such a significant role in her family's history.

She was stunned at what she found — or, more accurately, what she didn't find.

No statues. No monuments. Not even a simple marker to commemorate this is where it all began for Robinson. Heck, he wasn't even in the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame (which finally inducted him in 1998).

Maybe that was only natural since Robinson spent such a short time in Georgia. After his father left the family, his mother packed up Jackie and his four siblings and moved to Pasadena, California in search of a better life.

Even so, Walden has dedicated much of her life outside of medicine to making sure that Cairo is remembered for more than its famous syrup.

She now owns the site where Robinson was born. A fence protects the grounds, though all that is left is a brick chimney. The abandoned structure burned down long ago.

Walden also had a historic marker installed, which sadly became a symbol of just how far we have to

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go in this country. Vandals damaged the plaque with gunshots. She suspects it was the work of racists who were none too pleased with the progress that Robinson fought for throughout his all-too-short life.

"I'm gonna let God handle all that and take care of whoever did it. He has his ways to dealing with people," Walden said. "But it's really disappointing that people would show the ugly face of racism that still exists. I just pray for those people."

Fortunately, the nasty part of the story takes a more promising turn. MLB made a \$40,000 donation that got the ball rolling to install not one, but two replacement markers. One at the library, where more people in the town of roughly 10,000 would be able to see it, and another at the birthplace outside the city limits.

"Birthplace of Jackie Robinson: First African American in Modern-Day Major League Baseball," the marker says.

A dedication ceremony for the new plaques was held in January.

"I'm very proud," said Walden, who still gets emotional every time she talks about her distant relative. "This means his legacy will continue. Those signs represent the man and the resilience of Jackie Robinson. They're a symbol of hope, a symbol of courage, a symbol of confidence and determination, a symbol of excellence. No matter what, we can achieve."

The damaged sign, meanwhile, was shipped to the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City, Missouri, which held its own event Friday to unveil the marker "as a reminder that the ugliness of America's past persists to this day."

It will remain on temporary display through mid-August, said Raymond Doswell, the museum's vice president and curator. Then it will become part of a permanent exhibit.

"We're not going to try to repair it," he said. "We want to show people his humble origins, and at the same time show with the damaged marker that the fight against racism and violence continues.

"We have a long, long way to go."

We'd like to see MLB take another big step to honor Robinson's legacy.

Bring a real big league game to the town where it all started.

Already, MLB has constructed a pair of temporary stadiums to host a one-off game at the Fort Bragg military base in 2016 and the wildly popular "Field of Dreams" game in Iowa that will have an encore in 2022.

How about a "Jackie Robinson Day" game in Cairo next April 15 between the home-state Braves and the Los Angeles Dodgers, the team that Robinson played his entire big league career for while they were in Brooklyn?

The Braves could wear replica uniforms from the Atlanta Black Crackers, the city's Negro Leagues team. The Dodgers could don the caps they wore during the Robinson era, adorned with a "B" rather than "LA."

Walden has long dreamed of raising funds to build a field that could host big league teams in Cairo. This seems like a perfect opportunity for MLB to step up again to honor its most significant ballplayer and, hopefully, boost waning interest in the national pastime among Black Americans.

If a fictional movie is worthy of a special game, Jackie Robinson most certainly is, too.

His story really happened.

Climate toll on Arctic bases: Sunken runways, damaged roads

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. military bases in the Arctic and sub-Arctic are failing to prepare their installations for long-term climate change as required, even though soaring temperatures and melting ice already are cracking base runways and roads and worsening flood risks up north, the Pentagon's watchdog office said Friday.

The report from the inspector general of the Department of Defense provides a rare bit of public stock-taking of the military's state of readiness — or lack of readiness — for the worsening weather of a warming Earth.

The U.S. military long has formally recognized climate change as a threat to national security. That's in part because of the impact that intensifying floods, wildfires, extreme heat and other natural disasters are

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having and will have on U.S. installations and troops around the world.

Increasing hurricanes, flooding, storms and wildfires in recent years have caused billions of dollars in damage to Florida's Tyndall Air Force Base, Nebraska's Offutt Air Force Base and other U.S. military installations, and interrupted training and other operations.

For years, laws, presidential orders and Pentagon rules have mandated that the military start planning and work so that its installations, warships, warplanes and troops can carry out their missions despite increasingly challenging conditions as the use of fossil fuels heats up the Earth.

While even acknowledging climate change was a career risk for administration officials under former President Donald Trump, President Joe Biden directed faster, more sweeping action on climate change by the Department of Defense and other agencies as one of his first acts in office.

Despite Biden's emphasis, inspectors visiting the United States' six northernmost military bases last June and July found none were carrying out the required assessments and planning to prepare their installations and operations against long-term climate change.

Further, "most installation leaders at the six installations we visited in the Arctic and sub-Arctic region were unfamiliar with military installation resilience planning requirements, processes, and tools," the inspector general reports said.

Senior officers told the inspector general's inspection team that their operations lacked the training and funding to start the required work on hardening their bases. Some saw requirements for that kind of long-term planning as assembling a "wish list" that would go up against competing priorities, the officers told the inspectors.

A Pentagon spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday. The inspector general report cited Defense officials as saying that the Biden administration has finished or is working on many of the report's recommendations to better incorporate climate preparations at bases and across military branches, and would increase resources to bases to make that possible.

One of the bases is in Greenland and the other five in Alaska: Thule Air Base, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Clear Space Force Station, Eielson Air Force Base, Fort Wainwright and Fort Greely.

The Arctic and sub-Arctic are important to U.S. strategic aims in part because of rising tensions and competition with Russia and China, and in part because sharply rising temperatures are melting sea ice and opening up both shipping lanes and access to the region's oil and other resources, increasing interest and traffic in the region.

The Defense Department also sees "the Arctic is a potential vector for an attack on the U.S. homeland, a region where Russia and China are operating more freely, and a strategic corridor for DoD forces between the Indo-Pacific and Europe," the report notes.

The inspectors found the kind of problems associated with worsening climate change already causing trouble at the U.S. bases.

At Fort Wainwright in Alaska, heightened wildfire risks in 2019 interrupted training for two Pacific Air Force squadrons, so that one was able to carry out only 59% of planned training for a period, the report said.

Many of the specific discussions of climate risks at the six bases were blacked-out in the version of the report made public Friday.

But inspectors photographed and described some. That included cracked and sunken runways undermined by melting ice, damaged hangers and roads, and a collapsed rock barrier that had been piled up to hold back floodwater from a river swollen by glacial melting, at Thule in Greenland.

Leaders at all six bases visited noted that kind of damage, inspectors said, "however, officials from five of these installations said they had not begun incorporating future climate risks into their installations' planning."

"They stated that their day-to-day focus was on reacting to immediate problems or reducing risk to existing hazards, rather than planning for future hazards," the report noted.

The Arctic is warming two to three times faster than the rest of the world. A March heat wave that hiked Arctic temperatures 50 degrees (30 Celsius) higher than normal stunned scientists.

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Of 79 U.S. military installations overall, the Department of Defense says two-thirds are vulnerable to worsening flooding as the climate worsens and half are vulnerable to increasing drought and wildfires.

'Detest me with moderation,' Paris attacks defendant pleads

By NICOLAS VAUX-MONTAGNY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The only surviving member of the Islamic State attack team that terrorized Paris in 2015 asked Friday for forgiveness and expressed condolences for the victims, wiping away tears during court testimony as he pleaded with survivors to "detest me with moderation."

For years, Salah Abdeslam stayed silent about what happened Nov. 13, 2015 in the Bataclan theater, Paris cafes and the national stadium, and the 130 people who were killed. After his trial opened last year, he had a few outbursts of extremist bravado, but for months he refused to answer most questions.

Then this week, his words started flowing, in lengthy testimony that at times contradicted earlier statements. His words at times prompted angry outbursts from the public.

Survivors and victims' families, who hope the extensive trial helps them find justice and clarity, had mixed reactions.

Abdeslam said the mastermind of the attacks convinced him two days beforehand to join the team of suicide bombers. The next day, Abdeslam said his brother Brahim showed him the café in northern Paris where Salah was meant to detonate himself in a crowd.

"For me, it was a shock. I didn't know how to react. I showed that I wasn't ready for that," Abdeslam told the court. "He ended up convincing me."

He recounted donning an explosive belt the night of Nov. 13, as his brother and other Islamic State extremists who had fought in Syria were fanned out around Paris mounting parallel attacks.

"I enter the café, I order a drink," Abdeslam said. "I was thinking. I looked at people laughing, dancing. And that's when I knew that I couldn't do it."

"I told myself, I'm not going to do it," he said, citing a sense of "humanity."

A police explosives expert has told the court that the suicide belt was faulty, but Abdeslam testified that he disabled it.

Last month, he expressed "regret" that he hadn't followed through on the attack.

But this week, he started showing signs of remorse.

"There are no words for this," he said.

Questioned Friday by his lawyer about his mother, and her loss over her older son's death, Abdeslam started to cry for the first time since the trial began in September, according to French media reports.

"I ask you today to detest me with moderation," he told the victims. "I offer my condolences, and I ask forgiveness for all the victims."

He has also repeatedly asked forgiveness of three fellow defendants being tried for helping him escape.

Georges Salines, whose daughter Lola was killed in the Bataclan, was quoted by France-Info radio as saying: "Abdeslam is trying to settle a mountain of contradictions in his head. He's trying to resolve them, but his path will be long."

After leaving the café, Abdeslam described desperate attempts to reach friends to ask for help, and taking a taxi across Paris to the suburb of Montrouge, where he said he removed the detonator from his explosive vest and tossed the vest in a garbage bin. He hid out at first near Paris, and then fled with friends to Brussels, where he was arrested four months later.

He faces life in prison if convicted on murder charges.

The more than 2,400 civil parties to the case present their final arguments next month, and the verdict is expected on June 24. It's among the biggest trials in modern French history.

Ukraine's port of Mariupol holding out against all odds

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — Under relentless bombardment and a Russian blockade, the key port of Mariupol

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is holding out, but weapons and supplies shortages could weaken the resistance that has thwarted the Kremlin's invasion plans.

More than six weeks after the Russian siege began, Ukrainian troops are continuing to fight the vastly superior Russian forces in ferocious battles amid the ruins of what once was a bustling city on the Sea of Azov.

The mayor says an estimated 120,000 people remain in the city, out of Mariupol's prewar population of about 450,000.

The Ukrainians' fight has scuttled Moscow's designs, tying up significant Russian forces and delaying a planned offensive in eastern Ukraine's industrial heartland, Donbas. The Kremlin hopes an attack in the east could reverse the battlefield fortunes for Russia after a humiliating failure to quickly storm the capital, Kyiv.

Mariupol has been a key objective for Russia since the start of the Feb. 24 invasion. Capturing the city would allow Moscow to establish a land corridor to Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula that Russia annexed in 2014 and deprive Ukraine of a major port and prized industrial assets.

Oleksandr Motuzyanyk, a spokesman for Ukraine's Ministry of Defense, described the situation in Mariupol as "complicated," saying fighting is continuing in industrial areas and the port, and that Russia for the first time used a Tu-22M3 long-range bomber to attack the city.

The giant Azovstal steel mill and other plants have been heavily damaged by the Russian bombardment that has flattened much of Mariupol, indiscriminately hitting homes, hospitals and other public buildings and killing thousands.

The victims include about 300 people killed in last month's Russian airstrike on the Mariupol Drama Theater that was being used as a shelter and had the word "CHILDREN" printed in Russian in huge white letters on the pavement outside to ward off aerial attack.

Mayor Vadym Boychenko told The Associated Press that at least 21,000 people were killed in Mariupol with bodies "carpeted through the streets." He said the Russians deployed mobile cremation equipment to methodically dispose of the bodies in order to hide evidence of the massacre and prevent international organizations from documenting "the horror the Russian army is responsible for."

The bodies of more than 900 civilians have been found in the region surrounding Kyiv following the withdrawal of Russian forces, said Andriy Nebytov, head of the regional police force, adding that many were "simply executed." The number of dead is double what was announced nearly two weeks ago, a discovery that has fueled global outrage and accusations from Ukrainians and the West that Russia is committing war crimes in Ukraine.

Moscow deployed fighters from Chechnya, known for their ferocity, to wage street battles in Mariupol. Chechnya's Moscow-backed leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, has repeatedly boasted on his messaging app channel about defeating Ukrainians in Mariupol, but the fight has continued.

Boychenko said several Ukrainian units are still fighting in Mariupol, including the 36th Marine Brigade, Interior Ministry troops, border guards and the national guard's Azov Regiment, which Russia singles out as a particular villain because of its far-right ideology.

The Azov Regiment, a seasoned volunteer force that is widely considered one of the country's most capable units, is defending the Azovstal plant that covers an area of nearly 11 square kilometers (over 4.2 square miles). It has taken advantage of the plant's sprawling network of concrete buildings and underground facilities to repel continuous Russian attacks.

The 36th Marine Brigade was maintaining defensive positions at the Azovmash and Zavod Ilyicha factories until it ran out of supplies and ammunition and made a desperate attempt to break through the Russian blockade earlier this week.

In a post on the brigade's Facebook page, one of its officers described how "for more than a month, the marines have been fighting without replenishing ammunition, food and water supplies."

"The wounded accounted for nearly a half of the brigade's strength, but those who still had their limbs and were capable of walking reported back to duty," it said.

Boychenko said that some of the marines managed to join the Azov regiment, while others were captured

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by the Russians. He didn't give any numbers.

The Russian military said Thursday that a total of 1,160 Ukrainian marines surrendered this week, a claim that couldn't be independently verified.

As the Ukrainian troops continue to offer fierce resistance in Mariupol, fears have grown that the exasperated Russians could resort to chemical weapons to deal with the remaining pockets of resistance at the Azovstal plant and other areas of the city.

Eduard Basurin, a Russia-allied separatist official in eastern Ukraine, appeared to call for that Monday, telling Russian state TV that the Russia-backed forces should block all the exits out of the factory and then "use chemical troops to smoke them out of there." He later said that no chemical weapons were used.

The Azov Regiment claimed Monday, without providing evidence, that a drone had dropped a poisonous substance on its positions but inflicted no serious injuries. A Ukrainian defense official said the attack possibly involved phosphorus munitions.

Ukrainian authorities have said that the Russians have blocked humanitarian convoys from reaching Mariupol, keeping it without food, water and power since the siege started. The Russian troops have turned back buses sent to evacuate residents, but about 150,000 have been able to flee the city in their own vehicles.

Boychenko said at least 33,500, and, possibly, up to 50,000 Mariupol residents have been taken to "filtration camps" in the separatist-controlled east before being forcibly sent to distant, economically depressed areas in Russia.

Mariupol has seen communications cut since the start of the siege, and as the Russians moved to capture sections of the city they launched radio broadcasts to brainwash the population.

"They unleashed propaganda, telling people that Kyiv and other cities have been captured and they have been abandoned," Boychenko said.

The continuing fighting has forced the Russian military to keep a significant number of troops in the city, delaying the eastern offensive.

"As long as the street fighting is going on, Russia can't remove troops from Mariupol and deploy them to other areas, including Donbas," Oleh Zhdanov, an independent military expert, told the AP.

"The Ukrainian troops in Mariupol are still fulfilling their main task by diverting the Russian forces from other areas. Mariupol remains a major symbol of the Ukrainian resistance."

Amid false 2020 claims, GOP states eye voting system upgrade

By JONATHAN MATTISE and CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — For years, Tennessee Democratic Senate Minority Leader Jeff Yarbro's call to require the state's voting infrastructure to include a paper record of each ballot cast has been batted down in the Republican-dominated Legislature.

But as false claims still swirl around the 2020 presidential election — and some GOP voters remain distrustful of voting machines — Tennessee Republican lawmakers who have held off are coming around on a paper-backed mandate. A similar scenario is playing out in some of the five other states -- most of which are Republican-led -- that do not currently have a voting system with a paper record.

The Tennessee GOP bill that is gaining traction would set a 2024 deadline for Tennessee to join the vast majority of states that already have voting systems that include a paper record of every ballot cast, so any disputed results can be verified.

Yarbro said he'll take the change, even if he doesn't love the impetus for it.

"I'm disappointed that it's taken this long, and somewhat concerned over the rationale," the Nashville lawmaker said. "But at the end of the day, this is good public policy."

Mississippi and Indiana plan to have a paper trail by the 2024 presidential election. Last year, lawmakers in Texas — where slightly more than 1 in 10 registered voters cast ballots on paperless machines — passed a law requiring paper records by 2026. Republican Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick touted the move as helping to rebuild trust in elections.

Efforts in two states — Democratic-led New Jersey, and Louisiana, which has a Democratic governor

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and a Republican-led Legislature — have been slowed by either process issues or funding.

"Across the partisan spectrum, there is some sense that the controversy around 2020 underscores how important it is to have paper records of voter intent that we can go back to," said Mark Lindeman, director of Verified Voting, a group that tracks voting equipment across states.

In Tennessee, GOP Gov. Bill Lee has proposed \$15 million for a switch to voter-verifiable, paper-backed equipment. The changeout could cost up to \$37 million, with leftover federal election funds covering the rest, state officials said. Nearly two-thirds of the state's 95 counties currently do not produce a paper record.

Republican lawmakers say Tennessee's elections are just fine. They direct scrutiny at other states, despite a lack of any evidence of widespread fraud or other major problems anywhere in the 2020 election.

"When they had the vote, there were a lot of questions about it, especially in several of the states, Georgia and different ones — 'Is this done right?'" said Tennessee Sen. Ed Jackson, the Republican bill sponsor. "So, that's what we are trying to accomplish. But we don't have that issue here in Tennessee."

Nationwide, election officials continue to grapple with false claims spread by former President Donald Trump and his allies about the 2020 election. This has led to new mail voting restrictions, threats directed at election officials, costly and time-consuming partisan ballot reviews and calls to abandon voting machines altogether and rely solely on paper ballots counted by hand.

About 68% of U.S. registered voters will mark ballots by hand for the 2022 midterm elections, while the rest will use touchscreen voting machines, according to Verified Voting. About 5% of ballots cast in the 2020 presidential election did not have a paper record, down from about 18% in 2016, according to federal officials.

That will shrink further by 2024.

In Indiana this year, Republicans decided not to replace existing equipment. Instead, they added a small printer to some 5,000 voting machines to create a paper trail by 2024.

That plan advanced through the GOP-dominated Legislature in March despite criticism from voter advocacy groups. They argue the printer technology is outdated and relies on lightweight thermal paper, similar to cash register receipts, that is easily damaged and lets voters see only part of their ballot at a time through a small window.

Democratic state Rep. Ed DeLaney of Indianapolis argued not having voter-completed paper ballots available for recounts threatens election integrity far more than claims such as mail ballot fraud.

"If we want to have voter confidence, then we need to do those things which are simple and effective in preventing a miscount," said DeLaney. "That's what we need to do and then we can worry about our fantasies and fears."

This month, Mississippi lawmakers sent the governor legislation to require paper backups by 2024. On a radio show last year, Republican Sen. Jeff Tate said his bill addresses the perception of rigged voting equipment.

In New Jersey, GOP Sen. Joe Pennacchio has sponsored a bill to require paper ballots for all in-person voting, saying that even without the complaints over the 2020 election, "it's still the right thing to do." Some majority-party Democrats have introduced paper-trail proposals, as well. New Jersey has a long-standing requirement to upgrade to paper-backed voting systems, but a 2009 deadline still hasn't kicked in due to funding issues.

New Jersey has a hodgepodge of counties with voting machines that produce paper trails, and some that don't. The state's law permitting early in person voting, which took effect in 2021, called for machines with paper records. Though the state financed them for all 21 counties, only some bought enough to run their entire election on paper-backed machines.

About one-third of Mississippi voters and nearly half of New Jersey voters use paperless machines, according to Verified Voting.

Louisiana's Republican Secretary of State Kyle Ardoin has favored ballot-marking machines that print a paper receipt that is electronically scanned so results could be available on election night, but efforts to replace the state's paperless machines have been mired in process delays.

A 2021 law tasked a new commission with recommending a replacement with a paper trail. As it mulls its options, the commission has heard calls for hand-marked paper ballots along with unsubstantiated

claims of “cheating” in the 2020 election.

There is no evidence of any widespread fraud or coordinated efforts to steal the 2020 election. Last year, The Associated Press reviewed every instance of potential voter fraud reported in the six states disputed by Trump and found fewer than 475 cases — a number that would have made no difference in the contest.

Over the years, Tennessee election officials have said counties can choose their voting equipment. More recently, they encouraged a move toward paper-backed systems. Now, they support requiring the change, reasoning that increasingly fewer paperless machines are produced.

Last year, a Republican-led legislative subcommittee halted a Democratic push for a paper-trail mandate.

“If there’s not a problem, why are we trying to fix it? And why are we mandating that our local governments have to foot the bill for it?” GOP Rep. Ryan Williams said in 2021.

Williams has since come around. He voted for the new bill last month, telling fellow lawmakers that Tennesseans were “disturbed” about “elections in other states that they felt like disenfranchised them.”

“I think one of the things our citizens wanted to know after the last elections, that we did have a way to verify them in paper,” Williams said.

Confusion reigns as school shooter’s jury selection moves on

By TERRY SPENCER and CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Confusion reigned as jury selection in the death penalty trial of Florida school shooter Nikolas Cruz concluded its second week with no immediate end in sight.

Circuit Judge Elizabeth Scherer, presiding over her first death penalty case, united prosecutors and defense attorneys in protest over her plans for concluding the lengthy process of picking the panel that will decide if Cruz is executed for killing 17 people at Parkland’s Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Valentine’s Day 2018.

That confusion and other issues mean opening statements in Cruz’s penalty trial, already delayed two years by the COVID-19 pandemic and legal battles, likely will move from May 31 to mid- or late June.

Scherer took the blame for the confusion late Wednesday afternoon but also expressed frustration with the attorneys. Jury selection is being conducted Mondays through Wednesdays only — with next week off — to give both sides time to depose expert witnesses expected to testify.

“I apologize if I didn’t do it the way you all wanted,” said Scherer, a judge for 10 years. Still, she said, “In what universe does it take three months for jury selection?”

But that process might get even longer. Earlier this month, Scherer summarily dismissed 11 potential jurors who answered “no” when she asked their group of 60 if they could follow the law — a question she hadn’t asked any previous panel. The defense protested that she hadn’t questioned each individually to assure they meant what they said. Those jurors have received summonses ordering their return April 25, but if any don’t, the defense might seek a mistrial. If granted, jury selection would start anew, delaying the trial further.

“I won’t make that mistake again,” Scherer told the attorneys.

Cruz, 23, pleaded guilty in October to murdering 14 students and three staff members during a five-minute rampage through a three-story classroom building.

Scherer and the attorneys are picking a panel of 12 jurors and eight alternates for a four-month trial that will determine if he is sentenced to death or life in prison without parole. They will weigh whether the prosecution’s aggravating factors such as the multiple deaths, Cruz’s planning and his cruelty outweigh mitigating factors such as his lifelong mental health problems, possible fetal alcohol syndrome and the early deaths of his adoptive parents.

Robert Jarvis, a professor at Nova Southeastern University’s law school near Fort Lauderdale, said he understands Scherer feels pressure to complete the trial, but speed cannot be a priority.

“Because Cruz admitted he’s the killer, much of the public doesn’t understand what there is to talk about and why the case is still going,” Jarvis said. “A more experienced judge would have realized that this was always going to be a very long process.”

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Any mistakes Scherer makes throughout the trial could be a basis for a Cruz death sentence being overturned, meaning a second penalty trial would be needed years from now.

Melisa McNeill, Cruz's lead public defender, told Scherer: "If we do it right, we do it once." Prosecutors made similar statements.

David Weinstein, a Miami defense attorney and former prosecutor, said Cruz's attorneys are banking Scherer's mistakes for a potential appeal. Individually, they might not be enough to overturn a death sentence, but they add up.

"If it is one or two small things, that is not going to do it. But 15 or 20 small things that pile on top of another and that creates a bigger thing, that could do it," he said. "Each error creates more opportunity."

The scale of Cruz's killings, the extensive local media coverage and the trial's length are requiring an extra large pool of prospective jurors. The case is the deadliest U.S. mass shooting to make it to trial — seven other shooters who killed at least 17 died during or shortly after their attacks either by suicide or police gunfire. The man accused of killing 23 at an El Paso, Texas, Walmart in 2019 is awaiting trial.

More than 1,200 potential jurors have been screened since April 4, with about 250 passing the first hurdle: Can they serve from June through September? Another 700 or more are likely to be screened starting April 25.

Potential jurors who can serve fill out a lengthy questionnaire about their backgrounds, knowledge of the case and views on the death penalty. Scherer told them they could be brought back twice for further questioning in May.

Both prosecutors and the defense thought that meant that at the next session, the potential jurors would be asked about the questionnaire. Those who passed that hurdle would be brought back for deeper questioning to determine if they can be fair and haven't made up their minds whether Cruz should be executed.

But Scherer told the attorneys she envisioned bringing potential jurors back just once, in groups of about 30 — one group each morning, another each afternoon.

The attorneys said that wasn't enough time for each group. In death penalty cases, they told her, it is not unusual for individual questioning of a potential juror to take 10 or 15 minutes instead of the two or three in many trials.

"It cannot be done quickly if it is done correctly," prosecutor Carolyn McCann told Scherer.

Appearing exhausted and resigned to another delay, Scherer ended the session. She said she would issue a new schedule soon.

"There comes a time when it is going to have to be what it is," she said. "It can't go on like this."

GOP leaders in Ohio try to block Trump endorsement of Vance

By JILL COLVIN and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Dozens of Republican leaders in Ohio are mounting a last-minute effort to urge former President Donald Trump not to endorse "Hillbilly Elegy" author JD Vance in the crowded upcoming primary for an open Senate seat.

A draft letter circulating among Republicans and obtained by The Associated Press calls on Trump to remain neutral in the race. It was written following a news report that Trump was going to endorse Vance, a step the former president has not yet taken.

But the letter is a sign of anxiety among some Republicans about which candidate Trump may pick in advance of the state's May 3 primary. Vance has come under particular scrutiny from some of Trump's most loyal supporters for criticizing the former president in the past, something the Republicans highlighted in their letter.

In bullet points, they remind Trump of Vance's past comments, including references to potentially supporting Hillary Clinton and comparing the former president to "another opioid."

"We know there are many qualified candidates in this race who have stood up for the America First agenda over the years and have carried the Trump mantle over the years, again with the notable exception of JD Vance," they wrote. "While we were working hard in Ohio to support you and Make America

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Great Again, JD Vance was actively working against your candidacy.”

The letter, signed by GOP party leaders, including a slew of county chairs, tells the former president that “an endorsement that cuts against your support and legacy in Ohio will only serve to confuse or upset voters” and may even suppress Republican turnout in the fall.

Representatives for Trump and Vance, who has said he regrets his past comments, did not respond to requests for comment.

David Johnson, chairman of the Columbiana County Republican Party, who helped to draft and circulate the letter, said the effort came together in a series of phone calls between party chairs Thursday.

Johnson, who has endorsed former Ohio Republican Party chair Jane Timken for Senate, said the letter has now been signed by between 40 and 50 people, including supporters of Timken, former Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel, Cleveland investment banker Mike Gibbons and state Sen. Matt Dolan. Two other candidates round out a seven-way primary to replace Republican U.S. Sen. Rob Portman.

“All of us think it’s just not a smart thing to do for winning that seat. That’s the objective,” he said.

Vance supporters, meanwhile, urged Trump to stick with him.

“President Trump would be making a fantastic choice by endorsing JD Vance,” said Marshall Pitchford, the chairman of Ohio Right to Life. “JD is 100% pro-life without exceptions. He will continue President Trump’s pro-life victories in the US Senate.”

In France’s election, a meaty issue unites Jews and Muslims

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — As she cooks lunch and talks politics, Sarah Gutmann has a nasty feeling — of would-be French president Marine Le Pen invading the privacy of her home and meddling with her Jewish faith and the plates of chicken and kosher sausages that she is frying for her husband and their eldest son.

That’s because the far-right candidate wants to outlaw ritual slaughter if she’s elected next Sunday. And that could directly impact how Gutmann feeds her family and exercises her religious freedom. She and her husband, Benjamin, say they would have to think about leaving France if a far-right government interfered with observant Jews’ kosher diets. Their fear is that under Le Pen, targeting ritually slaughtered meats could be just the start of steps to make French Jews and Muslims feel unwelcome.

“Attacking the way we eat impinges on our privacy and that is very serious,” Gutmann said as she busied herself in the kitchen of their Paris home.

“The intention is to target minority populations that bother her and send a message to voters who are against these minorities: ‘Vote for me, because I will attack them and perhaps, with time, make them leave.’”

Muslim shopper Hayat Ettabet said her family might be forced to illegally slaughter at home to stay within their religious rules, bleeding out animals “in the bathroom, back to the way it was.”

Le Pen says all animals should be stunned before slaughter, and frames the issue as one of animal welfare. That’s unacceptable to observant Jews and Muslims who believe stunning causes unnecessary animal suffering and that their ritual slaughters for kosher and halal meats are more humane.

With the largest populations of Muslims and Jews in western Europe, the issue has major potential repercussions for France and could hit communities elsewhere that buy French meat exports. The issue is one of the many fault lines between Le Pen and incumbent President Emmanuel Macron and the starkly different visions of France they are presenting for next Sunday’s election runoff vote. It is expected to be far closer than in 2017, when the centrist Macron beat Le Pen by a landslide.

“We have never been so close to having an extreme-right regime,” Gutmann said. “The alarm bell is ringing.”

Le Pen’s France would be more inwardly focused, with far fewer immigrants and fewer rights for those already here, less tolerance for non-Christian traditions, and less tightly bound to the European Union and the outside world.

Macron is largely promising the opposite as he seeks a second five-year term. Macron zeroed in on Le Pen’s proposals for ending slaughter without stunning to emphasize their political differences. He said he

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doesn't want "a France that prevents Muslims or Jews from eating as their religion prescribes."

Le Pen says she doesn't want that either. But alarmed Jews and Muslims find her hard to believe. Le Pen is not opposed to other practices deemed cruel by animal welfare campaigners, such as bullfighting or — most notably — hunting, a tradition deeply anchored in rural France where she is trawling for votes. So her focus on kosher and halal meats smacks of hypocrisy to Jews and Muslims who see an attack disguised as animal welfare.

Le Pen says the meats could instead be imported. But that also makes no sense to critics, because it seems to run counter to Le Pen's general France-first rule that the country should produce more things itself and import less.

Her camp has also flip-flopped. Jordan Bardella, Le Pen's No. 2 who is heading their National Rally party while she seeks the presidency, said in March that they want an outright ban on kosher and halal meats, both imported and from domestically slaughtered animals.

Jewish leaders responded in a statement that the "detestable" proposition would force large numbers of Jews and Muslims to leave.

But Le Pen and Macron are both now modulating their positions on issues important to voters who didn't support them in round one of the election, seeking to amass the votes they will need to win round two. Macron, most notably, has softened his plan to increase the retirement age to 65. Le Pen is trying to appear more inclusive.

"I'm not at all going to get rid of halal and kosher butcher shops," she said this week. She said meat from animals that have been knocked out electrically might prove to be an acceptable halal alternative to some Muslims. But if not, "importing this meat would be authorized, obviously."

"What we want is to truly stop this animal suffering, very intense, that is the consequence of slaughter without stunning," Le Pen said.

Slovenia, Denmark and Sweden, as well as non-EU members Switzerland, Iceland and Norway, have done away with religious exemptions, meaning kosher and halal meat must be imported. So, too, have the Flanders and Wallonia regions of Belgium. The bans there are being challenged in the European Court of Human Rights by Yohan Benizri, a vice president of the European Jewish Congress.

He says outlawing religious slaughter makes Jews feel "we're not part of European culture" and "portrays us as some form of savages."

Because France exports kosher meats, banning its production "will have a devastating effect" on Jewish communities elsewhere, he said.

"It's going to be a devastating signal as well because — again — we would be seen as not welcome in the European Union," Benizri said.

As her son finished lunch, Sarah Gutmann said the most worrying aspect of a Le Pen-pushed law on the issue would be if it was met by general indifference.

"Then, really, I will be very, very scared," she said. "If I see an unjust law go through and no one reacts, then we'll say to ourselves that we really are in danger."

Putin's Pollock: US seafood imports fuel Russian war machine

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and HELEN WIEFFERING Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A U.S. ban on seafood imports from Russia over its invasion of Ukraine was supposed to sap billions of dollars from Vladimir Putin's war machine.

But shortcomings in import regulations mean that Russian-caught pollock, salmon and crab are likely to enter the U.S. anyway, by way of the country vital to seafood supply chains across the world: China.

Like the U.S. seafood industry, Russian companies rely heavily on China to process their catch. Once there, the seafood can be re-exported to the U.S. as a "product of China" because country of origin labeling isn't required.

The result is that nearly a third of the wild-caught fish imported from China is estimated to have been caught in Russian waters, according to an International Trade Commission study of 2019 data. For pollock

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and sockeye salmon, the rate is even higher — 50% to 75%.

“China doesn’t catch cod. They don’t catch pollock. But yet, they’re one of the largest exporters of these whitefish in the world,” said Sally Yozell, a former policy director at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration who now is a senior fellow at the Stimson Center in Washington. “Having it labeled as a Chinese product is really not fair to the consumers and to restaurants.”

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Fishing is big business in Russia, one closely linked to the Kremlin and Putin’s projection of power at sea. The country is the one of the world’s top seafood producers and was the eighth-largest exporter to the U.S. last year, with more than \$1.2 billion worth of sales, the bulk of it king crab.

But it’s unknown exactly how much manages to land in the U.S. by way of China, which sent another \$1.7 billion in fish to the U.S. last year. Nor does the Biden administration’s ban require companies importing from China to find out.

Among Russia’s biggest seafood exports is Alaska pollock. A cousin of cod, Alaska pollock is the most harvested fish in the U.S., showing up in everything from imitation crabmeat to McDonald’s Filet-O-Fish. Every year, giant, floating factories in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska catch 1.5 million metric tons of the fish, the equivalent of more than four times the weight of the Empire State Building.

But the same species is also harvested in Russia in similar amounts, and once processed and imported from China, fills an important gap in the U.S. market. In lieu of tracing the country of origin, U.S. producers rely on the name recognition of Alaska pollock to signal where the fish was caught.

“Consumers can have confidence that if the name Alaska is on the box it unequivocally comes from Alaskan waters,” insisted Craig Morris, chief executive of Genuine Alaska Pollock Producers.

Even before the invasion of Ukraine, pressure had been building to prevent what Sen. Dan Sullivan, a Republican of Alaska, called “authoritarian” pollock from entering the U.S. Putin banned U.S. seafood in 2014 following American sanctions to punish him for the invasion of Crimea that year. Since then Russian exports entering the U.S. duty free have nearly quadrupled in value.

U.S. trade data analyzed by The Associated Press show that the biggest importer of Russian-caught pollock from China last year was High Liner Foods. The company did not respond to the AP’s request for comment.

While overshadowed by Russia’s role as an energy powerhouse, Russia’s seafood industry has increasingly been flexing its own muscle with strong support from the Kremlin.

Two of the country’s largest seafood exporters — Vladivostok-based Russian Fishery Co. and Russian Crab — are owned by Gleb Frank, the son of Putin’s former transportation minister and head of state-owned shipbuilder Sovcomflot. Frank, dubbed Russia’s “Crab King,” is also the son-in law of one of Russia’s richest men, Gennady Timchenko, who was among the first oligarchs sanctioned following the 2014 invasion of Crimea.

With generous state loans, Frank’s companies have been at the forefront of an effort to renew Russia’s aging fleet. Last year, during a Navy Day ceremony at a St. Petersburg shipyard with Putin and 50 warships looking on, he launched an advanced supertrawler capable of hauling 60,000 tons of pollock per year.

After Frank himself was hit with U.S. sanctions last month, he sold part of his ownership stakes in both seafood companies and resigned as chairman. Russian Fishery Co. did not respond to a detailed list of questions about the U.S. embargo but Russian Crab said Frank has never played a role in management of the company.

It’s not just the industry’s ties to the Kremlin that are driving concern.

For years, activists have complained about Russia’s poor record caring for the oceans. The country was ranked No. 2 out of 152 nations in a recent study of global efforts to combat illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. Only China scored worse.

Allegations of illegal fishing have even followed Russia to the south pole, where a Russian ship in 2020

was accused of faking its location data to fish illegally off season. A Russian observer was also found to be behind anomalous catch data from several Antarctic fishing vessels. In both cases, Russia denied any wrongdoing.

At a congressional hearing this month on the Russian seafood ban, Rep. Jared Huffman, a California Democrat, led calls for the expansion of NOAA's Seafood Import Monitoring Program, which aims to prevent illegal seafood from entering U.S. supply chains by tracking shipments from the point of catch. Currently the program covers just 13 species, only two of which — red king crab and Atlantic cod — are fished by Russia.

"Until that happens, Russian seafood will continue to line grocery store shelves and American consumers will continue to unwittingly support Putin's war machine," Huffman said.

Peter Quinter, a former U.S. Customs Service attorney, said that the Biden administration can easily close the China loophole by requiring importers to inspect their supply chains to make sure none of their fish comes from Russia.

"They can and should fix this," said Quinter, who now advises seafood companies on compliance with American trade law. "The old days of being sure your fish is caught in a single place or country is no longer the case."

Modest-income buyers being priced out of new-vehicle market

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — Two years after the pandemic tore through the economy, America's auto market looks something like this: Prices are drastically up. Supply is drastically down. And gasoline costs drastically more.

The result? A widening disparity between the richest buyers and everyone else.

The most affluent buyers keep plunking down big money for new vehicles, including the least fuel-efficient among them — trucks, SUVs, large sedans.

As for the rest of America, millions are feeling increasingly priced out of the new-vehicle market. They are competing instead for a shrunken supply of used autos, especially smaller, less expensive ones that consume less fuel. The jump in pump prices since Russia's invasion of Ukraine has only intensified their urge to keep costs down.

They are people like Natalia Ponce De Leon of North Palm Beach, Florida. She had been leasing a Toyota Tacoma pickup she acquired as new four years ago and had been using for her custom drapery business. When it was time to replace it recently, she didn't even consider a new vehicle.

Instead, she settled on a 9-year-old vehicle with 14,000 miles on it — a Toyota RAV4, a small SUV, that she bought at Earl Stewart Toyota in North Palm Beach. Though it cost her \$23,000 to buy the SUV and pay off the remainder of her lease, Ponce De Leon is happy with her decision. For just under \$400 a month for six years, she said, she has a vehicle that's easier to drive than her old pickup yet spacious enough to carry a 6-foot ladder for her business.

Best of all, with gasoline having scaled \$4 a gallon nationally, she's enjoying superior fuel efficiency.

"I'm thinking I'm going to save, per month, between \$100 and \$200," Ponce De Leon said — money that she plans to spend for online marketing to help grow her business.

The new-vehicle market is another story entirely. Among all purchases of new autos last month, nearly 79% were trucks and SUVs. A decade ago, that proportion was just 52%.

And that's despite a whopping 22% jump in the average price of a new car since the pandemic struck two years ago — to more than \$46,000, as of December.

Based on March prices and interest rates, the monthly payment on an average new vehicle would be \$691 — far beyond the reach of what a household with a median gross income of \$65,732 should spend, according to calculations by Cox Automotive and Moody's.

Not so for many of the wealthier-than-average buyers who now dominate the new-vehicle market.

"Those that can afford it are still buying what they want," said Jeff Schuster, president of global forecasting for LMC Automotive, a consulting firm.

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Ivan Drury, a senior manager at the Edmunds.com auto site, has been surprised by the demand among affluent buyers for high-priced new vehicles.

"I can't imagine a situation in which we've had so many people willing to spend so much money," Drury said. "It's just abnormal for someone to go out and spend (sticker price) or above. I can't think of any other time period unless it was on specific models. And this is every car on the road."

Left largely out of that pool, buyers of more modest means have been vying for the most fuel-efficient used vehicles — and forcing up their prices. At auctions where dealers buy many of their vehicles, the average price of a 2-to-8-year-old compact car rose 1.1% during the past three weeks to an average of \$12,560. That's an annual rate of nearly 20%. The price of older cars is up even more, according to data compiled by Black Book, which monitors such prices.

By contrast, over the same period, the average for a full-size 2-8-year-old SUV actually fell 2.3%, to \$32,700.

"The demand is pushing dealers to buy smaller, more efficient, and older vehicles," said Alex Yurchenko, chief data officer for Black Book.

Behind that trend lies an economic reality: Americans as a whole have less cash to spend. Although America's job market is robust and many people have received pay raises in recent months, the acceleration of inflation has more than wiped out those gains in most cases.

Consumer prices have skyrocketed 8.5% over the past year, the fastest such pace in four decades. In addition, stimulus checks and other federal aid that most households received after the pandemic have long since expired.

In many cases, too, households have drawn down much of the cash they had stockpiled during the pandemic. In response, Americans as a whole are going deeper into debt to pay their expenses.

"People in the lower price range are just jammed up," Drury noted. "It's weird to have so many people with so much money, and we have this other swath of consumers that say, 'I'm tapped out.'"

Further stressing the lower-priced market is the shrinking availability of leasing, which had long allowed ordinary households to keep monthly payments low. Leasing has nearly dried up because automakers are no longer offering attractive deals.

"They don't have to," said Jonathan Smoke, chief economist of Cox Automotive, "because (auto) supplies are low."

Even among higher-income households, the run-up in gas prices has left more buyers focused on fuel efficiency. In particular, many have been snapping up electric vehicles, whose sales jumped 66% over the past year, Edmunds.com says. Even so, the EV share of the overall auto market remains only about 4%.

In the meantime, prices for both new and used vehicles have begun to fall or level off. From February to March, average prices for used cars and trucks actually fell nearly 4%. That may suggest, Drury said, that people have had it and won't keep paying inflated prices. Automakers have even begun raise discounts on pickup trucks.

"They might have tapped out of consumers that pay any price to get what they want," Drury said.

NY Gov. Hochul hits election hurdle in running mate's arrest

By MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — One man's scandal catapulted New York Gov. Kathy Hochul into office. Will alleged misconduct by another man hurt her chances of holding on to the job?

Hochul's previously smooth path to a Democratic primary win hit a major bump this week when her lieutenant governor, Brian Benjamin, resigned following his arrest in a federal corruption investigation.

One of Hochul's first big decisions as governor was to appoint Benjamin, then a state senator, after she took over from Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who resigned last summer rather than face impeachment over sexual harassment allegations, which he has denied.

Her leading opponents in both the primary and general election pounced, saying Hochul's pick of Benjamin at a time when he was already under scrutiny showed poor judgement.

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"Either she's consistently shamefully out of the loop, or shamefully enabling through her inaction, and either way it's clear that unless we elect leadership outside of the old ways of Albany, these patterns of scandal and corruption will keep repeating," said New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, who is running against Hochul for the Democratic nomination.

U.S. Rep. Tom Suozzi, a Long Island Democrat also trying to beat Hochul, piled on, saying her pick of Benjamin was part of a pattern of bad choices, which he said included cutting a deal that will give her hometown Buffalo Bills more than \$1.1 billion to build and operate a new stadium.

"Hochul has fostered a culture of continued corruption with months of fundraising from pay to play insiders and people doing business with the state, and secretive budget deals that resulted in the billion dollar Bills stadium and little else," Suozzi tweeted.

Hochul, though, hasn't appeared to lose support from top allies.

News of Benjamin's arrest and resignation was nearly lost in the noise of a mass shooting on a subway train in New York City.

Hochul raced into town to attend a police news conference about the attack, where she ducked a question about Benjamin, then visited shooting victims in the hospital and rode the rails in a symbolic statement against fear.

"Right now Kathy Hochul has such a significant lead as far as polling and fundraising is concerned, I don't think as of now the troubles will hurt her drastically for the June primary," Fordham University political science professor Christina Greer said. "Obviously her opponents will raise questions and have raised questions about what she knew."

Federal prosecutors say Benjamin accepted bribes, in the form of illegal campaign contributions, during a failed run for New York City comptroller.

An indictment said that in exchange for the illicit donations, he helped a nonprofit organization controlled by the donor get a \$50,000 state grant.

Prosecutors said Benjamin also offered to help the donor, a real estate developer, get a zoning variance from the city in exchange for a \$15,000 donation to a political committee. And they said he lied to state officials about the investigation when he was being considered for the lieutenant governor appointment.

Benjamin's lawyers said there was "nothing inappropriate" about the grant and that their client's actions were "laudable — not criminal."

Hochul used a public radio interview Wednesday to defend her selection of Benjamin, and said the vetting process didn't raise red flags.

"It was a surprise, it really was," Hochul told WNYC host Brian Lehrer. "I made the best decision I could with the information I had at that time."

Questions about Benjamin's campaign committee and use of expense accounts had been the subject of scrutiny by journalists and state regulators prior to his selection as lieutenant governor, including stories in the Daily News about potential use of campaign funds for personal expenses, such as auto repairs and a party at a jazz club to celebrate his wedding.

Last week, Hochul had reiterated her support of Benjamin and described the probe into his campaign as "related to other people."

Hochul — who had also said she wasn't aware of any harassment in Cuomo's administration until after the claims became public — will now have to thread a fine line with voters, Greer said.

While she needs to claim ignorance of any wrongdoing by Benjamin, "she doesn't want to seem as though she's inept, as if she doesn't know what's going on right underneath her," Greer said.

Still, Hochul holds some big advantages. She raised nearly \$22 million for her election campaign as of January, which dwarfed the \$5.4 million raised by Suozzi and \$222,000 raised by Williams.

One of the candidates expected to mount a serious challenge, Attorney General Letitia James, dropped out of the race quickly.

Just over half of Democratic voters said they would vote for Hochul in the June primary in a Siena College poll released in late March, compared with one-fourth of voters supporting Suozzi or Williams.

Democratic strategist Evan Stavisky said voters will likely ultimately judge Hochul based on their pocket

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books and her record.

"The governor being misled by someone who was then charged by the federal government for lying to her is probably not a salient point with voters," Stavisky said.

If Democrats wind up sticking with Hochul in the primary, she would be the expected favorite over most potential Republican challengers in a heavily blue state.

One wildcard: Cuomo has acknowledged thinking about entering the race late to potentially get his old job back. He's been making public appearances again lately, criticizing the state's Democratic leaders for shifting too far to the left and potentially positioning himself for a run.

Cuomo still sits on millions of dollars in campaign funds he could use to run as an independent candidate, if he chooses.

Republican gubernatorial candidate U.S. Rep. Lee Zeldin of Long Island criticized Hochul Wednesday for having "zero criticism, condemnation or outrage" for Benjamin.

"She's getting hit on both sides, that's a very bad spot to be in," said Republican strategist Alex DeGrasse. Hochul hasn't named a new lieutenant governor.

From 'sister' to rival: Dem rising stars fight for Ga. seat

By SUDHIN THANAWALA and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

LAWRENCEVILLE, Ga. (AP) — Reps. Lucy McBath and Carolyn Bourdeaux flipped two longtime Republican congressional districts in Atlanta's northern suburbs by running against then-President Donald Trump and his divisive brand of politics.

But as they fight to keep their House seats this year, they're competing against each other.

After new congressional maps approved by the Republican-controlled state Legislature made McBath's district more conservative, she decided to compete for Bourdeaux's seat. That's pitting two colleagues from the same party against one another ahead of Georgia's May 24 primary.

The race is an uncomfortable development for Democrats who would prefer to celebrate the inroads they've made in Georgia, culminating with Joe Biden becoming his party's first presidential candidate to take the state in 28 years. Rather than building on that success, which was driven in part by support in Atlanta's suburbs, the primary is pitting two of the party's rising stars against each other.

Bourdeaux, who has referred to McBath as a "sister" and previously campaigned alongside her, said in a recent interview that she was "pretty shocked" by the primary challenge.

"If the shoe were on the other foot, it would not have crossed my mind in a million years to go over to the sixth (district) and run against her," Bourdeaux said, lamenting that McBath was devoting resources to defeating her in the primary that could instead be directed at Republicans.

McBath said her push to remain in Congress is "about my work to honor my son," not her primary opponent. Her 17-year old son, Jordan Davis, was shot and killed at a Florida gas station in 2012 by a white man who was angry over the loud music the Black teenager and his friends had been playing in their car, spurring McBath into becoming a gun safety activist.

"To keep that promise to my son and my family and my community, I have just refused to let Brian Kemp and the NRA gun lobby and the Republican Party decide who represents our communities in Georgia," McBath said in an interview, referring to the state's Republican governor and new maps state lawmakers drew based on the 2020 census.

She added: "I've had many people say to me, 'I think you're making the right decision. It's a difficult decision, of course, but I think it's the right decision.'"

The contest is one of five major incumbent-on-incumbent House primary races that will unfold around the country this summer. They include Democratic Reps. Andy Levin and Haley Stevens in suburban Detroit; Republican Reps. David McKinley and Alex Mooney in the northern half of West Virginia; and Illinois congressional colleagues from both parties — Republicans Mary Miller and Rodney Davis and Democrats Marie Newman and Sean Casten.

For some of these contenders, trying to unseat a colleague is just a political reality that comes along with

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the once-a-decade redistricting process. In Michigan, Levin and Stevens each said they still considered the other a friend despite now competing for a new seat drawn by an independent commission.

"When something unfortunate like this happens, to me, it's nothing personal," said Levin, who opted to forgo competing in a newly drawn battleground district to instead challenge Stevens in a safely Democratic one.

Stevens said that, during a recent vote on the House floor, she pulled Levin aside to discuss a bill they'd been working on. Later, she said, it hit her that, "Holy smokes. I'm in this primary with him and, no matter what happens, we're not gonna be colleagues."

The race in Georgia is especially stinging because it will stunt one of two nascent, promising political careers.

McBath won a House seat in 2018 from a suburban district that was held by former Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich for two decades. The former Delta flight attendant is known nationally as a fierce gun safety advocate.

The same year, Bourdeaux came within a few hundred votes of unseating a Republican in the adjacent district, before ultimately winning the seat in 2020. A former public policy professor and Georgia Senate budget director, Bourdeaux has worked on transportation and infrastructure issues. She was among a small group of House Democrats who urged passage last year of a bipartisan infrastructure law before agreement was reached on a larger Democratic social policy package.

Bourdeaux's redrawn district includes wealthy suburbs in Gwinnett County that have grown increasingly diverse in recent years. It has large Black, Hispanic and Asian populations. A stretch of Buford Highway that runs through the area has become a major draw for its breadth of ethnic restaurants.

The district is heavily Democratic, so the winner of the primary is expected to prevail in the general election.

The two have stayed fairly even in the money race. As of the end of last year, McBath had raised slightly more than \$3 million, compared with Bourdeaux's nearly \$2.4 million.

Bourdeaux has been endorsed by some top Gwinnett County Democratic leaders, while Everytown for Gun Safety, where McBath once worked, has runs ads on her behalf. "Protect Our Future," a new Democratic super PAC backed by a cryptocurrency billionaire, has also vowed to spend big to boost McBath, prompting calls from Bourdeaux's campaign that her opponent should "disavow" funding from the group.

Jovanny Emery Sierra, a 27-year-old technologist at a medical company from Duluth, voted for Bourdeaux in the 2020 general election but is now volunteering for McBath. He said he was alienated by Bourdeaux seeming to prioritize the infrastructure legislation rather than a larger, White House-backed social spending and public works bill known as Build Back Better that eventually collapsed.

"It just felt like a slap in the face," he said.

Others who live in the district say they feel anguished that McBath or Bourdeaux will be left without a congressional seat.

"We have two great, caring people that are Democrats, but through this gerrymandering at the state Legislature, they just cut them up and dilute the democratic process," said Jim Shealey, 72. Shealey said he hadn't decided whom to vote for in May.

Still, Julie Pierce, 65, said McBath's decision to challenge Bourdeaux "leaves me squeamish."

Pierce said she's always thought highly of McBath, but she sees Bourdeaux out campaigning much harder.

"If you're going to parachute in, for crying out loud, parachute in and date me," Pierce said of McBath. "Don't take me for granted."

Today in History: April 16, King writes from Birmingham jail

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, April 16, the 106th day of 2022. There are 259 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 16, 1945, a Soviet submarine in the Baltic Sea torpedoed and sank the MV Goya, which Germany

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was using to transport civilian refugees and wounded soldiers; it's estimated that up to 7,000 people died. On this date:

In 1789, President-elect George Washington left Mount Vernon, Virginia, for his inauguration in New York.

In 1889, comedian and movie director Charles Chaplin was born in London.

In 1945, In his first speech to Congress, President Harry S. Truman pledged to carry out the war and peace policies of his late predecessor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In 1947, the cargo ship Grandcamp, carrying ammonium nitrate, blew up in the harbor in Texas City, Texas; a nearby ship, the High Flyer, which was carrying ammonium nitrate and sulfur, caught fire and exploded the following day; the blasts and fires killed nearly 600 people.

In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. wrote his "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in which the civil rights activist responded to a group of local clergymen who had criticized him for leading street protests; King defended his tactics, writing, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

In 1972, Apollo 16 blasted off on a voyage to the moon with astronauts John W. Young, Charles M. Duke Jr. and Ken Mattingly on board.

In 1977, Alex Haley, author of the best-seller "Roots," visited the Gambian village of Juffure, where, he believed, his ancestor Kunte Kinte was captured as a slave in 1767.

In 1996, Britain's Prince Andrew and his wife, Sarah, the Duchess of York, announced they were in the process of divorcing.

In 2003, Michael Jordan played his last NBA game with the Washington Wizards, who lost to the Philadelphia 76ers, 107-87.

In 2007, in one of America's worst school attacks, a college senior killed 32 people on the campus of Virginia Tech before taking his own life.

In 2010, the U.S government accused Wall Street's most powerful firm of fraud, saying Goldman Sachs & Co. had sold mortgage investments without telling buyers the securities were crafted with input from a client who was betting on them to fail. (In July 2010, Goldman agreed to pay \$550 million in a settlement with the Securities and Exchange Commission, but did not admit wrongdoing.)

In 2020, the Trump administration gutted an Obama-era rule that compelled the country's coal plants to cut back emissions of mercury and other human health hazards.

Ten years ago: A trial began in Oslo, Norway, for Anders Breivik (AHN'-durs BRAY'-vihk), charged with killing 77 people in a bomb and gun rampage in July 2011. (Breivik was found guilty of terrorism and premeditated murder and given a 21-year prison sentence.)

Five years ago: U.S. officials said a North Korean medium-range missile exploded seconds after launch, a high-profile failure that came hours before U.S. Vice President Mike Pence arrived in South Korea for a visit at the start of a 10-day trip to Asia.

One year ago: Jon Ryan Schaffer, a member of the far-right Oath Keepers militia group and a heavy metal guitarist, became the first defendant to plead guilty to federal charges in connection with the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland revoked a series of Trump-era orders that promoted fossil fuel development on public lands and waters, and issued a new order that prioritized climate change in agency decisions. Raul Castro said he was stepping down as Cuban Communist Party leader, leaving the island without a Castro guiding affairs for the first time in more than six decades. Iran began enriching uranium to its highest-ever purity, edging the country closer to weapons-grade levels as Iran tried to pressure negotiators in talks on restoring its nuclear deal with world powers.

Today's Birthdays: Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI is 95. Singer Bobby Vinton is 87. Denmark's Queen Margrethe II is 82. Basketball Hall of Famer Kareem Abdul-Jabbar is 75. Former Massachusetts first lady Ann Romney is 73. NFL coach Bill Belichick is 70. Rock singer and former politician Peter Garrett is 69. Actor Ellen Barkin is 68. Actor Michel Gill is 62. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is 60. Rock musician Jason Scheff (Chicago) is 60. Singer Jimmy Osmond is 59. Rock singer David Pirner (Soul Asylum) is 58. Actor-comedian Martin Lawrence is 57. Actor Jon Cryer is 57. Actor Peter Billingsley is 51. Actor Lukas Haas is 46. Actor-singer Kelli O'Hara is 46. Actor Claire Foy (TV: "The Crown") is 38. Figure skater Mirai Nagasu is 29. Actor Sadie Sink is 20.