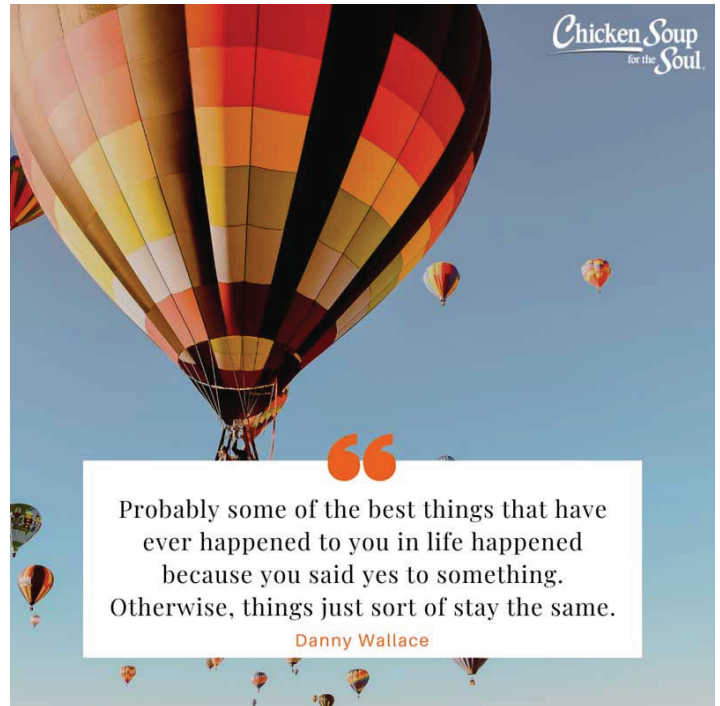


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## Saturday, April 30

Lynso Keller Benefit Auction, 5:30 p.m., Groton American Legion

## Sunday, May 1

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.

Emmanuel: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Grace Alone, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

Methodist: Communion Sunday: Conde Worship at 9 a.m., Sunday school at 10 a.m., Groton worship at 11 a.m.

St. John's: Bible Study, 8 a.m.; Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Zion worship 11 a.m.; Sunday school, 10 a.m.

2 p.m.: High School Baseball at Castlewood (V/JV)

## Monday, May 2

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes/gravy, coleslaw, peaches, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

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

School Lunch: Cheese sticks, marinara sauce, corn.  
6:30 a.m.: Emmanuel Bible Study  
3:30 p.m.: Junior High Track Meet at Aberdeen Ronealli (moved to Ipswich)

## Tuesday, May 3

Senior Menu: Baked fish, au gratin potatoes, 3-bean salad, fruit cobbler, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Hashbrowns, pizza.

School Lunch: Hamburgers, fries.

9:30 a.m.: Methodist Bible Study

1 p.m.: Track meet at Milbank

7 p.m.: Elementary Spring Concert

7 p.m.: City Council Meeting

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

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## Missouri River Levels

This Week



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®

Northwestern Division, Omaha District  
Mainstem and Tributary Reservoir Bulletin  
Project Data Date/Time: 04-30-2022 00:00  
Last Updated Date/Time: 04-30-2022 07:35



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								
<b>Missouri River Mainstem Projects</b>												
Fort Peck Dam	2234.0	2250.0	14,788,340	18,462,840	2222.63	0.03	12,546,000	6,000	6,100	84.8	0	0.0
Garrison Dam	1837.5	1854.0	17,744,640	23,451,300	1828.10	0.18	14,998,000	27,000	14,500	84.5	0	0.0
Oahe Dam	1607.5	1620.0	18,667,635	22,982,900	1595.40	0.31	15,203,000	70,000	27,300	81.4	0	0.0
Big Bend Dam	1420.0	1423.0	1,631,474	1,810,414	1420.66	-0.03	1,669,000	34,000	30,500	100.0	37,526	21.0
Fort Randall Dam	1350.0	1375.0	3,000,732	5,293,473	1355.63	0.54	M	M	21,500	M	M	M
Gavins Point Dam	1204.5	1210.0	295,406	428,033	1206.38	0.04	M	M	24,700	M	M	M
System Totals	--	--	56,128,227	72,428,960	--	--	M	--	--	M	M	M

Last Week



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®

Northwestern Division, Omaha District  
Mainstem and Tributary Reservoir Bulletin  
Project Data Date/Time: 04-23-2022 00:00  
Last Updated Date/Time: 04-23-2022 08:35



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								
<b>Missouri River Mainstem Projects</b>												
Fort Peck Dam	2234.0	2250.0	14,788,340	18,462,840	2222.60	0.01	12,544,000	4,000	6,100	84.8	0	0.0
Garrison Dam	1837.5	1854.0	17,744,640	23,451,300	1827.56	0.14	14,865,000	11,000	14,600	83.8	0	0.0
Oahe Dam	1607.5	1620.0	18,667,635	22,982,900	1595.30	0.25	15,148,000	15,000	25,600	81.1	0	0.0
Big Bend Dam	1420.0	1423.0	1,631,474	1,810,414	1420.33	-0.16	1,650,000	27,000	28,800	100.0	18,526	10.4
Fort Randall Dam	1350.0	1375.0	3,000,732	5,293,473	1354.31	-0.46	3,370,000	16,000	24,100	100.0	369,268	16.1
Gavins Point Dam	1204.5	1210.0	295,406	428,033	1205.96	0.07	327,000	26,000	26,000	100.0	31,594	23.8
System Totals	--	--	56,128,227	72,428,960	--	--	47,904,000	--	--	85.3	0	0.0
<b>USBR Section 7 Projects</b>												

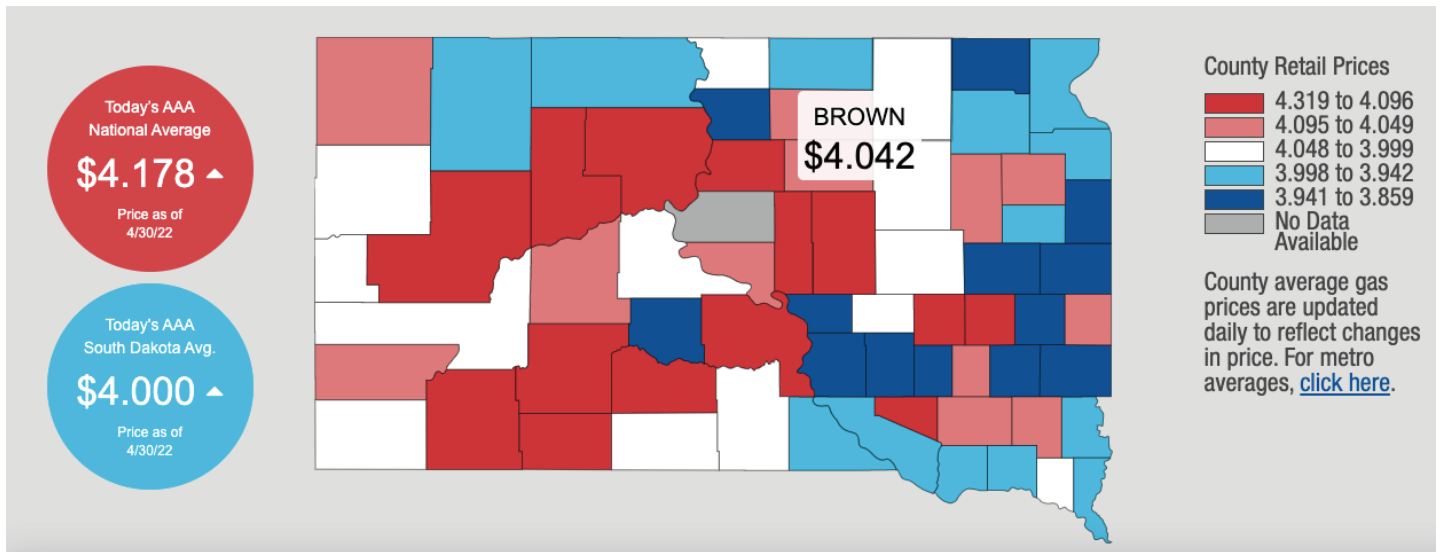
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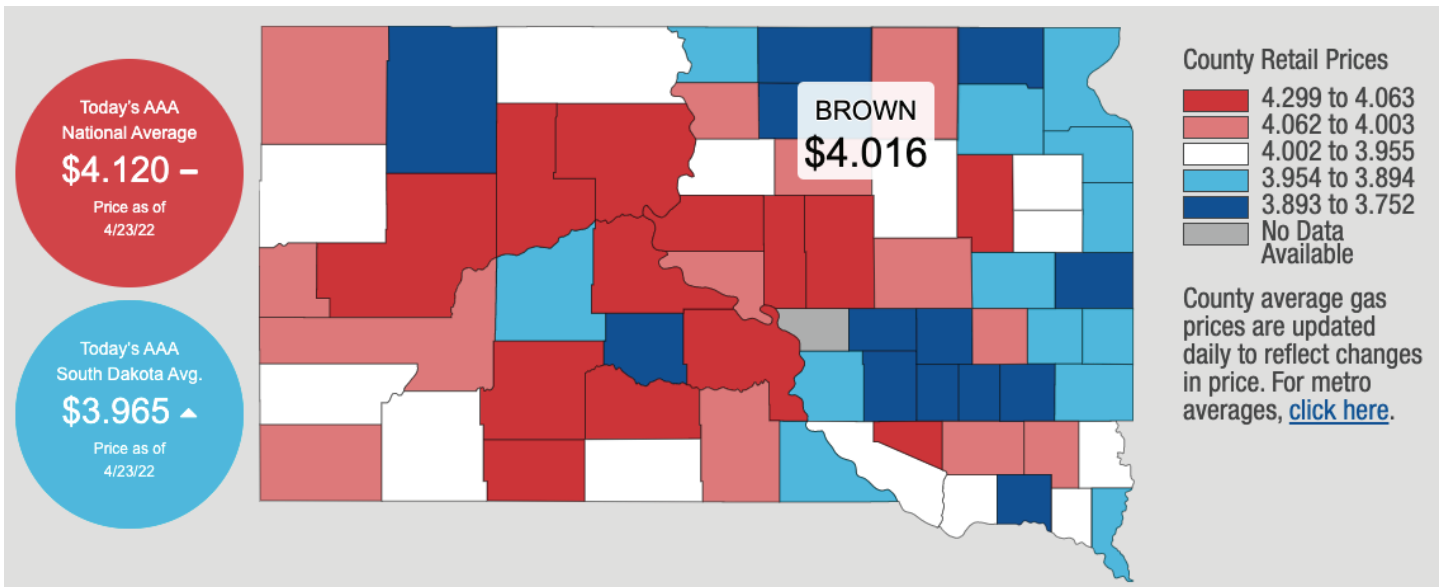
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$4.000	\$4.101	\$4.480	\$5.119
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.989	\$4.096	\$4.467	\$5.025
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.965	\$4.092	\$4.458	\$4.893
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.945	\$4.059	\$4.436	\$4.849
Year Ago Avg.	\$2.845	\$2.954	\$3.290	\$3.070

### This Week



### Last Week



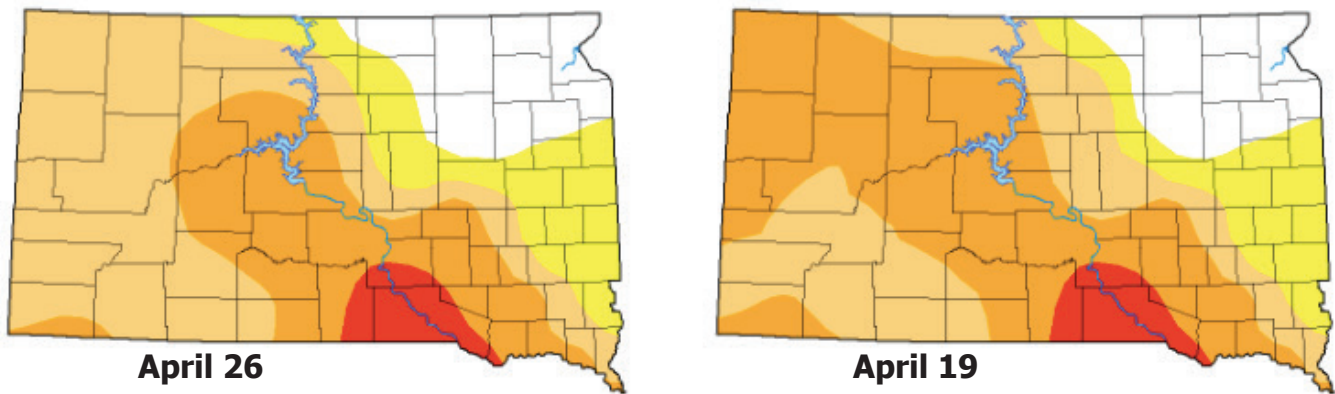
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## Drought Classification



## Drought Monitor



Conditions were nearly identical those observed the previous week, with beneficial precipitation falling across the northern tier of the region and windy, dry weather dominating the Southwest. Given the Southwest's low humidity levels, high winds, and drought-cured vegetation, two active wildfires—the Hermits Peak and Cooks Peak Fires—charred more than 50,000 acres of vegetation apiece in northeastern New Mexico. Northeast of Flagstaff, Arizona, the Tunnel Fire—ignited on April 17—scorched nearly 20,000 acres of vegetation and destroyed more than 50 structures. At times, impressively high winds raked the Southwest, raising dust and fanning flames. On April 22 in New Mexico, wind gusts in Gallup, Farmington, Las Vegas, and Raton were clocked to 70, 72, 73, and 80 mph, respectively. By April 24, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, New Mexico led the nation—tied with Texas—with topsoil moisture rated 86% very short to short. By the 26th, Tucson, Arizona, reported a daily-record high of 100°F—only the fourteenth observance of triple-digit heat on record during April in that location. Tucson's only earlier readings of 100°F or higher occurred on April 19-21, 1989, and April 22-23, 2012. Deterioration was common across the Southwest, with extreme to exceptional drought (D3 to D4) broadly expanding in New Mexico and moderate to severe drought (D1 to D2) increasing in coverage across parts of Arizona and Colorado. Farther north, however, periods of precipitation continued from northern California and the Pacific Northwest to the northern Rockies. Changes in the Northwestern drought depiction, although fewer than those noted the previous week, were driven by factors such as improving water-supply prospects and increasing topsoil moisture. In Oregon, topsoil moisture rated very short to short improved from 47 to 36% during the week ending April 24.

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Boys win Webster meet, Girls take second

The Groton Area boys won the Webster Area Track Meet held Friday. The boys finished with 128 points followed by LaMoure/Litch-Marion with 114, Florence/Henry with 109, Clark/Willow Lake with 107, Webster Area with 100, Aberdeen Christian with 74 and Britton-Hecla with 38.

The Groton Area girls took second by just one point as Webster Area won the team title, 134-133. Taking third was Clark/Willow Lake with 101, Florence Henry was fourth with 74 followed by Aberdeen Christian with 66, LaMoure/Litch-Marion with 63, Britton-Hecla with 41 and Langford Area with 33.

Three Groton Area girls relay teams took first place at the Webster Invitational Track Meet held Friday. In addition, Faith Traphagen took first in the 800m run and Aspen Johnson took first in the long jump.

Taking second for Groton Area were Aspen Johnson in the triple jump, Jackson Cogley in the high jump, Laila Roberts in the 100m dash, the girls 3200m Relay Team, Caden McInerney in the 110m hurdles, and the boys 1600m and 3200m Relay Teams.

Third place finishers were Colby Dunker in the 300m Hurdles, Tristan McGannon in the 1600m Run, Jacob Lewandowski in the 3200m Run, the Boys 1600m Sprint Medley Relay Team, Maddie Bjerke in both in the shot put and discus, Anna Fjeldheim in the long jump, Holden Sippel in the shot put and Caleb Hansen in the discus.

### Girls Division

**300m Hurdles:** 4, Talli Wright, 58.20.

**100m Dash:** 2, Laila Roberts, 14.06; 5, Karyn Jangula, 14.59; 8, Kayla Lehr, 14.84.

**200m Dash:** 5, Brooklyn Hanson, 30.49; 6, Kayla Lehr, 30.69; 8, Karyn Jangula, 30.96.

**400m Dash:** 5, Brooklyn Hanson, 1:10.70; 6, Rylee Dunker, 1:10.99; 13, Sydney Leicht, 1:15.87.

**800m Run:** 1, Faith Traphagen, 2:47.36.

**4x100m Relay:** 1, Groton Area (Jerica Locke, Kennedy Hanson, Aspen Johnson, Laila Roberts), 54.83.

**4x200m Relay:** 1, Groton Area (Jerica Locke, Kennedy Hanson, Kella Tracy, Laila Roberts), 1:56.63.

**4x400m Relay:** 1, Groton Area (Jerica Locke, Kennedy Hanson, Kella Tracy, Laila Roberts), 4:29.68.

**4x800m Relay:** 2, Groton Area (Faith Traphagen, Rylee Dunker, Taryn Traphagen, Emerlee Jones), 11:49.78.

**1600m Sprint Medley:** 5, Groton Area (Kayla Lehr, Karyn Jangula, Rylee Dunker, Taryn Traphagen), 5:09.30.

**Shot Put - 4kg:** 3, Maddie Bjerke, 29-09.25; 9, Faith Flihs, 26-03; 13, Emma Kutter, 23-09.75; 21, Ashley Johnson, 20-05; 22, Emma Schinkel, 19-10.5.

**Discus - 1kg:** 3, Maddie Bjerke, 86-03; 10, Faith Flihs, 71-07; 21, Emma Kutter, 57-05; 23, Ashley Johnson, 52-08; 24, Emma Schinkel, 49-09.

**High Jump:** 5, Anna Fjeldheim, 4-03.

**Long Jump:** 1, Aspen Johnson, 15-00.75; 3, Anna Fjeldheim, 14-03.25.

**Triple Jump:** 2, Aspen Johnson, 31-00; 7, Emerlee Jones, 27-08.5; 8, Anna Fjeldheim, 27-05.

### Boy's Division

**110m Hurdles:** 2, Caden McInerney, 20.56; 3, Tristan McGannon, 21.93.

**300m Hurdles:** 3, Colby Dunker, 50.42; 4, Caden McInerney, 50.96; 6, Tristan McGannon, 1:01.11.

**100m Dash:** 7, Korbin Kucker, 12.73; 16, Payton Mitchell, 14.13.

**200m Dash:** 9, Colby Dunker, 25.91; 11, Tate Larson, 26.18; 19, Christian Ehresmann, 29.15.

**400m Dash:** 2, Andrew Marzahn, 55.72.

**800m Run:** 7, Jayden Schwan, 2:59.05; 8, Ben Hoeft, 3:02.28.

**1600m Run:** 3, Tristan McGannon, 5:35.50; 5, Jayden Schwan, 6:08.93; 6, Ben Hoeft, 6:15.08.

**3200m Run:** 3, Jacob Lewandowski, 12:27.81.

**4x100m Relay:** 4, Groton Area (Keegan Tracy, Lane Tietz, Kaden Kurtz, Taylor Diegel), 47.59.

**4x200m Relay:** 6, Groton Area (Tate Larson, Colby Dunker, Taylor Diegel, Korbin Kucker), 1:44.31.

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**4x400m Relay:** 2, Groton Area (Keegan Tracy, Kaden Kurtz, Cole Simon, Teylor Diegel), 3:47.30.

**4x800m Relay:** 2, Groton Area (Cole Simon, Keegan Tracy, Lane Tietz, Jacob Lewandowski), 9:29.96.

**1600m Sprint Medley:** 3, Groton Area (Kaden Kurtz, Teylor Diegel, Keegan Tracy, Cole Simon), 4:02.05.

**Shot Put - 4kg:** 3, Holden Sippel, 40-0; 5, Caleb Hanten, 36-08; 6, Logan Ringgenberg, 35-3; 8, Kaleb Antonsen, 33-10; 20, Drew Thurston, 22-01.

**Discus - 1kg:** 3, Caleb Hanten, 112-08; 6, Logan Ringgenberg, 94-03; 7, Holden Sippel, 92-01; 10, Kaleb Antonsen, 84-10; 17, Drew Thurston, 55-03.

**High Jump:** 2, Jackson Cogley, 5-05.

**Long Jump:** 9, Jacob Zak, 17-04; 10, Jackson Cogley, 17-1.75; 13, Tate Larson, 15-09.

**Triple Jump:** 4, Jackson Cogley, 37-02.5; 6, Jacob Zak, 33-07; 7, Tristan McGannon, 32-01.

## Several Groton Area athletes in the top 24 in the state

Groton Area has taken part in only three outdoor track meets and Coach Shaun Wanner said the lack of meets is a disadvantage for the Tigers. He said many teams have had five or six track meets already. The weather has played a role in cancellations. "I've tried to line up another track meet when one is cancelled," he said.

"The kids are running well, but track is a hard sport to run if you don't have many meets," Wanner said. "We have good numbers out this year and have taken 51 kids to a track meet. We have a few kids in the top 24, but we have to maintain that with the remaining schedule."

The remaining schedule has track meets at Milbank on Tuesday, at Sisseton on Friday, at Eureka on Saturday, the NEC meet May 12 in Britton and the region May 19 in Clark. Then it's the state track meet at Howard Wood field in Sioux Falls. All three classes will be competing in Sioux Falls during the three-day meet, starting Thursday, May 26.

In order to qualify for the state track meet, athletes have to place in the top 24 on the state performance listing.

The Groton Area girls Sprint Medley Relay team is in the top 24, currently holding the number 15 spot with a time of 4:40.90. Aspen Johnson is currently ranked 12th in the state in the triple jump with a distance of 32-04.

In the boy's division, Andrew Marzahn is currently tied in 20th with a time of 11.54 in the 100m dash. The boys 400m Relay Team is in 17th place with a time of 46.24. The boys 800m Relay Team is also in 17th place with a time of 1:37.10. The boys 1600m Relay Team is holding on to 22nd place with a time of 3:47.40. The boys 3200m Relay Team is also in 22nd place with a time of 9:07.40. The boys Sprint Medley Relay Team is holding on to 24th place with a time of 3:59.70.

Jackson Cogley is in 24th place in the triple jump with a distance of 36-01-5.

Events that Groton Area is on the fringe are:

The girls 400m Relay team is in 27th place in the state. Their time is registered at 54.64. The 24th spot is 54.44.

The girls 800m Relay Team is in 28th place with a time of 1:56.40. The 24th spot is currently held by Canton with a time of 1:55.18.

The girls 1600m Relay team is in 26th place with a time of 4:37.20. The 24th spot is being held by Great Plains Lutheran with a time of 4:35.81.

The girls 3200m Relay Team is in 25th place with a time of 11:10.10. Canton is in 24th place with a time of 11:02.74.

Jackson Cogley is in 31st place in the High Jump with a height of 5-6. The 24th spot is at 5-8.

- Paul Kosel

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## Johnson, Cogley are high finishers at Rob Luecke Track Meet

Aspen Johnson placed second in the long jump and the triple jump to be the high placer for the Groton Area girls team at the Rob Luecke Invitational Track meet held in Groton. Jackson Cogley was high place finisher for the boys with a third place finish in the high jump.

### Boy's Division

**100 Meters:** 24, Christian Ehresmann, 12.8; 27, Jayden Zak, 12.9; 33, Spencer Sperry, 13.2; 46, Karsten Jeschke, 13.8

**200 Meters:** 22, Christian Ehresmann, 26.5; 26, Colby Dunker, 26.8; 30, Tate Larson, 26.9; 32, Jayden Zak, 27.3; 37, Braxton Imrie, 28.1; 39, Karsten Jeschke, 28.3

**400 Meters:** 5, Andrew Marzahn, 58.1; 12, Colby Dunker, 1:01.5; 25, Braxton Imrie, 1:05.2

**800 Meters:** 29, Ben Hoef, 3:02.1; 30, Jayden Schwan, 3:02.5; m 1600 Meters Varsity - Finals; 23, Ben Hoef, 5:59.7; 30, Jayden Schwan, 6:14.0

**3200 Meters:** 13, Jacob Lewandowski, 12:00.2

**110m Hurdles - 39":** 13, Caden McInerney, 21.2

**300m Hurdles - 36":** 13, Colby Dunker, 50.3; 14, Jacob Zak, 50.7; 22, Caden McInerney, 56.3

**4x100 Relay:** 5, Groton Area (Keegan Tracy, Lane Tietz, Kaden Kurtz, Teylor Diegel), 47.4; 12, Groton Area (Colby Dunker, Tate Larson, Christian Ehresmann, Spencer Sperry), 50.3

**4x200 Relay:** 8, Groton Area (Ryder Johnson, Kaden Kurtz, Teylor Diegel, Spencer Sperry), 1:42.4.

**4x400 Relay:** 5, Groton Area (Teylor Diegel, Lane Tietz, Kaden Kurtz, Keegan Tracy), 3:48.4.

**4x800 Relay:** 4, Groton Area (Cole Simon, Keegan Tracy, Lane Tietz, Jacob Lewandowski), 9:07.4.

**Sprint Medley Relay:** 4, Groton Area (Kaden Kurtz, Lane Tietz, Keegan Tracy, Cole Simon), 3:59.7.

**Shot Put:** 8, Holden Sippel, 37-10.00; 13, Logan Ringgenberg, 35-04.00; 16, Caleb Hanten, 34-10.50; 27, Kaleb Antonsen, 32-00.00; 41, Drew Thurston, 24-00.00

**Discus:** 13, Logan Ringgenberg, 105-03; 17, Holden Sippel, 99-08; 20, Caleb Hanten, 95-00; 27, Kaleb Antonsen, 84-07; 43, Drew Thurston, 60-06

**High Jump:** 3, Jackson Cogley, 5-06.00

**Long Jump:** 6, Jackson Cogley, 18-00.25; 10, Jacob Zak, 17-00.50; 12, Teylor Diegel, 17-00.00; 15, Ryder Johnson, 16-09.00; 24, Caden McInerney, 15-03.75; 30, Tate Larson, 14-06.50

**Triple Jump:** 7, Jackson Cogley, 36-01.50; 13, Jacob Zak, 33-01.50

### Girl's Division

**100 Meters:** 13, Kayla Lehr, 14.6; 26, Karsyn Jangula, 15.3

**200 Meters:** 4, Laila Roberts, 29.8; 12, Kayla Lehr, 31.2; 14, Karsyn Jangula, 31.8

**400 Meters:** 4, Kella Tracy, 1:08.7; 22, Rylee Dunker, 1:14.0

**800 Meters:** 9, Taryn Traphagen, 2:51.9

**4x100 Relay:** 3, Groton Area (Jerica Locke, Kennedy Hanson, Aspen Johnson, Laila Roberts), 54.4; 11, Groton Area (Kayla Lehr, Brooklyn Hanson, Karsyn Jangula, Mia Crank), 59.95.

**4x200 Relay:** 6, Groton Area (Jerica Locke, Kennedy Hanson, Brooklyn Hanson, Laila Roberts), 1:59.4; 14, Groton Area (Kayla Lehr, Karsyn Jangula, Mia Crank, Sydney Leicht), 2:10.06.

**4x400 Relay:** 4, Groton Area (Jerica Locke, Kennedy Hanson, Brooklyn Hanson, Faith Traphagen), 4:40.2.

**4x800 Relay:** 4, Groton Area (Rylee Dunker, Faith Traphagen, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy), 11:20.1.

**Sprint Medley Relay:** 2, Groton Area (Laila Roberts, Kennedy Hanson, Jerica Locke, Rylee Dunker), 4:40.9.

**Shot Put - 4kg:** 10, Maddie Bjerke, 29-06.25; 15, Faith Flihs, 26-09.00; 18, Emma Kutter, 25-09.50 PR; 37, Emma Schinkel, 21-00.75 PR; 39, Ashley Johnson, 20-03.25

**Discus - 1kg:** 11, Maddie Bjerke, 82-05; 20, Faith Flihs, 71-02; 34, Emma Schinkel, 54-10 PR; 35, Emma Kutter, 54-05; 38, Ashley Johnson, 52-03

**Long Jump:** 2, Aspen Johnson, 14-01.50; 13, Anna Fjeldheim, 12-07.00; 16, Trista Keith, 12-04.00

**Triple Jump:** 2, Aspen Johnson, 32-04.00; 18, Anna Fjeldheim, 26-10.00

## **Guthmiller places first at Redfield**

Carly Guthmiller was the only golfer to score in the 40s in both the front nine and the back nine to take first at the Redfield golf meet. Guthmiller trailed by two to Milbank's Shaylee Schnchard after the first round, but Guthmiller was consistent in her golfing and improved by one in the back with with a 47 while Schnchard shot a 51 as Guthmiller won with a total score of 95. Schnchard finished second with a 97.

Others playing for Groton Area were Emma Schinklel, with scores of 54 and 58 for a total of 112; Shaylee Peterson, with scores of 60 and 57 for a total of 117; Carly Giblert, with scores of 71 and 70; for a total of 141; and Ava Wienk, with scores of 83 and 72, for a total of 155.

Teams participating were Redfield, Groton Area, Milbank, Aberdeen Central JV, Moberidge-Pollock and Aberdeen Roncalli.



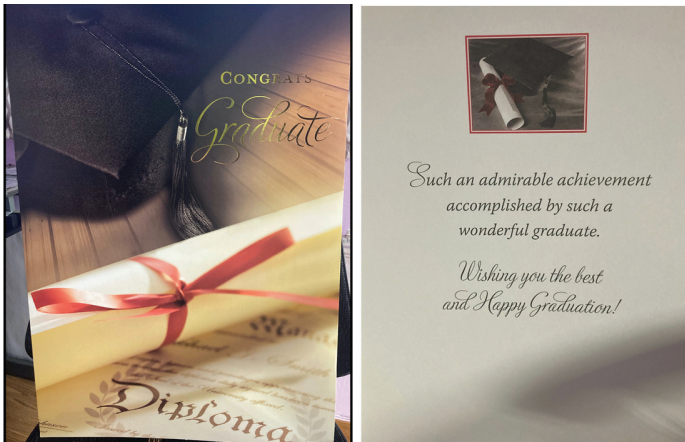
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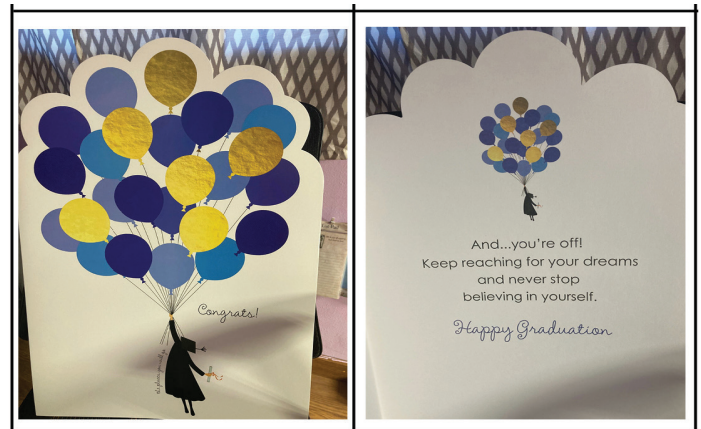
## Jumbo Graduation Cards

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

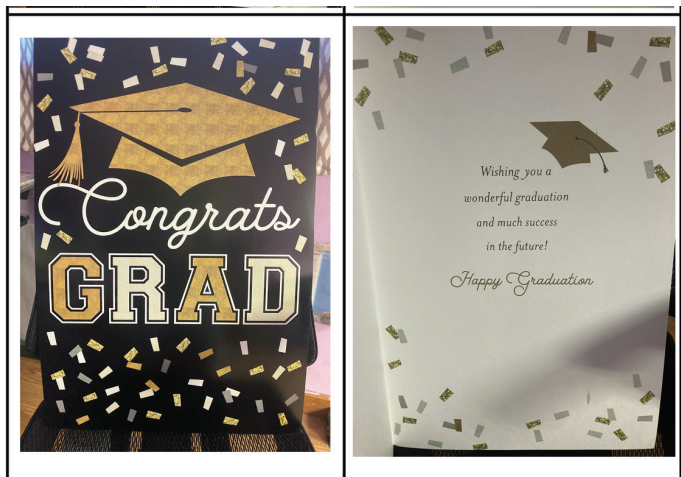
Can now be ordered on-line at [397news.com](http://397news.com) - Link on Black Bar  
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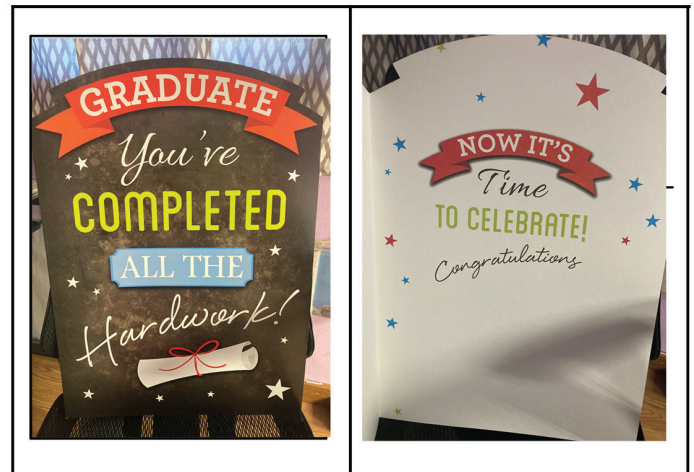
**50-9903-C**  
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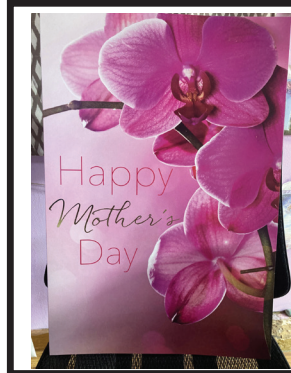
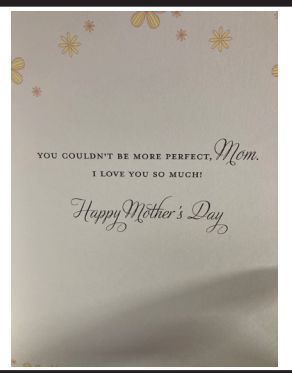
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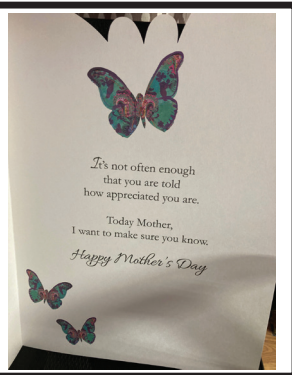
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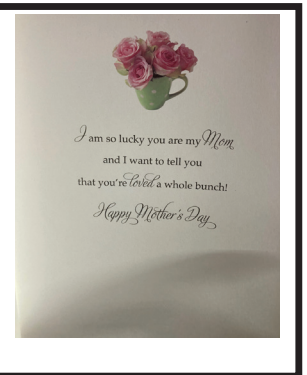
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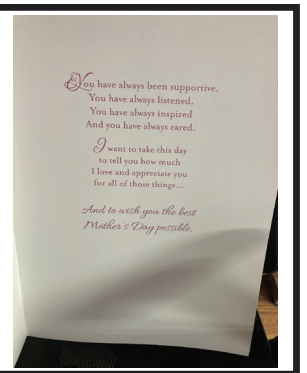
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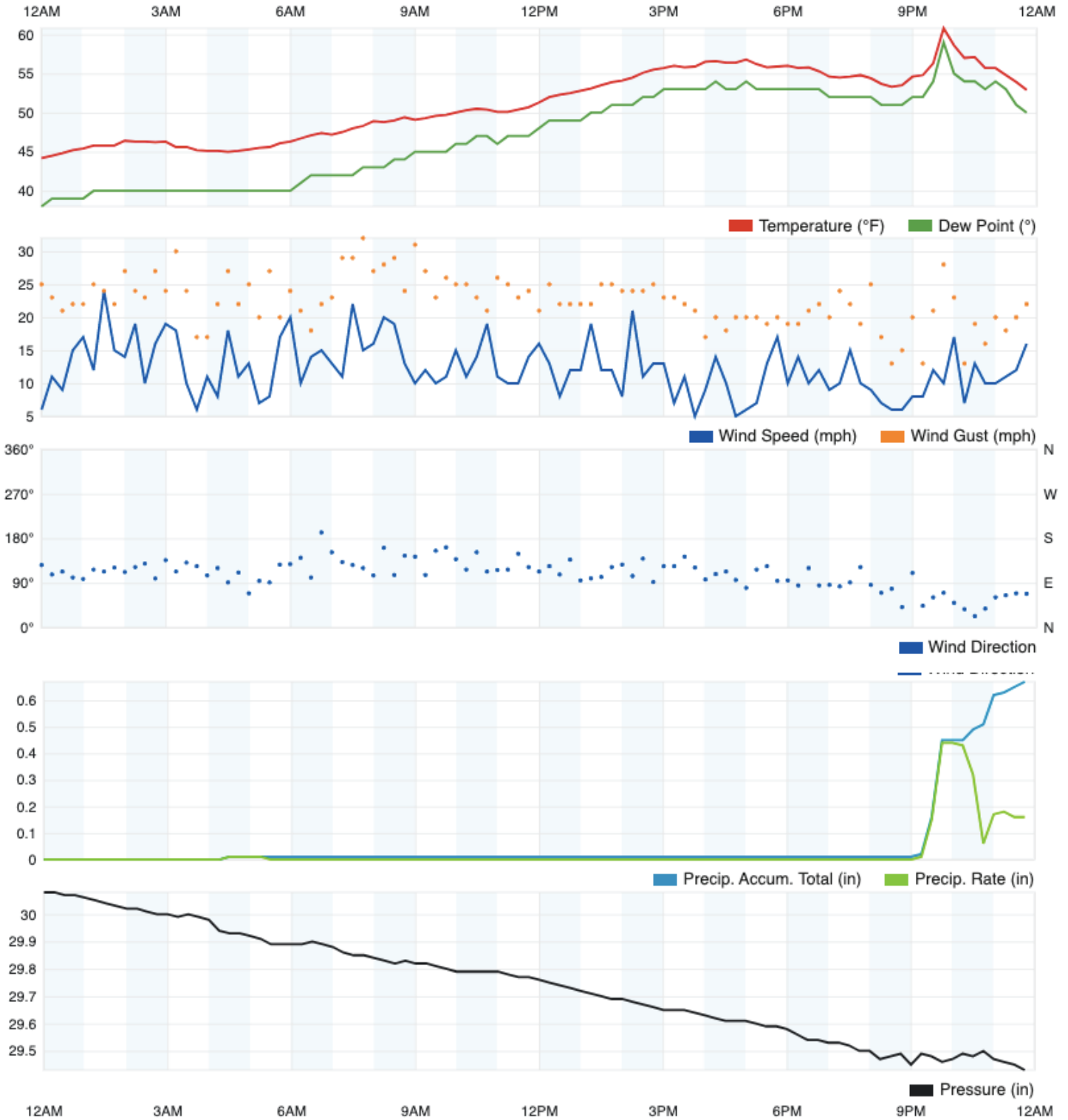
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

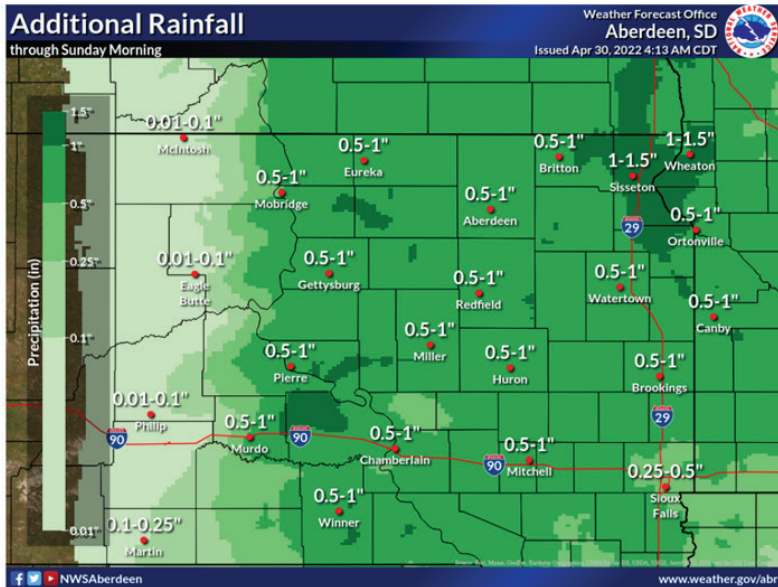
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Wind Advisory		Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
100% → 60%	70% → 40%					
Rain and Patchy Fog then Rain Likely and Breezy	Breezy. Rain Likely then Chance Rain	Cloudy and Breezy	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy		
High: 44 °F	Low: 38 °F	High: 48 °F	Low: 34 °F	High: 49 °F		



## Rainfall & Timing

April 30, 2022  
4:46 AM



### Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	4/30 Sat			5/1 Sun			
	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	
	6pm	12am	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	
Aberdeen	99	58	60	38	12	6	1
Britton	99	60	83	64	41	14	2
Eagle Butte	73	17	5	0	1	1	1
Eureka	95	97	54	9	4	4	1
Gettysburg	98	95	48	1	2	2	1
Kennebec	96	91	41	1	1	1	0
McIntosh	81	15	7	0	1	1	0
Milbank	97	93	77	41	25	19	2
Miller	98	66	58	14	2	2	1
Mobridge	92	81	23	1	3	3	1
Murdo	98	54	7	0	1	1	0
Pierre	92	78	19	0	0	1	1
Redfield	99	55	62	30	5	3	1
Sisseton	98	83	84	48	30	17	3
Watertown	96	81	83	51	22	12	1
Webster	98	78	80	51	28	13	1
Wheaton	98	88	86	44	28	23	3

\*Table values in %



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Strong Winds for central and portions of eastern South Dakota today. Moderate to Heavy Rain today to shift to northeastern South Dakota and diminish tonight. Additional rain of around 0.5 to 1" through early Sunday morning. Rain of around 0.10 to 0.50" expected every 6 hours through the day today. Focus for Moderate to Heavy Rain to shift over northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota and diminish tonight. Dense Fog to continue over the higher terrain and eastern slopes of Prairie Coteau through much of the afternoon.

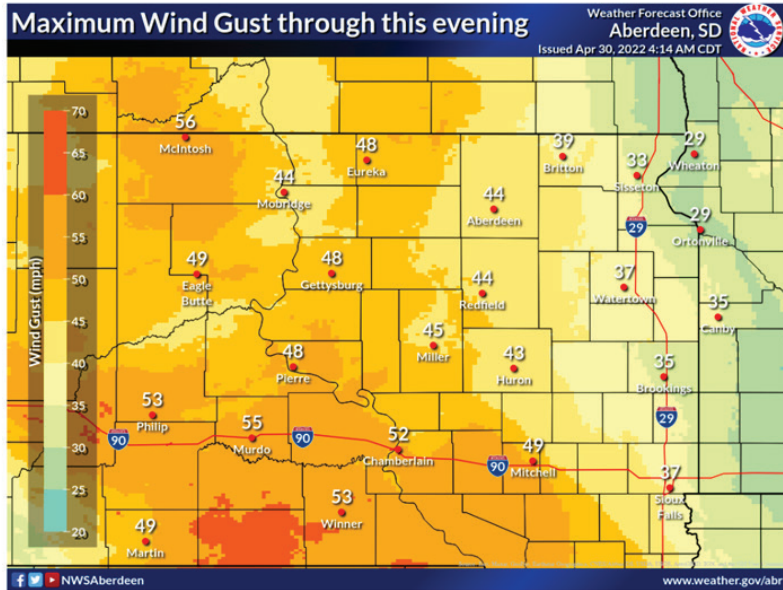
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## Maximum Wind Gusts & Timing

April 30, 2022  
4:47 AM



### Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

	4/30 Sat			5/1 Sun			
	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm
<b>Aberdeen</b>	39	43	41	35	36	35	30
<b>Britton</b>	33	39	38	35	36	37	32
<b>Eagle Butte</b>	49	49	47	36	32	29	24
<b>Eureka</b>	46	48	45	38	35	35	29
<b>Gettysburg</b>	47	48	44	38	37	37	28
<b>Kennebec</b>	55	53	48	38	32	32	25
<b>McIntosh</b>	52	56	51	43	36	36	31
<b>Milbank</b>	28	31	32	30	32	33	28
<b>Miller</b>	44	45	43	35	33	32	25
<b>Mobridge</b>	43	44	43	36	32	32	28
<b>Murdo</b>	54	55	49	38	32	30	24
<b>Pierre</b>	49	48	44	35	28	28	24
<b>Redfield</b>	40	44	43	35	36	36	29
<b>Sisseton</b>	30	35	33	33	35	35	30
<b>Watertown</b>	29	37	36	32	33	35	29
<b>Webster</b>	32	38	38	35	38	39	33
<b>Wheaton</b>	29	28	25	28	31	32	26

\*Table values in mph



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Strong winds will continue today, slowly diminishing this evening. The strongest winds will gust 45 to 60 mph over portions of central South Dakota. This could cause loose objects to blow around, and could create travel difficulties for high profile vehicles.

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## Today in Weather History

April 30, 1942: A tornado hit three farms near the northeastern edge of Castlewood. One barn was blown apart, and debris was swept into the house, killing one person. Damage from the estimated F2 tornado was \$20,000.

April 30, 2011: An unyielding low-pressure system moving across North Dakota brought high winds to much of central into parts of northeast South Dakota. Northwest winds of 35 to 50 mph with gusts to over 60 mph occurred from the morning to the late evening of the 30th. The high winds did cause some property damage across the region. A semi was tipped over on Highway 50 in Buffalo County; a large sign was brought down in Highmore, with some damage to security lights and twisted traffic signals in Pierre. Some of the highest wind gusts included 59 mph at Eagle Butte, 61 mph at Oacoma, 66 mph in Corson County, and 69 mph at Hayes in Stanley County.

1852 - A tornado, following the same track as the famous "Tri-state Tornado" of 1925, struck the town of New Harmony IND. Just sixteen persons were killed by the twister, due to the sparse settlement. The "Tri-state Tornado" killed 695 persons. (David Ludlum)

1888: 246 people died in the world's deadliest hailstorm in India. Hailstones were reportedly the size of baseballs. 1600 domesticated animals at Moradabad perished.

1924: A significant tornado outbreak occurred from Alabama to Virginia on the 29 through the 30th. 26 tornadoes were of F2 intensity or greater. A total of 111 people were killed, and over 1,100 injured. An estimated F4 tornado tore through Steedman and Horrell Hill, SC. This tornado killed 55 people.

1953: An F4 tornado 300 yards in width leveled homes on the north side of Warner-Robins Georgia, and barracks on the south side of the Warner-Robins Air Force Base. 19 people were killed and were 300 injured. Estimated damage was \$15 million.

1987 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather in Idaho, Utah, Wyoming and Montana. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 100 mph in Lincoln, Mineral and Sanders counties. Twenty-three cities in the central and southeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Memphis TN was the hot spot in the nation with a record high of 94 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A cold front produced high winds in the southwestern U.S. Winds gusting to 90 mph in southwestern Utah downed power lines, and damaged trees and outbuildings. The high winds also downed power lines in Nevada, completely knocking out power in the town of Henderson. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in central and eastern Texas. Hail three inches in diameter was reported at Cool, and thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Hillsboro. For the first time of record Oklahoma City went through the entire month of April without a single thunderstorm. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)

1990 - Late afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in southern Virginia and the Carolinas, with tennis ball size hail reported southeast of Chesnee SC. Thunderstorms moving over the Chesapeake Bay flooded U.S. Highway 50 on Kent Island MD with several inches of water resulting in a seventeen-mile long traffic jam. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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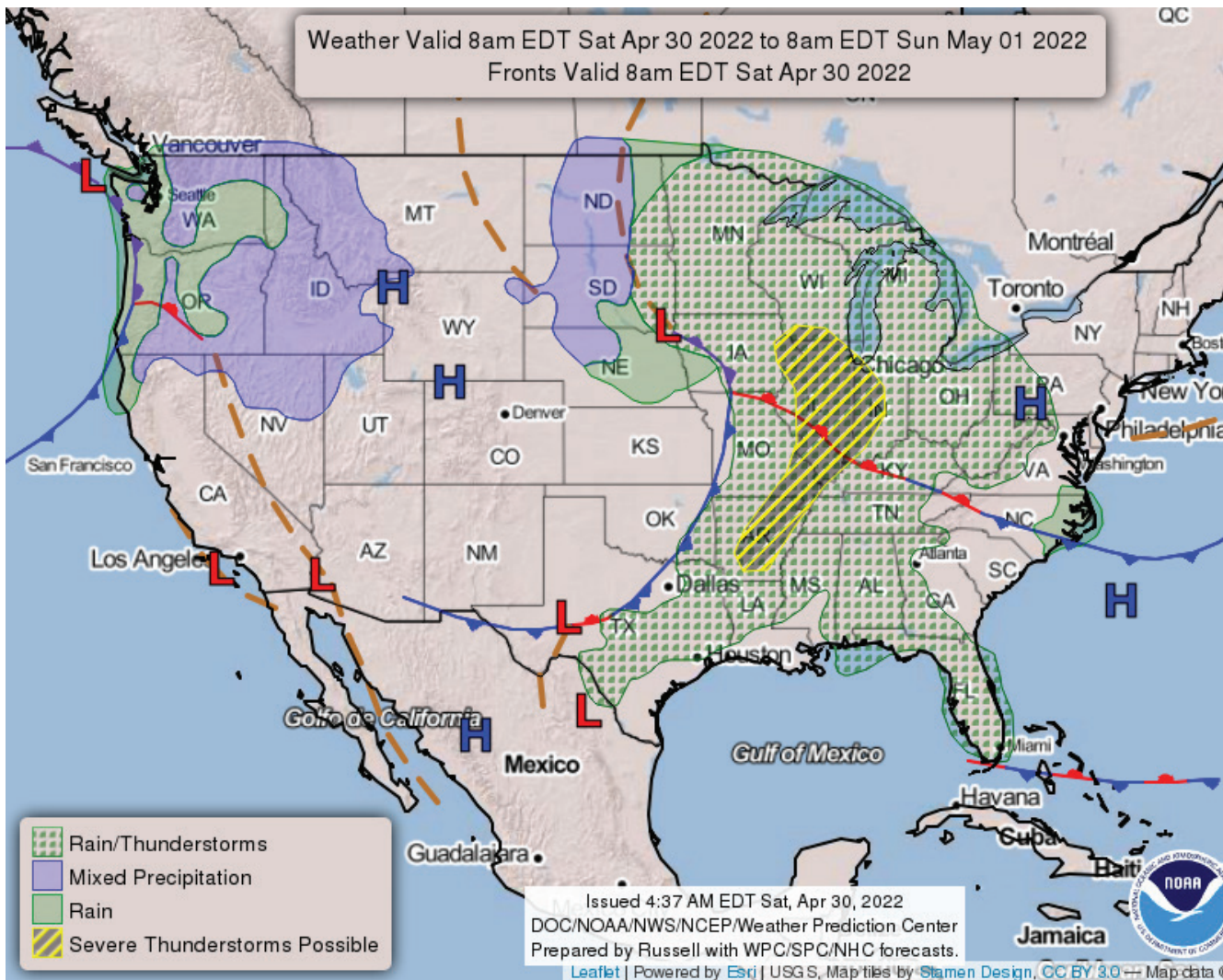
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 53 °F at 3:03 PM**  
**Low Temp: 44 °F at 1:39 AM**  
**Wind: 19 mph at 4:20 PM**  
**Precip: 0.46 (+.99 since midnight)**

Day length: 14 hours, 19 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 98 in 1992  
Record Low: 5 in 1966  
Average High: 64°F  
Average Low: 37°F  
Average Precip in April.: 1.91  
Precip to date in April.: 3.61  
Average Precip to date: 3.97  
Precip Year to Date: 5.41  
Sunset Tonight: 8:39:14 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:18:25 AM



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## JUSTICE FOR THE POOR AND NEEDY

Have you ever been told the reason an ostrich hides its head in the sand is that it is frightened? If you have and you believe it, you have been led astray. They do, however, run in circles when they are frightened. And the male ostrich will dig a hole that is six feet by eight feet where the female ostrich lays her eggs. Perhaps this nesting story is the source of the idea of an ostrich hiding its head.

There are times, however, when most of us "feel" like hiding our heads underneath a pillow or standing behind an object where no one can see us. Often, we are filled with a sense of inadequacy or "beneath others" because everyone seems to have more than we have or be more capable of doing things than we are. Or, perhaps, we feel "poor" in the sense that we have not been blessed by God as much as others.

David had a solution for this "feeling:" "I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor, and upholds the cause of the needy." In other words, David wants us to know that things are like they are because God designed them as they are for His purpose. If we feel poor - or lacking, - God will "make things right" because He is ultimately responsible for everyone's well-being and treated equally with justice. Our God is a just God and will not allow His own to suffer unfairly. He is at work completing His ultimate purpose for our lives.

David also wrote that "God will uphold the needy." It may be that when our wants exceed our resources, He is asking us to evaluate our priorities. His love always surrounds us and directs us as His plan to make us Christ-like unfolds.

Prayer: Lord, when things aren't right, it does not mean that You are treating us wrong. It means it is time to trust You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor, and upholds the cause of the needy. Psalm 140:1



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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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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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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

09-11-34-49-66, Mega Ball: 15, Megaplier: 2

(nine, eleven, thirty-four, forty-nine, sixty-six; Mega Ball: fifteen; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$43 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$20 million

### Lowe, Zunino homer, Rays beat Twins to end 7-game win streak

By DICK SCANLON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Josh Lowe and Mike Zunino homered for the first time this season, Corey Kluber gave up one hit in six innings and the Tampa Bay Rays beat the Minnesota 6-1 on Friday night, halting the Twins' seven-game win streak.

It was the first career homer for Lowe, who was facing some pressure after going homerless and batting .170 in 16 games as Tampa Bay's replacement for power-hitting Austin Meadows. Manager Kevin Cash asked Lowe before the game "not to make me look stupid hitting him fourth."

"He said it in the dugout, some assurance there from skip," Lowe said, grinning. "It was fun. I took it as a challenge."

Zunino, too, was feeling some heat after hitting 33 homers last season and batting .083 so far this season. But he wasn't worried about Lowe.

"I've been there. I've pressed. It's natural to do even with many years under your belt, but there's no question of the talent, no question of the resume with what he's done in Triple-A," Zunino said. "It's just finding your footing and building a little confidence. When a guy like him gets going, he's going to go on a tear and this will be an afterthought sooner rather than later."

Lowe's homer came in a four-run first inning off Twins starter Dylan Bundy. Zunino's solo shot put the Rays up 6-0 in the third.

"The game wasn't over just because we were four runs or five, six runs behind," Twins manager Rocco Baldelli said. "It just gave us a little bit of a challenge. It's going to be uphill sledding at that point, but we couldn't get anything going offensively."

Kluber (1-1) gave up one run on one hit and no walks in six innings, striking out six in his fourth start for the Rays.

The Rays jumped on Bundy (3-1) from the first pitch, which Brandon Lowe hit for a double. Wander Franco followed with an RBI double and after a single by Yandy Diaz. Lowe's three-run homer made it 4-0.

"Any time you can get run support early — let alone four in the first four hitters — it's a huge lift, not just to the pitcher but to the entire team," Kluber said. "You can go out there and be aggressive in the strike zone and attack the opposition."

Bundy, who had given up one run in three previous starts, gave up six runs on seven hits in six innings, striking out seven.

"He came in as one of the hottest starters in baseball," Cash said. "(I'm) really impressed with the way our offense went about it in the first three innings."

It was the fifth win in six games for the Rays, who have given up two earned runs or fewer in all six of those games.

Carlos Correa drove in the Twins' run with a single, the only hit off Kluber. It came after Kluber hit Byron Buxton with a pitch leading off the fourth.

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Correa had two of Minnesota's three hits.

## TRAINER'S ROOM

Twins: IF Miguel Sano missed a third straight game with a sore knee, but is close to 100%, according manager Rocco Baldelli. ... RHP Bailey Ober (groin) is probably headed to the injured list.

Rays: 1B Ji-Man Choi (hyperextended left elbow) missed a third straight game. ... LHP Ryan Yarbrough (groin) is likely to be inserted into the rotation early next week after throwing 59 pitches in his second rehab start for Triple-A Durham on Thursday night.

## UP NEXT

RHP Chris Archer (0-0, 3.18) will pitch Saturday against the Rays, for whom he has made 182 of his 218 career starts. LHP Shane McClellan (1-1, 2.45), tied for the AL lead with 31 strikeouts, will make his fifth start for Tampa Bay.

## Air Force preparing Ellsworth air show after 7-year hiatus

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Military officials are preparing to put on an air show at Ellsworth Air Force Base for the first time in seven years.

The Rapid City Journal reported Friday that the Ellsworth Air & Space Show is set for May 14 and May 15.

The show will celebrate the 80th anniversary of the base north of Rapid City as well as the 80th anniversary of the Doolittle Raid and the 75th birthday of the Air Force.

The show will feature a science booth and flyovers by the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels aerial acrobatics team. COVID-19 forced officials to scuttle plans for the 2020 and 2021 shows.

The base anticipates a record turnout of 60,000 people. The last airshow in 2015 saw a record 50,000 people.

## Woman given 8 years in Porcupine teen's overdose death

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A federal judge has sentenced a woman to eight years in prison for providing the fentanyl that caused the overdose death of a 16-year-old Porcupine boy.

Tarriah Provost, 24, earlier pleaded guilty to conspiracy with intent to distribute a controlled substance as part of a plea deal with prosecutors.

Louis Sandoval died of an overdose on Dec. 2, 2020. An autopsy found fentanyl in his system, which Provost admitted to giving him.

Provost told the judge that Sandoval was like a little brother to her and she wouldn't have given him the drug if she thought it would kill him, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Through their statements, Provost and her attorney told the story of how addiction caused the defendant's life to deteriorate.

Provost attended the University of Colorado Boulder in 2015 after winning a scholarship. After dropping out, Provost returned to Pine Ridge and had a son.

According to her defense attorney, Jennifer Albertson, Provost's life shifted after she was prescribed oxycodone following a car accident in November 2019 and surgery in May 2021.

Albertson characterized Provost as someone who "had an oxy habit" and "didn't go over there with any malice" when she supplied Sandoval with a fentanyl pill.

Four others — Donna Garnette, Kelly Grass, Jesse Grass, and Kimberly Janis — took the same plea deal as Provost for their involvement in the transportation and sale of pills. Kelly Grass was sentenced to 57 months in prison. Jesse Grass does not have a sentencing date yet. Sentencing for Janis is May 16 and June 22 for Garnette.

## Suspected tornado rips through Kansas, causes severe damage

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — A suspected tornado that barreled through parts of Kansas damaged multiple buildings, injured several people and left more than 6,500 people without power, officials said Saturday.

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Officials said the suspected twister moved through parts of southeast Wichita and Andover on Friday evening. Andover Fire Chief Chad Russell said during a news conference early Saturday morning that 50 to 100 buildings were damaged in Sedgwick County, though it was not immediately known how many buildings were damaged in Andover.

Russell said in some neighborhoods homes "were completely blown away."

Officials said only a few injuries had been reported. In Sedgwick County, three people were injured, including one woman who suffered serious injuries. Russell said no injuries had been reported in Butler County, but a secondary assessment would be conducted Saturday morning.

He said some neighborhoods were "damaged enough that houses were completely blown down" and cited areas that suffered "very bad damage."

City Hall also sustained damage, which hampered "some of our efforts," Russell said. Other buildings reportedly damaged included the Dr. Jim Farha Andover YMCA and Prairie Creek Elementary School.

Gov. Laura Kelly declared a State of Disaster Emergency for the hardest hit areas. The declaration makes state resources available to help local jurisdictions with response and recovery efforts in areas impacted statewide.

In addition to the tornadoes, large hail was reported in several towns across the Plains. Hail the size of softballs was spotted near Holbrook, Nebraska, and Enterprise, Kansas, according to the National Weather Service and storm spotters.

## Live updates | Ukraine reports vast grain seizures by Russia

By The Associated Press undefined

Ukraine's deputy agriculture minister says Russian forces are seizing vast amounts of grain in territory they hold, while its president says the war-torn country is facing fuel shortages.

"Today, there are confirmed facts that several hundred thousand tons of grain in total were taken out of the Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk and Luhansk regions," minister Taras Vysotsky told Ukrainian television on Saturday.

Ukraine is one of the world's major grain producers and the Russian invasion has curtailed exports, pushing up world grain prices and raising concerns about severe grain shortages in importing countries.

Ukraine is also facing fuel shortages as Russia destroys its fuel infrastructure and blocks its ports, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Friday night.

Fuel shortages have been reported in Kyiv, Dnipro and other cities. Vehicles can be seen lining up at gas stations and drivers in most places can purchase only 10 liters (2.6 gallons) of fuel at a time.

Zelenskyy promised that officials would find a fuel supply system within a week or two to prevent a deficit but called it a "difficult task" after the refinery at Kremenchuk was hit by a Russian missile.

But, Zelenskyy said, "there are no immediate solutions."

### KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR:

- Ukrainian forces fight Russia's grinding advance in eastern Donbas region
- Wives of Mariupol defenders appeal for soldiers' evacuation from final holdout
- Some Ukrainians go back across front line toward homes, despite dangers
- Ukrainian women learn how to clear land mines at course in Kosovo

Follow all AP stories on Russia's war on Ukraine at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

### OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

PARIS — French President Emmanuel Macron has conveyed to Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy his "wish to actively work to re-establish the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine during his second mandate," in coordination with allies, the presidential Elysee Palace says.

Macron assured Zelenskyy in their hourlong conversation Saturday that "military material" and humanitarian assistance would keep flowing to Ukraine, the Elysee said.

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France has so far sent 615 tons of equipment and aid, including generators for hospitals, ambulances and food. France has been coy about its contribution in defensive weapons, but Macron recently mentioned Milan anti-tank missiles and a delivery of truck-mounted Caesar cannons among "consequential equipment."

"This support will continue to strengthen," the French president told Zelenskyy, according to the Elysee.

Macron was re-elected president of France six days ago. During his first term, Macron held numerous conversations with both Zelenskyy and Russian leader Vladimir Putin since Russia's invasion Feb. 24.

LVIV, Ukraine — Russia's foreign minister says Moscow has evacuated over 1 million people from Ukraine since the war there began.

The comments Saturday by Sergey Lavrov in an interview with Chinese state news agency Xinhua come as Ukraine has accused Moscow of forcefully sending Ukrainians out of the country. Lavrov said that figure included more than 300 Chinese civilians.

Lavrov offered no evidence to support his claim in the interview.

Lavrov also said that negotiations continue between Russia and Ukraine "almost every day." However, he cautioned that "progress has not been easy."

Lavrov in part blamed "the bellicose rhetoric and inflammatory actions of Western supporters of the Kyiv regime" for disrupting the talks. However, Russian state TV nightly has had guests who suggest that Moscow use nuclear weapons in the conflict.

LVIV, Ukraine — The British military believes Russian forces in Ukraine are likely suffering from "weakened morale."

The British Defense Ministry made that assessment in a tweet Saturday as part of a daily report it provides on Russia's war on Kyiv.

It says Russia "still faces considerable challenges" in fighting. The British military believes Russian forces have "been forced to merge and redeploy depleted and disparate units from the failed advances in north-east Ukraine."

It offered no information on how it arrived at this assessment. However, analysts believe Russian forces that failed to take Kyiv at the start of the war have been redeployed without the time needed to properly rearm and restaff.

The British believe Russia hopes to reorganize its effort and shorten supply lines.

The ministry added: "A lack of unit-level skills and inconsistent air support have left Russia unable to fully leverage its combat mass, despite localized improvements."

WASHINGTON — A senior U.S. defense official said Friday the Russian offensive is going much slower than planned in part because of the strength of the Ukrainian resistance.

"We also assess that because of this slow and uneven progress, again, without perfect knowledge of every aspect of the Russian plan, we do believe and assess that they are behind schedule in what they were trying to accomplish in the Donbas," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the U.S. military's assessment.

He said the U.S. believes the Russians are "at least several days behind where they wanted to be" as they try to encircle Ukrainian troops in the east.

As the troops try to move north out of Mariupol so they can advance on Ukrainian forces from the south, their progress has been "slow and uneven, and certainly not decisive, in any event," the official said.

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia of trying to destroy the Donbas and all who live there.

"The constant brutal bombardments, the constant Russian strikes on infrastructure and residential areas show that Russia wants to empty this territory of all people. Therefore, the defense of our land, the defense of our people, is literally a fight for life," he said late Friday in his nightly video address to the nation.

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He said the cities and towns of the Donbas will survive only if Ukraine remains standing. "If the Russian invaders are able to realize their plans even partially, then they have enough artillery and aircraft to turn the entire Donbas into stones. As they did with Mariupol."

Zelenskyy said Mariupol, once one of the most developed cities in the region, was now a "Russian concentration camp among the ruins."

In Kharkiv, a major city to the north, the situation was "brutal" but Ukrainian troops and intelligence agents "have had important tactical successes," he said without elaborating.

Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov said about 20% of the city's residential buildings have been so badly damaged that it will be impossible to restore them.

Zelenskyy said rescuers were still going through the rubble in Kyiv after Thursday's missile strikes. He expressed his condolences to the family of Vira Hyrych, who was killed in the bombardment. He said she was the 23rd journalist killed in the war.

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov appears to have dismissed the need for the United Nations to help secure humanitarian corridors out of Ukraine's besieged cities, striking a tough line a day after the U.N. chief toured war-racked Kyiv with that very aim.

As an interviewer at Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya TV tried to ask Lavrov about U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' proposals for humanitarian assistance and evacuation of civilians, Lavrov cut him off.

"There is no need. I know, I know," an irritated Lavrov said. "There is no need for anybody to provide help to open humanitarian corridors. There is only one problem ... humanitarian corridors are being ignored by Ukrainian ultra-nationals," he said.

"We appreciate the interest of the secretary-general to be helpful," he added. "(We have) explained ... what is the mechanism for them to monitor how the humanitarian corridors are announced."

During the hourlong interview, Lavrov also accused the West of sabotaging Russia's peace talks with Ukraine. He claimed that thorny negotiations in Istanbul last month had been progressing on issues of Russian territorial claims and security guarantees until Ukrainian diplomats backtracked at the behest of the West.

"We are stuck because of their desire to play games all the time," Lavrov said. "Because of the instructions they get Washington, from London, from some other capitals, not to accelerate the negotiations."

When asked about the risks of war spilling into neighboring Moldova after a series of explosions rattled a breakaway border region within the country, Lavrov struck an ominous tone.

"Moldova should worry about their own future," he said. "Because they're being pulled into NATO."

## Ukrainians plead for Mariupol rescue; Russian advance crawls

By MSTYSLAV CHERNOV and YESICA FISCH Associated Press

KHARKIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian forces fought Saturday to hold off a Russian advance aimed at capturing an eastern industrial region along with Ukraine's last holdout in the southern city of Mariupol, where fighters and civilians hiding under a heavily damaged steel mill endure agonizing conditions.

The United Nations continued trying to broker an evacuation of civilians from the sprawling Soviet-era plant and other bombed-out ruins of Mariupol, a port city which Russia has sought to capture and subjected to heavy bombardment since it invaded Ukraine more than nine weeks ago.

There are up to 1,000 civilians at the Azovstal steelworks, according to Ukrainian officials, who have not said how many fighters remained in the only part of Mariupol not occupied by Russian forces. The Russians put the number of Ukrainian soldiers at the plant at about 2,000.

Video and images shared with The Associated Press by two Ukrainian women who said their husbands are among the fighters there showed unidentified wounded men with stained bandages in need of changing; others had open wounds or amputated limbs.

A skeleton medical staff was treating at least 600 wounded people, said the women, who identified their husbands as members of the Azov Regiment of Ukraine's National Guard. Some of the wounds were

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rotting with gangrene, they said.

In the video the women shared, the wounded men tell the camera they eat once a day and share as little as 1.5 liters (50 ounces) of water a day among four. Supplies inside the surrounded facility are depleted, they said.

The AP could not independently verify the date and location of the footage, which the women said was taken in the last week in the warren of passageways beneath the steel mill.

One shirtless man spoke in obvious pain as he described his wounds: two broken ribs, a punctured lung and a dislocated arm that "was hanging on the flesh."

"I want to tell everyone who sees this. If you will not stop this here, in Ukraine, it will go further, to Europe," he said.

In other developments:

— Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in an interview that Russian and Ukrainian negotiators talk "almost every day." However, he told Chinese state news agency Xinhua that "progress has not been easy."

— A former U.S. Marine was killed while fighting alongside Ukrainian forces, his family said, in what would be the war's first known death of an American in combat. The U.S. has not confirmed the report.

— Two buses that were headed to the town of Popasna in eastern Ukraine to evacuate residents were fired upon, and contact with the drivers was lost, Mayor Nikolai Khanatov said.

— Russian air-defense forces detected a Ukrainian military plane over Russia's Bryansk region and tried to repel the aircraft. Two shells fell on a village, regional Gov. Alexander Bogomaz said. No one was injured, but an oil terminal suffered some damage, Bogomaz said.

Getting a full picture of the unfolding battle in the east has been difficult because airstrikes and artillery barrages have made it extremely dangerous for reporters to move around. Both Ukraine and the Moscow-backed rebels fighting in the east also have introduced tight restrictions on reporting from the combat zone.

But Western military analysts suggested that Moscow's offensive in the eastern Donbas region, which includes Mariupol, was going much slower than planned. So far, Russia's troops and the separatist forces Moscow has backed in the region since 2014 appeared to have made only minor gains in the month since Moscow said it would focus its military strength in eastern Ukraine.

Numerically, Russia's military manpower vastly exceeds Ukraine's. In the days before the war began, Western intelligence estimated Russia had positioned near the border as many as 190,000 troops; Ukraine's standing military is about 200,000, spread throughout the country.

In part because of the tenacity of the Ukrainian resistance, the U.S. believes the Russians are "at least several days behind where they wanted to be" as they try to encircle Ukrainian troops in the east, said a senior U.S. defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the American military's assessment.

The British Defense Ministry offered a similar conclusion in its daily assessment of the war, saying it believes Russian forces in Ukraine are likely suffering from "weakened morale," along with a lack of unit-level skills and "inconsistent air support." It did not say on what basis it made the evaluation.

With plenty of firepower still in reserve, Russia's promised offensive still could intensify and overrun the Ukrainians. Overall, the Russian army has an estimated 900,000 active-duty personnel. Russia also has a much larger air force and navy than Ukraine and possesses tactical nuclear weapons.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy acknowledged as much in his nightly address.

"If the Russian invaders succeed in realizing their plans, at least in part, they will still have enough artillery and aircraft to destroy the entire Donbas. Just as they destroyed Mariupol," he said.

"The city, which was one of the most developed in the region, is simply a Russian concentration camp in the middle of ruins," Zelenskyy said.

In Mariupol, around 100,000 people were believed to still be in the city with little food, water or medicine. U.N. spokesman Farhan Haq said the organization was negotiating with authorities in Moscow and Kyiv to create the conditions for safe passage.

Ukraine has blamed the failure of numerous previous evacuation attempts on continued Russian shelling.

For those who are in steel plant, a vast underground network of tunnels and bunkers has provided safety



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from airstrikes. But the situation has grown more dire after the Russians dropped “bunker busters” and other bombs on the plant, the mayor said Friday.

The women who said their husbands are in the steel plant as part of the Azov Regiment said they feared soldiers will be tortured and killed if they are left behind and captured by the Russians. They asked for a Dunkirk-style mission to evacuate the fighters, a reference to the World War II operation launched to rescue surrounded Allied troops in northern France.

“We can do this extraction operation ... which will save our soldiers, our civilians, our kids,” Kateryna Prokopenko, 27, said, speaking to the AP in Rome. “We need to do this right now, because people — every hour, every second — are dying.”

The Azov Regiment helping to defend the steel plant has its roots in the Azov Battalion, which was formed in 2014 by far-right activists at the start of the separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine. Russian officials have referred to the regiment’s past while attempting to justify its activities in eastern Ukraine.

Despite the intensity of the fighting in the east, some Ukrainians tried to make their way back to the embattled region, going against the flow of the nearly 5.5 million people who have fled the country since Russia invaded.

“Everything is there. Our roots are there,” a 75-year-old man intending to cross the front-line from Zaporizhzhia with his wife to reach his home in Donetsk. “Even people from Mariupol want to go back.”

## Serbia displays Chinese missiles amid concerns in Balkans

By DUSAN STOJANOVIC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Serbia on Saturday publicly displayed a recently delivered Chinese anti-aircraft missile system, raising concerns in the West and among some of Serbia’s neighbors that an arms buildup in the Balkans could threaten fragile peace in the region.

The sophisticated HQ-22 surface-to-air system was delivered last month by a dozen Chinese Air Force Y-20 transport planes in what was believed to be the largest-ever airlift delivery of Chinese arms to Europe.

Although Serbia officially seeks membership in the European Union, it has been arming itself mostly with Russian and Chinese weapons, including T-72 battle tanks, MiG-29 fighter jets, Mi-35 attack helicopters and drones.

Back in 2020, U.S. officials warned Belgrade against purchasing HQ-22 missile systems, whose export version is known as FK-3. They said that if Serbia really wants to join the EU and other Western alliances, it must align its military equipment with Western standards.

The Chinese missile system has been widely compared to the American Patriot and the Russian S-300 surface-to-air missile systems although it has a shorter range than more advanced S-300s. Serbia is the first operator of the Chinese missiles in Europe.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said at the end of the arms display at a military airport near Belgrade that the Chinese missiles, as well as other recently delivered military hardware, are not a threat to anyone and only represent a “powerful deterrent” against potential attackers.

“We will no longer allow to be a punching bag for anyone,” Vucic said, apparently referring to NATO’s 78-day bombardment of Serbia for its bloody crackdown against Kosovo Albanian separatists in 1999.

Serbia, which was at war with its neighbors in the 1990s, does not recognize Kosovo’s independence declared in 2008. It still has frosty relations with NATO-members Croatia and Montenegro as well as Bosnia, whose separatist Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik attended the military drill on Saturday.

Vucic said Serbia is also negotiating a purchase of French multi-purpose Dassault Rafale jets, as well as British Eurofighter Typhoon fighters. He said that only “political hurdles” could prevent the purchase of the Western aircraft.

There are widespread concerns that Russia could push its ally Serbia into an armed conflict with its neighbors to try at least partly to shift public attention from the war in Ukraine.

Although Serbia has voted in favor of U.N. resolutions that condemn the bloody Russian attacks in Ukraine, it has refused to join international sanctions against its allies in Moscow or outright criticize the

apparent atrocities committed by the Russian troops in Ukraine.

## Autopsy backlog plagues Mississippi, with worst delays in US

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press/Report for America

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — After Truitt Pace admitted to law enforcement that he beat and shot his wife, her family expected a swift conviction. The 34-year-old mother of three's tiny frame was so bruised and traumatized that the funeral home suggested a closed casket. But as months went by, state prosecutors told Marsha Harbour's family they were waiting on a key piece of evidence: the medical examiner's autopsy report.

National standards recommend most autopsy reports be completed within 60 days. Prosecutors in Harbour's case waited for a year.

Across Mississippi, many families wait even longer. An Associated Press analysis based on state data and documents, as well as dozens of interviews with officials and residents, found that Mississippi's system has long operated in violation of national standards for death investigations, accruing a severe backlog of autopsies and reports.

Autopsies that should take days take weeks. Autopsy reports that should take months take a year or longer, as in Harbour's case. Too few pathologists are doing too many autopsies. Some cases are transferred hundreds of miles to neighboring states for reports without their family's knowledge.

The Mississippi State Medical Examiner's Office was waiting for about 1,300 reports from as far back as 2011, records sent to AP in early April show. Around 800 of those involve homicides — meaning criminal cases are incomplete.

District attorneys have resigned themselves to long waits: "We're at a point now where we're happy if it's only a year," said Luke Williamson, who's been a prosecutor for 14 years in northern Mississippi.

The National Association of Medical Examiners, the office that accredits U.S. death investigations offices, dictates that 90% of autopsy reports should be returned within 60 to 90 days.

Mississippi's office has never been accredited. The majority of U.S. medical examiner agencies, which are chronically underfunded and face a shortage of forensic pathologists, are unaccredited. States such as Georgia have raised the alarm about autopsy report delays of up to six months. But nowhere is the issue more severe than in Mississippi.

Mississippi's delays are an "emergency-level" concern, said Dr. James Gill, the association's 2021 president and a leader in the College of American Pathologists. "That's a disaster situation where you need to do something drastic."

Public Safety Commissioner Sean Tindell is a former Mississippi Court of Appeals judge who stepped into his role — overseeing the state medical examiner's office, the highway patrol and other agencies — in May 2020. He called the backlog "unacceptable" and said he's made eliminating it the top priority of his administration. He said working as a judge, he saw how trials were delayed while prosecutors awaited reports.

"I knew it was bad," he told the AP. "I didn't know it was this bad."

"Families deserve better. I'm sorry that they've had to experience delays in laying to rest loved ones, to getting closure in these cases, but we're going to fix the problem."

Tindell said he's instituted a policy that all reports must be back within 90 days. Using contractor pathologists in other states, the office began working to whittle down the backlog. Tindell said around 500 cases have been completed since summer.

But Tindell — who has hired two new pathologists, started university recruiting efforts and streamlined staff duties — said it's been a challenge trying to fix old problems while facing new ones: the pandemic and an unprecedented increase in violent crime.

Mississippi saw 597 homicides in 2021 and 578 in 2020 — record numbers for the state of 3 million. That's compared with 434 in 2019 and 382 in 2018.

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Tindell said both the forensics laboratory and medical examiner's office haven't been a state priority for funding or staffing in over a decade. The forensic laboratory's budget has essentially remained unchanged since 2008.

But during Mississippi's 2022 legislative session, lawmakers approved \$4 million that must be used to address backlogged cases.

Like most states, Mississippi does not perform an autopsy — a post-mortem surgical procedure by a forensic pathologist to determine cause of death — for all people. Autopsies are reserved for homicides, suicides, deaths of children and those in correctional facilities, and other unexpected cases. Forensic pathologists are responsible for performing autopsies at Mississippi's two medical examiner offices — one in the Jackson metro area, one on the coast.

After the autopsy, pathologists complete a report explaining their findings and results, including an official cause of death. Reports can help determine whether a death was an accident, a suicide or a homicide. They shed light on child deaths, or show whether a person accused of murder acted in self-defense.

In 2017, 93-year-old World War II veteran Durley Bratton died after two employees of a Mississippi veterans home dropped him and put him back in bed without telling anyone. Police began an investigation after a tip from the hospital where Bratton was taken.

Arrests didn't come until 15 months later, after the autopsy report was returned, concluding the veteran died of blunt-force trauma.

In the Harbour case, the autopsy report was the critical piece of evidence after Pace claimed self-defense for shooting his wife.

At the December 2021 trial where Pace was sentenced to life in prison, a medical examiner said Harbour suffered from blunt force trauma wounds consistent with being beaten before she was shot.

Harbour, who helped deliver babies as a surgical technician at a local hospital, had endured months of abuse. She once went to a domestic violence shelter. But she worried for her children's safety and never went to the police.

Because Pace had no criminal record, he was released on bond days after his arrest.

Harbour's stepmother, Denise Spears, said she and her family felt dejected as they went to the mailbox month after month to find notices that the trial was being pushed back. Once the report came in, the trial was delayed further because of the pandemic. Pace didn't stand trial until more than three years after killing his wife.

One of the worst parts was explaining to her grandchildren why the man who killed their mother was able to live free for years, Spears said. More than once, they came to her, afraid they'd run into him.

"They couldn't understand it," Spears said. "It was hard for me to explain to them, because I couldn't understand it either."

Ben Creekmore, a district attorney in northern Mississippi, said conversations with families about delays are always difficult. He worries about the impact the postponements have on trust in the criminal justice system.

"Those things dramatically impact our relationship with people who have suffered loss," he said. "It undermines your credibility on everything else."

Beyond effects on criminal cases, the lack of an autopsy report and official death certificate can prevent families from collecting benefits.

Mississippi Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann said he's been contacted by families who can't get insurance payouts without a certificate.

"One that contacted us was a mom and two children whose husband died unexpectedly," he said during a fall budget hearing. "They couldn't get their life insurance benefits, and that's the only money they had."

More than money, families can also find closure. Rebecca Brown lost her brother unexpectedly in 2018. It wasn't until last June — three years after his death — that his report was completed.

Her brother, in his early 40s, had a history of drug addiction but was in recovery. He lived with his mother,

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who worried he'd started using again and had died of an overdose. When they finally learned the cause of death was a heart attack, Brown said she felt no relief — just anger that it had taken so long. When she showed her mother a photo of the death certificate, she cried.

"In my mind, what they did is they called for my mother to grieve harder for three years than she could have," Brown said.

Tindell said the problems won't be fixed until the state is able to hire more pathologists. The National Medical Examiners Association standards recommend that pathologists perform no more than 250 autopsies a year. If pathologists perform more than 325 a year, the office risks losing accreditation.

In 2021, two Mississippi pathologists performed 461 and 421 autopsies. Arkansas's six pathologists completed an average of approximately 282 each.

During most of the 1990s and 2000s, Mississippi had no state medical examiner, instead contracting with a private physician, Dr. Steven Hayne, who performed 80% of autopsies in the state. He completed as many as 1,700 autopsies a year.

Hayne's work was repeatedly attacked in court as sloppy and scientifically unsound. Verdicts in multiple murder cases in which Hayne testified were overturned by the Mississippi Supreme Court.

In 2011, the state hired Pathologist Dr. Mark LeVaughn as its first chief medical examiner since 1995. During his tenure, LeVaughn spoke publicly repeatedly about a lack of resources, calling his office a critically understaffed public health risk.

Tindell said a substantial number of autopsy reports that are pending are LeVaughn's. Because of the department's staff turnover rate, LeVaughn was the only forensic pathologist handling all the autopsies in the state at times and fell behind on paperwork.

"He was put in the impossible situation of trying to do all the autopsies for the entire state, and just unfortunately, he was not able to get it all done," Tindell said.

LeVaughn resigned as chief medical examiner in January 2021. He has since been rehired as a pathologist finishing outstanding reports and testifying on them in trials.

Tindell said the office expects an additional pathologist to start late next month, and that he's recruiting to hire another as soon as possible.

In the meantime, to meet demand, the Mississippi Medical Examiner's Office has been forced to send bodies to neighboring states such as Arkansas. In 2021, 284 autopsies were completed by contractor pathologists.

The National Medical Examiner's Association recommends autopsies be completed within 72 hours. The turnaround time in Mississippi has exceeded three weeks in some cases. The problem is especially severe in north Mississippi, where there is no medical examiner's office.

One family in Tupelo waited 24 days. After he was shot and killed in May of last year, Lorenzin Brown's body was first brought almost 200 miles (322 kilometers) away for an autopsy at the Mississippi State Crime Lab in Pearl, the closest state facility that could do it.

Brown lay for two weeks in the morgue before pathologists determined they couldn't get to his case fast enough. They decided he should be transferred to Little Rock — more than 260 miles (418 kilometers) away — for an autopsy by a contractor.

His family wasn't notified that he was being transferred or told when he'd be returned. Without updates, they struggled to make funeral arrangements. His father wondered if he'd be able to see him before he was buried.

"To get a call saying that he's been murdered, it was already a tragic enough situation," said Brown's uncle, Tim Butler, a pastor who organized the funeral. "The grieving process is always bad. Under these circumstances, it's made everything that much worse."

His mother, Geisha, said she couldn't work while she waited for his body to be returned and to hold his service. It wasn't until a month and a day after he died that they were able to bury her son.

Clayton Cobler — coroner in Lauderdale County, where Harbour was killed — said families try calling the medical examiner's office for answers about the status of autopsies and reports, and they often don't hear back. Each of Mississippi's 82 counties has an elected coroner who's responsible for collecting and

transporting bodies to the medical examiner's office. They end up acting as liaisons with families and answering desperate calls month after month, Cobler said.

"I've got a grandmother that her grandson died in 2017, and she wants to know why," he said. "It just breaks my heart every time she calls, because I can't tell her."

Cobler, who has worked in death investigations for decades, said he recently made the difficult decision not to run for reelection.

"More and more coroners or long-term coroners are saying, 'I'm done. I'm not going to run again, because it's just too frustrating, and it's too heartbreaking,'" he said.

Rocky Kennedy, the Lafayette County coroner, said many people who work with families feel the same fatigue.

"It's a waiting game, and I think everybody's patience ran out a long time ago," he said. "Words without results mean nothing."

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LeVaughn resigned as chief medical examiner in January 2021. He has since been rehired as a pathologist finishing outstanding reports and testifying on them in trials.

Tindell said the office expects an additional pathologist to start late next month, and that he's recruiting to hire another as soon as possible.

In the meantime, to meet demand, the Mississippi Medical Examiner's Office has been forced to send bodies to neighboring states such as Arkansas. In 2021, 284 autopsies were completed by contractor pathologists.

The National Medical Examiner's Association recommends autopsies be completed within 72 hours. The turnaround time in Mississippi has exceeded three weeks in some cases. The problem is especially severe in north Mississippi, where there is no medical examiner's office.

One family in Tupelo waited 24 days. After he was shot and killed in May of last year, Lorenzin Brown's body was first brought almost 200 miles (322 kilometers) away for an autopsy at the Mississippi State Crime Lab in Pearl, the closest state facility that could do it.

Brown lay for two weeks in the morgue before pathologists determined they couldn't get to his case fast enough. They decided he should be transferred to Little Rock — more than 260 miles (418 kilometers)

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away — for an autopsy by a contractor.

His family wasn't notified that he was being transferred or told when he'd be returned. Without updates, they struggled to make funeral arrangements. His father wondered if he'd be able to see him before he was buried.

"To get a call saying that he's been murdered, it was already a tragic enough situation," said Brown's uncle, Tim Butler, a pastor who organized the funeral. "The grieving process is always bad. Under these circumstances, it's made everything that much worse."

His mother, Geisha, said she couldn't work while she waited for his body to be returned and to hold his service. It wasn't until a month and a day after he died that they were able to bury her son.

Clayton Cobler — coroner in Lauderdale County, where Harbour was killed — said families try calling the medical examiner's office for answers about the status of autopsies and reports, and they often don't hear back. Each of Mississippi's 82 counties has an elected coroner who's responsible for collecting and transporting bodies to the medical examiner's office. They end up acting as liaisons with families and answering desperate calls month after month, Cobler said.

"I've got a grandmother that her grandson died in 2017, and she wants to know why," he said. "It just breaks my heart every time she calls, because I can't tell her."

Cobler, who has worked in death investigations for decades, said he recently made the difficult decision not to run for reelection.

"More and more coroners or long-term coroners are saying, 'I'm done. I'm not going to run again, because it's just too frustrating, and it's too heartbreaking,'" he said.

Rocky Kennedy, the Lafayette County coroner, said many people who work with families feel the same fatigue.

"It's a waiting game, and I think everybody's patience ran out a long time ago," he said. "Words without results mean nothing."

## Beijing shuts dine-in services for holidays to stem outbreak

BEIJING (AP) — Restaurants in Beijing have been ordered to close dine-in services over the May holidays as the Chinese capital grapples with a COVID-19 outbreak.

Authorities said at a news conference Saturday that dining in restaurants has become an infection risk, citing virus transmissions between diners and staff.

Restaurants have been ordered to only provide takeout services from Sunday to Wednesday, during China's Labor Day holidays.

Beijing began mass testing millions of residents earlier this week as it scrambled to stamp out a growing COVID-19 outbreak.

The political stakes are high as the ruling Communist Party prepares for a major congress this fall at which President Xi Jinping is seeking a third five-year term to reassert his position as China's unquestioned leader.

Beijing authorities reported 67 new infections on Saturday, taking the city's total to nearly 300 since April 22.

Authorities have also ordered parks, scenic areas and entertainment venue to operate at half capacity during the holiday period. Schools have also been ordered closed.

Several communities in the city's most populous Chaoyang district have been designated high-risk areas and will be subjected to mass testing on Sunday and Tuesday.

Beijing is trying to prevent a massive outbreak that could trigger a citywide lockdown like the one that has paralyzed Shanghai for more than three weeks. Millions of residents there have been under lockdown and food has run low at times, prompting heavy criticism despite government efforts to censor it.

## Black Catholic nuns: A compelling, long-overlooked history

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

Even as a young adult, Shannen Dee Williams — who grew up Black and Catholic in Memphis, Tennes-



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see – knew of only one Black nun, and a fake one at that: Sister Mary Clarence, as played by Whoopi Goldberg in the comic film “Sister Act.”

After 14 years of tenacious research, Williams – a history professor at the University of Dayton -- arguably now knows more about America’s Black nuns than anyone in the world. Her comprehensive and compelling history of them, “Subversive Habits,” will be published May 17.

Williams found that many Black nuns were modest about their achievements and reticent about sharing details of bad experiences, such as encountering racism and discrimination. Some acknowledged wrenching events only after Williams confronted them with details gleaned from other sources.

“For me, it was about recognizing the ways in which trauma silences people in ways they may not even be aware of,” she said.

The story is told chronologically, yet always in the context of a theme Williams forcefully outlines in her preface: that the nearly 200-year history of these nuns in the U.S. has been overlooked or suppressed by those who resented or disrespected them.

“For far too long, scholars of the American, Catholic, and Black pasts have unconsciously or consciously declared -- by virtue of misrepresentation, marginalization, and outright erasure -- that the history of Black Catholic nuns does not matter,” Williams writes, depicting her book as proof that their history “has always mattered.”

The book arrives as numerous American institutions, including religious groups, grapple with their racist pasts and shine a spotlight on their communities’ overlooked Black pioneers.

Williams begins her narrative in the pre-Civil War era when some Black women – even in slave-holding states – found their way into Catholic sisterhood. Some entered previously whites-only orders, often in subservient roles, while a few trailblazing women succeeded in forming orders for Black nuns in Baltimore and New Orleans.

Even as the number of American nuns – of all races – shrinks relentlessly, that Baltimore order founded in 1829 remains intact, continuing its mission to educate Black youths. Some current members of the Oblate Sisters of Providence help run Saint Frances Academy, a high school serving low-income Black neighborhoods.

Some of the most detailed passages in “Subversive Habits” recount the Jim Crow era, extending from the 1870s through the 1950s, when Black nuns were not spared from the segregation and discrimination endured by many other African Americans.

In the 1960s, Williams writes, Black nuns were often discouraged or blocked by their white superiors from engaging in the civil rights struggle.

Yet one of them, Sister Mary Antona Ebo, was on the front lines of marchers who gathered in Selma, Alabama, in 1965 in support of Black voting rights and in protest of the violence of Bloody Sunday when white state troopers brutally dispersed peaceful Black demonstrators. An Associated Press photo of Ebo and other nuns in the march on March 10 — three days after Bloody Sunday — ran on the front pages of many newspapers.

During two decades before Selma, Ebo faced repeated struggles to break down racial barriers. At one point she was denied admittance to Catholic nursing schools because of her race, and later endured segregation policies at the white-led order of sisters she joined in St. Louis in 1946, according to Williams.

The idea for “Subversive Habits” took shape in 2007, when Williams – then a graduate student at Rutgers University – was desperately seeking a compelling topic for a paper due in a seminar on African American history.

At the library, she searched through microfilm editions of Black-owned newspapers and came across a 1968 article in the Pittsburgh Courier about a group of Catholic nuns forming the National Black Sisters’ Conference.

The accompanying photo, of four smiling Black nuns, “literally stopped me in my tracks,” she said. “I was raised Catholic ... How did I not know that Black nuns existed?”

Mesmerized by her discovery, she began devouring “everything I could that had been published about

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Black Catholic history," while setting out to interview the founding members of the National Black Sisters' Conference.

Among the women Williams interviewed extensively was Patricia Grey, who was a nun in the Sisters of Mercy and a founder of the NBSC before leaving religious life in 1974.

Grey shared with The Associated Press some painful memories from 1960, when – as an aspiring nurse – she was rejected for membership in a Catholic order because she was Black.

"I was so hurt and disappointed, I couldn't believe it," she said about reading that rejection letter. "I remember crumbling it up and I didn't even want to look at it again or think about it again."

Grey initially was reluctant to assist with "Subversive Habits," but eventually shared her own story and her personal archives after urging Williams to write about "the mostly unsung and under-researched history" of America's Black nuns.

"If you can, try to tell all of our stories," Grey told her.

Williams set out to do just that – scouring overlooked archives, previously sealed church records and out-of-print books, while conducting more than 100 interviews.

"I bore witness to a profoundly unfamiliar history that disrupts and revises much of what has been said and written about the U.S. Catholic Church and the place of Black people within it," Williams writes. "Because it is impossible to narrate Black sisters' journey in the United States -- accurately and honestly -- without confronting the Church's largely unacknowledged and unreconciled histories of colonialism, slavery, and segregation."

Historians have been unable to identify the nation's first Black Catholic nun, but Williams recounts some of the earliest moves to bring Black women into Catholic religious orders – in some cases on the expectation they would function as servants.

One of the oldest Black sisterhoods, the Sisters of the Holy Family, formed in New Orleans in 1842 because white sisterhoods in Louisiana, including the slave-holding Ursuline order, refused to accept African Americans.

The principal founder of that New Orleans order — Henriette Delille — and Oblate Sisters of Providence founder Mary Lange are among three Black nuns from the U.S. designated by Catholic officials as worthy of consideration for sainthood. The other is Sister Thea Bowman, a beloved educator, evangelist and singer who died in Mississippi in 1990 and is buried in Williams's hometown of Memphis.

Researching less prominent nuns, Williams faced many challenges – for example tracking down Catholic sisters who were known to their contemporaries by their religious names but were listed in archives by their secular names.

Among the many pioneers is Sister Cora Marie Billings, who as a 17-year-old in 1956 became the first Black person admitted into the Sisters of Mercy in Philadelphia. Later, she was the first Black nun to teach in a Catholic high school in Philadelphia and was a co-founder of the National Black Sisters' Conference.

In 1990, Billings became the first Black woman in the U.S. to manage a Catholic parish when she was named pastoral coordinator for St. Elizabeth Catholic Church in Richmond, Virginia.

"I've gone through many situations of racism and oppression throughout my life," Billings told The Associated Press. "But somehow or other, I've just dealt with it and then kept on going."

According to recent figures from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, there are about 400 African American religious sisters, out of a total of roughly 40,000 nuns.

That overall figure is only one-fourth of the 160,000 nuns in 1970, according to statistics compiled by Catholic researchers at Georgetown University. Whatever their races, many of the remaining nuns are elderly, and the influx of youthful novices is sparse.

The Baltimore-based Oblate Sisters of Providence used to have more than 300 members, according to its superior general, Sister Rita Michelle Proctor, and now has less than 50 – most of them living at the motherhouse in Baltimore's outskirts.

"Though we're small, we are still about serving God and God's people." Proctor said. "Most of us are elderly, but we still want to do so for as long as God is calling us to."

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Even with diminished ranks, the Oblate Sisters continue to operate Saint Frances Academy – founded in Baltimore by Mary Lange in 1828. The coed school is the country's oldest continually operating Black Catholic educational facility, with a mission prioritizing help for "the poor and the neglected."

Williams, in an interview with the AP, said she was considering leaving the Catholic church – due partly to its handling of racial issues – at the time she started researching Black nuns. Hearing their histories, in their own voices, revitalized her faith, she said.

"As these women were telling me their stories, they were also preaching to me in a such a beautiful way," Williams said. "It wasn't done in a way that reflected any anger -- they had already made their peace with it, despite the unholy discrimination they had faced."

What keeps her in the church now, Williams said, is a commitment to these women who chose to share their stories.

"It took a lot for them to get it out," she said. "I remain in awe of these women, of their faithfulness."

## **GOP election-deniers elevate races for secretary of state**

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Add one more group of contests to the white-hot races for Congress and governor that will dominate this year's midterm elections: secretaries of state.

Former President Donald Trump's attempts to reverse the results of the 2020 election and his subsequent endorsements of candidates for state election offices who are sympathetic to his view have elevated those races to top-tier status. At stake, say Democrats and others concerned about fair elections, is nothing less than American democracy.

"If they win the general election, we've got real problems on our hands," said former New Jersey Gov. Christine Todd Whitman, a Republican who has pushed back against the false claims made by Trump and his allies about widespread fraud in the 2020 presidential election. "This is an effort to replace the people who oversee these races — to change the rules to make the results come out the way they want them to."

The primary season begins in force in the coming week with elections in Ohio and Indiana. Ohio voters will decide which candidate will emerge from the Republican primary for secretary of state, with the winner favored to eventually win the office in the GOP-dominated state.

Primaries for the top election offices will follow over the next few weeks in Nebraska, Idaho, Alabama and the presidential battleground of Georgia. While Indiana also holds a primary Tuesday, nominees for secretary of state and some other offices won't be decided until party conventions in June.

In all, voters in about two dozen states will be deciding who will be their state's next chief election official this year. In three politically important states — Florida, Pennsylvania and Texas — the position will be filled by whoever wins the governor's race. In New Hampshire, the decision will be made by the state Legislature — currently controlled by Republicans.

States United Action, a nonpartisan advocacy organization co-founded by Whitman, has been tracking secretary of state races and identified nearly two dozen Republican candidates who deny the results of the 2020 presidential election.

That includes John Adams, a former state lawmaker challenging Ohio's incumbent secretary of state, Frank LaRose, in Tuesday's GOP primary. Adams has said "there's no way that Trump lost" and said LaRose wasn't any different than Stacey Abrams, a Democrat and national voting rights advocate who is running for governor in Georgia.

LaRose hasn't talked much about the 2020 election in the campaign other than to say it was secure in Ohio and to tout his office's pursuit of voter fraud cases. This marked a departure following the 2020 vote in which he praised the work of bipartisan election officials in running a smooth election, promoted voter access and presented statistics showing how rare voter fraud is.

Earlier this year, LaRose brushed aside questions about his shifting rhetoric.

"Unfortunately, some people want to make a political issue out of this," he said. "Of course, it's right to be concerned about election integrity."

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The pivot was enough to earn him an endorsement from Trump, who is considering another run for president in 2024 and said LaRose was "dedicated to Secure Elections." LaRose has been touting the endorsement.

Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, a Democrat, said it was important for Republican secretaries of state, in particular, to speak the truth about the 2020 election.

"Those secretaries who are accepting the support of election-deniers or accepting the support of a former president who openly interfered with the results of a free and fair election are abdicating their role and responsibility to stand as nonpartisan guardians and choosing to put their own partisan agendas ahead of democracy," Benson said in an interview.

This year, the most high-profile races will unfold in four of the six states where Trump disputed his 2020 loss to President Joe Biden: Arizona, Georgia, Nevada and Michigan. Trump has endorsed secretary of state candidates in all but one, backing those who support his false claims.

There is no proof of widespread fraud or wrongdoing. Judges, including ones appointed by Trump, dismissed dozens of lawsuits filed by the former president and his allies after the 2020 election.

Last year, an Associated Press review of every potential 2020 voter fraud case in the six states disputed by Trump found nowhere near enough cases to change the outcome.

Kristina Karamo, Trump's pick in Michigan, is the first to advance to the November election after state Republicans nominated her at the party's April 23 convention. A community college professor, Karamo gained prominence after the 2020 election claiming she had seen irregularities in the processing of mail ballots while serving as an election observer in Detroit.

At a rally with Trump before the convention, she accused the media of trying to demonize her, adding "corruption in our elections systems is a national security threat." She will face Benson, a former law school dean seeking her second term.

"All one has to imagine is what it would be like or what it would have been like if Brad Raffensperger had said, 'Yes, I will find you those votes and deliver Georgia for you,'" Benson said. "That's what could happen if you have an election denier serving as secretary of state."

Raffensperger is the Republican secretary of state in Georgia who withstood enormous pressure to uphold the results of the presidential race there, won by Biden. At one point after the election, Trump called Raffensperger and asked him to "find" nearly 12,000 votes to overturn Biden's win.

Of the 25 secretary of state races on the ballot this year, nine Republican and seven Democratic incumbents are running to keep their seats. While only one of the Democratic incumbents has drawn a challenger, seven Republican secretaries will be facing at least one GOP opponent who either denies Biden won or makes unsubstantiated claims that elections are not secure.

This includes Raffensperger, who rebuffed Trump's demands and has drawn three primary challengers. Among them is one endorsed by Trump, U.S. Rep. Jody Hice, who objected to Georgia's electoral votes being counted for Biden.

In nine states, incumbents have opted against seeking reelection, are running for higher office or are term-limited, leaving open contests. This includes Arizona and Nevada, which hold primaries in the coming months.

Both races feature Republican candidates -- Arizona's Mark Finchem and Nevada's Jim Marchant -- who have questioned the outcome of the 2020 election.

Another high-profile race is unfolding in Colorado, where a Republican county clerk under indictment for a security breach of voting systems is running to challenge Secretary of State Jena Griswold, a Democrat seeking a second term.

Mesa County Clerk Tina Peters has denied the charges, calling them politically motivated. She has been a frequent guest on conservative media and appeared at various events with Mike Lindell, the MyPillow CEO and Trump ally who has sought to prove voting machines were somehow manipulated in 2020.

In an interview earlier this year, Peters said she was committed to finding the truth of what happened in 2020 and hoped "the powers that be — instead of taking time to attack me — would solve violent crime, would look into election irregularities and find the truth."

Colorado Republicans will be deciding who their nominee will be in late June.

"Americans are going to have a very simple choice — do we want people overseeing elections who believe in upholding the will of the voter regardless of how they voted?" said Griswold. "Or do we want extremist politicians who will do anything it takes to tilt elections in their favor and claim victory regardless of how the American people cast their ballot?"

## Alabama prison official missing after escorting inmate

A prison official from Alabama is missing after escorting an inmate to a courthouse for a hearing.

The Lauderdale County Sheriff's Office said in a Facebook post Saturday that Assistant Director of Corrections Vicki White disappeared while escorting an inmate being held on capital murder charges. The inmate is also missing.

White left the detention center with inmate Casey White on Friday morning and neither has been seen since. The pair are not related.

The vehicle they were traveling in when they left the detention center was discovered at a nearby shopping center parking lot, according to the sheriff's office.

## Buffett invests big chunk of Berkshire Hathaway's cash

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Berkshire Hathaway's first-quarter earnings fell more than 53% on a large swing on the paper value of its investments, but Warren Buffett found ways to put some of the company's massive cash pile to work, which will give shareholders something to talk about at Saturday's annual meeting.

Berkshire said it earned \$5.46 billion, or \$3.702 per Class A share, during the quarter. That's down from \$11.7 billion, or \$7.638 per Class A share, a year ago.

But the key change during the quarter was that Berkshire's mountain of cash shrank to \$106 billion from \$147 billion at the beginning of the year as it invested \$51 billion in equities. Buffett also spent \$3.2 billion repurchasing Berkshire stock.

During the first quarter, Buffett agreed to buy the Allegheny insurance conglomerate for \$11.6 billion and made multibillion-dollar investments in HP Inc. and Occidental Petroleum. However, he hasn't disclosed all of his stock purchases yet, so it's not immediately clear what else Berkshire invested in this year.

But Berkshire did say that its stake in oil giant Chevron ballooned to \$26 billion by the end of the quarter, up from \$4.5 billion at the beginning of the year, to make it one of the company's four largest investments. Edward Jones analyst Jim Shanahan said that with the Chevron and Occidental investments combined Berkshire now has more than \$40 billion invested in the oil sector.

But Berkshire said the value of its investments shrunk by \$1.58 billion in the first quarter when a year ago that paper estimate of its investments grew by \$4.7 billion. That accounted for most of the swing in net earnings.

Buffett says that Berkshire's operating earnings are a better measure of the company's performance because they exclude investment gains and losses. By that measure, Berkshire's earnings remained steady at \$7.04 billion, or \$4,773.84 per Class A share, up from \$7.018 billion, or \$4,577.10 per Class A share, a year ago.

That beat Wall Street expectations. The four analysts surveyed by FactSet expected Berkshire to report operating earnings of \$4,277.66 per Class A share.

Berkshire said Saturday that profits improved at most of its businesses, including the railroad, utilities and manufacturing companies it owns, but underwriting income fell at its insurance companies.

In addition to investments, Berkshire Hathaway owns more than 90 business outright, including BNSF railroad, several major utilities, Geico insurance and an assortment of manufacturing and retail companies. Tens of thousands of shareholders were packing into an Omaha arena not far from the company's headquarters Saturday to listen to Buffett and Berkshire's vice chairmen spend hours answering any and

all questions.

Japanese investor Heihachiro "Hutch" Okamoto is attending the meeting for his first time this year partly because he is hearing so much interest in investing in the U.S. stock market at the brokerage company where he works in Japan.

"Mr. Buffett is kind of a proxy for the U.S. stock market, so I wanted to see him here," Okamoto said.

Janet Dalton of Overland Park, Kansas, said she has been attending the meetings for decades. Her family has an even longer association with the company because her dad bought stock in the Berkshire Hathaway textile company even before Buffett took it over in 1965 and began to convert it into the conglomerate it is today. They never sold the shares, which now sell for nearly \$500,000 apiece.

Dalton said she misses the more detailed business answers that Buffett used to give at the early meetings she attended.

"When I first came to the meetings, it was like getting a mini-MBA. Now it has become more general," Dalton said. But part of what keeps her coming back year after year is the chance to reconnect with friends and fellow investors she's met at past meetings.

## 'A huge demand': Ukrainian women train to clear landmines

By FLORENT BAJRAMI Associated Press

PEJA, Kosovo (AP) — Learning to identify and defuse explosives is something Anastasiia Minchukova never thought she would have to do as an English teacher in Ukraine. Yet there she was wearing a face shield, armed with a landmine detector and venturing into a field dotted with danger warnings.

Russia's war in Ukraine took Minchukova, 20, and five other women to Kosovo, where they are attending a hands-on course in clearing landmines and other dangers that may remain hidden across their country once combat ends.

"There is a huge demand on people who know how to do demining because the war will be over soon," Minchukova said. "We believe there is so much work to be done."

The 18-day training camp takes place at a range in the western town of Peja where a Malta-based company regularly offers courses for job-seekers, firms working in former war zones, humanitarian organizations and government agencies.

Kosovo was the site of a devastating 1998-99 armed conflict between ethnic Albanian separatists and Serbian forces that killed about 13,000 people and left thousands of unexploded mines in need of clearing. Praedium Consulting Malta's range includes bombed and derelict buildings as well as expanses of vegetation.

Instructor Artur Tigani, who tailored the curriculum to reflect Ukraine's environment, said he was glad to share his small Balkan nation's experience with the Ukrainian women. Though 23 years have passed, "it's still fresh in our memories, the difficulties we met when we started clearance in Kosovo," Tigani said.

Tigani is a highly trained and experienced mine operations officer who served as an engineer in the former Yugoslav army during the 1980s. He has been deployed in his native Kosovo, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Congo, Rwanda and Kenya, and conducted training missions in Syria and Iraq.

During a class last week, he took his trainees through a makeshift minefield before moving to an improvised outdoor classroom featuring a huge board with various samples of explosives and mines.

While it is impossible to assess how littered with mines and unexploded ordnance Ukraine is at the moment, the aftermaths of other conflicts suggest the problem will be huge.

"In many parts of the world, explosive remnants of war continue to kill and maim thousands of civilians each year during and long after active hostilities have ended. The majority of victims are children," the International Committee of the Red Cross testified at a December U.N. conference.

"Locating (unexploded ordnance) in the midst of rubble and picking them out from among a wide array of everyday objects, many of which are made of similar material is a dangerous, onerous and often extremely time-consuming task," the Red Cross said.

Mine Action Review, a Norwegian organization that monitors clearance efforts worldwide, reported that

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56 countries were contaminated with unexploded ordnance as of October, with Afghanistan, Cambodia and Iraq carrying the heaviest burdens, followed by Angola, Bosnia, Thailand, Turkey and Yemen.

Thousands of civilians are believed to have died in Ukraine since Russia invaded on Feb. 24. Russian forces have bombed cities and towns across the country, reducing many to rubble.

Military analysts say it appears Russian forces have employed anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, while Ukraine has used anti-tank mines to try to prevent the Russians from gaining ground.

With Ukrainian men from 18 to 60 years old prohibited from leaving their country and most engaged in defending it, the women wanted to help any way they could despite the risks involved in mine clearing.

"It's dangerous all over Ukraine, even if you are in a relatively safe region," said Minchukova, who is from central Ukraine.

Another Ukrainian student, Yuliia Katelik, 38, took her three children to safety in Poland early in the war. She went back to Ukraine and then joined the demining training to help make sure it's safe for her children when they return home to the eastern city of Kramatorsk, where a rocket attack on a crowded train station killed more than 50 people this month.

Katelik said her only wish is to reunite with her family and see "the end of this nightmare." Knowing how to spot booby-traps that could shatter their lives again is a necessary skill, she said.

"Acutely, probably as a mother, I do understand that there is a problem and it's quite serious, especially for the children," Katelik said.

Minchukova, wearing military-style clothes, said she was doubtful that normal life, as they all knew it before the war, will ever fully return.

"What am I missing? Peace," she said. "I'm dreaming about peace, about sleeping in my bed not worried about going to bomb shelters all the time. I miss the people I lost."

The Kosovo training center plans to work with more groups of Ukrainian women, both in Peja and in Ukraine.

"We're planning as well to go to Ukraine very soon and start with delivery of courses there, on the theater" of war, Tigani said.

## 5 rescued from building collapse in China, dozens missing

BEIJING (AP) — Rescuers in central China have pulled out alive five of 23 people trapped in a partially collapsed building, authorities said Saturday, while President Xi Jinping gave instructions to rescue the victims "at all costs."

The six-story building in the city of Changsha partially collapsed on Friday. State broadcaster CCTV reported that the collapse trapped some 23 people who were in the building. But authorities also said that 39 others who were present around the site of the building when it toppled remain uncontactable, and rescue operations were underway.

Authorities said at a news conference that the five people who were rescued were in stable condition in a hospital.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the building housed a restaurant, a coffeeshop, a hotel, and several apartments, CCTV reported.

The tenants had made structural changes to the premises, and the exact cause of the collapse is still being investigated, the report said.

Following an increase in the number of self-built building collapses in recent years, Xi also said that it was necessary to check on such structures to investigate any hidden dangers and fix them in a timely manner to prevent the occurrence of major accidents, according to state-run news agency Xinhua.

Photos showed the front of the building largely intact, while the rear section appeared to have collapsed into itself.

Poor adherence to safety standards, including the illegal addition of extra floors and failure to use reinforcing iron bars, is often blamed for such disasters.

## Wives of Mariupol defenders appeal for soldiers' evacuation

By TRISHA THOMAS Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Two Ukrainian women whose husbands are defending a besieged steel plant in the southern city of Mariupol are calling for any evacuation of civilians to also include soldiers, saying they fear the troops will be tortured and killed if left behind and captured by Russian forces.

"The lives of soldiers matter too. We can't only talk about civilians," said Yuliia Fedusiuk, 29, the wife of Arseniy Fedusiuk, a member of the Azov Regiment in Mariupol.

She and Kateryna Prokopenko, whose husband, Denys Prokopenko, is the Azov commander, made their appeal in Rome on Friday for international assistance to evacuate the Azovstal plant, the last stronghold of Ukrainian resistance in the strategic and now bombed-out port city.

An estimated 2,000 Ukrainian defenders and 1,000 civilians are holed up in the plant's vast underground network of bunkers, which are able to withstand airstrikes. But conditions there have grown more dire, with food, water and medicine running out, after Russian forces dropped "bunker busters" and other munitions in recent days.

The United Nations has said Secretary-General António Guterres and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed on arranging evacuations from the plant during a meeting this week in Moscow, with the U.N. and International Committee of the Red Cross involved. But the discussions as reported by the U.N. concerned civilians, not combatants.

Speaking in English, Prokopenko, 27, called for a Dunkirk-style mission, a reference to the 1940 World War II maritime operation in which hundreds of boats were launched to rescue over 330,000 British and Allied troops surrounded by German forces on the beaches of northern France.

"We can do this extraction operation ... which will save our soldiers, our civilians, our kids," she said. "We need to do this right now, because people — every hour, every second — are dying."

The women said 600 of the soldiers are wounded, with some suffering from gangrene. Video and images they shared with The Associated Press showed wounded men with stained bandages in need of changing; others had open wounds or amputated limbs.

The women said the images were taken sometime in the past week. The AP could not independently verify the date and location of the footage.

The men, who are not identified, say they eat just once a day and share as little as 1.5 liters (50 ounces) of water a day among four. Supplies inside the blockaded plant are depleting, they say.

One shirtless man spoke in obvious pain as he described his wounds: two broken ribs, a punctured lung and a dislocated arm that "was hanging on the flesh." Another said he stepped on a mine that was dropped from a helicopter, leaving him with an open fracture in his leg.

A military doctor who appears on the video identified herself as an anesthesiologist treating the wounded at the Azovstal plant. She said she was working with a small team of doctors "in extremely hard conditions, under constant bombardment."

"Our resources are extremely limited. Guys are literally dying before our eyes because we don't have any possibility to evacuate them. There is no way to treat them properly," she said.

She appealed for the evacuation of the wounded soldiers, along with the trapped civilians. "We just ask, we beg, to give at least the slightest chance to save the life of these fighters. They deserve it," she said.

The Azov Regiment has its roots in the Azov Battalion, which was formed in 2014 by far-right activists at the start of the conflict in the east between Ukraine and Moscow-backed separatists, and which has elicited criticism for its tactics.

Fedusiuk said she and Prokopenko were seeking help from Europe, the United States and international organizations to find a diplomatic resolution to the Azovstal standoff.

And she said the troops would never surrender to Russian capture.

"We don't know any Azov soldier who came (back) alive from Russian soldiers, from 2014, so they will be tortured and killed," Fedusiuk said. "We know that definitely, so it is not an option for them."



## Activists keep up pressure as Biden weighs student debt move

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For student loan activists, the week began with hope as President Joe Biden gave his clearest indication that he was considering canceling federal debt rather than simply allowing borrowers to defer payments during the pandemic.

But that soon gave way to disappointment when Biden signaled days later that any debt relief would be much less than activists wanted. So Melissa Byrne, one of the organizers who has been leading the charge, got back to work.

First, she tweeted that activists need to “ramp up” their efforts, stay “warm + fuzzy” and “fight until we win.” (“White House staff reads tweets,” she explained.) Then she and her allies dove into their group chats as they considered ways to keep the pressure on.

“We need to keep our eye on the prize,” Byrne said.

The flurry of activity comes in a crucial stretch, with Biden saying he would make a decision in the coming weeks. After promising to address the issue during his campaign for president, he’s now weighing how much federal student loan debt should be canceled and who should benefit.

Critics caution that forgiving debt might anger voters who already paid off their loans, and Republicans describe the idea as a political giveaway in a midterm election year. However, an expansive approach could buoy young people whom Democrats view as a central part of their coalition, allowing Biden to deliver concrete results when many of his proposals from the left remain stalled on Capitol Hill.

John Della Volpe, director of polling at the Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics, said student loan forgiveness is “a cornerstone in the relationship between President Biden and young Americans.”

Without young voters on board, “we don’t have a Democratic House, a Democratic Senate and a Democratic president,” said Della Volpe, who worked as a consultant for Biden’s campaign.

About 43 million Americans owe \$1.6 trillion on their student loans, more than either credit cards or car payments. It’s a growing problem for younger people, who have assumed more and more debt to finance their educations when public funding for colleges has declined.

And it’s a challenge that Biden has personally experienced. While running for office, he told a student in New Hampshire that he “ended up with a debt of over \$280,000” to pay for college and graduate school for his three children.

“I get it,” he said.

In a poll of Americans under 30 years old conducted by the Harvard Kennedy School and released on Monday, 85% said the federal government should take some action on student loan debt.

However, opinions were split about the best path forward. Although 38% supported full cancellation, 21% wanted such a step to be taken for only those with the greatest financial needs. In addition, 27% wanted the government to help with repayment, but not debt cancellation.

Biden said Thursday that he was still considering what to do.

“I’m in the process of taking a hard look at whether or not there will be additional debt forgiveness,” he said. “And I’ll have an answer on that in the next couple of weeks.”

It’s possible that his idea will include means testing, which involves limiting by income who would see their debts forgiven.

“He has talked in the past about how, you know, he doesn’t believe that millionaires and billionaires, obviously, should benefit, or even people from the highest income,” White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Thursday. “So that’s certainly something he would be looking at.”

During the campaign, when Biden was consolidating support in the Democratic primary, he pledged to “immediately” cancel \$10,000 in federal student loan debt per person. But he did not use his executive authority to do so once in office — whether he has such power remains the subject of debate in Washington — and Congress took no action on his promise, either.

Now Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., is calling for \$50,000 in debt to be canceled and some activists want all debt wiped out without exception.

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Biden's pending decision comes as he struggles to make progress on other parts of his liberal agenda that could appeal to young people, such as tackling climate change by expanding clean energy.

"We need to motivate voters and show them that Democrats are fighting for them," said Emma Lydon, who lobbies for the Progressive Change Campaign Committee. "And this is a slam dunk way to do that."

Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, mocked the idea by tweeting that "desperate polls call for desperate measures." He added, "Other bribe suggestions: Forgive auto loans? Forgive credit card debt? Forgive mortgages?"

Celinda Lake, a Democratic pollster who worked with Biden's campaign, didn't see a downside to the inevitable criticism.

"The voters who are going to grouse about this, we weren't getting them anyway," she said.

However, the issue can still be controversial among Democrats, even evoking raw emotions at times.

"We just had a fight about this in a focus group last night," Lake said.

An older woman who had paid off her debts didn't like the idea, while a middle-aged man with children was enthusiastic.

Byrne is trying to tip the scales as far as she can, and on Friday she plastered signs around downtown Washington with other activists.

"President Biden: Not 10k, not 50k, no means-testing," said black letters on a hot pink background. "Cancel student debt, ALL OF IT."

Some of the signs went outside places where there would be parties during the weekend of the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner. Perhaps they would catch the eye of someone influential as they walked by in a tuxedo or evening gown.

Although it's unclear what Biden's final decision will be, Byrne said activists have already scored a victory.

"We've won the argument that we have to cancel student loan debt," she said. "Now it's about how much we can get."

## Back with the banned: Do Twitter's exiles return under Musk?

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

QAnon loyalists, COVID deniers, neo-Nazis and a former American president: The list of people banned from Twitter is long, but their exile could soon come to an end if Elon Musk's \$44 billion offer for the platform is approved.

Musk, the world's richest man and the owner of SpaceX and Tesla, calls himself a free speech absolutist who believes in allowing any content that doesn't run afoul of the law.

While Musk hasn't offered specifics about how he would run the platform, his musings are prompting celebrations from some of those muzzled by Twitter, even as they alarm internet safety experts who predict a rise in harassment, hate speech and misinformation about topics like vaccines and elections.

"There's no reason why these folks wouldn't want to be in this space," said Jaime Longoria, manager of research and training at the Disinfo Defense League, a non-profit that works with local organizations to combat the effects of misinformation. "Ultimately I think Elon's premise to save the public square is going to create a square that nobody wants to be in."

From former President Donald Trump to conspiracy theorist Alex Jones to white supremacist David Duke, here's a look at who might be coming back to Twitter if Musk's offer to buy it is approved.

TWEETER IN CHIEF

Trump said he won't return to Twitter even if Musk lifts the ban imposed following the deadly Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. The platform cited concerns of further incitement to violence.

Following his banishment, Trump created his own platform, Truth Social, which launched earlier this year.

"I am not going on Twitter. I am going to stay on Truth," Trump told Fox News this past week. "I hope Elon buys Twitter because he'll make improvements to it and he is a good man, but I am going to be staying on Truth."

Trump built one of the world's largest Twitter followings before his suspension, using his account to demean critics, spread lies about the 2020 election and amplify potentially dangerous misinformation about COVID-19.

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Despite what the former president said, returning to Twitter may be too tempting to resist, said Emerson Brooking, resident fellow at the Digital Forensic Research Lab of the Atlantic Council.

"If Donald Trump is the presidential nominee for the Republican Party in 2024, it's almost unthinkable that he won't return to Twitter the moment he has the opportunity to do so," Brooking said.

Two former top advisers to Trump — Steve Bannon and Roger Stone — were also banned by Twitter after repeatedly violating their rules. Bannon was kicked off for calling for the beheading of Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's leading infectious disease specialist.

Stone, ultimately suspended for a series of vulgar threats against CNN journalists, tried to create a new Twitter account Thursday but was quickly re-suspended.

Other Trump allies kicked off Twitter include Michael Flynn and Sidney Powell, Lin Wood and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who was permanently banned in January for repeatedly spreading misinformation about COVID-19 and vaccine safety.

## HATE SPEECH AND WHITE SUPREMACISM

Perhaps the trickiest challenge for Musk will be content that, while legal, preaches hate based on things like race, gender, sexual orientation or religion.

White supremacists banned by Twitter include Duke and the Proud Boys organization, along with far-right trolls like one who goes by the name Baked Alaska, who promoted anti-Semitic tropes and faces charges stemming from his involvement in the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Twitter's efforts to police hate speech have had mixed results. While some extremist leaders have been vanquished, a quick search of the platform turns up numerous racist slurs and attacks.

Several admitted white supremacists still on Twitter celebrated news of Musk's interest in the platform, predicting this ownership will mean looser rules. "We are liberated!" one wrote this week.

"The extremists are celebrating," tweeted Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League. "They believe he will usher in a 'new era' on Twitter & that they'll return to the platform. This is dangerous."

## CONSPIRACY THEORISTS AND QANON

Twitter began cracking down on QAnon content on its platform years ago and accelerated the process following the attack on the Capitol. More than 150,000 accounts had been suspended as of last year, according to the company's latest update.

QAnon followers advocate a conspiracy theory rooted in the baseless belief that Trump was fighting so-called deep state enemies and a cabal of Satan-worshipping cannibals operating a child sex trafficking ring. The mob that stormed the Capitol included some believers.

Now, some of them are eager to get back on Twitter.

"The Twitter deal is done," Ron Watkins, a prominent QAnon leader, wrote on the platform Telegram. Watkins' Twitter account was spiked last year. "Banned accounts will be restored," he predicted.

Other conspiracy theorists have also felt Twitter's sting, though usually only when their stated beliefs have pushed over into hate or harassment.

David Icke was kicked off the platform two years ago for spreading misinformation about COVID-19, including claims that Jews and 5G towers were behind the pandemic. Icke is a prominent advocate of the belief that a race of lizard people have taken over the Earth by posing as human leaders.

Alex Jones, the creator of Infowars, was permanently banned in 2018 for abusive behavior. Jones recently lost a defamation case filed by the parents of children killed in the 2012 Newtown, Connecticut, school shooting over Jones' repeated claims that the shooting was fake. Twenty first graders and six teachers were killed in the massacre. Infowars is now seeking bankruptcy protection.

## HAPPY IN EXILE?

Trump may not be the only user kicked off Twitter who ends up happy in a new home. Other new platforms, like Gab, GETTR and Parler, have grown in recent years by catering to conservative and far-right users who dislike Twitter and Facebook's moderation policies.

The new sites have little to no moderation, meaning Nazi imagery, homophobic threats and misogynistic content can be easily found alongside conversations about U.S. politics and culture.

After Musk's purchase offer, Gab CEO Andrew Torba predicted the billionaire will struggle to realize his

vision for Twitter. While Trump may be sticking with his own new platform for competitive reasons, other conservatives may not be immediately tempted by Musk's promises of free speech absolutism. Twitter's employees, for one, may put up a fight, according to Torba.

Parler CEO George Farmer sounded a similar note in a message to users.

"We are going nowhere," Farmer wrote.

## For Ukrainian Model UN students, hopes dim for diplomacy

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — For nearly a week in April, Mariia Pachenko took a respite from her studies in besieged Ukraine to share its plight with fellow college students in New York. Soon after, the 18-year-old faced a wrenching decision: Return to her war-torn country or wait out the conflict as hopes for a diplomatic remedy dimmed by the day.

Pachenko and a handful of other Ukrainian students recounted the war's human toll and the perilous trip through Russian-occupied territories to make it to the National Model United Nations conference, relishing the opportunity to foster "communication between young people across the world because it's so important to share ideas, to express your thoughts on the relevant political issues and to try to find the solutions."

But despite urgent calls to end the Russian invasion, diplomacy has made little progress in the real world.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged Moscow and Kyiv to take "whatever urgent steps" to stop the fighting, but the lack of dialogue between the two governments has been disconcerting for Pachenko — now in France for the foreseeable future — and her peers in the widening diaspora of Ukrainians fleeing bombs, tanks and violence.

They harbor little hope that diplomacy will prevail anytime soon.

"The United Nations as an organization needs to be reformed. It has no power — no practical power in the real world," said participant Olha Tolmachova, who has returned to her town in western Ukraine, which, for now, has been spared the Russian onslaught.

Guterres spent nearly two hours in a one-on-one meeting Tuesday with Russian President Vladimir Putin, followed by a Thursday meeting with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. While the Russians rebuffed his appeal to halt fighting, the U.N. said Putin did agree in principle to the U.N. and the International Committee of the Red Cross' participation in evacuating civilians from Mariupol.

Artemy Kalinovsky, a faculty member of Temple University's Center for the Study of Force and Diplomacy, said they're rightfully skeptical.

The U.N. can highlight the ravages of war and serve as a platform for serious discussions, Kalinovsky said. But in the end, he said, "I don't think there's anything that the U.N. can do ... because one of the belligerents or the aggressors in this case is a member of the Security Council and can veto anything that could serve to end this conflict."

As the students' conference was ongoing, the Kremlin simply withdrew altogether from the U.N. Human Rights Council after the 193-member General Assembly — where there are no vetoes — voted to suspend Russia.

Planned many months beforehand, the war was not part of the Model U.N. conference's central agenda. And there were no Russian universities taking part because of visa problems and U.S. travel rules. But the conflict wafted through as the Ukrainian delegation used the event as an informal podium from which to plead for continued dialogue and attention.

Amid all the geopolitics are the more than 5 million individual stories of those who have fled Ukraine since February.

Feelings of guilt have followed Larysa Haivoronska's decision to delay her return. She recalls how the walls shook as the bombs fell in the distance back home. Russian jets streaked overhead and helicopters thwacked ominously. Now outside Chicago, Haivoronska last spoke to her mother nearly a week ago. Bombing damage has disrupted power lines. Without phone and internet services, her eastern hometown of Kupyansk-Vuzlovyy has been disconnected from the outside world.

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"The only thing they want is for me to be safe. That's why they told me I need to stay here," the 22-year-old said, sobbing. "I don't want to be safe if they're not safe. I told my mom that if something happens to them, I will come back and go to army or do whatever. ... Because I don't care about my life if something happened to them."

With Kalinovsky's help, Haivoronska was recently admitted to a doctorate program in political science at Temple, but vows to return to Ukraine.

"We have to not only physically rebuild, like the roads, the houses, but we also need to rebuild our international systems and we have to rebuild the whole political system," she said.

The students' adviser, Halyna Protsyk, has returned to Lviv, and worries about the toll on the young people her country desperately needs to return.

"They need to make sure that our country still functions in every sphere," she said during her visit to New York, "and my mission is to make sure that higher education still performs high quality standards."

Those who have left Ukraine continue their studies online, much as they did during the height of the coronavirus pandemic. Some plan to enroll in new universities.

Pachenko said it's been difficult to stay away. Bombs have destroyed the bridges outside her town southeast of Lviv, cutting it off from shipments of food and medicine.

She says it's difficult to "live in a constant stress" so she tries not to overwhelm herself with information. But she still tracks daily updates on her phone. Friends and family alert her to the latest air sirens. She worries her mother will ignore the warnings to take cover. If she were home, she could force her mother to run to the shelters. And it's been hard to leave a place where so many memories still reside, Pachenko said.

"I'm young, and I understand that my life and my safety are much more important than some memories," she said. "And I want to make more memories in my life. And that's why I want to stay safe."

Acknowledging that some did hold out hope for a peaceful solution, she nonetheless thinks it was a mistake for anyone to believe that diplomacy could stop Putin — after eight years of fighting since Moscow's annexation of Crimea — from further encroachment.

The hope now lies in a quick end to the war, the students' adviser said.

"The biggest challenge for us," Protsyk said, "will be to bring back our youth to Ukraine — after we got our victory."

That outcome though, the Ukrainians acknowledged, remains uncertain.

## Headcounts are down at public schools. Now budgets are too.

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and ANNIE MA Associated Press

MISSION, Kan. (AP) — A school system in suburban Kansas City is eliminating over 100 jobs, including kindergarten aides and library clerks. Oakland, California, is closing seven schools. Other districts around the country are merging classrooms, selling buildings and leaving teaching positions unfilled in order to close budget gaps.

Public school systems are beginning to feel the pinch from enrollment losses tied to the coronavirus pandemic.

Money for schools is driven partly by student headcounts, and emergency provisions in many states allowed schools to maintain funding at pre-pandemic levels. But like the billions of dollars of federal relief money that have helped schools weather the crisis, those measures were not meant to last forever.

In Olathe, Kansas, where the school system is cutting 140 jobs, Deputy Superintendent John Hutchison said the extra federal money merely put off the inevitable.

Now it is trimming millions of dollars from its budgets because enrollment, having peaked at more than 30,000 students in fall 2019, fell by around 900 in the first full school year of the pandemic. Less than 100 of those students have returned.

"Where did those kids go?" Hutchison asked during a recent public meeting. "Where are they? They didn't come back this year. That's what's laying on that additional reduction in our funding."

Families opting for homeschooling, private schools and other options sent enrollment down sharply in

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the first full school year of the pandemic, and generally it has been slow to recover.

In Houston, the largest district in Texas, enrollment tumbled by more than 22,000 to around 183,000 in fall 2021 and only about half of those students have returned. The district was shielded from making cuts in the first two years of the pandemic by what are known as "hold harmless" provisions, but those protections are expected to end. Superintendent Millard House has asked departments to cut \$60 million from next year's budget.

Among other states that took steps to protect school budgets, Delaware provided \$9.3 million in one-time funding in the fiscal year that ended in summer 2021 to school districts and charter schools to prevent layoffs over enrollment declines, and North Carolina lawmakers decided to allow schools to use pre-pandemic attendance levels.

More districts will be making cuts in coming years, said Alex Spurrier, an associate partner at Bellwether Education Partners, a think tank. The last of the federal aid must be spent by 2024.

"Once the federal funding dries up, it will put a lot more districts in a lot more difficult position if they're kind of kicking the can down the road of making the adjustments that they'll need if they are going to be serving smaller student populations in the years to come," he said.

Some districts have struggled to explain the need for cuts. Albuquerque Public Schools announced this spring that it anticipates a budget shortfall of about \$25 million.

"That might sound crazy," the district wrote in a blog post, acknowledging the influx of federal aid. But it explained that enrollment declines have accelerated amid the pandemic, with the student population falling to 73,000 from 85,000 in just six years. The district hasn't released a cost-cutting plan but legislative analysts say it will require layoffs and school closures.

Amid the upheaval, some states have gained students. Florida was among the leaders, according to the data-tracking site Burbio. And some districts' headcounts benefited from new families, including some who moved to less costly areas as work went virtual.

In California, which announced this month that enrollment had fallen by an additional 110,283 students, Oakland's planned school closures are leading to protests. The ACLU filed a complaint this month alleging that they disproportionately affect Black students and families.

Further complicating the situation is a tight labor market and demands for teacher and staff raises.

In Minneapolis Public Schools, where a nearly three-week long teacher strike ended with a new contract, the district said it needed to make \$27.1 million in budget cuts in the upcoming school year to pay for it. Federal relief money helped cover the \$53.5 million price tag for the more lucrative contract for teachers and support staff for the current school year. Since the pandemic began, the district also has lost more than 4,000 students, along with the state funding they generate.

School officials in the city of Lawrence — home to the main University of Kansas campus — are creating multi-grade level elementary classrooms, which will allow the district to get by with fewer teachers. It is part of an effort to close a budget shortfall brought on by declining enrollment and to free up money for raises.

"You can't cut close to \$7 million and not change how you do business," Lawrence Superintendent Anthony Lewis acknowledged at a meeting this month.

In Iowa, the Des Moines district canceled a conference, sold a building and isn't replacing some retiring teachers as it cuts \$9.4 million in spending for the upcoming school year. The cuts were needed partially because the district's enrollment has fallen by 1,600 students since the pandemic began.

The district, which is the state's largest with 31,000 students, anticipates that it will need to make even deeper cuts next year.

"I think it's fair to say, the federal aid helped offset some of the financial challenges," said Phil Roeder, a spokesman for the district. "It did help to get us through what's been a historically bad moment in history. But it was a temporary, stopgap, not a long-term solution for school districts."

**Kim warns N. Korea could 'preemptively' use nuclear weapons**

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By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un warned again that the North could preemptively use its nuclear weapons if threatened, as he praised his top army officials for a massive military parade in the capital, Pyongyang, this week.

Kim expressed “firm will” to continue developing his nuclear-armed military so that it could “preemptively and thoroughly contain and frustrate all dangerous attempts and threatening moves, including ever-escalating nuclear threats from hostile forces, if necessary,” the North’s official Korean Central News Agency said Saturday.

KCNA said Kim called his military officials to praise their work during Monday’s parade, where the North showcased the biggest weapons in its nuclear arsenal, including intercontinental ballistic missiles that could potentially reach the U.S. homeland. The North also rolled out a variety of shorter-range solid-fuel missiles designed to be fired from land vehicles or submarines, which pose a growing threat to South Korea and Japan.

KCNA didn’t say when Kim’s meeting with military brass took place.

The parade marking the 90th anniversary of North Korea’s army came as Kim revives nuclear brinkmanship aimed at forcing the United States to accept the idea of his country as a nuclear power and remove crippling economic sanctions.

Speaking to thousands of troops and spectators mobilized for the parade, Kim vowed to develop his nuclear forces at the “fastest possible speed” and threatened to use them if provoked. He said his nuclear weapons would “never be confined to the single mission of war deterrent” in situations where the North faces external threats to its “fundamental interests.”

Kim’s comments suggested he would continue a provocative run in weapons testing to dial up the pressure on Washington and Seoul. South Korea will inaugurate a new conservative government in May that could take a harder line on Pyongyang following the engagement policies of outgoing liberal President Moon Jae-in that produced few results.

Kim’s threat to use his nuclear forces to protect his country’s ambiguously defined “fundamental interests” possibly portends an escalatory nuclear doctrine that could pose greater concern for South Korea, Japan and the United States, experts say.

North Korea has conducted 13 rounds of weapons launches so far this year, including its first full-range test of an ICBM since 2017, while Kim exploits a favorable environment to push forward its weapons program as the U.N. Security Council remains divided and effectively paralyzed over Russia’s war in Ukraine.

There are also signs that North Korea is rebuilding tunnels at a nuclear testing ground that was last active in 2017. Some experts say the North may try to conduct a new test sometime between the inauguration of South Korean President-elect Yoon Suk Yeol on May 10 and his planned summit with U.S. President Joe Biden on May 21 to maximize its political effect.

U.S. State Department deputy spokesperson Jalina Porter said the United States was aware of reports that North Korea could be preparing to conduct a nuclear test, which she said would be deeply destabilizing for the region and undermine the global non-proliferation regime,

“We urge the DPRK to refrain from further destabilizing activity and instead engage in serious and sustained dialogue,” she said, referring to North Korea by its formal name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

Kim’s recent remarks followed a fiery statement released by his powerful sister earlier this month in which she blasted South Korea’s defense minister for touting preemptive strike capabilities against the North. She said her country’s nuclear forces would annihilate the South’s conventional forces if provoked.

Yoon, during his campaign, also talked about enhancing the South’s preemptive strike capabilities and missile defenses. He also vowed to strengthen South Korea’s defense in conjunction with its alliance with the United States.

While Kim’s collection of ICBMs has grabbed much international attention, North Korea since 2019 has also been expanding its arsenal of short-range solid-fuel missiles threatening South Korea.

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The North describes some of those missiles as “tactical” weapons, which experts say communicates a threat to arm them with smaller battlefield nuclear bombs and proactively use them during conventional warfare to blunt the stronger conventional forces of South Korea and the United States. About 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in the South.

North Korea may use its next nuclear test to claim that it has acquired the ability to build a small nuclear warhead to fit on those missiles or other weapons it recently tested, including a purported hypersonic missile and a long-range cruise missile, analysts say. Smaller warheads would also be necessary for the North’s pursuit of a multi-warhead ICBM.

“Solid-fueled missiles are easier to hide, move and launch quickly, making them less vulnerable to a preemptive strike,” said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Seoul’s Ewha Womans University.

“Taken together with ambitions for tactical nuclear warheads, submarine-based launch capabilities, and more sophisticated ICBMs, Pyongyang is not simply looking to deter an attack. Its goals extend to outrunning South Korea in an arms race and coercing the United States to reduce sanctions enforcement and security cooperation with Seoul,” Easley added.

Nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang have been stalled since 2019 because of disagreements over a potential easing of U.S.-led sanctions in exchange for North Korean disarmament steps.

Kim has stuck to his goals of simultaneously developing nuclear weapons and the country’s dismal economy in the face of international pressure and has shown no willingness to fully surrender a nuclear arsenal he sees as his biggest guarantee of survival.

## Run Rich Run takes spotlight on final day of NFL draft

By JOE REEDY AP Sports Writer

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — What started as a dare during the NFL Scouting Combine has morphed into much more for Rich Eisen.

Last Saturday at the Rose Bowl, the NFL Network host participated in his 18th “Run Rich Run.” Eisen donned his suit and tie to run the 40-yard dash at the iconic stadium, celebrating its centennial this year.

“Run Rich Run” will air during Saturday’s coverage of the final day of the NFL draft on NFL Network.

The Rose Bowl also has special meaning for Eisen. He covered the 1990 game as a University of Michigan student. It was Bo Schembechler’s last game as the Wolverines lost to USC.

“I always dreamt of having a career in sports, broadcasting or television, or anything like that. I like that I’m back here in the Rose Bowl with an event like this. Words can’t describe how cool this is,” Eisen said.

Eisen’s first dash came during a lull at the 2005 combine, when Terrell Davis thought Eisen was joking when he asked Davis how fast he thought he could run.

Eisen ran 6.77 seconds at the old RCA Dome in Indianapolis without any training and wearing wingtips in 2005. It has been his slowest time.

His quickest was 5.94 in 2016, one of four times he has been under six seconds.

A photo of Eisen running the 40 was the cover of his 2008 book. A silhouette of him running in a suit and tie is the logo of his talk show.

Since 2015, “Run Rich Run” has also been a fundraising event for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. Last year’s campaign raised a record \$1.7 million.

Fans the last seven years have been encouraged to submit videos on social media of them running the 40 using the hashtag #RunRichRun or #RunYour40.

“It has become so ingrained in everything that I do. It was a total lark (in 2005),” Eisen said. “The league and network support it by asking people around the country to run in their work suit or work clothes and send videos. I’ve seen people in firefighter, hazmat suits, lab coats, high heels, business attire. It just blows me away.”

Up until 2020, Eisen’s run took place during the combine and was shown during the final day of coverage. When the COVID-19 pandemic canceled the 2021 combine, the event had to find a new venue. It also saw an opportunity to increase participation.



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Last year's event took place at SoFi Stadium before the draft. While Eisen's dash remained the highlight, NFL legends teamed up with entrepreneurs to run. Each pair ran a 40-yard dash, with the lowest combined time being declared the winner.

Former players Cris Carter, Tony Gonzalez, Michael Vick, Rod Woodson, Robert Griffin III, and Eric Metcalf ran this year. The entrepreneurs that took part were Vinit Bharara, Melissa Bridgeford, Michael Jaconi, Alex Lieberman, Marc Lore, and Sebastian Tomich.

Lore, a co-owner of the Minnesota Timberwolves, was the one who first came up with the idea last year of pairing legends with entrepreneurs.

"We get an opportunity to meet people in a different light than we normally would get to meet them," Carter said. "We have a lot of good people around the league. And that's what Rich is. A lot of this is us supporting him."

The 18th annual 'Run Rich Run' campaign continues to raise awareness and support for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Eisen, the legends and entrepreneurs, were also joined by Alexander, an 11-year-old St. Jude patient who served as the official timekeeper. Alexander was diagnosed in 2017 with medulloblastoma, a form of brain cancer. He was treated at St. Jude and is now cancer-free.

"He got a call (earlier last week) to say he just got a clean scan for the first time in a long time. And he's running, his mom is here and not worrying about anything except being here at the Rose Bowl and running around. So it's pretty cool," Eisen said.

"It looks easy, just running in a straight line. But it's a significant physical endeavor. And certainly, as you get older, it becomes that much more difficult. But I'll do this as long as anybody wants to watch a middle-aged man run and raise money for St. Jude."

## 'Our roots are there': Ukrainians cross front line for home

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — A tiny, Soviet-made car is bed tonight for the older couple waiting to risk their lives by crossing the war's front line in Ukraine. But they're not fleeing — they're going back in.

"Everything is there. Our roots are there," says the man, 75. "Even people from Mariupol want to go back."

They don't want to share their names out of fears for their safety as they attempt to make the long drive back to the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine, the scene of some of the war's fiercest fighting.

The world is now accustomed to images of millions of Ukrainians on the run from Russia's invasion. In their shadow are people with a different kind of desperation and daring, heading the other way.

For some the pull is to reach loved ones, often vulnerable due to illness or infirmity, who were left behind. For others it's a journey of nostalgia and defiance.

The couple want to go back to their home in Donetsk to take a look at least. They're old. They're home-sick. It's time to take chances. "Where else should we go?" the man says.

He leans against the boxy yellow Lada, resting his weight on the 40-year-old car and on two canes. His belongings are whatever his wife stuffed into the trunk before they fled.

"She forgot to bring her lover," the man says, with mischief in his eyes. His wife of 53 years laughs, then comes close to tears as reality returns.

"You can go mad if you don't make jokes," she says.

Recent weeks have seen many Ukrainians who fled the country return home, but in many cases that's because Russian forces withdrew from the area around the capital, Kyiv, regrouping for an offensive in the east. It's not known how many people have crossed the front lines to return to contested areas and occupied cities.

Here in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia is a parking lot where volunteers have helped thousands of people fleeing in battered vehicles. Some have shattered windows. Others are missing doors. Many have signs saying "children" taped to their windshields.

On the edges of this are people headed in the other direction.

One is Igor Filko, who stands alone on the sidewalk, smoking. The 30-year-old was released Wednesday after three years in prison, emerging into a world he hardly recognized.

"Everything is different," he says. "Everything is wrong."

He is trying to make his way to the seaside city of Berdyansk and his wife, small child and mother. He sleeps at the train station. He has no phone, borrowing one from a volunteer at the reception center to call his family. He has no car, little money and a growing sense of just how dangerous it is to go home.

After his release, he tried to set off on foot but was quickly stopped at a checkpoint. Soldiers told him he wouldn't be let out walking and certainly wouldn't be let back in. Now he waits for a corridor to open.

Russian forces are tightening their control over Berdyansk, Filko says. They tell residents they should switch to Russian passports and the currency will change to the ruble soon. His family wants to leave. He wants to help them.

"I don't know of another plan," Filko says. "All my hopes are on getting at least my child out."

Each family reaching the reception center has its own harrowing story supporting that desire to flee.

Tatyana Vasileva's vehicle was shot at near the final checkpoint on the journey from occupied Melitopol, in the southeast. A shell flew over their roof, and Russian soldiers stole her money.

"Thank God we left before it got too bad," Vasileva says.

Many of the new arrivals are from the southern city of Kherson, where Russian flags now fly.

Vitaly Bizyuk and his family drove three days to find an open corridor from there to Zaporizhzhia.

Along the way, they were pressured at Russian checkpoints to change their mind. Bizyuk is originally from Crimea, which was annexed by Russia in 2014. "They asked me, 'Why not go there?'" he says. "I said, 'Why, what did I forget there?'"

Disheveled and standing next to his dust-covered car, he describes life under occupation. The ruble will be introduced Sunday. Tanks are in the streets. The channels on TV, and the brands in markets, are Russian.

Bizyuk holds up a pack of Russian cigarettes and looks unhappy: "I needed to smoke."

Over two months into the war, he also needed to get out. Unlike the couple in the Lada, he sees no return in sight.

## Migrant boat disaster wrecks a Lebanese family amid crisis

By FAY ABUELGASIM Associated Press

TRIPOLI, Lebanon (AP) — A week ago, the boat carrying Bilal Dandashi, his relatives and dozens of others hoping to escape Lebanon and reach Europe sank in the Mediterranean. Dandashi still doesn't know if his wife and children are alive or dead.

Their boat sank in the darkness of night in a matter of seconds after a collision with a Lebanese Navy ship trying to stop the migrants. Of the around 60 men, women and children on board, 47 were rescued, seven bodies were found — and the rest remain missing.

The tragedy underscored the desperate lengths to which some Lebanese are going after their country's economy collapsed, driving two-thirds of the population into poverty with no hope on the horizon for any recovery.

Lebanon has now become a source for migrants making the dangerous boat crossing to reach European shores. There are no firm figures, but hundreds of Lebanese in recent months have attempted the journey.

In Tripoli, Lebanon's poorest city, residents say there is a constant stream of migrant boats, taking off from shores around the city — even from Tripoli's official port.

"The port has become like an airport. Young people, women and children are going to Europe. The trips are daily," said Amid Dandashi, Bilal's brother, who was also on the boat with him and whose three children were killed in the capsizing.

On Friday, police said they arrested three smugglers preparing to set off with a boat carrying 85 migrants from the dock of a resort near Tripoli.

Bilal and another of his brothers had attempted a crossing once before, but the smugglers' boat they were on stalled offshore.

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So for a second trip, they took matters into their own hands. Working with two other families in Tripoli, they obtained a recreational boat, nearly 50 years old, from a smuggler. The brothers spent three months refurbishing it and getting life jackets for it.

On the night of April 23, they set off: around 22 members of the extended Dandashi family along with members of the other two families. They were around 60 people total, well over the capacity of the small yacht. The goal was to reach Italy — some 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) across the Mediterranean, a common route for migrant boats from Lebanon.

An hour and a half into their journey, their boat was intercepted by the Lebanese Navy.

Disaster struck: The boat collided with the Navy ship and sank within seconds.

The Navy has blamed the boat captain, saying he was maneuvering to avoid being forced to return to shore. It also blamed the migrants for overcrowding the boat and not wearing life vests.

Bilal Dandashi, however, accused the Navy ship of intentionally ramming their boat to force it back.

He said the Navy crew were shouting insults at the migrants during the encounter. Their boat would have reached international waters, out of the Navy's jurisdiction, in just a few minutes, he said.

"If it hadn't hit us from the front ... we would have been able to cross," he said. "They took a decision intentionally."

The passengers weren't wearing their life jackets because they didn't want to draw attention as they left port and the boat sank too fast to put them on after the collision, Dandashi said.

Bilal Dandashi was rescued along with two of his children. But his wife and two other children remain missing.

His brother Amid's three children were all killed, their bodies found in the later search.

Amid recalled packing up his children's things for the trip, never imagining he'd return home without them. He and his brothers had felt certain the boat was safe after the work they put into it, otherwise he never would have put his children at risk, he said.

"I blame myself, as a father, that I went and took that risk," he said. "But I was sure that I would reach (Europe.) ... Everything was safe."

The increase in migrants is fueled by desperation from an economic meltdown caused by years of corruption and mismanagement.

Spiraling inflation and the collapse of the currency have wrecked people's salaries and savings. Medicines, fuel and many foods are in short supply. Bilal Dandashi has diabetes and cannot find the medication he needs.

Tripoli, Lebanon's second largest city, has felt the brunt of the crisis. Almost the entire Tripoli workforce depends on day-to-day income.

Since the boat sank, tensions have heightened in the city. Angry residents blocked roads and attacked a main army checkpoint in Tripoli, throwing stones at troops who responded by firing into the air.

The government held an extraordinary meeting and asked the military tribunal to investigate the case.

"This whole country is drowning, (it is) not just us who drowned. The whole country is drowning, and they are ignoring it," Bilal Dandashi said.

The 47-year-old acknowledged his attempted crossing was illegal but said he was unable to travel legally. With so many Lebanese requesting passports, authorities have wrestled with a massive backlog and recently stopped processing applications altogether.

"Give me a passport. For 6 months, I couldn't get one," he said. "Why? Because they want us here to put us in the grave here -- or go die in the sea."

## Grizzlies rally again past Wolves 114-106 to reach 2nd round

By DAVE CAMPBELL AP Sports Writer

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Memphis Grizzlies didn't act their age in this first-round series against Minnesota, especially when they faced a double-digit deficit — all three times — entering the fourth quarter.

With another relentless and resolute finish, the Grizzlies finished off the Timberwolves. Their next chal-

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lenge is coming fast: the Golden State Warriors.

Desmond Bane and Dillon Brooks each scored 23 points and the Grizzlies rallied yet again to eliminate the Timberwolves, winning 114-106 in Game 6 on Friday night.

"I wish we got better starts so we don't have to put ourselves in that predicament," Brooks said, "but we're always going to find a way to fight."

Brandon Clarke added 17 points and 11 rebounds in another stellar effort off the bench for the Grizzlies, who withstood another quiet night by star Ja Morant and another double-digit deficit entering the fourth quarter.

"We stick together, stay on the same page, and I think it really showed on the big stage this series," said Bane, who led the Grizzlies in scoring the series.

The Grizzlies advanced in the playoffs for the first time in seven years, this time to meet Golden State, the NBA champions in 2015, 2017 and 2018. Game 1 is in Memphis on Sunday.

"Physically, mentally, this series was a battle," said a visibly drained Morant, who went 4 for 14 from the field and had 17 points and 11 assists. "Obviously, the wins were pretty ugly outside of Game 2, but we got it done."

Anthony Edwards had 16 of his 30 points in the first quarter for Minnesota. Jaden McDaniels had 24 points off the bench and Karl-Anthony Towns added 18 points and 10 rebounds, but the late-game struggles were evident again.

"We showed it in our shot selection in the fourth, and it's baked in our DNA right now," coach Chris Finch said. "We know we have to learn from this. We're not all just going to be able to save the day."

With the Grizzlies already the first team in NBA history to win multiple games in the same playoff series by erasing a double-digit-point fourth-quarter deficit, the here-we-go-again feeling was palpable in the building as an 84-74 lead for the Wolves at the third-quarter break quickly vanished.

Bane and Brooks each hit tying 3-pointers midway through the fourth, and Brooks fouled out just 26 seconds after his evened the score at 97.

"I think they thought I was going to shoot 1 for 10 again. I'm a pro. I figure stuff out," said Brooks, who went 9 for 19 including 5 for 6 from deep.

Bane then swished another one from deep at 3:03 for a 101-99 lead, the first for the Grizzlies since they were up 39-38.

The kill shot came soon after for a Wolves team that, like so many others against the Grizzlies this season, was consistently a step and a jump behind on the glass.

Tyus Jones missed a pair of 3-pointers from the wing on the same possession, but the Grizzlies rebounded both — and Morant used the second one for a layup and a four-point lead.

After McDaniels, who had the game of his two-year career, hit a 3 with 1:34 left to bring the Wolves back within one, Jones — the former Timberwolves player and native of Minnesota — answered with a 3-pointer to bump the lead back to two possessions with 1:09 left.

Despite the devastation of the two squandered leads in defeat earlier in the series and the franchise's untrustworthy history, the fans turned out again to give the Wolves a clear advantage.

Former Timberwolves star Latrell Sprewell sat courtside, a few seats down from Vikings wide receiver Adam Thielen, a Minnesota native. Local head coaches P.J. Fleck (Gophers football), Ben Johnson (Gophers basketball) and Cheryl Reeve (Lynx) were in the house, too, as fans clutched neon-blue glow sticks for the duration of the night in the packed downtown arena.

Finch and Towns both clapped and waved at the fans as they walked off the court after the game in appreciation of the season-long support.

"How much this city, this team has given me, really made me enjoy basketball again," Towns said.

## BEVERLEY THRILLS

One of the most vital players for Minnesota in this series — all season, really — has been Patrick Beverley with his energy, experience and tenacity.

He knocked down a 3-pointer from the corner to give the Wolves a 69-56 lead — their largest of the game — and grinned at Morant on his way back. The NBA's Most Improved Player flashed back a smile

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and promptly produced with a three-point play on the other end by flipping in a layup and drawing a foul. That sparked a 12-0 spurt by the Grizzlies, which Beverley ended with another 3.

## MUST-WINS IN MINNESOTA

This was the first Game 6 the Timberwolves hosted in their modest postseason history, though they had Game 7 at Target Center in 2004 when they beat Sacramento to close that second round series.

In the Western Conference finals that year, the Wolves also beat the Lakers here in Game 5 before losing in Los Angeles in Game 6. Those are the only two elimination games they've ever won at home, having lost in those situations in the first round in 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002.

## TIP-INS

Grizzlies: Bane went 27 for 56 on 3-pointers in the series. That's already the most makes in team history for a single postseason. O.J. Mayo made 20 from behind the arc in 13 playoff games in 2011.

Timberwolves: Naz Reid was not with the team for personal reasons, so recent acquisition Greg Monroe got the backup center minutes, his first action of the series.

## Connecticut Senate OKs bill that protects abortion providers

By SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — The Connecticut Senate gave final legislative approval shortly before midnight Friday to a bill abortion rights advocates contend is needed to protect in-state medical providers from legal action stemming from out-of-state laws, as well as the patients who travel to Connecticut to terminate a pregnancy and those who help them.

Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney, D-New Haven, said lawmakers in Connecticut, a state with a long history of supporting abortion rights, needed to pass the legislation "in defense of our own values and our own legal system." It comes after Texas enacted a law that authorizes lawsuits against clinics, doctors and others who perform or facilitate a banned abortion, even in another state.

The bill, which already cleared the House of Representatives earlier this month, passed in the Senate on a 25-9 vote. It now moves to Gov. Ned Lamont's desk. The Democrat has said he will sign it.

Supporters voiced concern about the spate of new abortion restrictions being enacted in a growing number of conservative states and the possibility the U.S. Supreme Court may overturn or weaken *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark 1973 decision that established a nationwide right to abortion.

"We have to think about what we will do when that time comes and we have to think about what we're going to do right now, given what's happening in other states," said Sen. Gary Winfield, D-New Haven, co-chair of the General Assembly's Judiciary Committee.

Under the bill, state and local agencies in the state of Connecticut, which codified the *Roe v. Wade* decision in state law in 1990, would be prevented from cooperating in investigations and prosecutions of abortion providers in the state. The bill also modifies the state's extradition statutes and prevents an out-of-state patient's medical records from being disclosed.

The socially conservative Family Institute of Connecticut has criticized the legislation, arguing it will create a "safe harbor" for "abortion providers who violate abortion laws in other states."

The bill would also allow an advanced practice registered nurse, nurse-midwife or physician assistant to perform the most common type of in-clinic abortion known as an aspiration abortion in the first 12 weeks of a pregnancy. The procedure is currently limited to physicians.

Advocates contend the additional clinicians are needed to help address a shortage of doctors in Connecticut that perform abortions as well as prepare for the possible influx of women from out-of-state seeking to have the procedure.

Sen. Patricia Billie Miller, D-Stamford, who is Black, said she agrees women should be able to make choices about their bodies. However, Miller said she planned to vote against the bill because of the racist history surrounding abortion, which was outlined during a speech delivered on the House floor by freshman Rep. Treneé McGee, D-West Haven, who spoke of Black girls being steered toward abortion as a form of birth control.

"I can't support a system that systemically tried to get rid of a race of people," Miller said.

## Experts: Lawmaker rape case illustrates survivors' trauma

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — When a legislative intern came forward with rape allegations against an Idaho state lawmaker last year, she was subjected to months of online harassment and abuse.

She later testified about the attack at an ethics hearing, and some of the lawmaker's supporters filmed her and chased her through the Statehouse.

This week, the young woman took the stand to testify in his criminal trial and became so distraught she fled the courtroom.

Aaron von Ehlinger's rape conviction Friday was a rare victory for prosecutors in a criminal justice system that can be fraught with trauma for sexual assault survivors, experts say.

Only about a third of sexual assaults are reported to police, according to RAINN, the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, and only about 5% of assaults result in an arrest. Convictions are even rarer, with only about 2.8% of sexual assaults resulting in felony convictions.

Put another way, about 972 of every 1,000 perpetrators of sexual assault will never face a conviction, according to the organization.

"It really means that we are not very good at prosecuting it and that the survivors very rarely get the desired results," said Elizabeth Jeglic, a professor of psychology at John Jay College with the City University of New York and an expert in sexual assault prevention and public policy. "We have to really focus on prevention. I think that's where we're going to see the largest change."

Von Ehlinger, a former Republican state lawmaker, was found guilty of rape and faces anywhere from a year to life in prison when he is sentenced this summer. The jury acquitted the 39-year-old on a second count of sexual penetration with a foreign object.

Von Ehlinger maintained during the trial that the two had consensual sex. His attorney Jon Cox did not respond to a request for comment.

The verdict came after a dramatic trial in which the young woman fled the witness stand during testimony, saying "I can't do this."

Fourth District Judge Michael Reardon instructed the jury to disregard her statements since the defense couldn't cross-examine her. He then asked the defense if they wanted to request a mistrial — a step that would have forced a do-over for the entire trial — but defense attorney Jon Cox declined. Cox hasn't said if von Ehlinger intends to appeal.

The Associated Press generally does not identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted, and has referred to the woman in this case as "Jane Doe" at her request.

Doe was 19 and interning at the Idaho Statehouse when she met von Ehlinger and agreed to go to dinner with him.

But the night of March 9, 2021, was not the networking opportunity she expected, she later told investigators. Instead, she said, von Ehlinger brought her back to his apartment under false pretenses, overpowered her and forced her to perform oral sex while he straddled her chest, pinning her arms with his knees.

Doe reported the assault to her supervisor at the Statehouse on March 11, followed by police. She underwent a sexual assault examination, which revealed DNA that matched von Ehlinger.

Survivors must weigh the risk of not being understood or believed when they report, Jeglic said, as well as the intrusiveness of the investigation process.

"While most of the SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) nurses are well-trained, having someone touch you and look at your private parts and ask you intimate questions immediately after can feel like another violation," Jeglic said.

For von Ehlinger, the assault report triggered a legislative ethics investigation, and a legislative committee required Doe to testify during the hearing. A black fabric screen protected her from view during her testimony in the packed public hearing, but as she tried to leave the Statehouse some of von Ehlinger's

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supporters chased her, filming her as she sunk to the floor, distraught.

The ethics committee recommended von Ehlinger be banned from the Statehouse, and he resigned.

For Doe, the report triggered an avalanche of additional trauma and harassment. Supporters of von Ehlinger doxxed her by releasing her name, photo and personal details about her life in far-right blogs and social media posts. One person even wore mocking costumes to political events with a sash emblazoned with her name. While some lawmakers lauded her courage in coming forward, others questioned her integrity or called her names like "honey trap."

"The constant attack on her really prevented her from starting the healing process," said Ada County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Katelyn Farley, who argued the case against von Ehlinger. "Hopefully it doesn't happen again to future victims, but it is something that happens all the time at this point."

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that as many as one-fifth of sexual violence survivors who chose not to report their crimes to police cited the fear of retaliation as a primary reason.

"This was a very public case, so people got to see kind of a real-time view into why people don't report sexual assaults: What a tough journey it is, and the scrutiny they face, and the ongoing trauma of having to retell your story and have people attack you constantly," said Annie Hightower, director of law and policy with the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence. The organization helps survivors navigate criminal justice system and provides civil legal services, and is representing Jane Doe.

That trauma was evident when Doe took the stand on the second day of the trial. She struggled to stay focused on the prosecutor, her gaze shifting between the exit doors, the packed gallery and the defense table where von Ehlinger sat. She haltingly described the first moments of the assault before abruptly standing up, saying "I can't do this," and rushing out of the courtroom.

It's not uncommon for survivors to experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder when recounting an assault, said Jeglic, with symptoms like increased heart rate and sweating.

"If the trauma is overwhelming you might see symptoms of dissociation — where they look like they space out. They might feel jittery or have difficulty concentrating. The fight or flight reflex is activated at that point, because it feels like they might be back in that situation," Jeglic said.

Watching Doe leave the trial was "heart-wrenching," Farley said. But deputy prosecutor Whitney Welsh, who worked with Farley on the case, noted that it was also a sign of Doe's agency.

"I think it's important that she decided to walk in the room, and she also decided to walk out — those were her choices," Welsh said.

Successful prosecutions in cases like von Ehlinger can help the public better understand the dynamics of power and control in sexual assault cases, Jeglic said.

"I think one of the issues that we face as a society is the understanding of consent, what a rape looks like, and how power differentials come into play," she said. "The more success we have in prosecutions, and the more we can prevent these things from happening to begin with, the better."

The conviction was a bittersweet moment in the midst of a tough journey, said Hightower.

"The focus should be on my client and her healing — what happened today doesn't heal her, right? But the team brought some little form of justice today," Hightower said. "I hope this will help survivors — other survivors who maybe didn't come forward, or are thinking of coming forward — to help them know that people believe them."

## Correspondents' gala offers political normalcy despite COVID

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Much of Washington is ready to party like it's 2019, before the coronavirus, when the biggest risk at the annual White House press corps gala was more likely to be jokes that ruffled too many political feathers.

After the pandemic nixed the event in 2020 and 2021, the White House Correspondents' Association dinner returns Saturday night, with Joe Biden as the first sitting president to attend in six years after Donald Trump shunned it while in office.

Comedy is also back, with "The Daily Show" host Trevor Noah as headliner. Celebrities are, too: Kim Kar-

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dashian and Pete Davidson are expected to turn up, and the Funny or Die comedy studio is co-sponsoring an after-party. The event also draws a large swath of government officials and other prominent figures.

"Seeing the president of the United States come back, and the dinner come back, I think signals more than a pause in the pandemic," said Harold Holzer, author of the book "The Presidents vs. The Press." "We're safe to talk to each other again."

"I think this relationship — even if it's a one-night thing where witticisms are exchanged and people make fun of others and each other — it's a very healthy thing."

It feels like the return of a modicum of normalcy for the nation's capital, but it is also a reminder that COVID-19 remains a threat. Vice President Kamala Harris tested positive this week and Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top coronavirus expert, is skipping the dinner "because of my individual assessment of my personal risk."

That raised questions about whether the 79-year-old Biden should go. The president is going to pass up the meal and turn up later for the program. He plans to be masked when not speaking.

Biden mentioned the dinner during a speech this week about Russia's war on Ukraine, saying, "I've always had respect for the press but I can't tell you how much respect I have watching them in these zones where they're under fire."

"Imagine if we weren't getting that information," the president added. "It would be a different world."

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Biden's plan to attend "does stand in stark contrast to his predecessor, who not only questioned the legitimacy of the press on a nearly daily basis, but also never attended the dinner." Trump gleefully boycotted the event and at times branded the media "the enemy of the people."

After the recent Gridiron Club press dinner in Washington, dozens of attendees, including members of Congress and of Biden's Cabinet and journalists, tested positive for COVID-19.

The White House is stressing the abundance of the antiviral pill Paxlovid, which has been shown to reduce by 90% severe outcomes from the virus among those at highest risk. Still, Psaki has said of Biden, "We want to be very clear that it is possible he could test positive for COVID, just like any American."

That's because the U.S. is experiencing a COVID case spike from a highly contagious subvariant of omicron, with confirmed infections rising to about 44,000 per day, up from 26,000 a month ago. Though well below the maximum of 800,000-plus cases per day nationwide during the height of the omicron wave earlier this year, current statistics are probably undercounts given the increased availability of at-home COVID-19 tests whose results may not be reported to health authorities.

The White House Correspondents' Association said it would require same-day antigen testing for its dinner attendees even before the Gridiron outbreak. It has since added a vaccination requirement for those attending Saturday's gala, which will have a capacity exceeding 2,600 and is fully booked.

Despite the latest wave of COVID-19 cases, virus deaths and hospitalizations are near, or at, pandemic lows, with the BA.2 variant proving less severe than earlier virus strains. Just over 300 people are dying in the U.S. each day from the virus, down from more than 2,600 daily earlier this year — with about 1,600 hospitalizations per day, declining from a peak of more than 21,000 daily in January.

The correspondents' dinner debuted in 1921. Calvin Coolidge became the first president to attend three years later and all have since, except Trump. Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon opted not to attend every year of their presidencies, however, and Ronald Reagan, then recovering from an assassination attempt, missed the 1981 installment — but called in from Camp David.

"The thing I think this shows is the restoration to the health of the relationship," said Holzer, director of the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College in New York. "It's still barbed, there are still tense moments. But that's OK."

After comedian Michelle Wolf's sharp satire sparked controversy in 2018, the event the following year featured historian Ron Chernow. The return of celebrities this time recalls President Barack Obama's administration, when the likes of George Clooney, Charlize Theron and Viola Davis attended.

As vice president in 2014, Biden appeared in a comedy video with the star of HBO's "Veep," Julia Louis-



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Dreyfus, which drew big laughs at the correspondents' dinner. The White House director of speech writing, Vinay Reddy, and longtime Biden adviser Mike Donilon worked on Biden's remarks for this year, the White House said, tapping material from a variety of people both inside and outside government.

Psaki already acknowledged trying to lower expectations, saying the speech is "not funny at all. Just kidding." Presidential attempts at humor can be tricky, though.

At the 2011 dinner, Obama skewered an unamused Trump — in his presence — over Trump's fictitious claims about the then-president's birth certificate. Obama concluded by musing about Trump taking his job one day, saying, "He certainly would bring some change to the White House" as banquet hall screens flashed a parody image of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue's grand façade fitted with a Trump logo, golden columns, a digital clock and a sign proclaiming "Hotel, Casino, Golf Course, Presidential Suite."

That turned out to be prophetic, since Trump of course succeeded Obama — though the overhauls he eventually brought to the presidency stopped short of affixing his name to the White House.

## More evacuations expected near dangerous Southwest wildfires

By MORGAN LEE AND CEDAR ATTANASIO Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Thousands of firefighters battled destructive wildfires in the Southwest as more residents prepared to evacuate Friday into the weekend in northern New Mexico where strong winds and dangerously dry conditions have made the blazes hard to contain.

The biggest fire in the U.S. grew to more than 117 square miles (303 square kilometers) through the afternoon northeast of Santa Fe. Gusty winds prevented any aerial attacks by midmorning and crews lost some of the containment they had established in previous days.

The rapid rate of the spread of the fire was exceeding dire predictions in some areas, incident commander Carl Schwope said Friday night.

"We're in a very dangerous situation. Evacuation statuses are changing as we speak," he warned at a briefing in Las Vegas, New Mexico, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) east of Santa Fe.

More air and ground forces were on the way, he said, to fortify the nearly 1,000 firefighters on the fire lines there and winds that gusted up to 65 mph were beginning to subside as nightfall approached.

There were no immediate reports of any new structures have been lost since the local sheriff confirmed Thursday night at least 166 homes have been destroyed in northeast New Mexico's rural San Miguel County.

But erratic wind shifts in some of the driest conditions the region has seen in years were forecast again Saturday, and authorities were making preparations to evacuate some residents as far north as Taos.

"Just getting people out of the way, that's been the mission today," Sheriff Chris Lopez said at the briefing in Las Vegas. Some of the most active fire was heading in the direction of that town but he said the town itself was not in immediate danger.

Fire lines were bolstered outside the rural New Mexico community of Ledoux in efforts to save structures, and they appeared to be holding.

More than 2,000 firefighters were battling fires in Arizona and New Mexico on Friday — about half of those in northeast New Mexico, where a total of more than 187 square miles (484 square kilometers) of mostly timber and brush have been charred.

Red flag warnings for extreme fire danger were in place Friday for nearly all of New Mexico and parts of Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas.

The fires are burning unusually hot and fast for this time of year, especially in the Southwest, where experts said some timber in the region is drier than kiln-dried wood.

"We still have some fire weather to get through tonight, tomorrow and several days afterwards," fire behavior specialist Stewart Turner said at Friday night's briefing in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

"It's very important that everybody pays attention to the evacuation orders because this is a very, very serious fire — very dangerous fire behavior out there."

Matthew Probst, Las Vegas-based medical director for the health clinic network El Centro Family Health, said the nearby fire has swept through impoverished communities already frayed by the coronavirus

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pandemic.

"Here, you're losing meager homes, but it's everything. It's all they had," said Probst, a coordinator of county health services for wildfire evacuees.

Rural families in the area were caught off guard after heading home from an early evacuation — only to be ambushed by a fast-moving fire last week.

A 79-year-old widow from the tiny community of Sapello left her house and a blue heeler cattle dog for a doctor's appointment, with boxes packed for possible evacuation with jewelry and her 1964 wedding photos. Winds kicked up, and police said it was too late to go back for anything.

"They said, 'No ma'am, it's far too dangerous,'" said Sonya Berg in a phone interview Friday from an emergency shelter at a nearby middle school.

A close friend says the house burned, but Berg doesn't want to believe it. A neighbor rescued the dog.

"I'm in denial until I go and see it," said Berg, whose husband passed away in 2019 and was buried outside the home. "He's up there, he's been through the whole thing. I'm hoping the gravestone we put up is still there."

In the Jemez Mountains east of Los Alamos, another wildfire spanning 12 square miles (30 square kilometers) crept in the direction of Bandelier National Monument, which closed its backcountry hiking trails as a precaution while central visiting areas remained open.

In northern Arizona, authorities are nearing full containment of a 30 square-mile (77 square-kilometer) blaze that destroyed at least 30 homes near Flagstaff and forced hundreds to evacuate. A top-level national management team turned it back over to the local forest Friday.

"It's pretty stable for the most part," said Coconino National Forest spokeswoman Randi Shaffer. "We're not seeing any forecasted crazy weather patterns. We have fire crews monitoring, all of our suppression efforts have been holding."

Some residents near another fire 10 miles (16 kilometers) south of Prescott haven't been allowed back home. Firefighters have about one-third of the 14 square-mile (37-square-kilometer) fire's perimeter contained. Lighter winds were expected into the weekend, but low humidity will be a concern, fire officials said.

## Dems hone populist appeal with proposed stock trading ban

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Rep. Abigail Spanberger first introduced a bill banning stock trading by members of Congress and their families, the Virginia Democrat managed to get only eight co-sponsors. So far this session, 62 — or about one out of every seven House members — have signed on.

It's a similar story in the Senate. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., a once lonely voice on the issue, had just one co-sponsor for his proposed stock trading ban in the last two congressional sessions. Now, he has nine.

The uptick in support reflects a growing lawmaker appetite to tighten the rules around trading after several members faced heavy scrutiny for their stock transactions during the pandemic. While there's no guarantee any of the proposals will become law, many lawmakers facing the toughest reelection races have embraced the legislation, elevating the ethics issue as a talking point — and potential point of attack — for the midterm campaigns.

Even with voters focused on issues like inflation and the war in Ukraine, Spanberger said the trading ban comes up time and again when she meets with constituents.

"No matter where I am, somebody brings it up," said Spanberger, who is among those lawmakers facing a difficult reelection bid.

But it's not clear sailing. Other lawmakers, particularly Republicans, are skeptical and raising concerns about the merits of such a ban and the logistics of enforcing it. And while congressional leaders say they are open to the proposals, there are doubts from some lawmakers about whether that will translate to action.

"The headwind is that some members of Congress don't want to abide by these rules, and some of those members are in leadership," Spanberger said.

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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., initially said she did not support a stock trading ban back in December. "We are a free market economy. They should be able to participate in that," she told reporters. But in February she announced she was open to one. "It's complicated, and members will figure it out. And then we'll go forward with what the consensus is," she said.

Under current law, members of Congress and government employees must report the sale and purchases of stocks, bonds, commodity futures and other securities no more than 30 days after learning they were made and within 45 days of a transaction exceeding \$1,000.

But lawmakers have been routinely late in filing such notices, and in some cases didn't file at all, leading to a flurry of complaints to the House Ethics Committee.

During a House hearing on the issue in April, Rep. Rodney Davis, R-Ill., said it's clear the current disclosure laws aren't working as intended. But he characterized the violations as mostly inadvertent.

Davis said he's heard little from constituents about the stock trading and worries that requiring lawmakers to put assets in a blind trust would prove inordinately expensive for many lawmakers. Still, he's open to finding a compromise "that doesn't encourage the ultra wealthy to be only ones to run for Congress."

Rep. Barry Loudermilk, R-Ga., went further. He said Americans have the "right and freedom to participate in a free and fair market economy."

"It's not going to make a difference to me personally, but it does make a difference to me as an American citizen," he said.

Watchdog groups warned at the hearing that public disclosure of stock trades has failed to deter lawmakers from owning and trading stocks in companies subject to their oversight, eroding voter trust.

California Rep. Zoe Lofgren, the Democratic chair of the House Administration Committee who has been reviewing the various trading bills introduced, said this week she was "hopeful" of getting a bill through her committee. But she also said "it's way more complicated than I understood when I first started looking at it."

Support for the trading ban is bipartisan. Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, co-authored the bill with Spanberger, but the vast majority of co-sponsors of the various bills are Democrats. That includes progressives such as Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y.

Several Democrats facing tough reelection battles have also signed on as co-sponsors. The list includes Reps. Jared Golden of Maine, Sharice Davids of Kansas, Angie Craig of Minnesota, Kim Schrier of Washington, Elissa Slotkin of Michigan and Tom Malinowski of New Jersey.

Malinowski is under an Ethics Committee investigation after the Office of Congressional Ethics determined there was substantial reason to believe he failed to properly disclose stocks that he purchased or sold. Malinowski said his trading activity was conducted by a third-party investment manager without his involvement. He has since established a qualified blind trust to manage his investments. But Republicans have made the trades and the ethics investigation an issue as they try to win back Malinowski's New Jersey seat.

Slotkin said she was elected in 2018 after promising not to accept donations from corporate political action committees. She called it a defining issue in that race, and she views the proposed trading ban as an extension of that effort.

"Anything that we can do to clean up the perception about elected officials is good for democracy," Slotkin said.

She said she shares Spanberger's concern that Pelosi doesn't consider the stock trading ban a priority. "When the speaker wants something to get done, it gets done. When she doesn't want it to get done, you have to fight to get it on the agenda, and that is the place where we are at," Slotkin said.

In the Senate, 13 Democratic lawmakers, but no Republicans, have signed onto a bill from Sen. Jon Ossoff of Georgia that would require lawmakers and their spouses and children to place their securities in a blind trust. Three Democratic senators viewed as having the toughest reelection races this year are co-sponsors: Sens. Mark Kelly of Arizona, Raphael Warnock of Georgia and Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada.

Larry Parnell, director of the strategic public relations program at George Washington University, said Democratic candidates have had a muddled message going into the midterms because "they're sort of

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halfway in, halfway out on certain elements of the Biden agenda." But he believes the stock trading ban is one idea "that everyone can get behind."

"Its a win-win situation for anyone looking for a populist message to bring to the market," Parnell said.

## 2022 NFL Draft I Day 2 ends with yet another receiver picked

By The Associated Press undefined

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The Latest on the NFL draft.

The second day of the NFL draft ended appropriately with another wide receiver being selected.

The San Francisco 49ers selected speedster Danny Gray from SMU with the last pick of the third round, No. 105 overall. Through three rounds, 17 receivers were selected, more than any other position.

The third round also produced a mini-run on quarterbacks after none were selected in Round 2 and only one went off the board in the first round Thursday night.

After Cincinnati's Desmond Ridder went to Atlanta and Liberty's Malik Willis was selected by Tennessee, the Carolina Panthers chose Mississippi's Matt Corral with the 94th pick overall.

Heading into Saturday's final four rounds, North Carolina's Sam Howell is the most highly rated quarterback left on the board.

Malik Willis of Liberty became the third quarterback taken in the NFL draft when the Tennessee Titans took him in the third round with the 86th overall pick.

Willis is a spectacular athlete who signed with Auburn as a blue-chip recruit out of high school. He transferred to Liberty where he thrived in coach Hugh Freeze's offense the past two seasons. He threw 47 touchdowns passes and ran for 27 scores in the past two years.

The previous two quarterbacks taken were Kenny Pickett from Pitt by the Steelers in the first round and Desmond Ridder of Cincinnati earlier in the third round to Atlanta.

Georgia linebacker Nakobe Dean, the leading tackler on the national champions' dominant defense, was selected in the third round with the 83rd overall pick by the Philadelphia Eagles.

The Butkus Award winner as the nation's best linebacker was projected to be a first-round pick, despite being a bit undersized at 5-foot-11.

Various reports during the draft suggested Dean had injury issues that caused him to drop. The All-American became the sixth player from Georgia's defense taken in this draft and the eighth Bulldogs' player overall.

Cincinnati's Desmond Ridder was the second quarterback picked in the draft, taken in the third round at No. 74 overall by the Atlanta Falcons.

There were no quarterbacks taken in Round 2 of the NFL draft after just one — Kenny Pickett to the Steelers — went in Round 1.

The previous time only one quarterback was selected in the first two rounds of the draft was 2000. Ridder led the Bearcats to the College Football Playoff and went 43-6 as a starter in college.

Ridder will play behind former first-round pick and Heisman Trophy winner Marcus Mariota in Atlanta.

Breece Hall got his moment — and hug from Roger Goodell — on stage at the NFL draft.

It just took a few hours.

The former Iowa State running back was drafted by the Jets with the No. 36 overall pick — the fourth selection of the second round — after New York moved up two spots by trading with the Giants. He was the first running back drafted this year.

Hall was staying at a hotel in the Las Vegas area and watching the draft, but didn't attend. He instead was celebrating with friends and family when he received the call from New York and his name was an-

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nounced by former Jets cornerback Darrelle Revis.

Hall did a Zoom interview with reporters, but then made his way to the draft site.

Wearing a Jets cap, Hall was allowed to walk on to the stage — both arms raised as fans in attendance cheered — and was greeted by a big hug from the NFL Commissioner.

“It’s just a dream come true,” Hall told NFL Network. “Last night, just knowing the Jets, they tried to trade into the first round to get me but it didn’t go through. So it was kind of a bummer. But, I mean, I’m still blessed to be a Jet and blessed to be able to have the opportunity to come on here. So it’s been fun.”

The second pick of the second round was wide receiver Christian Watson from North Dakota State by the Green Bay Packers and by the time the round was done six more wideouts came off the board.

Thirteen receivers in the first two rounds matched a draft record.

Three straight receivers came off the board at one point, starting with Georgia’s George Pickens to the Steelers with pick No. 52. The Colts followed up with Cincinnati’s Alec Pierce and then the Chiefs grabbed Skyy Moore from Western Michigan.

The round ended with two players from Nebraska being taken — center Cam Jurgens to Philadelphia and cornerback Cam Taylor-Britt to Cincinnati — the best showing in the draft by the Cornhuskers since they had two second-rounders in 2015.

But Georgia linebacker Nakobe Dean was still waiting to be selected.

The Patriots selected maybe the fastest receiver in this year’s draft when they picked Baylor’s Tyquan Thornton with the 50th overall pick.

New England traded up a few spots to get Thornton, who ran a 4.28 in the 40-yard dash at the combine, best of any receiver. Thornton also had a scholarship offer to run track at LSU.

Meanwhile, Georgia linebacker Nakobe Dean, the leading tackler on the national championship defense was still on the board through 52 picks. Dean, an All-American but a bit undersized at 5-foot-11, was projected by many analysts to be a first-round pick.

After a record five defensive players from Georgia were taken in the first round, the first Bulldog taken in the second round was receiver George Pickens to the Steelers with the 52nd pick.

Michigan edge rusher David Ojabo is going from one Harbaugh to another. Baltimore selected the second-team All-American in the second round with the 45th overall pick. Ojabo was pegged as a possible first-rounder before he tore the Achilles tendon in his left leg during a pro day workout.

Ojabo, who was born in Nigeria and raised in Scotland, had a breakout season as a junior with 11 sacks playing for Michigan coach Jim Harbaugh and then-defensive coordinator Mike Macdonald, who had previously been an assistant for John Harbaugh with the Ravens.

Macdonald returned to Baltimore this offseason to become defensive coordinator for John and now will be coaching Ojabo again.

The Big 12 finally had a player taken in the NFL draft, and then had another on the very next pick.

Iowa State running back Breece Hall, a two-time All-American and the conference’s offensive player of the year in 2021, was taken with the fourth pick of the second round, 36th overall, by the Jets. New York traded up with the Giants to get Hall.

On the very next pick, the Big 12’s defensive player of the year was selected. The Texans landed defensive back Jalen Pitre from Baylor.

The Big 12 was the only Power Five conference not to have a player selected during the first round. In fact, three players from FCS, Division I’s second-tier, were selected before a player from the Big 12.

Tennessee has added to its secondary with cornerback Roger McCreary with the third pick of the second round of the draft.

With a pick acquired from the New York Jets during the first round, the Titans get a fast and aggressive

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cover guy who excelled against the archrival Crimson Tide.

The Jets, so busy on Thursday when they made three picks, dealt with their co-tenant of MetLife Stadium, the Giants, to move to No. 36 and take Iowa State's Breece Hall. Not only is Hall the first running back chosen, but the first from the Big 12, which was blanked in the opening round.

Aaron Rodgers at last is getting a highly drafted rookie receiver.

Rodgers famously has sought more input into Green Bay's drafts, and the Packers didn't select a wideout in the first round with their two picks because the top prospects were gone. But they used the second slot in the second round to grab North Dakota State's Christian Watson.

Yes, Watson comes from a FCS school, but the Bison are as close to FBS as you can get, perennial championship contenders on their level, winning nine of the past 11 national titles. It's the fourth consecutive year a North Dakota State player has been drafted.

The Packers traded their All-Pro receiver, Davante Adams, to Las Vegas this offseason.

Houston defensive tackle Logan Hall is the first selection of the second round of the NFL draft, by the Buccaneers.

Tampa Bay, under new head coach Todd Bowles after Bruce Arians retired last month, owned the spot after trading with Jacksonville the previous night. Bowles' background is on defense, so Hall seems a natural choice. He goes 6-foot-6, 275 pounds and is known for his relentlessness. He comes off elbow surgery and missed the Senior Bowl.

The Tennessee Titans' newest wide receiver Treyton Burks is an Arkansas native who likes to go fishing and hunt with a bow.

Burks also likes to go hunting wild boar with his dogs and a knife. It's a quality that certainly makes a receiver unafraid of any defender he might see on a football field.

"A lot of people are not going to go out there and chase a wild boar," the 6-foot-3, 225-pound Burks said. "You know, they can hurt you. But at the same time, that's part of my game on the field, just being fearless and I'm just selling out for the team."

It's a hobby that might cause a general manager to insert a clause prohibiting boar hunting in the offseason. Titans general manager Jon Robinson said he might offer up some grocery store coupons to Burks.

"He can just go to the back aisle and get bacon and sausage," Robinson said. "It's probably a little easier trying to get it that way as opposed to dogs and knives."

Aidan Hutchinson seems set up for a smooth transition in the NFL, playing for his hometown Detroit Lions whose training facility is a 30-minute drive from his parents' house.

"I may be living in the basement," he joked Friday in Allen Park, Michigan.

Detroit drafted the former Michigan and Dearborn Divine Child defensive end with the No. 2 pick Thursday night and welcomed him, his parents and two sisters back to the Motor City less than 24 hours later.

"It feels like a dream," his mother, Melissa Hutchinson said. "We would've acclimated to wherever he was, but Detroit is special because he's a hometown boy from grade-school football, high school, college, and now he gets to stay home with the Lions."

Aidan Hutchinson was raised in nearby Plymouth, Michigan, and played high school football about five minutes from the facility he will train and practice in as an NFL player.

"To think I'm a Lion, it's like a wild dream," he said. "I'm sure one of these days it's going to hit me."

The Lions have taken a lot of hits over the years, advancing only once in the playoffs since winning the 1957 NFL title and that lone postseason victory was three decades ago.

Hutchinson remembers the team's 0-16 season in 2008, the low point of a long-suffering franchise.

"Not a ton of great memories," he said.

Detroit is attempting another rebuild, hoping general manager Brad Holmes and coach Dan Campbell can make all the right moves for a team that has averaged just four wins over the past four years.

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The Lions went into the NFL draft with an extra first-round pick, acquired as part of the Matthew Stafford trade with the Los Angeles Rams, and used the asset to gamble in Las Vegas on a player they coveted.

Detroit moved way up in the opening round to draft Jameson Williams at No. 12, giving up the last pick in the first round, No. 32 overall and a third-round pick for the Alabama wide receiver and a slot in the middle of the second round.

"If we have the conviction and we have the buy-in, we know that we'll be aggressive and go get that player," Holmes said. "There's not a lot of them, but fortunately Jameson was one."

New Seattle Seahawks left tackle Charles Cross says he's betting on himself by choosing to not have an agent to begin his NFL career.

Cross was selected with the No. 9 pick in the first round by the Seahawks and was introduced at the team's facility on Friday. Cross said he's created a team around him to help with business decisions — and specifically highlighted his business manager Saint Omni who was with him on Friday — but that team doesn't include an agent.

"I just had to bet on myself," Cross said. "Bet on myself and save some money in the long run."

Cross said he spoke with a couple of former Mississippi State teammates who have chosen to represent themselves in the NFL and that helped solidify his decision.

"Just getting their input and insight on it really helped me make my decision. I feel like I have a great team around me," Cross said.

Going into Round 2, the Big 12 is still waiting for its first player to be drafted.

The conference was the only one in the Power Five with no first-round picks. It was the second straight year the Big 12 was shut out.

Prior to 2021, the conference had at least one first-rounder every year since it formed in 1996 as a merger of the Big Eight and Southwest Conferences.

Among the Big 12 players in line to be selected in the second round are running back Breece Hall of Iowa State, safety Jalen Pitre of Baylor and defensive lineman Perrion Winfrey, edge rusher Nik Bonitto and linebacker Brian Asamoah, all of Oklahoma.

The Big 12 had 22 players drafted last year. First to go was Oklahoma State offensive lineman Teven Jenkins, picked 39th overall by Chicago.

## ROUND 1

The first round of the NFL draft began and ended with the selections of former University of Georgia defenders.

The Minnesota Vikings drafted safety Lewis Cine with the final pick of the first round which began with Jacksonville selecting edge rusher Travon Walker.

In between, former Georgia defenders Jordan Davis went to the Eagles at No. 10 and Quay Walker and Devonte Wyatt were selected by the Green Bay Packers with picks 22 and 28, respectively.

The Bulldogs won the national championship on the strength of their defense.

The previous record was four defenders taken from the same school in the first round in 2004 (Miami) and 2006 (Florida State).

The Green Bay Packers have become the first team in the common draft era ever to select two players from the same school in the first round.

The Packers selected former University of Georgia teammates Quay Walker with the 22nd pick and Devonte Wyatt with the 28th selection.

Four members of the national champion Bulldogs defense have been selected in the first round, tying for the most ever.

Former Georgia edge rusher Travon Walker was the first overall pick by Jacksonville and ex-Bulldogs defensive tackle Jordan Davis was the 13th overall pick.

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The other schools that had four defensive players selected in the first round are the University of Miami in 2004 and Florida State University in 2006.

## UN works to broker civilian evacuation from Mariupol

By DAVID KEYTON and INNA VARENYTSIA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The United Nations doggedly sought to broker an evacuation of civilians from the increasingly hellish ruins of Mariupol on Friday, while Ukraine accused Russia of showing its contempt for the world organization by bombing Kyiv when the U.N. leader was visiting the capital.

The mayor of Mariupol said the situation inside the steel plant that has become the southern port city's last stronghold is dire, and citizens are "begging to get saved." Mayor Vadym Boichenko added: "There, it's not a matter of days. It's a matter of hours."

Ukraine's forces, meanwhile, fought to hold off Russian attempts to advance in the south and east, where the Kremlin is seeking to capture the country's industrial Donbas region. Artillery fire, sirens and explosions could be heard in some cities. And a senior U.S. defense official said the Russian offensive is going much slower than planned in part because of the strength of Ukrainian resistance.

In other developments:

— A former U.S. Marine was killed while fighting alongside Ukrainian forces, his family said in what would be the war's first known death of an American in combat. The U.S. has not confirmed the report.

— Ukrainian forces are cracking down on people accused of helping Russian troops. In the Kharkiv region alone, nearly 400 have been detained under anti-collaboration laws enacted after Moscow's Feb. 24 invasion.

— The international sanctions imposed on the Kremlin over the war are squeezing the country. The Russian Central Bank said Russia's economy is expected to contract by up to 10% this year, and the outlook is "extremely uncertain."

On Thursday, Moscow's forces launched a missile attack on a residential high-rise and another building in Kyiv, shattering weeks of relative calm in the capital following Russia's retreat from the region early this month.

U.S.-funded broadcaster Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty said one of its journalists, Vira Hyrych, was killed in the bombardment. Ten people were wounded, one of them losing a leg, authorities said.

The missile strike came barely an hour after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy held a news conference with U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres.

"This says a lot about Russia's true attitude toward global institutions, about attempts of the Russian leadership to humiliate the U.N. and everything the organization represents," Zelenskyy said.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said the attack was Russian President Vladimir Putin's way of giving "his middle finger" to Guterres.

In an apparent reference to the Kyiv bombing, Russia's military said it had destroyed "production buildings" at the Artem defense factory.

The missile strike came just as life in Kyiv seemed to be getting back a little closer to normal, with cafes and other businesses starting to reopen and growing numbers of people going out to enjoy the arrival of spring.

Volodymyr Fesenko, a Ukrainian political analyst and head of the Kyiv-based Penta Center think tank, said the attack carried a message: "Russia is sending a clear signal about its intention to continue the war despite the international pressure."

Getting a full picture of the unfolding battle in the east has been difficult because airstrikes and artillery barrages have made it extremely dangerous for reporters to move around. Both Ukraine and the Moscow-backed rebels fighting in the east also have introduced tight restrictions on reporting from the combat zone.

But so far, Russia's troops and the separatist forces appear to have made only minor gains.

The U.S. believes the Russians are "at least several days behind where they wanted to be" as they try to encircle Ukrainian troops in the east, said the senior U.S. defense official, who spoke on condition of



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anonymity to discuss the American military's assessment.

As Russian troops try to move north out of Mariupol so they can advance on Ukrainian forces from the south, their progress has been "slow and uneven and certainly not decisive," the official said.

In the bombed-out city of Mariupol, around 100,000 people were believed trapped with little food, water or medicine. An estimated 2,000 Ukrainian defenders and 1,000 civilians were holed up at the Azovstal steel plant.

The Soviet-era steel plant has a vast underground network of bunkers able to withstand airstrikes. But the situation has grown more dire after the Russians dropped "bunker busters" and other bombs.

"Locals who manage to leave Mariupol say it is hell, but when they leave this fortress, they say it is worse," said Boichenko, the mayor.

U.N. spokesman Farhan Haq said the organization was negotiating with authorities in Moscow and Kyiv to create safe passage.

This time, "we hope there's a slight touch of humanity in the enemy," the mayor said. Ukraine has blamed the failure of numerous previous evacuation attempts on continued Russian shelling.

But Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, told Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya TV that the real problem is that "humanitarian corridors are being ignored by Ukrainian ultra-nationals." Moscow has repeatedly claimed right-wing Ukrainians are thwarting evacuation efforts and using civilians as human shields.

Also Friday, two towns in central Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region were hit by Russian rockets, the regional governor said. There was no immediate word on casualties or damage.

Fighting could be heard from Kramatorsk to Sloviansk, two cities about 18 kilometers (11 miles) apart in the Donbas. Columns of smoke rose from the Sloviansk area and neighboring cities. At least one person was reported wounded in the shelling.

In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy accused Russia of trying to destroy the Donbas and all who live there.

The constant attacks "show that Russia wants to empty this territory of all people," he said.

"If the Russian invaders are able to realize their plans even partially, then they have enough artillery and aircraft to turn the entire Donbas into stones, as they did with Mariupol."

The governor of Russia's Kursk region said that a border post came under mortar attack from Ukraine and that Russian border forces returned fire. He said there were no casualties on the Russian side.

In the village of Ruska Lozava, near Kharkiv, hundreds of people were evacuated after Ukrainian forces retook the city from Russian occupiers, according to the regional governor. Those who fled to Kharkiv spoke of dire conditions under the Russians, with little water or food and no electricity.

"We were hiding in the basement. It was horror. The basement was shaking from the explosions. We were screaming, we were crying and we were praying to God," said Ludmila Bocharnikova.

A video posted by Ukraine's Azov battalion showed troops raising the blue and yellow Ukrainian flag over the government building in the center of the village, though fighting continued on the outskirts.

Former U.S. Marine Willy Joseph Cancel, 22, was killed Monday while working for a military contracting company that sent him to Ukraine, his mother, Rebecca Cabrera, told CNN.

"He wanted to go over because he believed in what Ukraine was fighting for," she said, "and he wanted to be a part of it to contain it there so it didn't come here, and that maybe our American soldiers wouldn't have to be involved in it."

The Marine Corps said Cancel served four years but was given a bad-conduct discharge and sentenced to five months' confinement for violating orders. No details on the offense were given.

At least two other foreigners fighting on the Ukrainian side, one from Britain and the other from Denmark, have also been killed.

## **EXPLAINER: How China is using metal barriers to fight COVID**

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Several districts in Shanghai put up metal barriers last weekend as part of the city's battle against a COVID-19 outbreak, in a move that drew protests and anger from some residents.

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Workers in white head-to-toe protective gear erected mesh wire fences and metal sheets to block off roads, residential communities and even the entrances of some apartment buildings. A majority of the city's 25 million residents had already been prevented from leaving their homes during a month-long lockdown, though some neighborhoods have since opened up.

The barriers are deployed to ensure control over movement and often leave only a small entrance that can be easily guarded.

## IS THE USE OF METAL FENCING OR BARRIERS NEW?

The barriers are new to Shanghai but have been deployed throughout the pandemic in other cities across China. For example, early in 2020, some neighborhood committees — the lowest rung of local government — erected metal sheets and fences in parts of Beijing to control access points to homes. Wuhan, where the first cases of COVID-19 were reported in December 2019, also erected metal barriers across the city.

How they have been deployed varies. Sometimes the government sets up fencing around entire neighborhood blocks, leaving just one or two entrances. In other cases, they build fences in front of individual residential complexes.

The fencing has been widely deployed in border regions as well, including in Suifenhe, a city in the northeast that borders Russia. The metal barriers there block off entire streets.

## WHY DID PEOPLE PROTEST IN SHANGHAI?

Shanghai had not erected metal barriers on a wide scale during the past two years of the pandemic, priding itself on more targeted measures that did not rely on lockdowns. That changed in the latest outbreak, which is driven by the highly transmissible omicron BA.2 variant. Central authorities enforced a lockdown for the entire city that prevented people from putting even "one foot out the door," according to a widely propagated slogan.

Many Shanghai residents were upset about barriers blocking the entrances to their apartment buildings and some angry citizens circulated videos online showing protests. In one video verified by the AP, residents leaving a building in Shanghai's Xuhui district broke down a mesh fence barricade at the front entrance and went angrily looking for the security guard they believed to be responsible for putting it up.

Shanghai is using a tiered system in which neighborhoods are divided into three categories based on the risk of transmission. Those in the first category face the strictest COVID-19 controls and are the main target of the barriers.

However, some neighborhood officials in Shanghai put up barriers in areas that aren't part of the strictest category. One resident called the police to protest the sealing off of roads near his apartment building, saying his residence wasn't part of the first category. He and two other residents in his building complex tried to stop the workers from erecting the metal barriers, but they were stopped by a worker in the neighborhood committee. The police officer told the residents they had no right to leave the apartment, according to the man's account, which he posted on WeChat.

"This deep, deep feeling of powerlessness. Who can tell me: Is there any hope for this place?" he wrote. He declined to be named.

## WILL THEY BE TAKEN DOWN?

In some instances, residents have been successful in their protests.

At one apartment complex in Shanghai's Putuo district, residents fiercely protested after the residential committee put a U-lock on the door to their building on April 16.

"It was very sudden, without any notice, and it wasn't just the building. Every place was blocked off below. It blocked off any escape path," said one Shanghai resident who asked to be identified only by her last name, Zhang. "If there was any accident or fire, everyone's sure to die."

Residents in the building called the police as well as the city's hotline. The residential committee relented and put tape across the door instead, but warned residents that destruction of the tape would bring legal consequences, according to a notice the committee sent to residents that Zhang showed to the AP.

In Beijing, many barriers were removed after the city went without a major outbreak during the past two years. Now, however, residential complexes with positive cases are once again being barricaded.

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## Echoes of 2006: Jazz Fest returns to New Orleans for 2022

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Once silenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival opened Friday for the first time in three years — a long awaited 2022 revival that holds echoes of 2006 when the annual celebration of music and culture went on even after Hurricane Katrina.

"We've weathered a storm like no other," declared lifelong New Orleans resident Jennifer Jones, referring to the pandemic. She was carrying a feather-adorned parasol and strutting the grounds in an outfit of iridescent pinks, blues and yellows.

The two-weekend production draws tens of thousands to the city's Fair Grounds Race Course, where as many as 80 musical acts perform daily on more than a dozen stages, complemented by art and craft exhibits and an array of booths featuring foods from Louisiana and beyond.

"This lovely community, here in New Orleans, needs this festival," visitor Garey Rosen said as he and a buddy snapped a selfie while "Jesus on the Main Line" blared from the festival's Gospel tent. It was his seventh Jazz Fest for Rosen, who said he's from New Jersey.

"Everybody here relies on this festival. And it is the best festival in the world," Rosen said.

Lionel Richie and Death Cab for Cutie are among Friday's draws at the festival that sprinkles numerous big-name entertainers throughout its run. The Who headlines Saturday; the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Sunday. But the festival may be best known for showcasing a dizzying array of Louisiana musical talent, styles and genres — jazz, blues, Cajun, Zydeco and more.

Organizers pulled off the April 2006 show eight months after levees failed and the city flooded during Hurricane Katrina, and as debris and water-damaged houses still marred the landscape. Longtime festival producer Quint Davis recounts two strong emotional memories from that festival: Bruce Springsteen bringing the local crowd to tears singing "My City of Ruins" to close the first weekend, and the joy at having crowds line up at the gates on opening day.

"It was just incredible energy, like a pilgrimage," Davis recalled Tuesday.

2020 marked the first time the festival had been canceled in its 50-year history, owing to COVID-19. "It was like a sword through the heart," Davis said, adding that the comeback has been more difficult in some ways than the post-Katrina festival because the pandemic has led to changes in vendors, higher costs and complications in rounding up equipment after a three-year lull.

The 2020 cancellation, plus cancellations of planned returns in spring and fall of 2021, were emotionally devastating for festival organizers and fans, said Davis. And they brought recurring economic shocks for the bars, restaurants and music venues that count on an influx of Jazz Fest visitors.

"It's our biggest two weekends of the year," said James Gonzci, a co-owner of Liuzza's by the Track, recalling the disappointment. The neighborhood bar and restaurant draws overflow crowds after each day of the festival.

Robert Mercurio can assess the comeback from two perspectives. As the bassist for the funk band Galactic, he credits the fest with helping the band build international renown after a 1996 performance. As part owner of the historic Tipitina's music club, he appreciates the business that Jazz Fest brings to live music venues as they regain their footing after pandemic shutdowns.

"I think that people who haven't been to New Orleans for a long time are looking forward to coming to Tipitina's to have that real New Orleans experience after the fest," Mercurio said Thursday.

Jazz Fest returns as COVID-19 cases are at a lower point than they've been in months and two-thirds of the U.S. population is vaccinated. Mask mandates, public gathering limits and proof-of-vaccine requirements have been lifted in New Orleans. Hospitalizations remain low in Louisiana after reaching dangerous peaks in 2020 and 2021.

Masks were a rare sight at the fest, most of which takes place outdoors. Ebere Adighibe, selling hand-crafted jewelry from a booth with partner Teaty Pawoo, had his mask pulled under his chin — ready if needed. "Indoors, I always put it on," he said as a breeze stirred the warm morning air. "Out here, I'm not worried about it too much."

Jazz Fest hotel occupancy rates have not rebounded to the 2019 levels yet. Kelly Schulz of the tourism

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association New Orleans & Co., said downtown and French Quarter hotels so far project occupancy to be about 80%. It was around 90% three years ago.

But Schulz points to several signs of recovery, among them this year's return of the Mardi Gras season's parades and parties, the NCAA Final Four basketball tournament, a recent pro golf tournament, NBA playoff games and two major conventions.

Jazz Fest, she said, has an estimated \$400 million impact on the local economy, akin to when the city hosts the Super Bowl.

"What we're seeing is the best period of time as an industry since the beginning of the pandemic," Schulz said.

"Comparing it to 2006 is meaningful," Schulz said of Jazz Fest's return. "Because I think that's how people feel about it, in terms of the return and what it means and how much people have waited for this day -- especially because people thought we were going to have it last year and it was canceled again."

Mercurio, too, says the return of Jazz Fest is reminiscent of 2006 after Katrina. "It feels like an awakening after a really dark time," he said. "Finally coming to a light at the end of the tunnel that we've all been looking for so long."

## First 'Jeopardy!' Gen Z super champ's streak hits 19 games

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Reigning "Jeopardy!" champion Mattea Roach represents a new generation of the quiz show's all-star players.

As of Friday, the 23-year-old Canadian has won 19 games and amassed \$469,184 in prize money, putting her among the top 10 contestants for both consecutive victories and regular-season winnings in "Jeopardy!" history.

Roach, who begins her fifth week of competition Monday, is in the company of veteran standout players including Ken Jennings, who's currently hosting the show, and this season's champs Amy Schneider and Matt Amodio.

"The fact that I'm now one of the best players of all time hasn't fully sunk in yet. It doesn't really feel real," said Roach, the first Gen Zer to be dubbed a "super champion" by the show for achieving a double-digit string of wins. (Generation Z generally refers to those born from 1997 to 2012.)

A tutor for aspiring law school students, and perhaps one herself, she plays with a breezy confidence. Roach is relaxed enough to casually think out loud about her approach, as she did when she hit a crucial Double Jeopardy last Wednesday.

"You know what, if I wager a lot and lose today, like whatever, I had such a good run," Roach mused, then successfully wagered a hefty \$8,000 and ended up taking the game from formidable challenger Ben Hsia of Fremont, California.

The category was anatomy, the clue was "To gently tease another person," and Roach's slightly exasperated response: "I should have wagered more. What is 'rib'?"

Besides conservative bets, her play has been distinguished by the broad range of knowledge and buzzer command that "Jeopardy!" champs have. Athletic skill doesn't contribute to the latter, said Roach, who admits that sports isn't a favored category.

Among her trademarks are an engaging smile and demure wave to the camera at the start of a game; tattoos including Talking Heads song lyrics, and attire that's on the serious side but with a touch of personal flair. For a recent interview, however, she paired a T-shirt with denim.

"There's no denim on 'Jeopardy!'" Roach said, helpfully. As for her on-camera wardrobe, it's all clothes she already owned — "I hate shopping," she said — and which she figured would send the right message.

"I wanted to be comfortable, I wanted to look professional and I wanted to express my personality, and I think I accomplished that," she said.

A native of Halifax, Nova Scotia, who lives in Toronto, Roach credits her love of learning to her mother, Patti MacKinnon, an auditor, and her father, Phil Roach, who works in human resources. Mattea Roach

began reading at age 3, skipped a grade in elementary school and enrolled at the University of Toronto when she was 16.

After mom and dad helped pay for the first two years of college, Roach put herself through the rest.

"I have three younger siblings at home, and even with them (her parents) both working there's only so much money to go around," she said. "I figured I can work, so why would I not be?"

She majored in sexual diversity studies and earned minors in political science and women and gender studies. The school's debate program helped her gain poise and tackle unfamiliar subjects, presumably helpful training for "Jeopardy!" — and maybe politics.

As a youngster, Roach said, she had a vague interest in the "workings of government" and, while she's retained an interest in it, she realized it wouldn't be a good fit. Despite the flurry of media and online attention that "Jeopardy!" has brought, "I'm actually a very private person, and I prefer to have a relatively more normal job," she said.

She was applying to law school when "Jeopardy!" summoned her to be a contestant. Her success and that of Amodio (38 wins, \$1.52 million) and Schneider (40 wins, \$1.38 million) has made the show's 2021-22 season a memorable one.

Roach mentioned on air that she would be able to pay off her student loans after her first win. What is she planning to do as the sum has grown?

"I'm so boring. I don't want to splurge on anything," she said.

Roach intends to invest the windfall for her future, although some of it will go toward realizing travel plans derailed by the pandemic. Another possible indulgence occurred to her.

"I hopefully will not be afraid of buying concert tickets anymore," she said.

## Former Idaho lawmaker found guilty of raping intern

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A former Idaho lawmaker was convicted Friday of raping a 19-year-old legislative intern after a dramatic trial in which the young woman fled the witness stand during testimony, saying "I can't do this."

The intern told a Statehouse supervisor that Aaron von Ehlinger raped her at his apartment after the two had dinner at a Boise restaurant in March 2021. Von Ehlinger said the sex was consensual.

At the time, the Lewiston Republican was serving as a state representative, but he later resigned.

Von Ehlinger, 39, was found guilty Friday of rape. He was found not guilty of sexual penetration with a foreign object.

Von Ehlinger sat calmly as the verdict was read, as he has throughout the trial.

Afterward, 4th District Judge Michael Reardon told the jury: "This has been an unusual case attended by many unexpected circumstances, but I appreciate your attention ... and hard work."

A felony rape conviction carries a minimum sentence of one year in prison in Idaho. The maximum penalty can be as high as life in prison, at the judge's discretion. Sentencing has been scheduled for July 28.

As von Ehlinger was remanded into custody and handcuffed, he talked quietly with his attorney who removed items from von Ehlinger's pockets.

The prosecution remained stoic as they left the courtroom, but once they reached a lower floor they stopped to briefly to congratulate each other on the verdict.

Von Ehlinger's attorney, Jon Cox, could not be immediately reached for comment after the trial.

The Associated Press generally does not identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted, and has referred to the woman in this case as "Jane Doe" at her request.

In a press conference, Ada County Prosecuting Attorney Jan Bennetts thanked the jury, investigators and the prosecutors who handled the case.

"Last but not least, it took an incredible amount of courage for the victim in this case, Jane Doe, to come forward," Bennetts said. "I want to acknowledge the courage that she took in coming forward."

Doe testified on the second day of the trial. She haltingly described the moments the alleged assault

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began, before abruptly leaving the witness stand.

"He tried to put his fingers between my legs and I closed my knees," Doe said.

At that, she stood up.

"I can't do this," she said, quickly walking out of the courtroom.

The judge gave the prosecuting attorneys 10 minutes to find her to determine if she would return and resume her testimony.

When she did not, the judge told the jurors they had to "strike (Doe's testimony) from your minds as if it never happened," because the defense could not cross-examine her.

During the press conference, Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Katelyn Farley said the moment Doe left the trial was "heart-wrenching," but said she and deputy prosecutor Whitney Welsh had prepared for trial knowing that Doe may not be able to testify.

"I think it's important that she decided to walk in the room, and she also decided to walk out — those were her choices," Welsh said.

During his testimony Thursday, von Ehlinger often spoke in a clear, loud voice directly to jurors, saying he and Doe decided to return to his apartment to "hang out" after eating at a fancy Boise restaurant. Then they began making out on the couch, he said.

"Things were going well, and I asked (Doe) if she would like to move to the bedroom," von Ehlinger said. "She said 'Sure.' We got up, held hands and walked into the bedroom."

Deliberations stretched for seven hours until nearly 8 p.m. Thursday before the jury decided to break for the evening. At one point, the judge summoned the attorneys to his chambers because the jury asked a question. No details were made public about the jury's inquiry.

When the allegations became public — largely because of the legislative ethics investigation — Doe faced unrelenting harassment from some of von Ehlinger's supporters. Her name, photo and personal details about her life were repeatedly publicized in "doxxing" incidents. One of the people who frequently harassed her was in the courthouse to attend the trial, but law enforcement banned the man from the floor where the case was being heard.

During closing arguments, Farley told jurors that the case was about "power in the wrong hands" used to the "great devastation" of Doe. Von Ehlinger had social, political and physical power over the petite intern, Farley said.

"He used that power to rape and forcibly penetrate her," Farley said, pointing at von Ehlinger. Doe resisted in several ways, she said, highlighting the testimony of law enforcement investigators and a nurse sexual assault examiner who interviewed Doe after the alleged assault.

"Words show lack of consent. Excuses of 'Why this shouldn't happen' show lack of consent. Yanking your head back and getting an injury shows lack of consent," Farley said.

But von Ehlinger's attorney told jurors the prosecution's case was made up of "red herrings," and said von Ehlinger was a credible person who willingly took the stand to share his side of the story.

The investigators and the nurse who performed the sexual assault exam testified earlier this week. They said Doe reported being pinned down while von Ehlinger forced her to perform oral sex, and that she knew he frequently carried a handgun and had placed it on a dresser near the bed at the time of the assault. The nurse also testified that Doe had a "goose egg" on the back of her head from striking the wall or a headboard while trying to jerk her head away from von Ehlinger's grip.

## Praise, few blemishes in file of cop who shot Patrick Lyoya

By ED WHITE and BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

A Michigan police officer who fatally shot Patrick Lyoya in the back of the head had no complaints of excessive force against him but much praise for traffic stops that turned up drugs, guns and people wanted for crimes, according to his personnel file.

Records released Friday by Grand Rapids police show Christopher Schurr received more than a dozen letters of recognition since becoming an officer in 2015. The incidents sometimes began with a stop be-

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cause of a missing brake light or a driver's sudden swift turn.

"Your quick and professional actions resulted in another firearm being removed from the streets and two parolees taken into custody," then-Chief David Rahinsky wrote in 2017.

It's possible that complaints against Schurr are no longer in his file. The contract between Grand Rapids and the police union allows expungement of older records if officers complete two years without a disciplinary action.

A few past incidents that brought Schurr positive recognition turned into foot chases. A foot chase is what happened on April 4 when he stopped a car driven by Lyoya, a Black man, and said the license plate didn't match the vehicle.

Schurr, who is white, and Lyoya physically struggled across a front lawn while Lyoya's passenger recorded the scene on his phone.

Lyoya, 26, was on the ground when Schurr shot him after demanding that he take his hand off the officer's Taser, according to video.

State police investigating the shooting submitted a report Thursday to the Kent County prosecutor, who will consider if any charges are warranted. Chris Becker said he still needs reports about Schurr's Taser and body-worn camera.

A witness to the confrontation told Grand Rapids police that Schurr "did everything he could to de-escalate the situation," according to an incident report released Friday, though some experts, civil rights groups and Lyoya's family vigorously disagree.

Lyoya's parents want Schurr fired and charged with crimes.

Schurr's personnel file, released to The Associated Press under a public records request, reveals only a few warts. He was ordered to drive safely after causing a crash while backing up his patrol car in 2021.

That same year Schurr said he stopped a car because an air freshener dangling from a mirror could obstruct the driver's vision. A search turned up a small safe that was subsequently broken open by a tow-truck driver at the request of another officer. A portion of a stolen gun was inside.

The search was deemed OK by internal affairs investigators, but Schurr was criticized for not reporting the broken safe, records show.

Schurr's file shows he was assigned early in his career to the south side of Grand Rapids, where a night-shift team of seven to 11 officers was given a performance award for 2016.

Rahinsky noted more than 500 felony arrests during "countless foot chases, robberies, stolen car recoveries" and other police responses, and no citizen complaints for excessive force or disrespect.

## Foreign ballet dancers leave Russia over war with Ukraine

EUGENE GARCIA undefined

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (AP) — Ballet dancers Adrian Blake Mitchell and Andrea Lassakova moved to Russia years ago to chase their dream of performing with the best in a country where people live and breathe ballet.

But days after Russia invaded Ukraine, the couple uprooted their lives and left behind their prized jobs with the prestigious Mikhailovsky Ballet Company in St. Petersburg.

Mitchell, who is American, and Lassakova, who is from Slovakia, are among the dozens of foreign dancers who have left Russia since the war started in February. The two are now in the U.S., preparing for a performance in Southern California.

They say the war is bound to take Russian ballet back to the isolation of the Soviet era.

"Most of our friends are international. They left, and I don't think they will come back soon," Lassakova said.

Amy Brandt, editor in chief of Pointe, an American online magazine about the world of ballet, said there were likely fewer than 100 foreign dancers working in Russia when the war started. But based on social media posts and hiring announcements by dance companies outside Russia, most have left, she said.

Russia opened its ballet world to the West in the decades after the Soviet Union's collapse. In 2011,

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American ballet dancer David Hallberg became the first foreigner to be named a principal dancer at the storied Bolshoi Ballet.

But in recent weeks, Russian ballet companies have experienced backlash over the war. The Bolshoi Ballet and Mariinsky Ballet companies, Russia's most renowned ballet institutions, performed in the United States every year as part of their international tour, but already performances scheduled for this year have been canceled.

"It feels like we're going backward in time in a lot of ways," Brandt said.

Mitchell and Lassakova lived in Russia for seven years but decided to leave the country in early March after Russian troops invaded Ukraine and as rumors of martial law, financial collapse and the loss of liberties loomed. They hired a taxi and hurriedly left with their dog for Estonia.

While in Russia, the pair didn't involve themselves in politics, despite seeing many pro-democracy protesters marching outside their apartment. But once across the border, and now in the U.S., the dance partners have been vocal about their opposition to the war.

"We had a difficult situation. But what's happening to the people of Ukraine is just the most tragic, terrible thing I could imagine," Mitchell said during an interview at Westside Ballet studios in Santa Monica, California, where he was once a student and where the couple will perform next month to raise funds for the school.

Mitchell believes dancers, both Russian and the few foreign ones who remain, may oppose the war but fear the consequences of protesting.

"You hear very few Russian dancers speaking out, but many of them want to leave because they want to be able to speak out," he said.

Russian ballerina Olga Smirnova quit the Bolshoi Ballet last month to protest the Russian invasion. She now dances with the Dutch National Ballet.

Since arriving in the U.S., Mitchell and Lassakova have been traveling the country, doing benefit performances and giving talks in support of Ukraine.

They are currently rehearsing at Santa Monica's Westside Ballet for a performance of Russian choreographer Oleg Vinogradov's "Barber's Adagio."

It's a ballet Mitchell and Lassakova performed in St. Petersburg. Now they fear they may never dance in Russia again.

"Russian ballet is definitely going to be totally isolated," Mitchell said. "Isolated from the West."

## Tech stocks sink again, Nasdaq has worst month since 2008

By DAMIAN J. TROISE and ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writers

The Dow Jones Industrial Average slumped more than 900 points Friday as another sharp sell-off led by technology stocks added to Wall Street's losses in April, leaving the S&P 500 with its biggest monthly skid since the start of the pandemic.

A sharp drop in Amazon weighed on the market after the internet retail giant posted its first loss since 2015. The decline knocked more than \$200 billion off Amazon's market value.

The benchmark S&P 500 fell 3.6% and finished April with an 8.8% loss, its worst monthly slide since March 2020. The Dow slumped 2.8%.

The Nasdaq composite, heavily weighted with technology stocks, bore the brunt of the damage this month, ending April with a 13.3% loss, its biggest monthly decline since the 2008 financial crisis.

Major indexes shifted between slumps and rallies throughout the week as the latest round of corporate earnings hit the market in force. Investors have been reviewing a particularly heavy batch of financial results from big tech companies, industrial firms and retailers.

But some disappointing results or outlooks from Apple, Google's parent company and Amazon helped fuel the selling this week.

"When you start to hear from companies saying that perhaps demand is down, the concerns over a deeper slowdown in the economy gains momentum, and that's where we are," said Quincy Krosby, chief



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equity strategist for LPL Financial.

Traders also continue to fret about the tough medicine the Federal Reserve is using in its fight against inflation: higher interest rates. The central bank is expected to announce another round of rate hikes next week, a move that will further increase borrowing costs across the board for people buying cars, using credit cards and taking out mortgages to buy homes.

"Rising cost pressures and uncertain outlooks from the largest technology names have investors agitated going into the weekend and investors are not likely to be comfortable any time soon with the Fed widely expected to deliver a 50-basis point hike along with a hawkish message next week," said Charlie Ripley, senior investment strategist for Allianz Investment Management.

The S&P 500 fell 155.57 points to 4,131.93 Friday. The benchmark index is now down 13.3% for the year. The Dow dropped 939.18 points to 32,977.21. The Nasdaq slid 536.89 points to 12,334.64. It's down 21.2% so far this year.

Smaller company stocks also had a rough day. The Russell 2000 slid 53.84 points, or 2.8%, to 1,864.10.

Big Tech has been leading the market lower all month as traders shun the high-flying sector. Tech had posted gigantic gains during the pandemic and now is starting to look overpriced, particularly with interest rates set to rise sharply as the Fed steps up its fight against inflation.

Internet retail giant Amazon slumped 14%, one of the biggest decliners in the S&P 500, a day after reporting a rare quarterly loss and giving investors a disappointing revenue forecast. The weak update from Amazon comes as Wall Street worries about a potential slowdown in consumer spending along with rising inflation.

Prices for everything from food to gas have been rising as the economy recovers from the pandemic and there has been a big disconnect between higher demand and lagging supplies. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has only added to inflation worries as it drives price increases for oil, natural gas, wheat and corn.

The Commerce Department on Friday reported that an inflation gauge closely tracked by the Federal Reserve surged 6.6% in March compared with a year ago, the highest 12-month jump in four decades and further evidence that spiking prices are pressuring household budgets and the health of the economy.

The latest report on rising U.S. inflation follows a report from statistics agency Eurostat that shows inflation hit a record high in April of 7.5% for the 19 countries that use the euro.

Bond yields rose following the hot readings on inflation. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 2.92% from 2.85%.

Persistently rising inflation has prompted central banks to raise interest rates in order to temper the impact on businesses and consumers.

Much of the anxiety on Wall Street in April has centered around how quickly the Fed will raise its benchmark interest rate and whether an aggressive series of hikes will crimp economic growth. The chair of the Fed has indicated the central bank may raise short-term interest rates by double the usual amount at upcoming meetings, starting next week. It has already raised its key overnight rate once, the first such increase since 2018, and Wall Street is expecting several big increases over the coming months.

Investors spent much of April shifting money away from Big Tech companies, whose stock values benefit from low interest rates, to areas considered less risky. The S&P 500's consumer staples sector, which includes many household and personal goods makers, was the only sector in the benchmark index to make gains in April. Other safe-play sectors, such as utilities, held up better than the broader market, while technology and communications stocks are among the biggest losers.

## 50 years on, Apollo 16 moonwalker still 'excited' by space

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Fifty years after his Apollo 16 mission to the moon, retired NASA astronaut Charlie Duke says he's ready for the U.S. to get back to lunar exploration.

Part of that effort, Duke said Friday, will come in the form of the Artemis program, which includes NASA's upcoming flight to the moon using its new Space Launch System rocket. The first of the huge rockets is

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supposed to blast off without crew later this year, with crewed flights planned subsequently.

"With Artemis, NASA is going to be focused on deep space, to the moon and beyond, and I'm excited about that," Duke told The Associated Press in an interview in Columbia.

Duke, 86, is one of four surviving moonwalkers from the Apollo program, taking Apollo 16 to the lunar surface in 1972. He has been making the rounds to mark the 50th anniversary of his voyage, recently taking a trip to the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama, to visit his spaceship, which made the next-to-the-last U.S. mission to land on the moon.

The late John Young was first out of the lander and walked on the moon with Duke. Ken Mattingly orbited the moon in the command module, nicknamed "Casper."

Duke said he does not begrudge NASA for ending the Apollo program to focus on space shuttles, the international space station and other missions in more remote parts of space. But he looks forward to future missions that build off of what he and others have learned from their time on the moon, which called "a great platform for science."

Duke also noted that he's encouraged by the commercial partnerships that have developed around space exploration, like Space X and Blue Origin. Those options, he said, "make space available for more people and more science and engineering and unmanned stuff."

"That compliment is going to be really important in the future," Duke went on. "The more people we get into space, who can see the beauty of the Earth ... it's going to affect a lot of people."

On Friday, Duke visited the South Carolina State Museum in Columbia, which houses an exhibit full of some of his mementos from the moon, including a space suit, check list and moon rock. A series of placards describe the voyage and also include a flight drawing Duke made as a child on some of his arithmetic work.

Speaking with middle school students from his native Lancaster, South Carolina, Duke's eyes sparkled as he narrated a 16-minute planetarium video of his time on the moon's surface, drawing laughs as he described how easy it was to tumble or drop things in the low-gravity environment.

"I just encourage you stick with it in school, to hang in there, and all the best in your careers, as you continue to grow up and mature in life," Duke told the students. "I've discovered in my life that, if you keep those antennas up, if you keep focused on your life, and do things that you like to do, and take care of yourself, there are unlimited possibilities."

Asked about his continuing contributions to U.S. space programs, which includes consulting with a company trying to win a contract for a new lunar rover, Duke said he will keep going as long as he's able.

"I flunked retirement," Duke said, with a laugh. "As long as the Lord is willing and gives me the ability physically to do it, I want to challenge America and challenge the kids to aim high. ... Everybody's not going to listen, but maybe one or two will."

## **An algorithm that screens for child neglect raises concerns**

By SALLY HO and GARANCE BURKE Associated Press

Inside a cavernous stone fortress in downtown Pittsburgh, attorney Robin Frank defends parents at one of their lowest points – when they risk losing their children.

The job is never easy, but in the past she knew what she was up against when squaring off against child protective services in family court. Now, she worries she's fighting something she can't see: an opaque algorithm whose statistical calculations help social workers decide which families should be investigated in the first place.

"A lot of people don't know that it's even being used," Frank said. "Families should have the right to have all of the information in their file."

From Los Angeles to Colorado and throughout Oregon, as child welfare agencies use or consider tools similar to the one in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, an Associated Press review has identified a number of concerns about the technology, including questions about its reliability and its potential to harden racial disparities in the child welfare system. Related issues have already torpedoed some jurisdictions' plans to use predictive models, such as the tool notably dropped by the state of Illinois.

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According to new research from a Carnegie Mellon University team obtained exclusively by AP, Allegheny's algorithm in its first years of operation showed a pattern of flagging a disproportionate number of Black children for a "mandatory" neglect investigation, when compared with white children. The independent researchers, who received data from the county, also found that social workers disagreed with the risk scores the algorithm produced about one-third of the time.

County officials said that social workers can always override the tool, and called the research "hypothetical."

Child welfare officials in Allegheny County, the cradle of Mister Rogers' TV neighborhood and the icon's child-centric innovations, say the cutting-edge tool – which is capturing attention around the country – uses data to support agency workers as they try to protect children from neglect. That nuanced term can include everything from inadequate housing to poor hygiene, but is a different category from physical or sexual abuse, which is investigated separately in Pennsylvania and is not subject to the algorithm.

"Workers, whoever they are, shouldn't be asked to make, in a given year, 14, 15, 16,000 of these kinds of decisions with incredibly imperfect information," said Erin Dalton, director of the county's Department of Human Services and a pioneer in implementing the predictive child welfare algorithm.

This story, supported by the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, is part of an ongoing Associated Press series, "Tracked," that investigates the power and consequences of decisions driven by algorithms on people's everyday lives.

Critics say it gives a program powered by data mostly collected about poor people an outsized role in deciding families' fates, and they warn against local officials' growing reliance on artificial intelligence tools.

If the tool had acted on its own to screen in a comparable rate of calls, it would have recommended that two-thirds of Black children be investigated, compared with about half of all other children reported, according to another study published last month and co-authored by a researcher who audited the county's algorithm.

Advocates worry that if similar tools are used in other child welfare systems with minimal or no human intervention—akin to how algorithms have been used to make decisions in the criminal justice system—they could reinforce existing racial disparities in the child welfare system.

"It's not decreasing the impact among Black families," said Logan Stapleton, a researcher at Carnegie Mellon University. "On the point of accuracy and disparity, (the county is) making strong statements that I think are misleading."

Because family court hearings are closed to the public and the records are sealed, AP wasn't able to identify first-hand any families who the algorithm recommended be mandatorily investigated for child neglect, nor any cases that resulted in a child being sent to foster care. Families and their attorneys can never be sure of the algorithm's role in their lives either because they aren't allowed to know the scores.

SAFER, FASTER

Incidents of potential neglect are reported to Allegheny County's child protection hotline. The reports go through a screening process where the algorithm calculates the child's potential risk and assigns a score. Social workers then use their discretion to decide whether to investigate.

The Allegheny Family Screening Tool is specifically designed to predict the risk that a child will be placed in foster care in the two years after they are investigated. Using a trove of detailed personal data collected from birth, Medicaid, substance abuse, mental health, jail and probation records, among other government data sets, the algorithm calculates a risk score of 1 to 20: The higher the number, the greater the risk.

Given the high stakes – skipping a report of neglect could end with a child's death but scrutinizing a family's life could set them up for separation – the county and developers have suggested their tool can help "course correct" and make the agency's work more thorough and efficient by weeding out meritless reports so that social workers can focus on children who truly need protection.

The developers have described using such tools as a moral imperative, saying child welfare officials should use whatever they have at their disposal to make sure children aren't neglected.

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"There are children in our communities who need protection," said Emily Putnam-Hornstein, a professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Social Work who helped develop the Allegheny tool, speaking at a virtual panel held by New York University in November.

Dalton said algorithms and other predictive technologies also provide a scientific check on call center workers' personal biases because they see the risk score when deciding if the case merits an investigation. If the case is escalated, Dalton said the full investigation is carried out by a different social worker who probes in person, decides if the allegations are true and helps determine if the children should be placed in foster care.

CMU researchers found that from August 2016 to May 2018, the tool calculated scores that suggested 32.5% of Black children reported as being neglected should be subject to a "mandatory" investigation, compared with 20.8% of white children.

In addition, the county confirmed to the AP that for more than two years, a technical glitch in the tool sometimes presented social workers with the wrong scores, either underestimating or overestimating a child's risk. County officials said the problem has since been fixed.

The county didn't challenge the CMU researchers' figures, but Dalton said the research paper represented a "hypothetical scenario that is so removed from the manner in which this tool has been implemented to support our workforce."

The CMU research found no difference in the percentage of Black families investigated after the algorithm was adopted. The study found the workers were able to reduce this disparity produced by the algorithm.

The county says that social workers are always in the loop and are ultimately responsible for deciding which families are investigated because they can override the algorithm, even if it flags a case for mandatory investigation. Dalton said the tool would never be used on its own in Allegheny, and doubted any county would allow for completely automated decision-making about families' lives.

"Of course, they could do that," she said. "I think that they are less likely to, because it doesn't make any actual sense to do that."

Despite what the county describes as safeguards, one child welfare expert who worked for an Allegheny county contractor says there is still cause for concern.

"When you have technology designed by humans, the bias is going to show up in the algorithms," said Nico'Lee Biddle, who has worked for nearly a decade in child welfare, including as a family therapist and foster care placement specialist in Allegheny County. "If they designed a perfect tool, it really doesn't matter, because it's designed from very imperfect data systems."

Biddle is a former foster care kid turned therapist, social worker and policy advocate. In 2020, she quit, largely due to her growing frustrations with the child welfare system. She also said officials dismissed her concerns when she asked why families were originally referred for investigation.

"We could see the report and that decision, but we were never able to see the actual tool," she said. "I would be met with ... 'What does that have to do with now?'"

In recent years, movements to reshape – or dismantle – child protective services have grown, as generations of dire foster care outcomes have been shown to be rooted in racism.

In a memo last year, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services cited racial disparities "at nearly every major decision-making point" of the child welfare system, an issue Aysha Schomburg, the associate commissioner of the U.S. Children's Bureau said leads more than half of all Black children nationwide to be investigated by social workers. "Over surveillance leads to mass family separation," Schomburg wrote in a recent blog post.

With discussions about race and equity looming large in child welfare circles, Putnam-Hornstein last fall took part in a roundtable of experts convened by the conservative American Enterprise Institute and co-authored a paper that slammed advocates who believe child welfare systems are inherently racist.

She said she collaborated with the group that suggested there are "racial disparities in the incidence of maltreatment" because she sees the need for reforms, and believes "that the adoption of algorithmic decision aids can help guard against subjectivity and bias."

Some researchers worry that as other government agencies implement similar tools, the algorithms could

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be allowed to make some decisions on their own.

"We know there are many other child welfare agencies that are looking into using risk assessment tools and their decisions about how much fully to automate really vary," said Stapleton. "Had Allegheny County used it as a fully automated tool, we would have seen a much higher racial disparity in the proportion of kids who are investigated."

## 'LAB RATS'

A decade ago, the developers of Allegheny's tool – Putnam-Hornstein and Rhema Vaithianathan, a professor of health economics at New Zealand's Auckland University of Technology – began collaborating on a project to design a predictive risk model for New Zealand's child welfare system.

Vaithianathan and colleagues prototyped a new child abuse screening model that proposed using national data to predict the risk that the child protection system would confirm allegations that a child had been mistreated by age 5. The plan was scrapped after documents revealed the Ministry of Social Development's head sharply opposed the project, declaring: "These are children, not lab rats."

The minister wasn't the only one concerned. Emily Keddell, a professor of social work at Otago University in New Zealand who analyzed the tool in the peer-reviewed Critical Social Policy journal, found that it would likely have resulted in more Māori families being tagged for investigation, reinforcing "existing structural inequalities by contributing to the ongoing stigmatisation of this population."

In response, Vaithianathan said that she and her collaborators are open to community criticism and committed to showing their work, even if jurisdictions decide against it. She added that she has worked extensively with Indigenous Māori researchers.

"We encourage agencies to listen to those critical voices and to make leadership decisions themselves," she said.

Vaithianathan and Putnam-Hornstein said they have since expanded their work to at least half a dozen cities and counties across the United States and have explored building tools in Chile and Australia.

Brian Chor, a clinical psychologist and child welfare researcher at the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall, said the pair are respected for confronting ethical and racial concerns in creating the tool. He also said that Pittsburgh was the perfect place to create a model algorithm for other public welfare agencies.

"Allegheny County is probably an early adopter where the stars seem to be aligned, where they have the data," Chor said. "They have a solid recipe that I think is replicable."

In several public presentations and media interviews, Vaithianathan and Putnam-Hornstein said they want to use public data to help families in need.

"We're researchers and we're trying to model what good, good approaches look like in this field," Vaithianathan said in an interview. The developers also noted in a document sent to Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services last year that demand for their tools had increased due to the pandemic, as the state weighed a proposal for a statewide tool that would cost \$520,000 to develop and implement.

Vaithianathan has said the tool ultimately can help address racial bias, and has pointed to a 2019 Stanford University evaluation commissioned by Allegheny County that suggests it may have had a modest impact on some disparities.

"I've always felt that these are tools that have the opportunity to improve the quality of decision making," Vaithianathan said at a November panel. "To the extent that they are used with careful guardrails around them, I think they also offer an opportunity for us to try and address some of those systemic biases."

But when AP asked county officials to address Carnegie Mellon's findings on the tool's pattern of flagging a disproportionate number of Black children for a "mandatory" child neglect investigation, Allegheny County questioned the researchers' methodology by saying they relied on old data.

The researchers reran the analysis using newer data to address the county's concerns and reached many of the same conclusions.

In response to AP, Allegheny County provided research that acknowledges the tool has not helped with combating disparities in the rates at which Black and white child neglect cases are investigated. A recent unpublished analysis written by the developers themselves determined "no statistically significant effect of the algorithm on this disparity."

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"We don't frame the entire decision-making process around race, though clearly it's an important thing that we think about," Dalton said.

Dalton said her team wants to keep improving the tool and is considering new updates, including adding available private insurance data to capture more information about middle class and upper income families, as well as exploring other ways to avoid needless interventions.

Dalton also downplayed the algorithm's role in neglect investigations.

"If it goes into court, then there's attorneys on both sides and a judge," Dalton said. "They have evidence, right?"

Chor said Allegheny's tool is applied at the most important point of the child welfare system.

"The very front end of child protection decision-making is understandably the most impactful decision that you can make on a child's life, because once you come into contact with the hotline, with an investigator, then your chance of being removed, of course, is increased," Chor said.

The latest version of the tool excludes information about whether a family has received welfare dollars or food stamps, data that was initially included in calculating risk scores. It also stopped predicting whether a child would be reported again to the county in the two years that followed. However, much of the current algorithm's design remains the same, according to American Civil Liberties Union researchers who have studied both versions.

The county initially considered including race as a variable in its predictions about a family's relative risk but ultimately decided not to, according to a 2017 document. Critics say even if race is not measured outright, data from government programs used by many communities of color can be a proxy for race. In the document, the developers themselves urged continuing monitoring "with regard to racial disparities."

"If over a million dollars have been spent creating and maintaining this tool, only for call screeners to disagree with it, for racial disparities to stay essentially level, and for screen-ins to continue at unreasonably high rates, is that the best use of Allegheny County's resources?" asked Kath Xu, an attorney at the ACLU.

Child welfare agencies in at least 26 states and Washington, D.C., have considered using algorithmic tools, and at least 11 have deployed them, according to a recent ACLU white paper by Xu and colleagues.

## LITTLE TRANSPARENCY, GROWING INFLUENCE

Family law attorney Frank says she's always worried about the lack of due process and secrecy surrounding Allegheny County's child welfare algorithm. Some of her clients have asked if the system was surveilling them because they used public assistance or community programs, but she can't answer.

"I just don't understand why it's something that's kept in secret," Frank said.

Once, Frank recalled, a judge demanded to know a family's score, but the county resisted, claiming it didn't want to influence the legal proceeding with the numbers spat out by the algorithm.

Bruce Noel, who oversees call screeners using Allegheny's tool, said that while the risk score advises their decision on whether to launch an investigation, he is torn about sharing that information with families because of the tool's complexity. He added that he is cognizant of the racial disparities in the underlying data, and said his team didn't have much input into development.

"Given that our data is drawn from public records and involvement with public systems, we know that our population is going to garner scores that are higher than other demographics, such as white middle class folks who don't have as much involvement with public systems," Noel said.

Dalton said she personally doesn't support giving parents their score because she worries it could discourage people from seeking services when they need them.

"I do think there are risks and I want the community to also be on board with ... the risks and benefits of transparency," Dalton said.

Other counties using algorithms are taking a different approach. Larimer County, Colorado, home to Fort Collins, is now testing a tool modeled on Allegheny's and plans to share scores with families if it moves forward with the program.

"It's their life and their history," said Thad Paul, a manager with the county's Child, Youth & Family Services. "We want to minimize the power differential that comes with being involved in child welfare ... we

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just really think it is unethical not to share the score with families.”

In the suburbs south of Denver, officials in Douglas County, Colorado, are using a similar tool and say they will share scores with families who request it.

Oregon does not share risk score numbers from its statewide screening tool, which was first implemented in 2018 and inspired by Allegheny’s algorithm. The Oregon Department of Human Services – currently preparing to hire its eighth new child welfare director in six years – explored at least four other algorithms while the agency was under scrutiny by a crisis oversight board ordered by the governor.

It recently paused a pilot algorithm built to help decide when foster care children can be reunified with their families. Oregon also explored three other tools – predictive models to assess a child’s risk for death and severe injury, whether children should be placed in foster care and if so, where.

For years, California explored data-driven approaches to the statewide child welfare system before abandoning a proposal to use a predictive risk modeling tool Putnam-Hornstein’s team developed in 2019. The state’s Department of Social Services spent \$195,273 on a two-year grant to develop the concept.

“During the project, the state also explored concerns about how the tool may impact racial equity. These findings resulted in the state ceasing exploration,” department spokesman Scott Murray said in an email.

Putnam-Hornstein’s team is currently working with one of the nation’s largest local child welfare systems in Los Angeles County as it pilots a related tool.

The embattled agency is being audited following high-profile child deaths, and is currently seeking a new director after its previous one stepped down late last year. The “complex-risk algorithm” helps to isolate the highest-risk cases that are being investigated, according to the county’s Department of Children and Family Services.

So far, the experiment has been limited to the Belvedere, Lancaster, and Santa Fe Springs offices, the agency said. The tool also has allowed the agency to generate and review reports about cases involving Black children and families who were deemed low-risk, but were still investigated and didn’t result in any conclusive or substantiated allegations, the county said.

In the Mojave Desert city of Lancaster, U.S. Census shows 22% of the city’s child population is Black. In the first few months that social workers started using the tool, county data shows that Black children were the subject of nearly half of all the investigations flagged for additional scrutiny.

The county did not immediately say why, but said it will decide whether to expand the tool later this year.

Back in Pittsburgh, family law attorney Frank is still trying to untangle how, exactly, the county’s algorithm is impacting each client she shepherds through the system.

To find strength on the brutal days, she keeps a birthday calendar for the children she’s helped and sends them handwritten cards to remember times when things went right.

She’s still haunted by a case in which she says she heard a social worker discuss a mother’s risk score in court around 2018. The case ultimately escalated to foster care, but Frank has never been able to understand how that number influenced the family’s outcome.

County officials said they could not imagine how a risk score could end up in court.

“There’s no way to prove it – that’s the problem,” Frank said.

## Trump, fighting contempt fines, says he doesn’t have records

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Donald Trump’s lawyers, seeking to reverse their client’s \$10,000-per-day contempt fine, provided a New York judge Friday with an affidavit in which the former president claims he didn’t turn over subpoenaed documents to the state attorney general’s office because he doesn’t have them.

The judge, though, was unmoved and refused to lift sanctions he imposed on Trump on Monday. Judge Arthur Engoron criticized the lack of detail in Trump affidavit, which amounted to two paragraphs, saying that he should have explained the methods he uses to store his records and efforts he made to locate the subpoenaed files.

In the affidavit, which bore Trump’s signature and Wednesday’s date, the former president said that

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documents sought in Attorney General Letitia James' civil investigation into his business dealings weren't in his personal possession. Trump, who is appealing the contempt ruling, said he believed any documents would be in the possession of his company, the Trump Organization.

In other affidavits, Trump lawyers Alina Habba and Michael Madaio detailed steps they took to locate documents in the Dec. 1 subpoena, including meeting with Trump last month at Mar-a-Lago in Florida and reviewing prior searches of his company's files.

Andrew Amer, a lawyer for the attorney general's office, said in a court filing that while the affidavits "provide some additional information" about Trump's efforts to comply with the subpoena, more extensive searches were needed — including of Trump Tower, his residences and electronic devices — before the judge should consider reversing the contempt finding.

Frank Runyeon, a reporter for the legal publication Law360, said that Engoron held an impromptu hearing Friday, without a court stenographer, in which he addressed the affidavits from Trump and his lawyers and ruled to keep the contempt fine in place.

Runyeon, one of the few members of the news media to attend the unadvertised hearing, reported that Engoron was insistent that Trump provide the "who, when, where, what" of his search, with the judge asking at one point: "Where did he keep files? I assume it wasn't all in his head."

Habba filed a notice of appeal Wednesday with the appellate division of the state's trial court seeking to overturn Engoron's contempt ruling. Trump is also challenging Engoron's Feb. 17 ruling requiring that he answer questions under oath. Oral arguments in that appeal are scheduled for May 11.

James, a Democrat, has said that her investigation has uncovered evidence that Trump may have misstated the value of assets like skyscrapers and golf courses on his financial statements for more than a decade. Her Dec. 1 subpoena sought numerous documents, including paperwork and communications pertaining to his financial statements and various development projects.

James asked Engoron to hold Trump in contempt after he failed to produce any documents by a March 31 court deadline. In his ruling, Engoron said that Trump and his lawyers not only failed to meet the deadline, but also failed to document the steps they had taken to search for the documents, as required under case law.

Trump, a Republican, is suing James in federal court in an effort to stop her investigation. Oral arguments in that matter are scheduled for May 13.

Trump recently labeled her an "operative for the Democrat Party" and has said in written statements that her investigation and a parallel criminal probe overseen by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, another Democrat, are "a continuation of the greatest Witch Hunt of all time."

Bragg said this month that the 3-year-old criminal investigation he inherited in January from his predecessor, Cyrus Vance Jr., is continuing "without fear or favor" despite a recent shakeup in the probe's leadership. Trump's lawyers contend that James is using her civil investigation to gain access to information that could then be used against him in the criminal probe.

So far, the district attorney's investigation has resulted only in tax fraud charges against the Trump Organization and its longtime finance chief, Allen Weisselberg, relating to lucrative fringe benefits such as rent, car payments and school tuition. The company and Weisselberg have pleaded not guilty.

## Ukraine cracks down on 'traitors' helping Russian troops

By MSTYSLAV CHERNOV and YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

KHARKIV, Ukraine (AP) — Viktor appeared nervous as masked Ukrainian security officers in full riot gear, camouflage and weapons pushed into his cluttered apartment in the northern city of Kharkiv. His hands trembled and he tried to cover his face.

The middle-aged man came to the attention of Ukraine's Security Service, the SBU, after what authorities said were his social media posts praising Russian President Vladimir Putin for "fighting with the Nazis," calling for regions to secede and labeling the national flag "a symbol of death."

"Yes, I supported (the Russian invasion of Ukraine) a lot. I'm sorry. ... I have already changed my mind,"



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said Viktor, his trembling voice showing clear signs of duress in the presence of the Ukrainian security officers.

"Get your things and get dressed," an officer said before escorting him out of the apartment. The SBU did not reveal Viktor's last name, citing their investigation.

Viktor was one of nearly 400 people in the Kharkiv region alone who have been detained under anti-collaboration laws enacted quickly by Ukraine's parliament and signed by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy after Russia's Feb. 24 invasion.

Offenders face up to 15 years in prison for collaborating with Russian forces, making public denials about Russian aggression or supporting Moscow. Anyone whose actions result in deaths could face life in prison.

"Accountability for collaboration is inevitable, and whether it will happen tomorrow or the day after tomorrow is another question," Zelenskyy said. "The most important thing is that justice will be served inevitably."

Although the Zelenskyy government has broad support, even among many Russian speakers, not all Ukrainians oppose the invasion. Support for Moscow is more common among some Russian-speaking residents of the Donbas, an industrial region in the east. An eight-year conflict there between Moscow-backed separatists and Ukrainian government forces had killed over 14,000 people even before this year's invasion.

Some businessmen, civic and state officials and members of the military are among those who have gone over to the Russian side, and Ukraine's State Bureau of Investigations said more than 200 criminal cases on collaboration have been opened. Zelenskyy has even stripped two SBU generals of their rank, accusing them of treason.

A "registry of collaborators" is being compiled and will be released to the public, said Oleksiy Danilov, head of Ukraine's Security Council. He refused to say how many people were targeted nationwide.

Under martial law, authorities have banned 11 pro-Russian political parties, including the largest one that had 25 seats in the 450-member parliament – the Opposition Platform For Life, which was founded by Viktor Medvedchuk, a jailed oligarch with close ties to Putin.

Authorities say pro-Russian activists in southeastern Ukraine, the scene of active fighting, are acting as spotters to direct shelling.

"One of our key goals is to have no one stab our armed forces in the back," said Roman Dudin, head of the Kharkiv branch of the SBU, in an interview with The Associated Press. He spoke in a dark basement where the SBU moved its operations after its building in central Kharkiv was shelled.

The Kharkiv branch has been detaining people who support the invasion, call for secession and claim that Ukrainian forces are shelling their own cities.

Allegations of collaborating with the enemy carry strong historic resonance in Ukraine. During World War II, some in the region welcomed and even cooperated with invading forces from Nazi Germany after years of Stalinist repression that included the "Holodomor" – a man-made famine believed to have killed more than 3 million Ukrainians. For years afterward, Soviet authorities cited the cooperation of some Ukrainian nationalists with the Nazis as a reason to demonize today's democratically elected leaders of Ukraine.

Human rights advocates know of "dozens" of detentions of pro-Russian activists in Kyiv alone since the new laws were passed, but how many have been targeted nationwide is unclear, said Volodymyr Yavorsky, coordinator at the Center for Civil Liberties, one of Ukraine's largest human rights groups.

"There is no complete data on the (entire) country, since it is all classified by the SBU," Yavorsky told AP.

"Ukrainian authorities are actively using the practice of Western countries, in particular the U.K., which imposed harsh restrictions on civic liberties in warring Northern Ireland. Some of those restrictions were deemed unjustified by human rights advocates, but others were justified, when people's lives were in danger," he said.

A person in Ukraine can be detained for up to 30 days without a court order, he said, and antiterrorism legislation under martial law allows authorities not to tell defense attorneys about their clients being remanded.

"In effect, these people disappear, and for 30 days there's no access to them," Yavorsky said. "In reality, (law enforcement) has powers to take anyone."

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The government knows the implications of detaining people over their opinions, including that it risks playing into Moscow's line that Kyiv is repressing Russian speakers. But in wartime, officials say, freedom of speech is only part of the equation.

"The debate about the balance of national security and ensuring freedom of speech is endless," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told AP.

Ravina Shamdasani, a spokeswoman for the U.N. human rights office, said her agency has documented "cases of arrests and detention allegedly made by Ukrainian law enforcement authorities, which may involve elements of human rights violations" and is following up with the Ukrainian government.

She said her office is looking into eight cases that "appear to be disappearances of people considered as 'pro-Russian,' and we have documented two cases of unlawful killings of 'pro-Russians,'" along with cases of vigilantism, in which law enforcement and others punish those suspected of being pro-Russian,

In the town of Bucha, now a symbol of horrific violence in the war, Mayor Anatoly Fedoruk said collaborators gave invading troops the names and addresses of pro-Ukrainian activists and officials in the city outside Kyiv, with hundreds of civilians shot to death with their hands tied behind their backs or their bodies burned by Russian forces.

"I saw these execution lists, dictated by the traitors — the Russians knew in advance who they're going to, at what address, and who lives there," said Fedoruk, who saw his own name on one list. "Of course, Ukrainian authorities will search for and punish these people."

In the besieged port city of Mariupol, officials accused collaborators of helping the Russians cut off electricity, running water, gas and communications in much of the city.

"Now I understand perfectly why the Russians were carrying out such precise, coordinated strikes on objects of critical infrastructure, knew about all locations and even times when Ukrainian buses evacuating refugees were supposed to depart," said Mayor Vadym Boychenko.

Political analysts say the invasion and the brutality by Russian troops against civilians have turned off many Moscow sympathizers. Still, many such supporters remain.

"Russian propaganda took deep roots and many residents of the east who watch Russian TV channels believe absurd claims that it's Ukrainians who are shelling them and other myths," Volodymyr Fesenko of the Penta Center think tank told AP. "Naturally, Ukrainian authorities in the southeast are afraid of getting stabbed in the back and are forced to tighten security measures."

Unlike Viktor, whose Kharkiv apartment was raided, 86-year-old Volodymyr Radnenko didn't seem surprised when Ukrainian security arrived to search his flat Saturday after detaining his son, Ihor. The military said the son was suspected of helping the Russians in shelling of the city — some of which occurred in Radnenko's neighborhood about 15 minutes before the officers showed up, with the smell of smoke lingering. At least two people were killed and 19 others wounded in the region.

"He is used to thinking that Russia is all there is," Radnenko told AP after the officers left. "I ask him: 'So who is shelling us? It's not our (people), it's your fascists.' And he only gets angry at that."

## Round 2 of NFL draft has plenty of tantalizing possibilities

By ARNIE STAPLETON AP Pro Football Writer

Georgia's defense dominated the first round of the NFL draft 3 1/2 months after whipping Alabama in the national championship game.

The surprising part was that linebacker Nakobe Dean wasn't among the Bulldogs whose names were called Thursday night.

Dean, who watched a half-dozen of his ex-teammates get selected in the first round, is among the top prospects on the board Friday night in Round 2.

At 5-foot-11 and 229 pounds, Dean is smaller than some personnel evaluators prefer, but his coverage skills, speed and toughness could make him an ideal fit for a team in today's pass-heavy NFL.

The first round began and ended with selections from the Bulldogs' defense and included three of their teammates in between, breaking the record of four set by Miami in 2004 and matched by Florida State

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in 2006.

Defensive end Travon Walker was taken first overall by Jacksonville. Defensive tackle Jordan Davis went No. 13 to Philadelphia. Green Bay took linebacker Quay Walker with pick No. 22 and defensive tackle Devonte Wyatt at No. 28. Minnesota capped Round 1 by selecting safety Lewis Cine.

Plus, edge rusher Jermaine Johnson, who transferred from Georgia to Florida State for his final season last year, went 26th to the New York Jets.

The spotlight in Round 2 on Friday night will be on Dean and Liberty's Malik Willis, considered the passer with the most upside in this year's otherwise thin crop of college quarterbacks.

For the first time since 2013, when Buffalo drafted E.J. Manuel with the 16th pick, only one quarterback was drafted in the first round Thursday night.

The Steelers, who lost Ben Roethlisberger to retirement this offseason, selected Pitt's Kenny Pickett with the 20th overall pick, meaning all he'll have to do is move to the other side of the teams' shared practice facility.

Other QBs who could go in Rounds 2 or 3 Friday night include Cincinnati's Desmond Ridder and Matt Corral of Mississippi.

No running backs were selected in Round 1, and the highest regarded prospect on the board is Iowa State's Breece Hall, who scored 56 touchdowns for the Cyclones, including five of at least 70 yards.

Other top-flight running backs include Big Ten Offensive Player of the Year Kenneth Walker III of Michigan State, Isaiah Spiller of Texas A&M and Dameon Pierce of Florida.

Among the best available players in Day 2 regardless of position is former Colorado State star Trey McBride, the Mackey Award winner as the nation's top tight end. McBride credits his two moms — Kate McBride and her partner Jen — for his nurtured upbringing that allowed him to reach the cusp of his dream to play in the NFL.

"He's an easy one to like," NFL Network draft analyst Daniel Jeremiah said. "He's going to be a solid starter for a long time."

Other prospects to keep an eye on Friday night include Central Michigan tackle Bernhard Raimann, a native of Austria who only switched from tight end two years ago, and pass rushers Boye Mafe of Minnesota and Arnold Ebiketie of Penn State.

The NFL draft kicked off in Las Vegas and featured a whopping nine trades. Two more prominent wide receivers switched teams with Tennessee's A.J. Brown and Baltimore's Marquise Brown getting swapped during a dizzying stretch of the NFL draft.

The Ravens traded Marquise Brown and the 100th overall pick to Arizona for the 23rd pick in the draft. Then the Titans dealt A.J. Brown to Philadelphia for the 18th and 101st picks.

The Browns were the latest big-name receivers to move this offseason, following Green Bay's trade of Davante Adams to Las Vegas and Kansas City's deal that sent Tyreek Hill to Miami.

The first round featured a record-tying six receivers selected, all in the first 18 selections, beginning with USC's Drake London to Atlanta with the eighth overall pick.

Some pass catchers available Friday include Alabama's John Metchie III, who tore his left ACL in the SEC championship game, and Georgia's George Pickens, who tore his right ACL in spring drills last season.

Two small-school prospects are Skyy Moore of Western Michigan and Christian Watson of North Dakota State, who shined at the Senior Bowl.

## **New York Times' top editor may speak out more on journalism**

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Times has a tradition of letting its work speak for itself, rather than publicly defending its journalism from criticism.

Yet with democracy, truth, and the news business under attack, that's a luxury The Times' incoming executive editor, Joe Kahn, may not be able to afford. Kahn, a managing editor for the past five years, succeeds Dean Baquet on June 14, inheriting the most high-profile job in journalism.

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The deliberate, soft-spoken Kahn said he's been thinking about whether The Times' reluctance to speak about its work is still the best approach at a time when people take sides about journalism brands like they do about politics. How Kahn will tackle things differently from his predecessors remains to be seen, but he is open to trying.

"I'm not sure there's a perfect answer to it," said Kahn, who believes efforts to communicate with readers could be improved. He added: "Being able to narrate that to some degree, and bring a broader audience into the investment we're making in quality journalism, I do think (that) is an important part of the job."

News organizations sometimes let marketing teams do the talking, with ad campaigns highlighting their work and why it is done, as CNN did when former President Donald Trump labeled them "fake news." Former Washington Post executive editor Marty Baron famously said that the Post was not at war with the Trump administration, "we're at work."

That may not be good enough anymore, said Kyle Pope, editor in chief and publisher of the Columbia Journalism Review.

"Journalists for a long time have taken it as a given that the country and its leaders understood the role they play in a functioning democracy," Pope said. "We're at a moment now where you can't take that for granted."

Targeting The Times for criticism has long been a rite of passage for many conservatives. More recently, liberals have stepped up their criticism, most notably by demanding the newspaper more aggressively call out what they see as Republican efforts to subvert democracy,

Kahn said he wants The Times to be dogged in covering voter access, the certification of elections and increased political violence. Reporters and editors dedicated to the topic need to be persistent about focusing attention on the problems, similar to how The Times tracked the COVID-19 pandemic, he said.

"We can cover these issues really well and assertively without turning ourselves into a partisan news organization," he said.

The Times can point to examples where it has led the way. This past week, Times reporters broke the news of House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy saying he planned to urge Trump to resign following the Jan. 6, 2021 Capitol insurrection. In June, The Times' painstaking "Day of Rage" video outlined clearly what happened that day.

Still, some critics on the left believe it too often treats efforts to change voter access laws as a typical political fight when the meaning is much deeper.

"Reporting more aggressively, accurately and clearly about threats to democracy is not asking them to become a partisan organization," said Dan Froomkin, editor of the Press Watch media criticism site.

The Post announced in February that it would hire two editors and three reporters to staff a new democracy team to cover these issues, and The Associated Press said last week it would add a new democracy editor to its political staff.

On a sometimes related topic -- disinformation -- Kahn said The Times plans further investment. That was illustrated recently when satellite imagery from Ukraine was used to refute Russian propaganda that civilian killings were staged.

The Times is also writing stories specifically designed to show up in Internet searches when people want to learn the truth about false stories that spread online, like quack COVID treatments.

"If you're partisan and want to live in your own information silo, it's really hard to break through to that," Kahn said. "But if you are, in my view, like the vast majority of people who hear things and may not believe them, we'll be there to help guide you in those moments."

One trait Kahn has that is not always common in top media executives is that he's open to listening to criticism, wrote Margaret Sullivan, the Post's media columnist. From 2012 to 2016, she was public editor at The Times, where her job was often to convey reader complaints to editors.

The Times discontinued that role in 2017. Although Sullivan doesn't expect that decision to be revisited — and Kahn pointed out that's the publisher's decision, not his — she said in an interview that "the thing that's missing is a steady sense of The Times hearing outside voices, outside critics, and responding in real time on a regular basis."

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Baquet has tended to respond to individual issues that come up through media interviews.

The Times' decision to appoint an insider as executive editor is typical, but does contrast with the Post choosing AP's Sally Buzbee and Los Angeles Times picking Kevin Merida from ESPN as leaders over the past two years. Part of the reason they went with outsiders, "if I'm being honest, is that they're trying to catch up with us," Kahn said.

In announcing Kahn's elevation, Times publisher A.G. Sulzberger said it was an affirmation of the Times' direction under Baquet, who had Kahn as his top lieutenant for five years.

The Times has grown from under a million digital subscriptions to nearly 10 million under Baquet. Its footprint has widened, encompassing a popular podcast, "The Daily," the Wirecutter product recommendation service, newsletters and a documentary unit that made "Controlling Britney Spears." Not everything has gone smoothly — The Times painfully concluded its 2018 podcast "Caliphate" did not meet journalistic standards — but it has been a remarkable transformation.

Neither The Times, nor he, believes in standing still.

## A key inflation gauge jumped 6.6% in March, most since 1982

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — An inflation gauge closely tracked by the Federal Reserve surged 6.6% in March compared with a year ago, the highest 12-month jump in four decades and further evidence that spiking prices are pressuring household budgets and the health of the economy.

Yet there were signs in Friday's report from the Commerce Department that inflation might be slowing from its galloping pace and perhaps nearing a peak, at least for now.

And despite soaring prices, consumer spending rose faster than inflation for a third consecutive month, suggesting that rising prices haven't cooled the desire of Americans to shop. The pandemic's distortions to the economy are also fading as consumers shift their spending back to experiences like travel, concerts and dining out. That follows a two-year surge of pandemic spending on goods, things like exercise bikes, patio furniture and standing desks.

The switch to services helps restrain inflation because prices are rising more slowly for services than for goods.

Excluding the especially volatile food and energy categories, so-called core prices rose 5.2% in March from a year earlier. That was slightly below the 5.3% year-over-year increase in February, and it was the first time that 12-month figure has declined since February 2021, before the inflation spike began. And on a month-to-month basis, core prices rose 0.3% from February to March, the same as from January to February. Previously, it had risen by a half-point for four straight months.

"The slowdown in (core inflation) is really nice to see," said Bill Adams, chief economist for Comerica Bank, in an email to clients. "Inflation may have peaked in March, although the evidence is still a little ambiguous. But inflation's momentum is still very strong."

Overall inflation jumped 0.9% in March from February, the biggest one month gain since 2005. Gas prices soared 18% just in March. But they have since fallen a bit this month, another sign inflation may start to slowly decline.

Consumers increased their spending by 1.1% last month, more than many economists had expected. The gain largely reflected higher prices at the gas pump, grocery store and other places where Americans shop for necessities. But even adjusted for inflation, spending rose 0.2%.

Sharp gains in wages and salaries are helping many consumers handle higher costs. A separate report Friday from the Labor Department showed that employees' pay and benefits jumped 1.4% in the first three months of the year, before adjusting for inflation. That was the highest such increase on records dating back two decades.

Yet the gain isn't big enough to completely offset higher prices. In the past year, wages and benefits have jumped 4.7%. But after adjusting for inflation, they are down 3.7%.

That decline helps explain why Americans are taking an increasingly negative view of the economy.

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About one-third of respondents to a Gallup poll, released Thursday, cited inflation as the most important financial problem their family faces today, up from fewer than one in 10 who said so a year ago.

Consumers are maintaining their spending by digging into the extra savings they built up during the pandemic. The saving rate fell to 6.2% in March, the lowest level since 2013.

A smaller savings pool may eventually restrain consumers, but that's unlikely anytime soon.

Americans have about \$2.1 trillion more in savings than they did before COVID, with some of that cash in lower-income Americans' bank accounts. Economists at Bank of America note that, according to the bank's data on checking and savings accounts, households that earn under \$50,000 a year had an average of about \$3,000 in their accounts in February — roughly double the pre-pandemic level.

High inflation and strong wage increases are leading the Federal Reserve to plan a series of sharp interest rates hikes in the coming months. The Fed is set to raise its benchmark short-term rate by a half-point next week, a faster move than its typical quarter-point hike and the first increase that large since 2000.

Outside the United States, too, inflation is surging, forcing other central banks to either raise interest rates or move closer to doing so. In the 19 countries that use the euro, inflation reached a record high of 7.5% in April from a year ago.

In Europe, spiking energy prices stemming from Russia's invasion of Ukraine are playing a bigger role in driving inflation. The European Central Bank could raise rates for the first time since the pandemic in July, even as growth in the region has slowed because of the war.

The gloom that has gripped public opinion as inflation has accelerated is posing a growing political threat to President Joe Biden and Democrats running for Congress. Biden has pointed to a strong job market and solid consumer spending as evidence that his policies have helped Americans. But that view absorbed a setback Thursday, when the government reported that the economy actually contracted in the first three months of this year at a 1.4% annual rate.

How consumers respond to inflated prices — and much higher interest rates from the Federal Reserve — is one of the unknowns facing the economy this year. Moody's Analytics estimates that the average household is spending \$327 more each month to buy the same things they bought a year ago.

## Becker gets 2 1/2 years in prison for bankruptcy offenses

LONDON (AP) — Tennis great Boris Becker was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison on Friday for illicitly transferring large amounts of money and hiding assets after he was declared bankrupt.

The three-time Wimbledon champion was convicted earlier this month on four charges under the Insolvency Act and had faced a maximum sentence of seven years in prison.

Judge Deborah Taylor announced the sentence after hearing arguments from both the prosecutor and Becker's attorney. She told the former top-ranked player that he's shown no remorse.

"While I accept your humiliation as part of the proceedings, there has been no humility," Taylor said.

Becker will have to serve at least 15 months before being eligible for release.

The 54-year-old German was found to have transferred hundreds of thousands of pounds (dollars) after his June 2017 bankruptcy from his business account to other accounts, including those of his ex-wife Barbara and estranged wife Sharlely "Lilly" Becker.

Becker was also convicted of failing to declare a property in Germany and hiding an 825,000 euro (\$871,000) bank loan and shares in a tech firm.

The jury at Southwark Crown Court in London acquitted him on 20 other counts, including charges that he failed to hand over his many awards, including two Wimbledon trophies and an Olympic gold medal.

Becker, wearing a striped tie in Wimbledon's purple and green colors, walked into the courthouse hand in hand with girlfriend Lilian de Carvalho Monteiro.

The six-time Grand Slam champion has denied all the charges, saying he had cooperated with trustees tasked with securing his assets — even offering up his wedding ring — and had acted on expert advice.

At Friday's sentencing hearing, prosecutor Rebecca Chalkley said Becker had acted "deliberately and

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dishonestly” and that he was “still seeking to blame others.”

Defense attorney Jonathan Laidlaw argued for leniency, saying his client hadn’t spent money on a “lavish lifestyle” but rather on child support, rent and legal and business expenses. Becker, he told the court, has experienced “public humiliation” and has no future earnings potential.

The judge said Becker’s two-year suspended sentence for tax evasion and attempted tax evasion in Germany in 2002 was “a significant aggravating factor” in her decision Friday. She said he “did not heed the warning” and opportunity of that suspended sentence.

Becker’s bankruptcy stemmed from a 4.6 million euro (\$5 million) loan from a private bank in 2013, as well as about \$1.6 million borrowed from a British businessman the year after, according to testimony at the trial.

During the trial Becker, said his \$50 million career earnings had been swallowed up by payments for an “expensive divorce” and debts when he lost large chunks of his income after retirement.

Becker rose to stardom in 1985 at the age of 17 when he became the first unseeded player to win the Wimbledon singles title and later rose to the No. 1 ranking. He has lived in Britain since 2012.

## **NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn’t happen this week**

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

Unexplained hepatitis cases not caused by COVID-19 vaccines

**CLAIM:** A recent outbreak of unexplained hepatitis cases among children is being caused by the adenovirus vector used in some COVID-19 vaccines, including the Johnson & Johnson shot.

**THE FACTS:** Medical experts say this isn’t the case, mainly because the dead adenovirus used in the J&J vaccine is a different strain than the one linked to the recent hepatitis cases. British health authorities this month have documented more than 100 cases of unexplained hepatitis, inflammation of the liver, among young children, and some social media users are suggesting the cases could be linked to J&J’s vaccine. While it isn’t clear what’s causing the illnesses, which have also been identified in the U.S., a leading suspect is adenovirus, a common group of viruses that can cause cold-like symptoms, fevers, sore throats and intestinal issues. Adenovirus was detected in 75% of the recent juvenile hepatitis cases tested, U.K. health officials have said. Viral vector vaccines, like the J&J vaccine, use dead, nonreplicable adenovirus to help trigger an immune response, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The AstraZeneca and Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccines also use viral vectors. Social media users are highlighting this connection to push the baseless claim that the adenovirus vector is causing the mysterious cases. But experts say that’s not possible. Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, told The Associated Press that current evidence indicates these hepatitis cases could be caused by adenovirus type 41, which is associated with intestinal infections. The adenovirus used as a vector in the J&J vaccine is type 26. Offit added that the adenovirus used as a vector in the vaccine cannot reproduce itself in the body and spread. “The combination of the fact that it’s not the type of adenovirus that’s expected to cause hepatitis, nor is it a virus that reproduces itself, makes the claim ludicrous,” Offit said. Dr. Mark Slifka, a professor of microbiology and immunology at Oregon Health & Science University, pointed to an April paper by researchers with Scotland’s public health department describing their initial investigation into the first Scottish cases of the sudden liver disease. The investigation noted that none of the children had been vaccinated against COVID-19, nor were the other patients in the U.K. “What appears to be happening on social media, is that people are jumping to conclusions that are not based on current evidence,” Slifka wrote in an email. A spokesperson for Public Health Scotland also told the AP that “there is no evidence to support the claims” linking the juvenile hepatitis cases to COVID-19 vaccines. Further, no increased risk of hepatitis was identified in clinical trials of the vaccines, or after emergency

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use authorization allowed many people to be vaccinated, Slifka noted. Adenovirus is currently circulating in children at higher than average levels after dropping during the pandemic. One theory being explored is that children who weren't exposed to adenovirus over the last two years as COVID-19 restrictions were in place may now be getting hit harder upon exposure.

— Associated Press writer Sophia Tulp in Atlanta contributed this report.

Denmark still offering COVID-19 vaccinations

CLAIM: Denmark has become the first country to suspend COVID-19 vaccinations.

THE FACTS: Denmark is ending broad vaccination efforts, meaning it will no longer send out vaccination invitations or reminders, but people can still get vaccinated against COVID-19 as needed. Social media users shared posts that misinterpreted a statement from the Danish Health Authority about the country's mass vaccination program that began in December 2020, falsely suggesting Denmark would no longer be vaccinating citizens. "Denmark becomes first country to suspend COVID vaccinations," an Instagram user wrote. Similar claims were also shared on Facebook and Twitter. Denmark's health authority states on its website that starting May 15, electronic vaccine invitations will no longer be issued, but people can still receive their vaccine. Vaccine invitations notify people when they are eligible to receive a shot and provide information on the vaccine and time slots to book an appointment. Vaccines will still be recommended, especially among groups who are at risk of developing severe disease and people who have started the vaccine course but haven't completed it. The second booster shot is currently offered to people with weakened immune systems or other types of diseases. "Denmark has not suspended covid vaccinations," Signe Breitenstein, spokesperson for the Danish Health Authority, wrote in an email to The Associated Press. "The vaccine coverage is high in the Danish population and the epidemic situation is favorable. We can therefore close the broad vaccination programme for the time being, which for instance means that electronic invitations to be vaccinated no longer are sent." Around 81% of Denmark's population of 5.8 million has received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, while nearly 62% have received a booster. Bolette Søborg, Denmark's chief physician, also noted Tuesday in an update about the vaccine program that Denmark is "in a good place" with COVID-19. "Spring has arrived, vaccine coverage in the Danish population is high, and the epidemic has reversed. Therefore, the National Board of Health is now ending the broad vaccination efforts against covid-19 for this season," the update stated. Denmark's vaccine program is set to resume in the fall in anticipation of potential new variants or an increase in cases heading into winter. "Prior to this, a thorough professional assessment must be made of who and when to be vaccinated and with which vaccines," Søborg said. We expect to present a plan for the overall framework for the 2022/23 season before the summer holidays."

— Associated Press writer Arijeta Lajka in New York contributed this report.

Officials: Ukraine didn't send text warnings in Transnistria

CLAIM: Ukrainian authorities warned the people of Transnistria in a text message that Ukraine was planning an attack on the region.

THE FACTS: Two Ukrainian government sources said in public statements on Tuesday that the country is not responsible for the message, which did not display any evidence it came from a verified source. Recent explosions in Transnistria, a small strip of land under the control of separatists near Moldova's border with Ukraine, have raised concerns that the war between Russia and Ukraine could extend there. Following reports of another round of explosions on Tuesday morning, social media users posted that some residents in the breakaway region had received text message warnings claiming to be on behalf of Ukrainian agencies stating that the country's military was planning an attack. Some social media users shared a photo of a screen displaying the purported text message, which stated in Russian, "The Security Service of Ukraine strongly recommends that the civilian population be evacuated to safer regions. We assure you that the Armed Forces of Ukraine do not wish harm to civilians, however, the people remaining in the cities will be perceived as sabotage groups and will be liquidated without warning." The message urged residents to



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evacuate before 7 p.m., at which time the text said Ukrainian forces were set to launch an attack on military facilities. The photo of the message was shared widely on Tuesday, but it was not immediately clear on what day or at what time it was sent. Still, no such strike was reported in Transnistria around 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, and two Ukrainian government sources said in statements that the text messages were not sent by Ukrainian authorities. "The state of Ukraine has nothing to do with this and similar provocations," the military's main intelligence directorate wrote in a statement in Ukrainian. Ukrainian MP Inna Sovsun tweeted an image of the text on a screen, with a statement saying, "Ukraine hasn't sent such text messages and has no plans to attack Transnistria." The photo of the purported text message did not include a phone number, signature or any identifying details and showed no indication it came from a verified source or official agency. The Security Council of Transnistria has said explosions believed to have been caused by rocket-propelled grenades hit the Ministry of State Security in the capital of Tiraspol on Monday, and explosions at a radio facility in Maiac as well as damage to a military unit in the village of Parcani, were reported on Tuesday morning. No injuries have been reported and no one has claimed responsibility for the blasts. Transnistria has been under the control of separatist authorities since a 1992 war with Moldova. Russia bases about 1,500 troops in the breakaway region, nominally as peacekeepers, The Associated Press has reported. Ukrainian officials have expressed concern about Moscow using those forces to invade Ukraine.

— Sophia Tulp

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Elon Musk didn't get Bill Gates suspended from Twitter

CLAIM: Shortly after Elon Musk reached an agreement to buy Twitter on Monday, Bill Gates was suspended from the platform.

THE FACTS: A screenshot purporting to show a suspension notice on Bill Gates' Twitter account on Monday is fake. In the hours after the Tesla CEO reached an agreement to buy Twitter for roughly \$44 billion, the screenshot emerged on the platform with claims it showed Musk had already influenced the social media company to suspend billionaire philanthropist Gates, who he has publicly criticized in recent days. "Elon moves quick," said one Twitter user who posted the manipulated screenshot on Monday afternoon. "First thing," commented another user. The screenshot appeared to show Gates' Twitter profile, including his picture, follower count, bio, location and website, above a notice saying, "Account suspended." However, Gates' account has remained active throughout the week, and an archive of the web page documented on Monday at about 1:15 p.m. — around the time news first broke that Twitter was poised to accept Musk's offer — shows his account had not been taken down and no such notice had been posted. Gates also tweeted at 4:36 p.m. and 6:05 p.m. on Monday. There is other evidence that the image is fake. Twitter profiles that are suspended appear to users without profile pictures or bio sections. They no longer list details such as follower counts, locations or website links, either — unlike what was shown in the altered screenshot. Those who visit a suspended profile only see the user's handle, and a gray background where the profile picture and header photo are usually displayed, along with an "account suspended" message. On Sunday, Musk called out Gates in a tweet, saying that he turned down a request from the Microsoft co-founder to discuss climate change philanthropy because he believed Gates was short-selling shares of Tesla stock. "I heard from multiple people at TED that Gates still had half billion short against Tesla," Musk also wrote in a Twitter reply to a user who had posted screenshots of an alleged text message conversation between the two business magnates. Still, Musk has also said he wants his "worst critics" to remain on Twitter because "that is what free speech means."

— Sophia Tulp

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Clip shows French TV error, not election fraud

CLAIM: The number of votes for French far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen decreased from 14.4 million during a live count to 13.3 million when her defeat was declared.

THE FACTS: The discrepancy was caused by a computing error during an election night live count run by TV channel France 2, causing inaccurate figures to be displayed at one point during the show, according

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to a statement from the broadcaster. There is no record of France's Interior Ministry officially reporting the inaccurate figures. After Emmanuel Macron won a second term as president on Sunday, some social media users suggested without evidence that election fraud may have played a role in his victory. Some Twitter users pointed to a clip from a France 2 broadcast that showed a graphic displaying more than 14.4 million votes for Le Pen, seemingly beating Macron at that time, who was shown on screen to have about 14.2 million votes. The result shown during that point in the broadcast for Le Pen was higher than the final count later announced by the Interior Ministry. Official results show Macron received nearly 18.8 million votes, while almost 13.3 million votes were cast for Le Pen. "How is it possible that the number of votes counted for Marine le Pen went down from 14.4m during the live count to 13.3m at the declaration?" one Twitter user wrote Monday, sharing the clip. "It stinks of election fraud," commented another in French. The channel, however, said in a statement Monday that Le Pen never actually received 14.4 million votes. Instead, France 2 attributed that figure, aired about 9:10 p.m., to a technical error that caused the graphic to show "erroneous figures." A software glitch counted the votes of certain municipalities twice for both Macron and Le Pen, inflating their respective vote counts at the time, France 2 said. "That error, immediately noticed, has been subsequently corrected," the broadcaster added. Several versions of the Interior Ministry's election results page archived throughout Sunday do not show Le Pen's total votes surpassing 13.3 million.

## Lawmaker: Sri Lanka president agrees to remove brother as PM

By KRISHAN FRANCIS Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lanka's president has agreed to replace his older brother as prime minister in a proposed interim government to solve a political impasse caused by the country's worst economic crisis in decades, a prominent lawmaker said Friday.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa agreed that a national council will be appointed to name a new prime minister and Cabinet comprised of all parties in Parliament, lawmaker Maithripala Sirisena said after meeting with the president.

Sirisena, who was president before Rajapaksa, was a governing party lawmaker before defecting earlier this month along with nearly 40 other legislators.

However, Rohan Weliwita, a spokesperson for Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, said the president has not communicated any intent to remove the prime minister and a decision will be announced if such a step is taken.

Sri Lanka is near bankruptcy and has announced it is suspending payments on its foreign loans until it negotiates a rescue plan with International Monetary Fund. It has to repay \$7 billion in foreign debt this year, and \$25 billion by 2026. Its foreign reserves stand at less than \$1 billion.

The foreign exchange shortage has severely limited imports, forcing people to wait in long lines to buy essentials such as food, fuel, cooking gas and medicine.

President Rajapaksa and his family have dominated nearly every aspect of life in Sri Lanka for most of the last 20 years. Protesters who have crowded the streets since March hold them responsible for the crisis and are demanding that they quit politics.

On Thursday, businesses were closed, teachers absent and public transportation interrupted as Sri Lankans joined a general strike to pressure the president to step down.

Rajapaksa earlier reshuffled his Cabinet and offered a unity government in an attempt to quell the protests, but opposition parties refused to join a government headed by the Rajapaksa brothers.

Both the president and prime minister have held on to their positions, while three other Rajapaksa family members resigned from the Cabinet earlier in April in what appeared an attempt to pacify angry protesters.

The weak, divided opposition has been unable to form a majority and take control of Parliament on its own.

## Ford recalls Explorer SUVs that can roll away while in park

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DETROIT (AP) — Ford Motor Co. is recalling more than a quarter-million Explorer SUVs in the U.S. because they can roll away unexpectedly while shifted into park.

The recall covers certain 2020 through 2022 Explorers with 2.3-liter engines, as well as 3-liter and 3.3-liter hybrids and the 3-liter ST. Also included are 2020 and 2021 Explorer Police hybrids and those with 3.3-liter gas engines.

Documents posted Friday by U.S. safety regulators say that a rear axle mounting bolt can fracture and cause the drive shaft to disconnect. If that happens, the SUVs can roll away even if they are placed in park gear, without the parking brake on.

The documents say Ford has 235 warranty claims due to the problem. The company says it knows of no crashes or injuries.

Depending on the model, dealers will replace a bushing and the axle cover, or they will update electronic parking brake software. Owners will be notified by mail starting June 6.

## New gas pipeline boosts Europe's bid to ease Russian supply

By DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Mountainous and remote, the Greek-Bulgaria border once formed the southern corner of the Iron Curtain. Today, it's where the European Union is redrawing the region's energy map to ease its heavy reliance on Russian natural gas.

A new pipeline — built during the COVID-19 pandemic, tested and due to start commercial operation in June — would ensure that large volumes of gas flow between the two countries in both directions to generate electricity, fuel industry and heat homes.

The energy link takes on greater importance following Moscow's decision this week to cut off natural gas supplies to Poland and Bulgaria over a demand for payments in rubles stemming from Western sanctions over the war of Ukraine.

The 180-kilometer (110-mile) pipeline project is the first of several planned gas interconnectors that would give eastern European Union members and countries hoping to join the 27-nation bloc access to the global gas market.

In the short term, it's Bulgaria's backup.

The new pipeline connection, called the Gas Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria, will give the country access to ports in neighboring Greece that are importing liquefied natural gas, or LNG, and also will bring gas from Azerbaijan through a new pipeline system that ends in Italy.

It's one of many efforts as EU members scramble to edit their energy mixes, with some reverting back to emissions-heavy coal while also planning expanded output from renewables.

Germany, the world's biggest buyer of Russian energy, is looking to build LNG import terminals that would take years. Italy, another top Russian gas importer, has reached deals with Algeria, Azerbaijan, Angola and Congo for gas supplies.

The European Union wants to reduce its dependence on Russian oil and gas by two-thirds this year and to eliminate it completely over five years through alternative sources, the use of wind and solar power, and conservation.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is likely to accelerate changes in the EU's long-term strategy as the bloc adapts to energy that is more expensive but also more integrated among member nations, said Simone Tagliapietra, an energy expert at the Brussels-based think tank Bruegel.

"It's a new world," he said. "And in this new world, it's clear that Russia doesn't want to be part of an international order as we think of it."

Tagliapietra added: "The strategy — particularly by Germany — over the last 50 years was always one of engaging with Russia on energy. ... But given what we are seeing in Ukraine and given Russia's view of international relations, it's not the kind of country with which we would like to do business."

EU policymakers argue that while Eastern European members are among the most dependent on Russian gas, the size of their markets makes the problem manageable. Bulgaria imported 90% of its gas from

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Russia but only consumes 3 billion cubic meters annually — 30 times less than lead consumer Germany, according to 2020 data from EU statistics agency Eurostat.

The Greece-Bulgaria pipeline will complement the existing European network, much of which dates to the Soviet era, when Moscow sought badly needed funds for its faltering economy and Western suppliers to help build its pipelines.

The link will run between the northeastern Greek city of Komotini and Stara Zagora, in central Bulgaria, and will give Bulgaria and neighbors with new grid connections access to the expanding global gas market.

That includes a connection with the newly built Trans Adriatic Pipeline, which carries gas from Azerbaijan, and suppliers of liquefied natural gas that arrives by ship, likely to include Qatar, Algeria and the United States.

As many as eight additional interconnectors could be built in Eastern Europe, reaching as far as Ukraine and Austria.

The 240 million-euro (\$250 million) pipeline will carry 3 billion cubic meters of gas per year, with an option to be expanded to 5 billion. It received funding from Bulgaria, Greece and the EU, and has strong political support from Brussels and the United States.

On the ground, the project faced multiple holdups because of supply chain snags during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Receiving specialized parts and moving personnel after construction got underway in early 2020 soon became increasingly difficult, said Antonis Mitzalis, executive director of Greek contractor AVAX, which oversaw the project.

Construction of the pipeline finished in early April, he said, while work and testing at two metering stations and software installation are in the final stages.

"We had a sequence in mind. But the fact that some materials did not arrive made us rework that sequence, sometimes with a cost effect," Mitzalis said.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis missed a tour of the site last month after contracting COVID-19. He spoke Wednesday with his Bulgarian counterpart, Kiril Petkov, to provide assurances of Greek support.

"Bulgaria and Greece will continue to work together for energy security and diversification — of strategic importance for both countries and the region," Petkov later tweeted. "We both are confident for the successful completion of the IGB on time."

## Today in History: April 30, George Washington's oath

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, April 30, the 120th day of 2022. There are 245 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 30, 1945, as Soviet troops approached his Berlin bunker, Adolf Hitler took his own life along with that of his wife of one day, Eva Braun.

On this date:

In 1789, George Washington took the oath of office in New York as the first president of the United States.

In 1803, the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from France for 60 million francs, the equivalent of about \$15 million.

In 1812, Louisiana became the 18th state of the Union.

In 1900, engineer John Luther "Casey" Jones of the Illinois Central Railroad died in a train wreck near Vaughan, Mississippi, after staying at the controls in a successful effort to save the passengers.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman signed a resolution officially confirming the name of Hoover Dam, which had also come to be known as "Boulder Dam."

In 1958, Britain's Life Peerages Act 1958 allowed women to become members of the House of Lords.

In 1970, President Richard Nixon announced the U.S. was sending troops into Cambodia, an action that sparked widespread protest.

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In 1973, President Richard Nixon announced the resignations of top aides H.R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, Attorney General Richard G. Kleindienst and White House counsel John Dean, who was actually fired.

In 1975, the Vietnam War ended as the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon fell to Communist forces.

In 1983, blues singer and guitarist Muddy Waters died in Westmont, Illinois, at age 68.

In 1993, top-ranked women's tennis player Monica Seles was stabbed in the back during a match in Hamburg, Germany, by a man who described himself as a fan of second-ranked German player Steffi Graf. (The man, convicted of causing grievous bodily harm, was given a suspended sentence.)

In 2004, Arabs expressed outrage at graphic photographs of naked Iraqi prisoners being humiliated by U.S. military police; President George W. Bush condemned the mistreatment of prisoners, saying "that's not the way we do things in America."

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda (yoh-shih-HEE'-koh NOH'-duh), meeting at the White House, decried aggressive acts from North Korea, including a recent failed rocket launch, and vowed to maintain a unified front against such provocations. A ferry carrying more than 300 people capsized in a river in northeast India, killing some 100 people and leaving about as many missing.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump said after North Korea's latest failed rocket launch that communist leader Kim Jong Un would eventually develop better missiles, and that "we can't allow it to happen"; in a taped interview broadcast on CBS' "Face the Nation," the president would not discuss the possibility of military action.

One year ago: The Transportation Security Administration said it was keeping in place a requirement that people wear masks on planes and all other forms of public transit because of COVID-19. Disneyland in Southern California reopened its gates after a 13-month closure caused by the coronavirus; capacity was limited for the reopening, and only California residents were allowed in. A stampede at a religious festival in northern Israel left 45 ultra-Orthodox Jews dead and about 150 others injured.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Willie Nelson is 89. Actor Burt Young is 82. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden is 76. Movie director Allan Arkush is 74. Actor Perry King is 74. Singer-musician Wayne Kramer is 74. Singer Merrill Osmond is 69. Movie director Jane Campion is 68. Movie director Lars von Trier is 66. Former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper is 63. Actor Paul Gross is 63. Basketball Hall of Famer Isiah Thomas is 61. Actor Adrian Pasdar is 57. Rock singer J.R. Richards (Dishwalla) is 55. Rapper Turbo B (Snap) is 55. Rock musician Clark Vogeler is 53. R&B singer Chris "Choc" Dalrymple (Soul For Real) is 51. Rock musician Chris Henderson (3 Doors Down) is 51. Country singer Carolyn Dawn Johnson is 51. Actor Lisa Dean Ryan is 50. R&B singer Akon is 49. R&B singer Jeff Timmons (98 Degrees) is 49. Actor Johnny Galecki is 47. Actor Sam Heughan is 42. Actor Kunal Nayyar is 41. Rapper Lloyd Banks is 40. Actor Kirsten Dunst is 40. Actor Dianna Agron is 36. Country singer Brandon Lancaster is 33. Rapper/producer Travis Scott is 31.