

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 8 - MOTHER'S DAY

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/Milestones, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Bethesda worship, 2 p.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

Methodist: Conde Worship at 9 a.m., Sunday school at 10 a.m., Groton worship at 11 a.m. (Sunday school sings at Groton service)

St. John's: Bible study, 8 a.m.; Worship, 9 a.m.; Graduation reception, 10 a.m.; Sunday school, 10 a.m.; Zion worship, 11 a.m.

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

## Monday, May 9

Senior Menu: Goulash, green beans, apple crisp, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, corn.

6:30 a.m.: Emmanuel Bible Study

10 a.m.: Girls Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course

3:30 p.m.: Junior High Track Meet at Aberdeen Roncalli

**Groton Daily Independent**

**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**

**Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460**



7 p.m.: School Board Meeting  
1 p.m.: Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center

## Tuesday, May 10

Senior Menu: Hot turkey combination, mashed potatoes and gravy, 7-layer salad, apple sauce, cookie.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Chicken strips, tater tots.

9:30 a.m.: Methodist Bible Study

6 p.m.: High School Baseball at Redfield (V/JV)

7 p.m.: All School Play at GHS Gym.

7 p.m.: Emmanuel Church Council



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WANTED!**

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Store**

**Part time cashier & part time deli.  
Deli must be 18 years of age or older.  
Apply at Ken's in Groton.**

**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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**#532 in a series**

## **Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller**

At midday today, our seven-day, new-case average was up to 65,866, worst it's been in around 10 weeks, which takes us well back into the winter surge. Even with the fact that the vast majority of new cases go unreported these days, we're still experiencing a 54 percent increase in reported new cases over the past two weeks. Pandemic total's up to 81,545,992.

Hospitalizations continue to rise as well. The seven-day average is at 17,499, a 17 percent increase over two weeks. You will note the increase in hospitalizations, which typically lags new cases by a couple of weeks, is still well below the new-case increase. Going back two weeks, we were looking at 54 percent for new cases, which is far above today's 17 percent for hospitalizations. There's a similar pattern with deaths of a lag (on about a three-week delay), and I anticipate a smaller surge in deaths than in hospitalizations or new cases. Although deaths have not yet started to increase this time around, they will soon. The seven-day average is currently at 375, which is just a three percent decline, and that percentage has been dropping for weeks, preparatory to turning into growth. I fully expect the daily average to begin to rise in the next several days. Pandemic total sits at 995,017.

The general trend that Omicron and its offspring appear to be causing milder disease as we go along seems to be holding. On current evidence, that looks like a combination of a decline in the virulence of the pathogen, largely due to decreased ability to set up housekeeping in the lungs, and reasonable general levels of immunological protection; however given the virus's improving immune evasion, I'm betting mostly on the virulence thing.

We have two new subvariants to think about, BA.4 and BA.5. They're running through the population in South Africa, accounting for some 60 percent of new cases in that country—news flash to those who care only about what's happening in the US—and seem likely to be able to evade our prior immunity, whether from infection or from vaccination. BA.4 has shown up in 15 countries and 10 US states; BA.5 has been reported in 13 countries and five states. South Africa is experiencing quadrupling case rates over two weeks along with more than doubling test positivity and increased hospitalizations in the past week, and that is a possible harbinger of what the rest of the world might soon face if this follows established patterns. However, we're not sure it will: Dr. Kaita Patel, a physician who led the pandemic preparedness response to H1N1 influenza several years ago, told the New York Times, "We're at an awkward global moment where the past can't really predict the future." So there's a lot we don't know.

Here's what we think we do know so far: These two subvariants have a growth advantage over BA.2. This appears to be due to mutations which enable them to evade immunity developed as a result of infection with the original Omicron variant, BA.1; in fact their key advantage seems to be the ability to infect people who've recently had BA.1 infections. There are only two significant mutations [at 452 which codes for part of the receptor binding domain (RBD) and 486, mutation at which has generally done more harm to the virus than good, so go figure], so this ability to evade immunity is sort of surprising and highly worrisome. In South Africa where almost everyone is estimated to have some sort of protection against Covid-19 but only 30 percent are vaccinated, the virus is surging—nearly 4000 new infections just on Sunday with 22 percent positivity rates; unvaccinated people with a history of BA.1 infection are getting sick. Additionally, a small South African study involving lab tests on blood from just 39 people previously infected by BA.1 showed an eightfold decrease in antibody production when they were exposed to BA.4 and BA.5 compared with the response seen after BA.1 exposure. Those with prior infections from earlier variants are, likewise, not well-protected. Vaccinated people showed something of a decrease in protection, but it was much smaller, pointing to a conclusion that vaccination is still more protective than infection—how much more remains to be seen. Those with both prior infection and vaccination seem to be the best protected; they may get sick, but they're unlikely to require hospitalization. What we don't know yet is whether these new guys cause milder or more severe illness and also whether these subvariants are going to be able to cause a surge in countries other than South Africa. As for severity, there are some signs the virus is continuing to get milder with time; it doesn't seem to be infecting the lower respiratory tract (i.e., the lungs)

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as well as earlier versions did—part of a longer trend. With respect to the question about surges in other countries, we're probably about to get answers because these new subvariants have been showing up in many states in the US and are clearly circulating at low levels in this country. Sigal does say, "I haven't seen early symptoms of respiratory distress, the major COVID-specific symptom that makes this disease so dangerous. It doesn't feel nice, but there's less chance of dying." I don't see this being much comfort to those who are immunocompromised or otherwise at risk, but on a societal level, it's something.

As of this week, we've identified BA.4 in 10 US states, the first as early as March 30, and sequenced BA.5 in five states, the earliest of those on March 29. They're not high in frequency at the moment, but are both listed as Variants of Concern (VOC). If they're able to spread widely and/or quickly here, an issue on which we don't have enough evidence to make a call, they'll have a chance to demonstrate it. Andy Pekosz, virologist and professor at Johns Hopkins University told CNN he wouldn't be surprised if they are able to spread; and Alex Sigal, professor at the Africa Health Research Institute in South Africa, told Fortune magazine that a new wave is "a strong possibility," although he doesn't expect a very severe one. We'll wait and see.

Meanwhile the current surge in cases in the US appears to be largely due to a different subvariant lineage from Omicron called BA.2.12.1, one that so far has turned up in just 22 countries, although the majority of cases have been in the US—and none so far in South Africa. We'd been thinking this one was around 25 percent more transmissible than BA.1, but as we go along it's looking more like 50 percent. I realize we're splitting hairs here on something that can rip through a population, but we're approaching measles territory. Since their paths don't seem to have crossed yet, I'm not sure how this one will fare in a head-to-head with BA.4 and BA.5 or against our current immunity; but I have an uneasy feeling we'll have plenty of opportunity to find out.

A new laboratory study out of China available in preprint, which means it has not yet been peer-reviewed, indicates BA.2 sublineages (which include BA.2.12.1 and BA.2.13) show increased binding at ACE2 (the primary binding site for this virus) and that BA.4 and BA.5 show weaker binding activity, but that BA.4 and BA.5 show stronger ability to evade neutralizing antibodies. What's more, this evasion may apply to vaccinated as well as convalescent individuals. This team has assembled some evidence the rapid and wide spread of BA.1, the original Omicron variant, may have driven the mutations which now appear to show such evasion. Could be our acceptance of runaway spread starting early last winter may have directly landed us in the spot we now occupy. Not a big surprise to those who've been looking.

And then there's XE, that hybrid of BA.1 and BA.2. In the UK, it's showing around a 10 percent transmissibility advantage over BA.2; the data are still sparse, so this could change. Cases have also shown up in Thailand, so we'll see how it fares there. I'm not sure what any of this means, but it's a concern until we can show it is not. We do know that worldwide BA.2 has declined from 70 percent of cases to 62 percent in just a week as one or another subvariant or hybrid has moved in.

From early on, we'd been relying on our prior experience with other coronaviruses and our earliest data from this pandemic to declare this virus isn't changing much. That's out the window now. The massive number of new cases we've seen worldwide for upwards of two years have given it an extraordinary opportunity to evolve, and as long as it continues to spread at these high rates, it will continue to evolve further. Once it started to gather beneficial (for the virus) mutations, these have accumulated at a high rate.

Last time we talked, we discussed the possibility some folks had raised that the FDA might delay considering vaccine findings for very young children until both vaccines, Moderna's and Pfizer/BioNTech's, were ready for prime time. At that time, I mentioned many experts thought this was unlikely; and on Tuesday the agency confirmed they're not waiting. If they have all of the data from either vaccine more than a week apart from the other's data submission, they're going to move. This is a good thing.

We talked earlier about S-gene target failure (SGTF), a mutation that renders a detectably different result in the PCR test that make the Omicron variant identifiable without genomic sequencing. In mid-March, I wrote this about SGTF:

"Meanwhile, if anything can be said to be good about Omicron, it is that we can again relatively easily differentiate between the two sublineages circulating using the PCR test. Remember back when Omicron

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(which was BA.1) first popped up and scientists discovered it was easy to spot from the PCR data because it caused S-gene target failure (SGTF)? That means the spike protein (S) genes don't amplify in the PCR in the same way nucleocapsid or 'viral body' genes do, so specimens showing N, but not S, amplification could be identified as Omicron. Anything else was Delta [the immediately prior dominant variant]. And then, when BA.2 came along, turns out it does not show SGTF, which is how it got its 'stealth variant' nickname—because we couldn't identify this Omicron sublineage without sequencing. Well, here's the thing: Now Delta is effectively extinct and the only viruses circulating BA.1 and BA.2, so we can once again use PCR results to spot our sublineages: If there's SGTF, then we're looking at BA.1, and if there is not, we have BA.2. That's handy because it's faster, easier, and cheaper to get these data from PCR tests than it is to sequence genomes; the upshot is that we're getting sublineage identification from a higher proportion of lab tests done."

Well, now BA.4 shows SGTF again. (Yes, it makes me sort of dizzy too.) We don't yet know what this subvariant will mean to us in the US. BA.4 has a growth advantage in South Africa, but we do not know that it will offer the same advantage here. We are thinking at this time that immunity against BA.1 and BA.2 will confer some protection against these new sublineages; but no one knows for sure, and there is some controversy about the point. Meanwhile, this quirk will help us to spot BA.4 if it does become a thing, which is handy.

We have a monoclonal antibody which seems to be having an effect in cases of long-Covid, or post-acute Covid-19 syndrome (PACS). Leronlimab is boosting immunity and reducing symptoms in some patients according to a paper published last week in *Clinical Infectious Diseases* by a team from multiple centers in Florida, Georgia, Washington, California, and Oregon. You will recall that a monoclonal antibody is a laboratory-synthesized antibody produced by a clone of immunologically-competent cells which all respond to the same antigen; that means the result is a highly-purified preparation of just one kind of antibody. The researchers report that "[t]hese findings suggest an unexpected mechanism of abnormal immune downmodulation in some persons that is normalized by leronlimab." I cannot access the article, so I'm working from a summary here; but it appears this monoclonal antibody can alleviate long-Covid symptoms by enhancing the immune response in those whose responses have been suppressed as a result of infection. As with so much of the current research, there's a long way to go; but these findings are promising.

The findings build on the understanding that at least some long-Covid symptoms result from persistent inflammation that results from an overactive cytokine response. People with long-Covid often have elevated levels of cytokines that cause inflammation. If we can normalize the immune response, perhaps we can tamp down long-Covid as well, at least in some people. Leronlimab blocks the cytokine receptor CCR5 expressed by immune cells and thereby reduces the levels of cytokines.

In a study of 55 participants with long-Covid, one group received leronlimab and another a saline placebo over eight weeks; then 24 symptoms were tracked for eight weeks. While not everyone experienced improvements over the period of the study, participants showed an increase in immune cells expressing CCR5. The thinking is that long-Covid may be associated with immune system downregulation, and that this monoclonal can stabilize CCR5 expression and upregulate the immune functions that are suppressed in long-Covid. Additionally, leronlimab increased the number of sensitized T cells, which is going to be important in the scheme of things. All of this helps us to understand long-Covid and how to help.

I've been reading a lot of papers reporting on studies of various combinations of viral variants in this or that vaccine. The work is pretty dense, and I don't know that it would be particularly productive to report all the fine details right now. I do want to let you know though that there is a number of these combinations which are looking very good for producing a broader immunity, some that appear to cover all of the known variants, which may mean they're going to work pretty well against future variants too. Because we know the window for getting something—or several somethings—approved in time for a potential fall upsurge in infection rates (not that we're not in one now or anything) is closing soon, I'm going to wait on most of the completely novel stuff to see what makes it to the FDA this next month or so and report on those which rise to the top rather than spend a lot of time now sorting out the ones that don't.

I will report on the established brands, and Moderna has made an announcement about their reformulated

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bivalent vaccine, the one we talked about just a couple of weeks ago. You may recall that it was looking pretty good in early trials. On Sunday's Face the Nation, Chief Medical Officer Paul Burton said they expect to have initial data on this vaccine in the second quarter of the year; that would be by the end of June. This pushes the envelope for producing a sufficient supply for a fall campaign, but he addressed this too: "We're confident by the fall of this year we should have large amounts of that new booster vaccine that will protect against Omicron and other variants." I'm not sure whether he means they intend to produce a bunch of it on spec or they think they can produce huge quantities in the few short months they'll have to do it after an FDA authorization. I'd guess by now—after what we've all been through—they're pretty darned good at rapid production, so that could be it.

Something we've talked about beginning in February is a monoclonal antibody, bebtelovimab, which was looking like it showed activity against the Omicron variant. Given all our earlier monoclonals have failed in that regard and are no longer in use, this was pretty good news. The FDA approved emergency use authorization (EUA) for the drug based on phase 2 trials, that is, once it was established as safe, but before definite evidence of benefit had accumulated; that's how hard-up we've been for therapeutics against this variant.

Of course, the research continued, and we now have a paper published last week in Cell Reports from scientists at AbCellera and Eli Lilly (the companies developing and producing the drug) and the NIH which addresses its effectiveness in current circumstances. The news is good. The authors say the drug "potently neutralizes SARS-CoV-2, Omicron, BA.2 Omicron, and Delta variants" and has "no loss of potency against currently circulating variants." They point out that the business end of this antibody binds to a spot on the virus that rarely mutates, which may make it pretty resistant to the mutations in further variants too. Their conclusions include that the breadth of neutralization activity and the fact that the binding site is "relatively conserved" (not very susceptible to mutation) "suggest that LY-CoV1404 [bebtelovimab] has the potential to be an effective therapeutic to treat all known variants." Since it's already authorized for use, I think you can have some confidence that, if it is offered to you as a therapeutic, it will help; it's certainly worth trying. More data should be coming from the continuing clinical trials soon as well.

I read an interesting paper from a group of German and Argentinian scientists published in Pharmaceuticals who took a look at rattlesnake venom in a search for antiviral activity that might be useful in treating Covid-19. This isn't as far-fetched as it might at first sound; turns out there is a whole list of drugs derived from one sort or another of venom. I don't know much about those other drugs, but if you think about SARS-CoV-2 and venom, it makes some sense. Once the snake injects it with a bite, venom needs to act quickly to disable whatever's threatening the snake. That means the venom has to get into cells and be able to withstand the cell's attempts to degrade it; and it so happens one constituent in rattlesnake venom is a protease inhibitor, that is, a substance that prevents enzymes from breaking down foreign proteins like snake venom. Now, way back when we first talked about targets for antivirals, one thing we talked about is the fact that the virus's genome is all in one circular RNA molecule, so when our cells produce protein according to viral instructions, all of the proteins are produced in a single long piece. None of them can assume their final shape or function until the individual proteins are snipped apart by proteases, which makes those essential proteases good targets for an antiviral. If you can shut those down, you can stop the virus cold. And so venom's protease inhibitors are a pretty attractive element here.

Now this was preliminary work investigating the mechanism of action for this protease inhibitor and to test it against the main protease of SARS-CoV-2 to see whether it appears to have activity, but the early news is good. From their conclusions, "Our results demonstrated the promising uses of peptide inhibitors (D-CDP1 and D-CDP7) designed from a polypeptide of snake venom." They cited these two peptide inhibitors' cell penetration properties, high stability and specificity, and selectivity against the target protease as particularly useful factors and encourage further study. This is a first step of a long process with plenty of ways that can fail as we go along; but this is the sort of work that leads us to new drugs when things work out. I'll be interested to see where it goes.

The Pan American Health Organization, the WHO's regional arm that covers this hemisphere, says Covid-19 has become a leading cause of death in pregnant women. This was true for 2021 and appears to remain

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true so far for 2022 as well. While these results are still preliminary, they seem to cover Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru; other countries' data are expected to fall in line with what we have so far. Big worry since pregnant people are one of the more resistant holdout populations with respect to vaccination.

Remember Katalin Karikó? We talked about her long, long ago—the lonely pioneer in RNA research who never knew how long the current job would last because she was studying something no one wanted to know about. Her work was precarious until a couple of biotech companies took a flyer on her and funded her work. Those companies were Moderna and BioNTech who, at the time, wanted to make an mRNA-based flu vaccine. If you weren't with us back when we met up with her, this is one story you're going to want to go back and read—about the value of stubborn refusal to give up with a nod to the value of basic research. You can find it in my Update #410 posted April 8, 2021, at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/4602832576399779>.

At any rate, Karikó's contribution to Covid-19 vaccine development has been recognized with the awarding of the 2022 Solvay Prize, an award given every other year for scientific discoveries in chemistry that have the potential to enhance human progress. This is a very big deal. I enjoyed reading this about the prize in Nature: "Karikó says that she will spend the €300,000 prize money on furthering research into mRNA therapeutics: 'I am 67 years old; I won't start changing my hobbies. My hobby is science.'"

With that we're finished for the day. Keep yourself well, and we'll talk again.

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*Weber Landscaping  
Greenhouse*  
**204 N State St., Groton**

Opening  
for the  
season  
on Friday,  
May 6th!



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New Planters!**



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**Opening May 9th at the Groton Community Center**

**Mondays: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

**Tuesdays: 4 p.m. to 8 p.m**

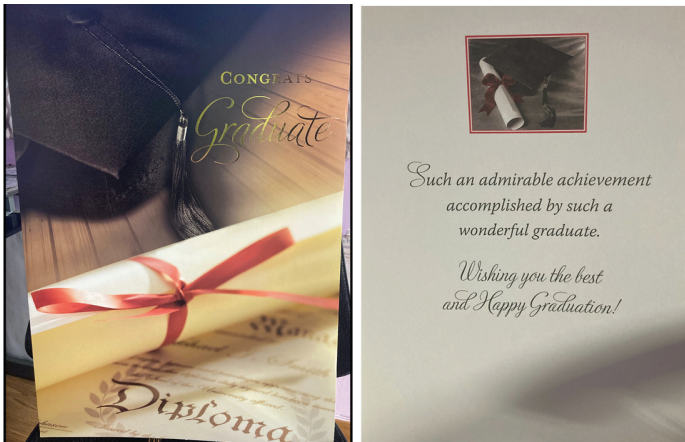
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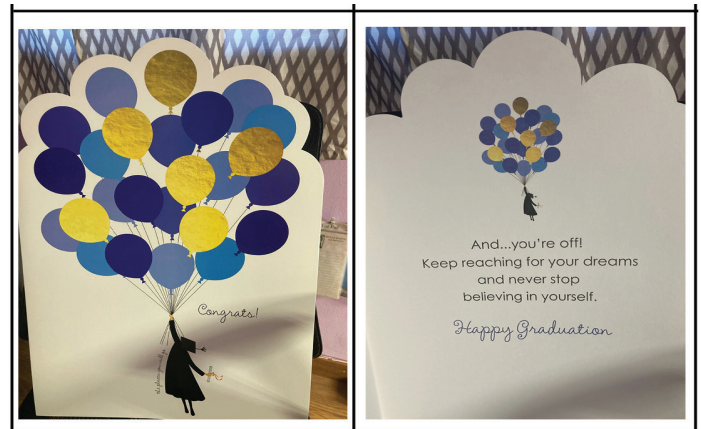
## Jumbo Graduation Cards

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

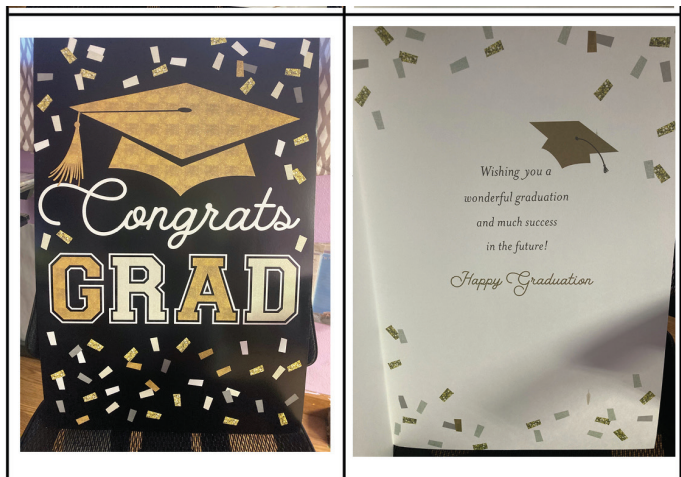
Can now be ordered on-line at [397news.com](http://397news.com) - Link on Black Bar  
Or Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460 or Tina at 605-397-7285  
to reserve your card(s)



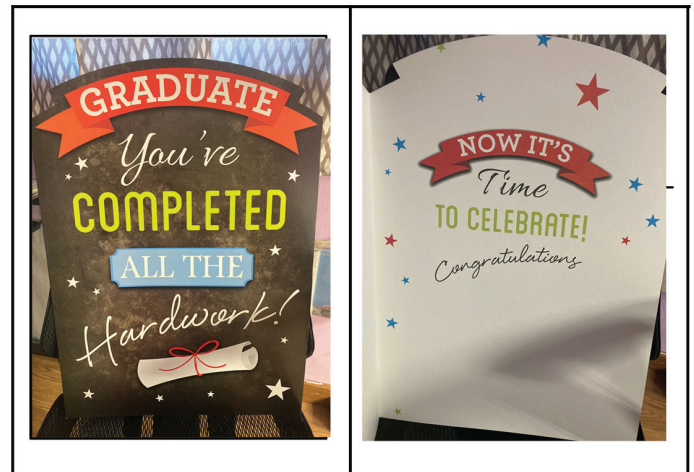
**50-9903-C**  
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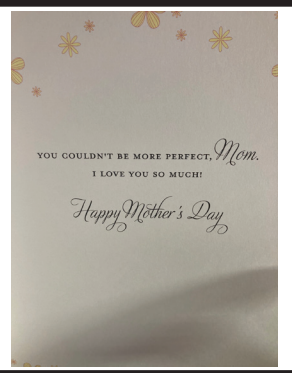
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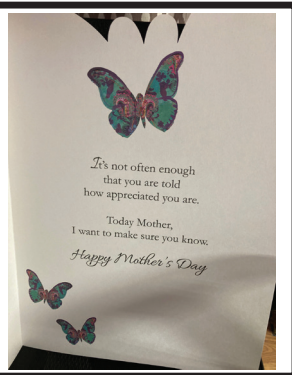
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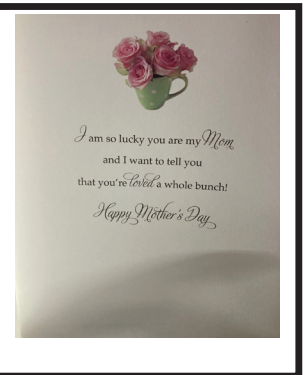
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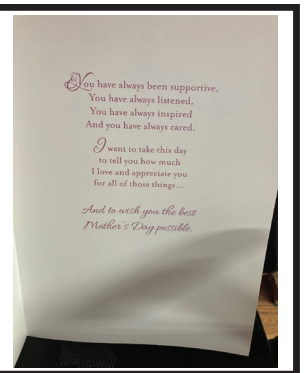
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#2 - \$5



#3 - \$6



#4 - \$10 - 45"



#5 - \$5



#6 - \$6



\$3.50 - 9" on a stick



#7 - \$10 - 36"



#8 - \$5



#9 - \$5



#10 - \$5



#11 - \$5



#12 - \$5



#13 - \$8 35"



#14 - \$5



#15 - \$5



#16 - \$5



#17 - \$5



#18 - \$5



#19 - \$5



#20 - \$5

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

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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



*"As We Forgive Our Debtors"*  
by Max Pechstein (1921)

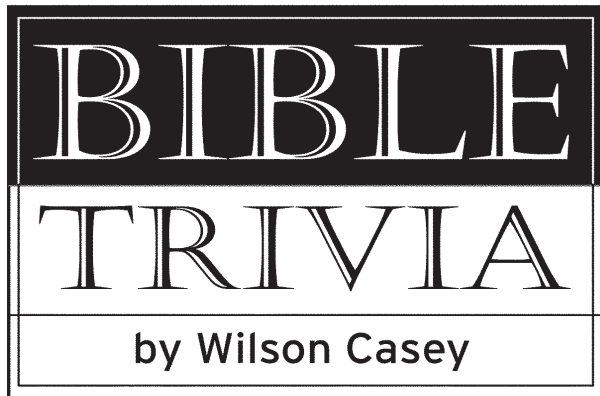
*Be kind to one another,  
compassionate, forgiving each  
other, just as God in Christ  
also has forgiven you.*

🌀 Ephesians 4:32 🌀

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THE FIRST TIME ELON MUSK NOTICED THE MOON...





by Healthy Exchanges

## No-Bake Creamy Strawberry Pie

---  
This is almost like whiling away the hours in a strawberry patch and indulging to your heart's content.

- 1 (4-serving) package sugar-free vanilla cook-and-serve pudding mix
- 1 (4-serving) package sugar-free strawberry gelatin
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup reduced-calorie whipped topping
- 2 cups finely chopped fresh strawberries
- 1 (6-ounce) purchased graham cracker pie crust

1. In a medium saucepan, combine dry pudding mix, dry gelatin and water. Cook over medium heat until mixture thickens and starts to boil, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Place saucepan on a wire rack and allow to cool for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

2. Fold in whipped topping. Add strawberries. Mix gently just to combine. Evenly spoon mixture into pie crust. Refrigerate at least 2 hours. Makes 8 servings.

\* Each serving equals: 141 calories, 5 g fat, 2 g protein, 22 g carbohydrate., 200 mg sodium, 2 g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 1/2 Starch/Carbohydrate, 1

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1. Is the book of 1 Timothy in the Old Testament or New Testament or neither?

2. Who saw an angel with a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem? *David, Jonah, Paul, Delilah*

3. From Joshua 14, which spy was awarded a piece of Canaan? *Gaddi, Ammiel, Sethur, Caleb*

4. In what body of water was Jesus baptized? *Dead Sea, River Jordan, Sea of Galilee, River Cherith*

5. Shifting your debts is robbing Peter to pay whom? *Piper, Paul, John, Levi*

6. What's the last word of the Old Testament (KJV)? *Father, Amen, Forgiveness, Cursew*

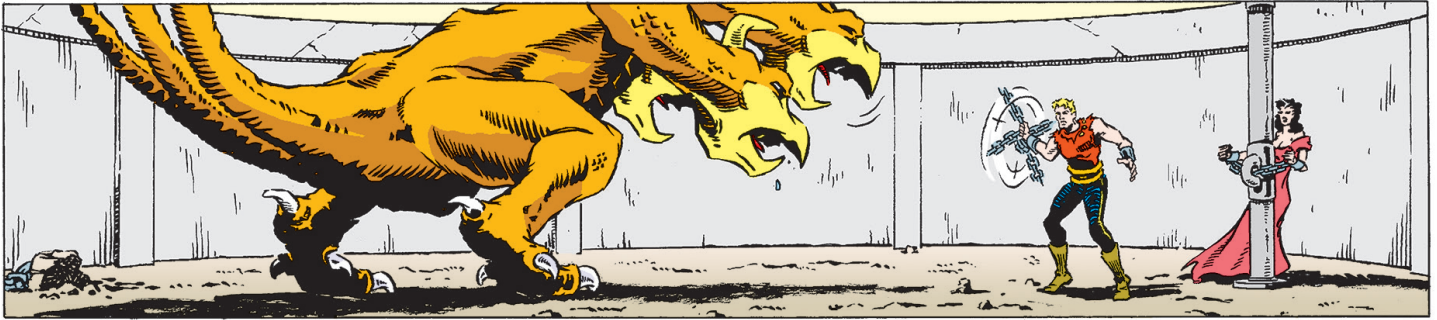
ANSWERS: 1) New; 2) David; 3) Caleb; 4) River Jordan; 5) Paul; 6) Curse (Malachi 4:6)

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

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# Groton Daily Independent

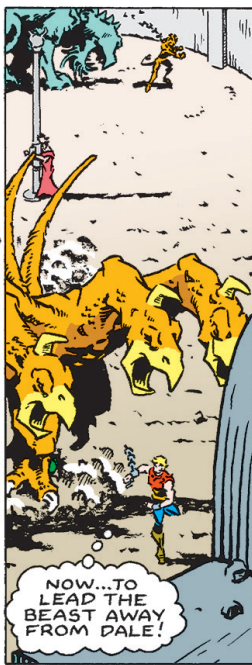
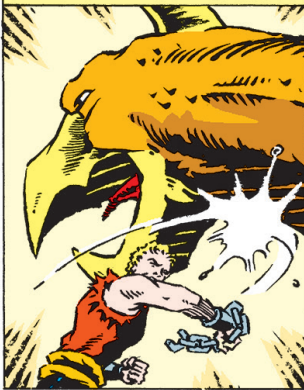
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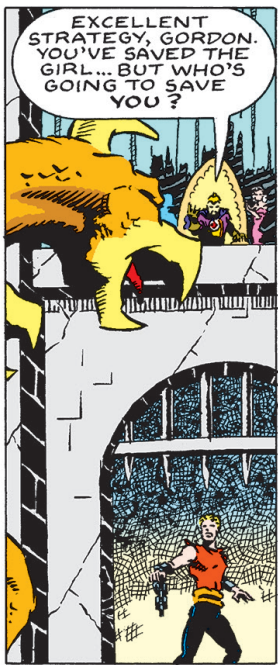
## FLASH GORDON

5-1  
By JIM KEEFE

AS THE TRICARNOSAUR LUNGES - FLASH STRIKES!



NOW...TO LEAD THE BEAST AWAY FROM DALE!



EXCELLENT STRATEGY, GORDON. YOU'VE SAVED THE GIRL... BUT WHO'S GOING TO SAVE YOU?



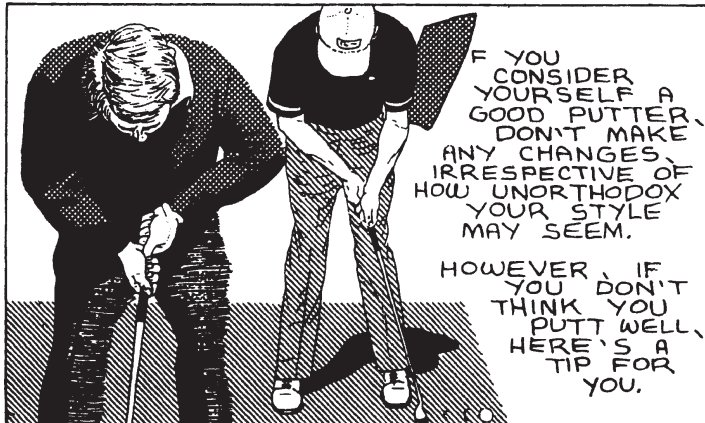
MRRRAHHH!

USING HIS SHACKLES AS MAKESHIFT REINS, VULTAN CHARGES...

IT CAN'T BE...

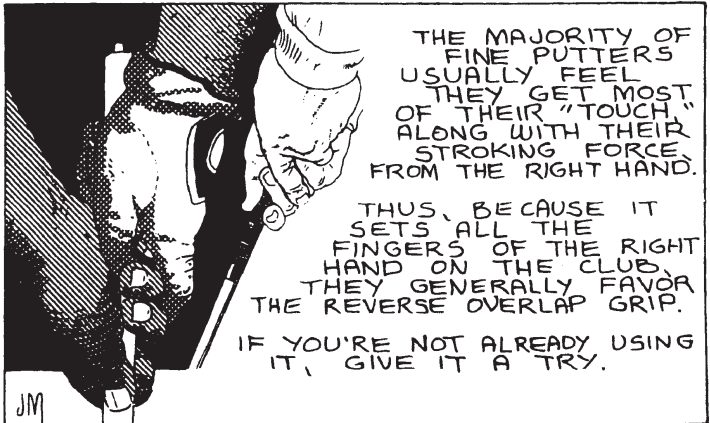
...WITH EARTH-SHATTERING RESULTS!

## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



IF YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A GOOD PUTTER, DON'T MAKE ANY CHANGES, IRRESPECTIVE OF HOW UNORTHODOX YOUR STYLE MAY SEEM.

HOWEVER, IF YOU DON'T THINK YOU PUTT WELL, HERE'S A TIP FOR YOU.



THE MAJORITY OF FINE PUTTERS USUALLY FEEL THEY GET MOST OF THEIR "TOUCH" ALONG WITH THEIR STROKING FORCE, FROM THE RIGHT HAND.

THUS, BECAUSE IT SETS ALL THE FINGERS OF THE RIGHT HAND ON THE CLUB, THEY GENERALLY FAVOR THE REVERSE OVERLAP GRIP.

IF YOU'RE NOT ALREADY USING IT, GIVE IT A TRY.

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## Cologuard Test Is Worth Risk of a False Positive



---  
DEAR DR. ROACH: I am a 77-year-old man in good health. At my recent annual physical exam, my physician ordered a Cologuard kit to be sent to me to screen for colorectal disease. I have never had symptoms of disease or problems with any part of my gastrointestinal tract. I had two colonoscopies at different times several years ago, with negative results. When I got the kit, I read that the Cologuard test could result in false positives, with an increased risk of false positives for persons over age 75. A positive test result requires a follow-up colonoscopy, which is also riskier for elderly patients. Since I am in good health with no symptoms of any disease, I decided I did not want to risk a false positive result from the test, which would require a follow-up colonoscopy. Did I make the right decision? -- E.G.

ANSWER: Cologuard is a brand of test that looks at DNA in stool for evidence of cancer. Certain DNA mutations are highly suggestive of cancer. In addition, Cologuard does an immunochemical test looking for blood. Because it combines these two techniques, Cologuard is more sensitive than only a test looking for blood. Compared with colonoscopy, Cologuard is about 92% sensitive in finding cancers, meaning it will miss about 8%. With improved sensitivity comes a lack of specificity, which means you could have a false positive result. The Cologuard can say that you have an abnormality when a colonoscopy would indicate normal. For 45% of people with a positive Cologuard test, no abnormalities will be found upon colonoscopy. You are right that false positives are more prevalent in older individuals.

There are two reasons that I think the Cologuard is still a reasonable choice, although it isn't as good as colonoscopy. The first is that I continue to recommend a screening test for healthy 77-year-old men, and although colonoscopy is my first choice, a normal Cologuard test prevents a need for colonoscopy, and a false positive would lead to the same colonoscopy you would have gotten anyway (although there probably is more anxiety after a false positive test). The second is that a person with an abnormal Cologuard and a normal colonoscopy may be at risk for an abnormality that wasn't found on colonoscopy. A study looking at people in this category found a 25% risk of abnormality on follow-up colonoscopy, if the Cologuard was abnormal again one to two years later.

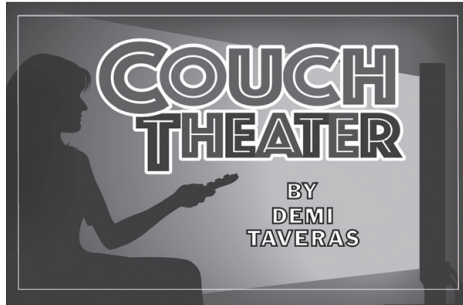
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DEAR DR. ROACH: I am 35 years old. I have experienced fluttering in my chest for most of my adult life. It's been a once in a while kind of thing, but for the past month, I keep getting it every day. I have had a lot of EKGs, but my doctor seems to think everything is normal. Please help me, because it's messing up my work and other aspects of my life. -- S.Q.

ANSWER: Most of the time, fluttering in the chest is not something you need to worry about. Most people will have occasional episodes of this, and a few people have a greater number but are found to be normal after extensive evaluation.

A cardiologist might recommend a 24- to 48-hour heart monitor. If you have symptoms every day, this would be likely to catch your heart rhythm during an event. Devices that record for longer amounts of time are also available, and there are consumer devices that allow you to record an EKG yourself.

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



**The Quest** (NR) — In 2014, a reality competition series called “The Quest” placed contestants in the fantasy land of Everrealm and presented them with a variety of challenges in order to reveal the “One True Hero.” Disney+ decided to revive the one-season competition show, but with a little twist: Contestants would consist only of teenagers from around the U.S. These eight teens must rely on their skills and battle it out to save themselves from elimination after each challenge. The last one standing receives the title of “One True Hero.” “The Quest” is an entertainingly unique competition that people of all ages could follow along to at home. Premieres May 11. (Disney+)

**The Essex Serpent** (TV-14) — Sharing the same name with the 2016 novel written by Sarah Perry, this series follows Londoner Cora Seaborne (Claire Danes), who moves to Essex to explore the myth of the Essex Serpent, a creature reportedly bringing tragedy to those who’ve needed to speak for their sins. While trying to learn the truth about the serpent, Cora becomes dangerously close to married local pastor Will Ransome (Tom Hiddleston). As the people of Essex continue to experience horrors within their town, they blame Cora for the serpent’s presence. Division, doubt and fear wreck Cora, Will and the rest of the townsfolk as the serpent’s grip, whether real or metaphorical, only tightens around them. Premieres May 13. (Apple TV+)

**Candy** (TV-MA) — True-crime drama has been taking center stage lately in movies and TV, and this limit-

ed series serves as another example of why the drama and true crime genres work so effectively together. Based off real-life events, Jessica Biel stars as Candy, a well-respected housewife in the 1980s who feels boxed in by her life and begins to crave more from it. With these feelings harboring inside of her, Candy decides to have an affair with Allan, the husband of her best friend, Betty. Afterward, when Betty starts behaving suspiciously as if she knows of Candy’s betrayal, Betty winds up dead. Candy then becomes a suspect for more than just her secret affair. (Hulu)



Apple TV+

## Claire Danes, Tom Hiddleston in “The Essex Serpent.”

**Operation Mincemeat** (PG-13) — During World War II, the Allied powers hatched a plan to invade Sicily’s southern shore; however, the Nazis received wind of the planned attack, forcing the Allies to rethink their original plan. The Allies then came up with Operation Mincemeat, a scheme to make Germany believe that their target has shifted from Sicily to Greece. The scheme included a corpse carrying fake documents that would wash up on the Spanish shore and get taken in by the Spanish military. If all went accordingly, these documents would then be passed onto Germany through its connection with Spain, proving Greece is the Allied forces’ new target and leaving Sicily free for the Allies to attack. “Operation Mincemeat” depicts the very risky operation once orchestrated in 1943. Premieres May 11. (Netflix)

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

1. How long was the album version of "Try Me, I Know We Can Make It"?
2. Name the group that released "Midnight Train to Georgia."
3. What duo wrote and released "What Have I Done to Deserve This"?
4. Which artist released "Walk the Way the Wind Blows"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "The wind in the willow played love's sweet melody, But all of those vows we made were never to be."

### Answers

1. The song was nearly 18 minutes, one minute longer than "Love to Love You Baby," Donna Summer's previous release. "Try Me" topped the Dance Club charts in the U.S.
2. Gladys Knight and the Pips, in 1973. The song netted them a Best R&B Vocal Performance Grammy.
3. The Pet Shop Boys, in 1987, in collaboration with Dusty Springfield. The song helped revive Springfield's flagging career when it hit the Top 10.
4. Kathy Mattea, in 1986.
5. "Blueberry Hill," by Fats Domino in 1956. The 1940 song was released several times during that decade, mostly by big bands. The oddest version, available around the Internet, has to be that done by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in 2010 at an international children's charity benefit.

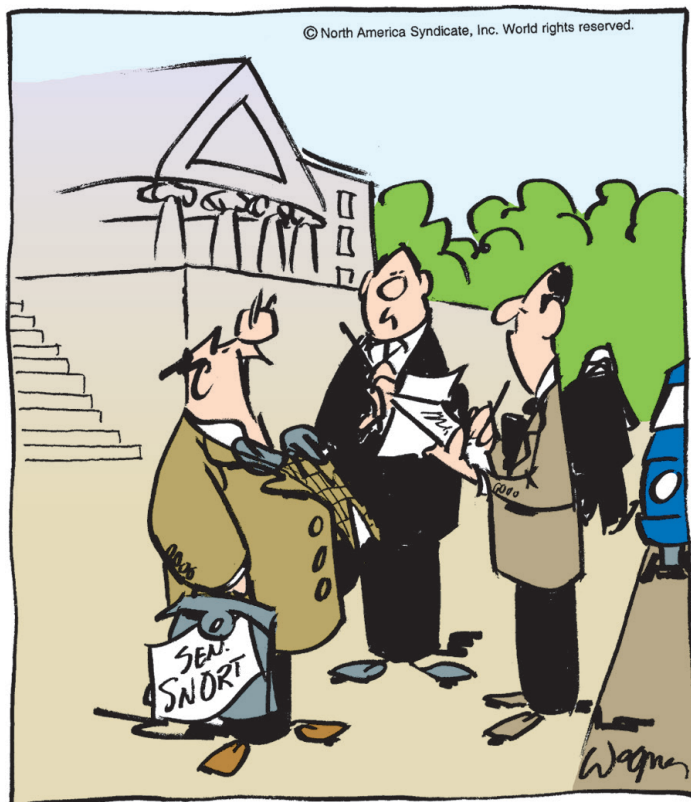
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### Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



### GRIN and BEAR IT

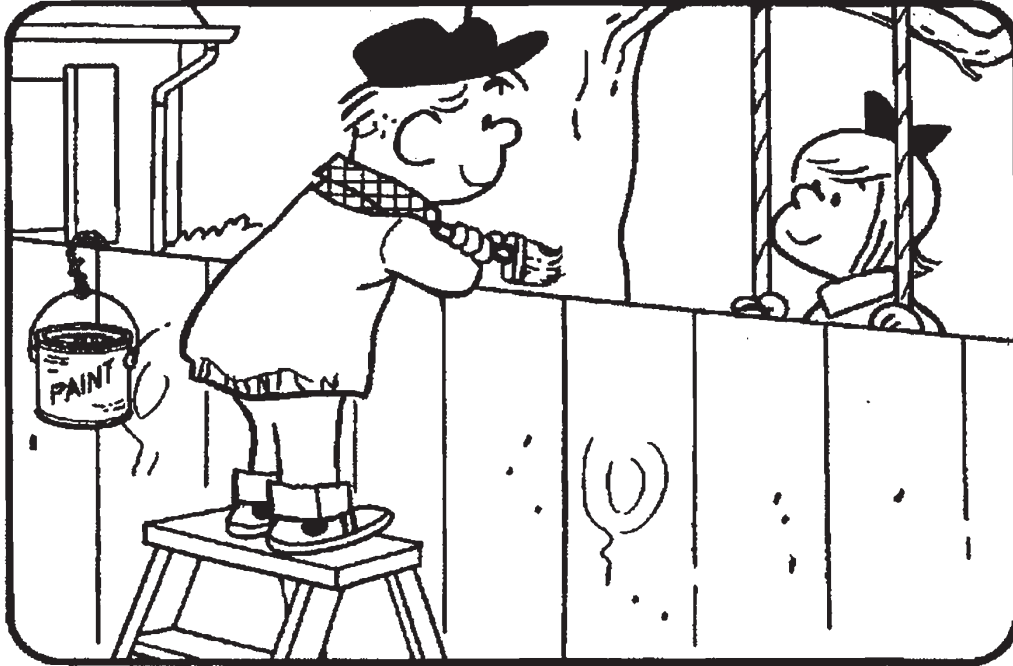


"My staff assures me that I will LOVE my bill!"

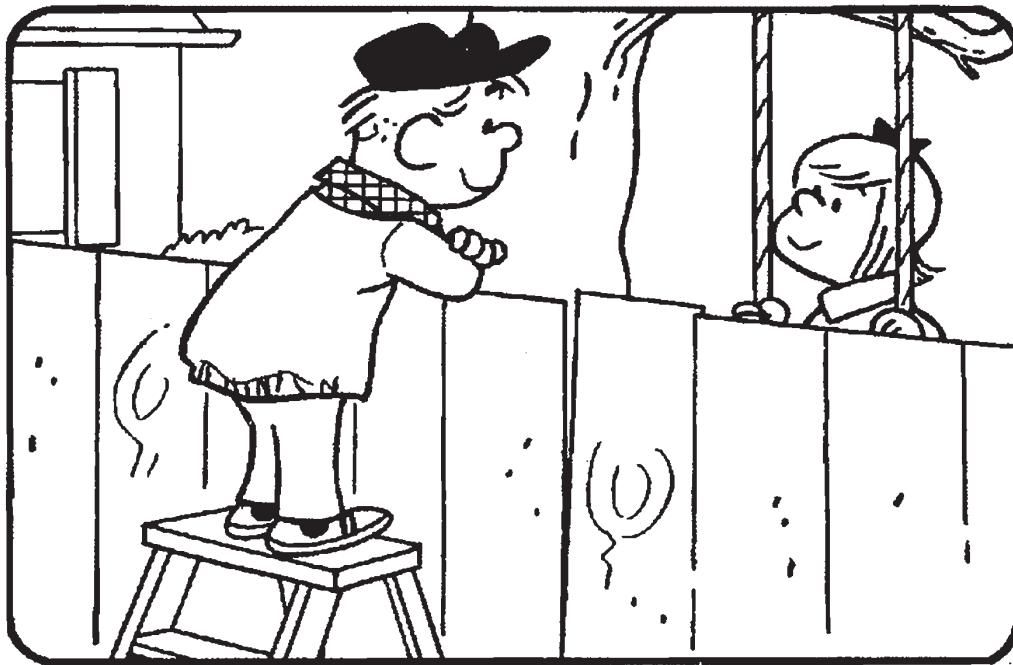


## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Downspout is missing. 2. Paint is missing. 3. Cuffs are missing. 4. Brush is missing. 5. Board is missing. 6. Bow is smaller.



- “Planning a new roof? Choose a light color for cooling benefits. Also check with your home-insurance company to see what discounts it might offer for different styles or options, like upgraded hurricane clips or fire-retardant materials.” — *R.E.W. in Tennessee*

- Cut a cord of firewood in the spring, and cure it yourself. Store it away from the house and properly care for the wood by stacking it where it will have access to the sun and wind to dry it. Let it season for six months or longer, and you’ll have firewood ready when the temperatures drop again.

- “If you’re melting chocolate in your microwave, do yourself a favor: Line the bowl with wax paper or parchment paper. The chocolate is still easy to stir, but when you take it out, you can scrape all the chocolate off the paper so that none is wasted!” — *A.A. in Florida*

- “Place a bit of clear tape over the spot

where you are going to drive in a nail to prevent the nail from cracking drywall. It will go right in. Also, if you’re nailing into wood, drag your nail through some soap (bar soap is fine) before striking it. This does the same thing — it will keep the wood from splitting. You can even keep a travel-size bar of soap in your nail apron for just this purpose.” — *P.K. in New Jersey*

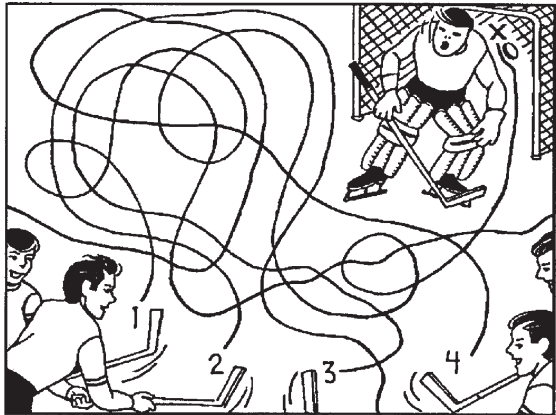
- Shopping for bagged frozen vegetables? Give them the squeeze test: If the vegetables feel hard and solid, they have thawed and refrozen. Choose another bag.

- Keep musty smells out of your linen closet by stashing a box of baking soda on one of the shelves, just as you would in the kitchen.

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

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**GOAL RUSH!** Just one of four shots lands the hockey puck in the net. Which shot scores the goal? Take a guess.

**CITY-ITES!** Shuffle letters of each person's name to find the name of a U.S. city:

1. Al Tanta.
2. Ed Vern.
3. Hope Nix.
4. Stu Noho.
5. Dot Teri.
6. Les Tate.

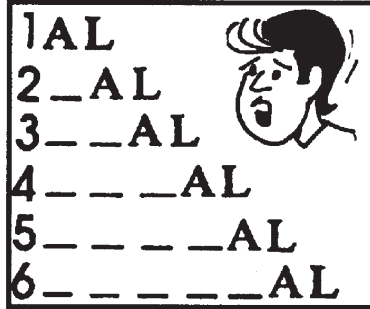
**SUM TRICK!** "Take a number," says the magician. "Multiply by two, add six, divide by two, and subtract the original number. Now, let me concentrate." He hesitates, thinks, and then says suddenly: "Your answer is three." And alakazam, it is just that.

How does he know? Because the answer is always one-half of the number he adds. If he adds six, answer is three; eight, four, etc.

Of course, the number he adds is always an even one.

## Junior Whirl

by Hal Kaufman



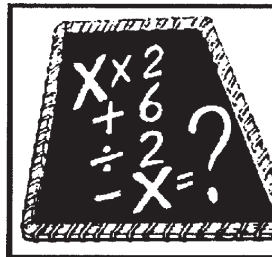
### TAGGING ALONG WITH PAL AL

JUST call me Al, and you will find me tagging along at the end of each progressively longer word in the diagram at left. Let's see if you can find these words in accord with definitions provided below:

1. That's me, Al, already in place.
2. My best girl's name is —, says Al.
3. We both enjoy a good, home-cooked —.
4. We like to — our bikes around town.
5. We both like to wear — clothes.
6. Each of us feels that the other is —.

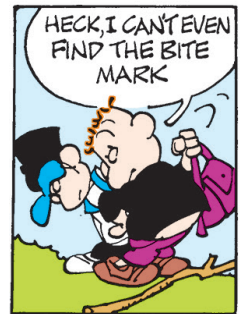
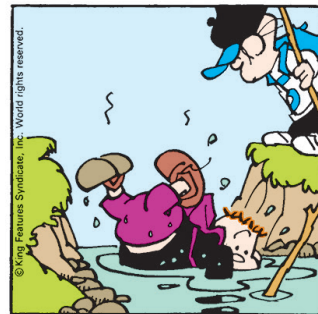
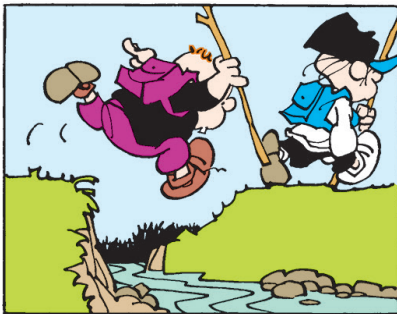
Time limit: Two minutes.

1. Al. 2. Sal. 3. Meal. 4. Pedal. 5. Casual. 6. Special. Other answers are possible.



## TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



BUD BLAKE

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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Went out with
- 6 Chinese martial art
- 12 Moolah
- 13 Skillful
- 14 Sheathe
- 15 Mountain chain
- 16 Stadium cheers
- 17 Quaker pronoun
- 19 Profit
- 20 Canadian gas brand
- 22 City area, for short
- 24 Gun lobby org.
- 27 Male turkeys
- 29 Show ennui
- 32 Pale, sweet fruit
- 35 Riga resident
- 36 "I smell —!"
- 37 Despondent
- 38 Hem's partner
- 40 Jealousy
- 42 Prefix with athlete
- 44 Early auto-maker
- 46 Burden
- 50 Aplenty
- 52 Strange thing
- 54 "Can you give me directions?"
- 55 Family girls

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11
12							13					
14							15					
16					17	18				19		
			20	21				22	23			
24	25	26		27			28		29		30	31
32			33					34				
35					36					37		
		38		39		40			41			
42	43			44	45				46	47	48	49
50			51				52	53				
54							55					
56							57					

- 56 Goes angling
- 57 Tennessee county
- DOWN**
- 1 Lady of Spain
- 2 Eyebrow shape
- 3 Rib
- 4 German river
- 5 Fresca, e.g.
- 6 Hit with a stun gun
- 7 Farewell
- 8 Hot temper
- 9 Like "Green Acres" humor
- 10 Employ
- 11 "Let's leave — that"
- 12 German article
- 18 Hit one out of the park
- 21 Farm pen
- 23 Reuben bread org.
- 24 Stanley Cup org.
- 25 Caviar base
- 26 Mounds built by insects
- 28 Final performance
- 30 Romance
- 31 SSE's opposite
- 33 JFK info
- 34 VJ's network
- 39 Not as good
- 41 Alpine air?
- 42 Pre-weekend cry
- 43 Malek of "Bohemian Rhapsody"
- 45 Reply to "Shall we?"
- 47 Pleasing
- 48 Western tribe
- 49 Method (Abbr.)
- 51 Reaction to fireworks
- 53 Cato's 502

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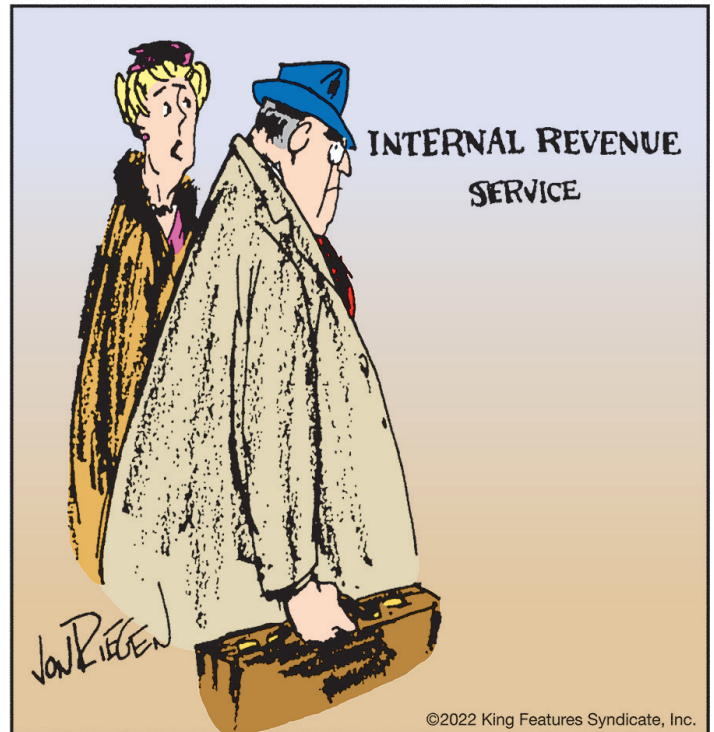
## — King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

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

## LAFF - A - DAY



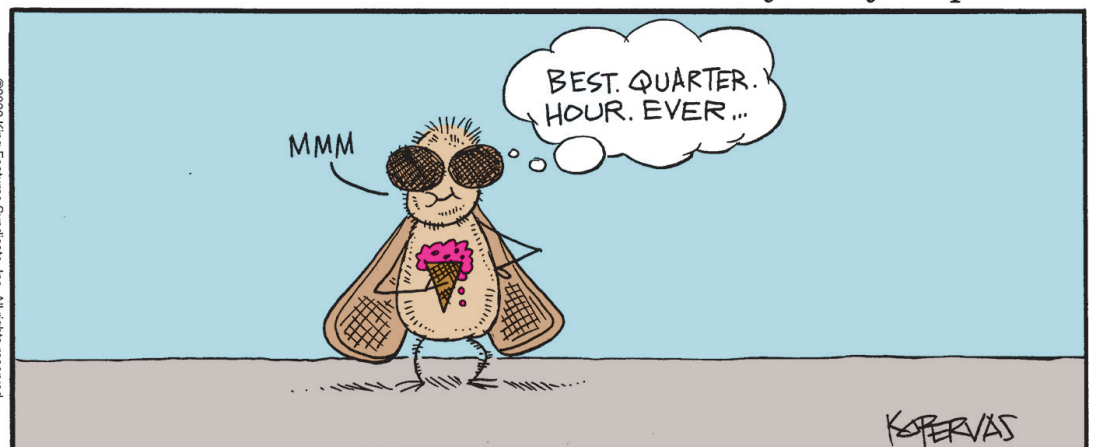
"Remember. I just signed my name—  
YOU thought up the deductions."

## Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas

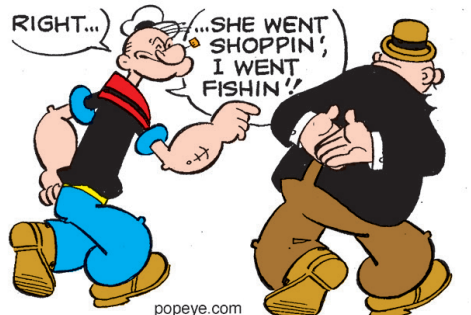
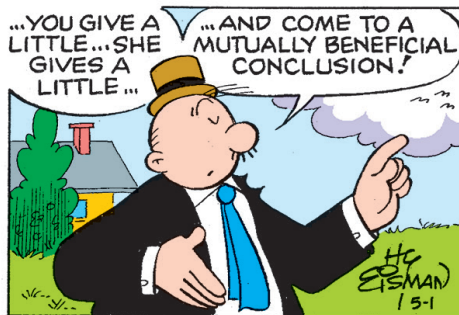
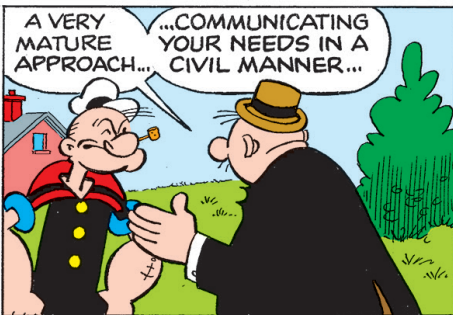
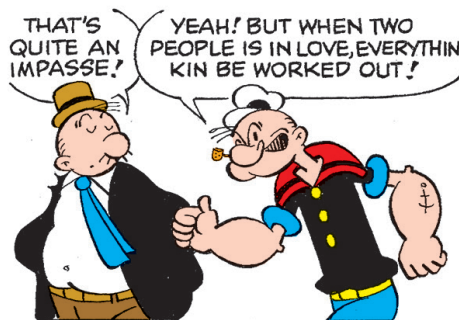
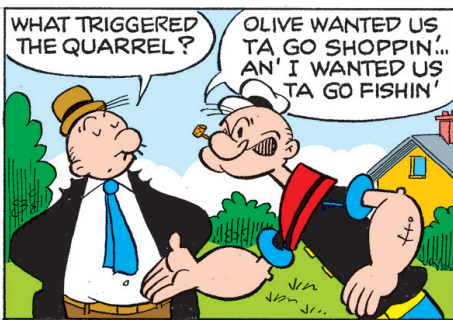
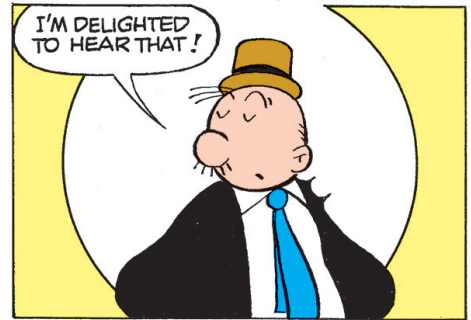
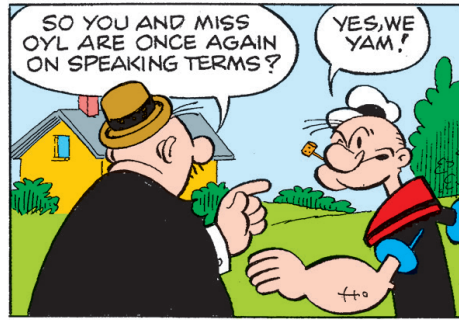
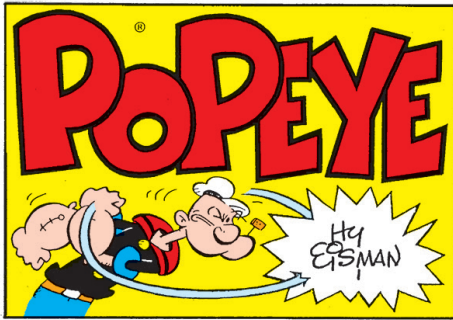
THE ADULT  
MALE TSETSE FLY  
LIVES FOR APPROX-  
IMATELY TWO WEEKS

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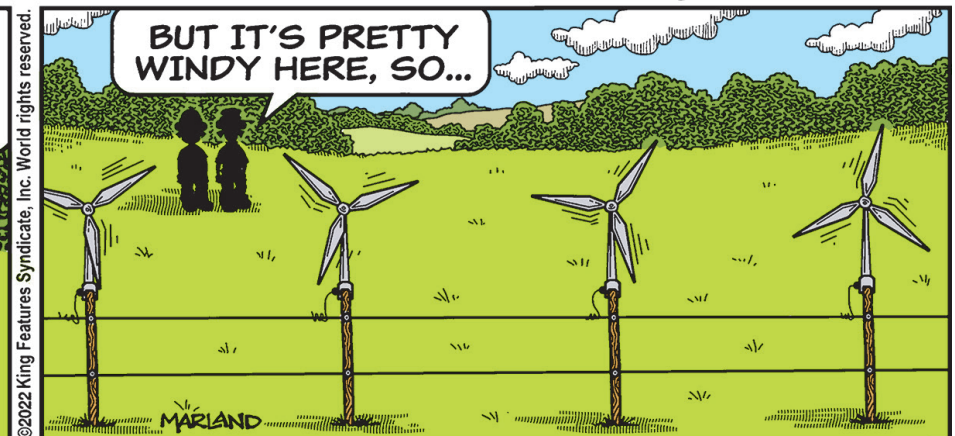
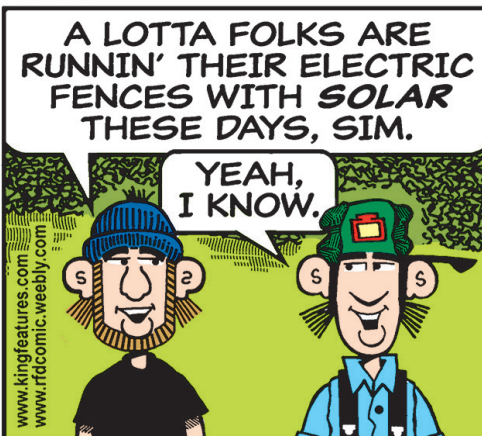
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## R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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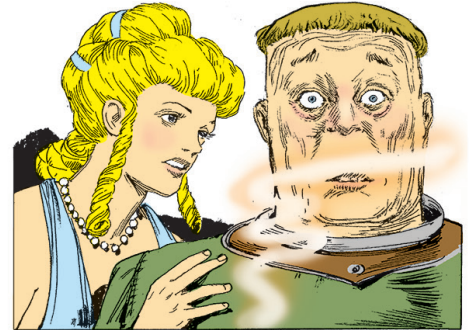
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IN FOSTER'S  
**Prince Valiant**  
GIANNI AND SCHULTZ

VAL AND ALETA WORK TOGETHER TO BEST THEIR ASSASSIN. VAL IS INCLINED TO DISPATCH HIM, BUT ALETA THINKS BETTER: "HE IS MERELY A VESSEL HOLDING MALDUBH'S EVIL WILL. I CAN TURN THIS SPELL TO OUR ADVANTAGE."



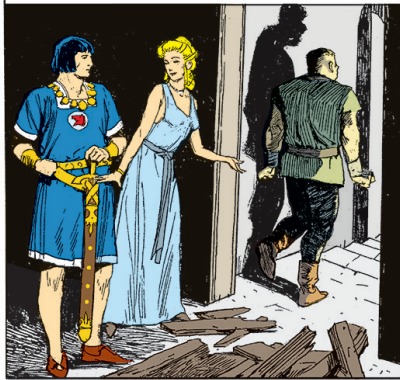
"WHILE CLEAR YOUR MASTER COMMANDS US DEAD, NOW MY VOICE WILL FILL YOUR HEAD. HER HOLD ON YOU IS DONE AND THROUGH, FOR NOW MY BIDDING YOU SHALL DO!"



WHILE VAL FINDS IT UNSETTLING TO KNOW HIS WIFE PRACTICES THE ANCIENT CRAFT, HER ARTISTIC TOUCH AND UNFAILING HUMOR CHEER HIM.



"THERE GOES OUR CARRIER PIGEON. HOW I'D LOVE TO WITNESS HIS RETURN TO DRACO'S QUARTERS."



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INDEED, ALETA WOULD BE PLEASED WITH THE LIVID REACTION TO HER HANDIWORK.



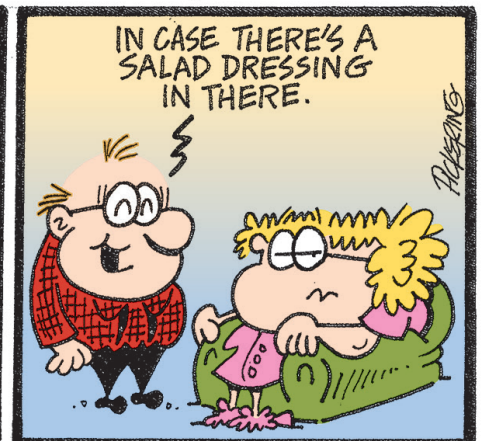
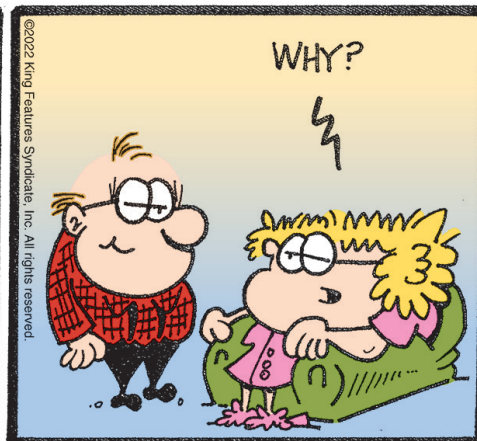
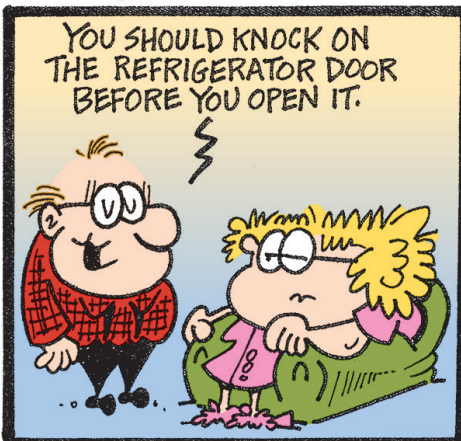
3866

NEXT:  
Desperate  
measures

5-13-11

## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### Finding the Cellphone That's Right for You

When it comes to buying a phone, there are so many choices that the decision can be difficult. Much depends on what you want to do with it and how much you want to spend.

What can we do on our phones? Depending on the type of phone (and our skill level), we can make calls, get voicemails, look at maps, write shopping lists and notes, roam the internet, play games, receive and send text messages, take photos, have face-to-face meetings and more.

Some of us, however, would rather keep it simple. We want to make and receive calls, period. If a phone comes with a few more features, that's fine, but we probably won't use them.

How to choose: Decide what you need the phone to do. Ask a lot of questions, especially of tech-savvy family members. Think about whether you want to pay upfront for your phone or have a long-term contract. Decide whether the phone is only for emergencies or if you'll use it daily.

There are a handful of good phones out there if you search the internet for "phones for seniors." You'll find dozens of websites describing the various phones now available.

Visit the phone stores near you, if possible. You'll need to handle the phones to be sure you can read and press the buttons with ease. Smaller phones are lightweight, but aren't necessarily the best if you can't see the screen or the buttons are tiny. The bigger ones, on the other hand, might be too heavy. Look into the flip phones as well, the ones that fold in half for ease of carrying in a pocket.

Look for discounts. For example, you might get a discount if you're an AARP member. If you're on Medicaid or SNAP benefits, see if you qualify for the Lifeline discount.

And remember: Keep it charged!



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1. Eddie Gaedel, who had one plate appearance with the St. Louis Browns in 1951, was the shortest player in Major League Baseball history. How tall was he?

2. Name the NCAA men's basketball all-time leader in assists (1,076), who had his No. 11 jersey retired by the Duke Blue Devils.

3. What British racecar driver won the Formula 1 driver's championship in 1992, then won the CART championship the following year?

4. Tulane University's athletic teams are known by what nickname?

5. What U.S. golfer won the 2010 LPGA Championship by a record 12 strokes?

6. What Basketball Hall of Famer from Australia was named WNBA MVP in 2003, '07 and '10?

7. In 1997, Larry Rothschild was named manager of what Major League Baseball expansion team?



by Ryan A. Berenz

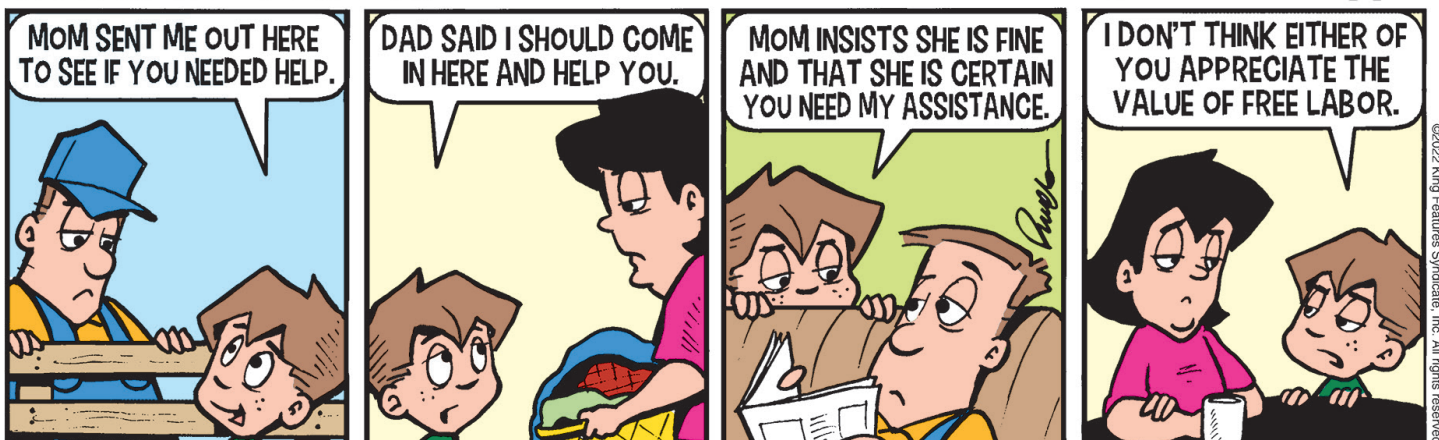
## Answers

1. 3 feet, 7 inches. He drew a walk.
2. Bobby Hurley.
3. Nigel Mansell.
4. The Green Wave.
5. Cristie Kerr.
6. Lauren Jackson.
7. The Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





## Try Rescue Network for Breed-Specific Adoptions

**DEAR PAW'S CORNER:** I read your recent column about using caution in the purchase of specific breeds of dogs or adopting from a shelter. Please advise your readers that there is a third option. Almost every breed is assisted by a rescue group, usually handled by breeders. Locating such a group for a specific breed can be done by contacting the American Kennel Club (AKC). We had a wonderful Bernese Mountain Dog that was too small to be a show dog, and a Sheltie whose father was a champion but was still too large to be a show dog. This gives adopters the breed they want and dogs who otherwise would end up in shelters — and possibly be put down — get a family instead. — *Kathy F.*

**DEAR KATHY:** Thank you for highlighting this excellent option. The AKC Rescue Network pulls together over 450 rescue groups, dog breeders and specialists in rehabilitation and rescue to save dogs that would otherwise be placed in shelters or euthanized.

Find more information about their work at [www.akc.org/akc-rescue-network](http://www.akc.org/akc-rescue-network). Breeds are listed alphabetically to make them easier to locate.

Fostering and rehabilitation of dogs through the network is somewhat unique in that dogs stay in the foster/rehab until they are rehomed. Breeders and dog fanciers are among the most enthusiastic participants in fostering and rehabilitating dogs. They take on the expense and time commitment to work with specific breeds and prepare them for a loving family. But they also get to know the dogs, their temperament and their needs — so that they're matched with the right people.

Check out this network and the work that they do. Thanks again, Kathy.

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

## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

\* Most of us know that pregnancy has its challenges, but one you might not be aware of is that expectant moms attract roughly twice as many mosquito bites. It's believed this is because they exhale more carbon dioxide and have higher body temperatures than those who aren't pregnant.

\* A Chinese father hired virtual assassins to kill his son's World of Warcraft character, hoping that would stop the young man from playing after he'd quit his day job.

\* American death row prisoners are given a physical to ensure they're fit enough to die.

\* During the 1984 Olympic Summer Games in Los Angeles, McDonald's announced a promotion offering free food and drink every time an American athlete made it to the medals podium. After the former Soviet Union boycotted the games, it turned out to be quite a costly promotion.

\* The French duo Daft Punk took their name from a negative review they received from "Melody Maker" magazine regarding a trio of which they'd previously been members.

\* Between 1887 and 1950, American weather forecasters were not allowed to use the word "tornado."

\* A particularly pessimistic fan of football's Cleveland Browns requested in his obituary that six members of the team serve as pallbearers at his funeral so "the Browns could let him down one last time."

\* In the early 1970s, the first Nike shoe was inspired by ... a waffle. After watching his wife make waffles, the company's co-founder, Bill Bowerman, poured urethane into a waffle iron to see what would happen. The Waffle Trainer debuted soon after.

\*\*\*

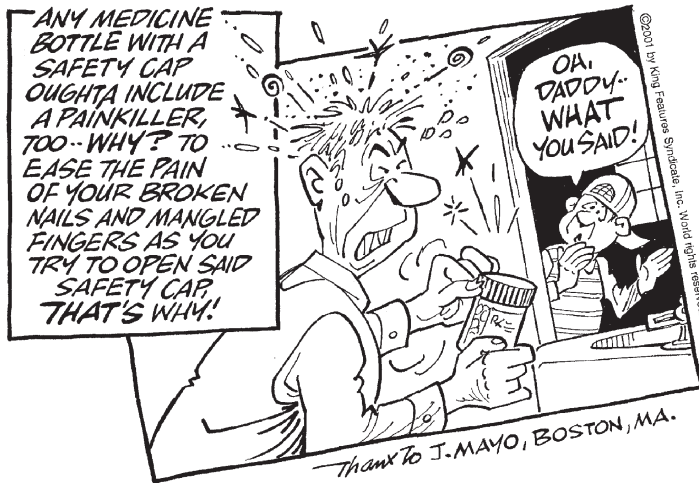
Thought for the Day: "The difference between a smart man and a wise man is that a smart man knows what to say; a wise man knows whether or not to say it." -- Frank M. Garafola

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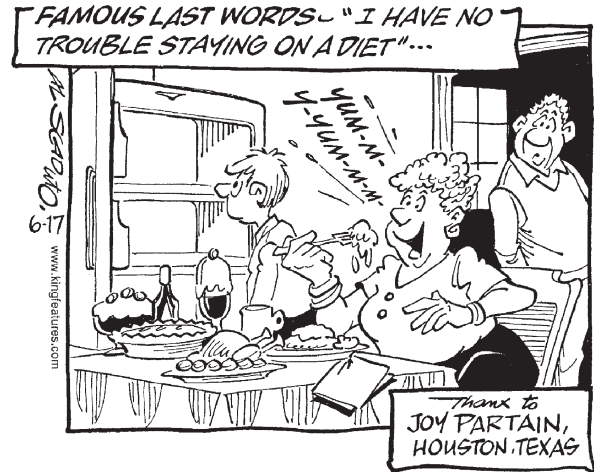
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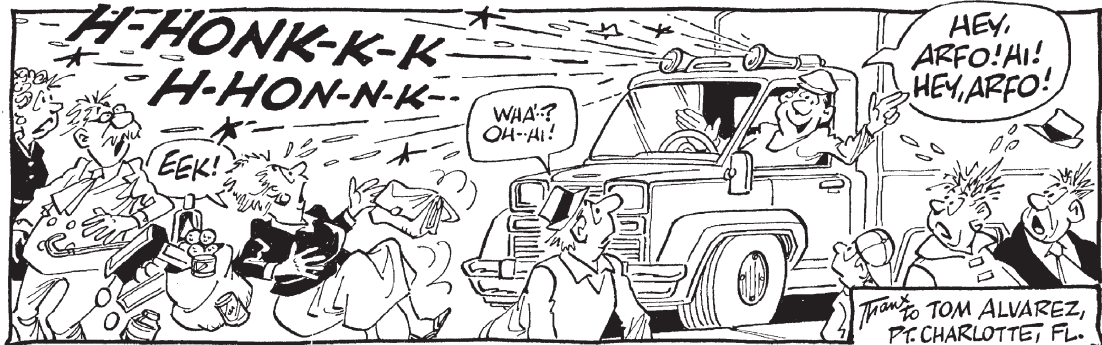
## THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME



## BY AL SCADUTO



PESTS WE CAN DO WITHOUT - THE NERD WHO SCARES YOU OUTTA YOUR WITS BY BLOWING HIS HORN TO SAY HELLO TO A PASSING PAL...



Red Deer Tongue

## Heat-tolerant lettuce

The leaf lettuces are ideal for containers; pick the outer leaves and let the center continue to grow. This is called "cut and come again" harvesting. Head lettuces like Romaine, Bibb and Crisphead need to grow about 50 days to harvest, so plan for those to grow in-ground.

**Bibb:** Buttercrunch, Speckles, Summer Bibb, Summer Bibb Blend

**Crisphead:** Michelle

**Leaf:** Black Seeded Simpson, Green Salad Bowl, Red Deer Tongue

**Romaine:** Little Gem, Parris Island Cos

— Brenda Weaver

Source: [www.groworganic.com](http://www.groworganic.com)

## VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

### Second Chances for Incarcerated Veterans

We recently had Second Chance Month, courtesy of a presidential proclamation. Its goal was to “provide meaningful redemption and rehabilitation for formerly imprisoned persons.” It requires, per the proclamation, a holistic approach that eliminates long sentences, and provides job and education training during incarceration plus opportunities to enter the workforce after release.

What that means for veterans is that the Department of Veterans Affairs is taking action to help vets rejoin society after they’ve been in prison. In a mutual help program, the Bureau of Prisons, the Social Security Administration and VA benefits will work to ensure that the VA is notified within 30 days of release.

Help for imprisoned veterans includes:

— Expanding outreach into prisons to let veterans know about the services they can use and hook up with while still in

prison.

— A web-based program that prison staff can use to identify veterans who will need VA services when they get out. The prison staff will need the veteran’s name, Social Security number, date of birth and so on to access the site: Veterans Reentry Search Service.

— Finding “justice-involved” veterans (through outreach by specialists) and encouraging them to access VA services. Those can include pre-release assessments and links to care for social, mental, medical and employment services.

To learn more about the health care services available to veterans released from prison, check the VA website at [www.va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/reentry.asp). Scroll down to watch videos about supporting and assisting incarcerated veterans, second chances for incarcerated veterans and suicide prevention. Further down the page are email links for the specialists in each state.

Once they’re released from prison, veterans are at risk for homelessness, death from drug overdoses and suicide. Per a U.S. Sentencing Commission study, 67% of incarcerated veterans had mental health problems, and 55% had served in a combat zone. Of those, 41% reported post-traumatic stress and 67% had used illegal substances ... yet 62% had separated from the service with an honorable discharge.



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



## Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

This week marked the annual National Week of Action for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls.

Across our nation, a disproportionate number of Native women and girls go missing or are murdered. In South Dakota alone, 68% of missing persons are Native Americans despite making up only 9% of the state population. Of the 106 persons on South Dakota's Missing Persons List, 30% are Native women. Even more troubling, American Indian women in some tribal communities face murder rates that are ten times higher than the national average. Many of these cases go unsolved due to a lack of resources, underreporting, poor data collection, and jurisdictional difficulties between tribal, local, and state police.

This week, I cosponsored a bill that designates May 5th as "National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls." Bringing awareness to this tragic issue is fundamental in securing additional funding and resources to not only help find those who are missing, but to prevent more murders and kidnappings in the future.

Thankfully, some progress has been made. In 2020, Savanna's Act was signed into law, which requires the Department of Justice to assess and develop law enforcement and justice protocols to address cases involving missing or murdered Native people. I was proud to be a lead cosponsor of this bill. In the same year, the Not Invisible Act became law, increasing intergovernmental coordination to identify and combat violent crime against Indians and on Indian lands.

Every life is precious. Every missing person should have the same chance of being found, but unfortunately that is not the case when it comes to our native neighbors. While we have been moving in the right direction, there is more work to be done to address this nationwide crisis.

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South Dakota Governor

**Kristi Noem**



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

## South Dakota Loves the Outdoors

When you think about South Dakota, you can't help but picture the great outdoors. The beautiful Black Hills, with their mix of mountain ranges and rolling prairies. The mighty Missouri River — winding across the state and feeding thousands of miles of riverbed and streams. The picturesque Prairie Lakes and the wide-open fields that I call home. From the Badlands to farmlands, we've got plenty of reasons to go outside. Whether you are there to work or there to play, the outdoors benefits our economy, too. Especially in agriculture and in our hunting and fishing opportunities.

Agriculture is, of course, our state's largest economic engine, and we are expanding opportunities for agriculture to grow our economy. We are expanding agriculture opportunities in several ways, including agritourism, value-added ag, and much more.

Agritourism is an industry that turns working farms into travel destinations, creating an interactive experience for visitors to see first-hand how their food is grown. With more people than ever visiting our state, I took steps to make it easier to start an agritourism business and provide more opportunities for visitors to our state to see what a life in agriculture has to offer. By tying in our second-largest industry — tourism — to our largest, we provide an opportunity for our farm families to diversify their operations and create another source of income.

Early in my administration, I tasked the Governor's Office of Economic Development with generating more value-added ag production in our state. In the last 18 months, GOED has helped secure an estimated \$627 million in capital investment for companies that process and add value to South Dakota-grown crops and livestock.

We have supported ranchers and consumers by giving grants to smaller meat processors and opening opportunities to ship state-inspected meat across state lines.

We also tie together agriculture and the promotion of South Dakota as the premier pheasant hunting destination. With my Second Century Habitat Initiative, we have provided farmers a financial opportunity to turn marginal acres into productive habitats for pheasants and other wildlife.

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To date, we have enrolled thousands of acres across the state in Second Century Habitat programs. Between this and other public-private partnerships, we have added nearly 1.5 million acres of private land in the public access hunting programs. We've also been able to add almost 12,000 acres of food habitat plots, 36,000 acres of grassland restoration, and 15,310 acres of wildlife-friendly fencing.

As an avid hunter, I want to share South Dakota's incredible outdoor opportunities with everyone who wants to come enjoy them and landowners play an important role in expanding access.

Since becoming governor, I have successfully streamlined hunting licenses to make it easier for residents and nonresidents to navigate. One big change has been the revamped website, which combines all outdoor-related activities: hunting/fishing licenses, park reservations, campgrounds, and more. And self-service kiosks (there are 96 around the state) provide a convenient way for visitors to pay for entrance fees, firewood, and campsite reservations.

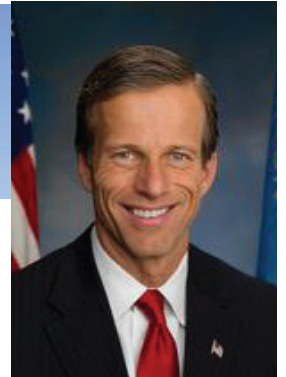
We simplified duck hunting by providing an option for a 3-duck bag limit, which allows hunters to bag any three ducks rather than being restricted by species. That helps first-time duck hunters get involved in the sport. But I also want to see more young people to get interested in the outdoors.

To do that, we eliminated fishing licenses for all minors and streamlined youth hunting licenses to increase youth participation. We also revamped our youth mentoring program that partners experienced hunters with novice outdoorsmen and women. One of the most successful youth programs has been our Nest Predator Bounty Program, which currently has nearly half of all participants under age 18.

These are just some of the ways we are continuing to promote the amazing outdoor adventures that are accessible to everyone in South Dakota. I hope that everyone takes time this year to get outdoors and enjoy all the beauty South Dakota has to offer.



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



## Protecting Taxpayers From Outdated and Expensive Pandemic Policies

On the 2020 presidential campaign trail, President Biden painted himself as a left-leaning moderate. However, since taking office, he has prioritized policies to appease the far-left wing of the Democrat Party. Here's what those policies have gotten us: an inflation crisis, an energy crisis, and a southern border crisis. Unfortunately, there's no sign the president or the tail that's been wagging the dog has any desire to shift course. For example, look no further than the latest Democrat push to cancel student loan debt.

For years, progressive Democrats have talked about cancelling student loan debt – as if the federal government were able to draw from an unlimited pot of money – and now, they are trying to use COVID-19 as the catalyst to get there. Recently, the president announced that he is extending the moratorium on federal student loan repayments, the accrual of interest, and debt collections for another four months. In the early days of the pandemic, this made more sense as a temporary measure for a genuine emergency as Americans' jobs were in jeopardy as the economy quickly began to shut down. But it's been more than two years since the pandemic began, we no longer have double-digit unemployment, and most folks are back to work. In fact, in South Dakota, our unemployment rate is a low 2.5 percent.

Deferring student loan repayments has already cost the federal government more than \$100 billion, which is why I recently introduced the Stop Reckless Student Loan Actions Act. This common-sense legislation would protect taxpayers and block President Biden from endlessly deferring federal student loan repayments. It would also prevent him from using the pandemic – or future national emergencies – as a reason to cancel these student loans outright. To put it simply, South Dakota taxpayers and working families should not be responsible for continuing to bear the costs associated with President Biden's outdated, budget-busting student loan repayment moratorium, especially since many of the borrowers who'd be on the receiving end have a high earning potential.

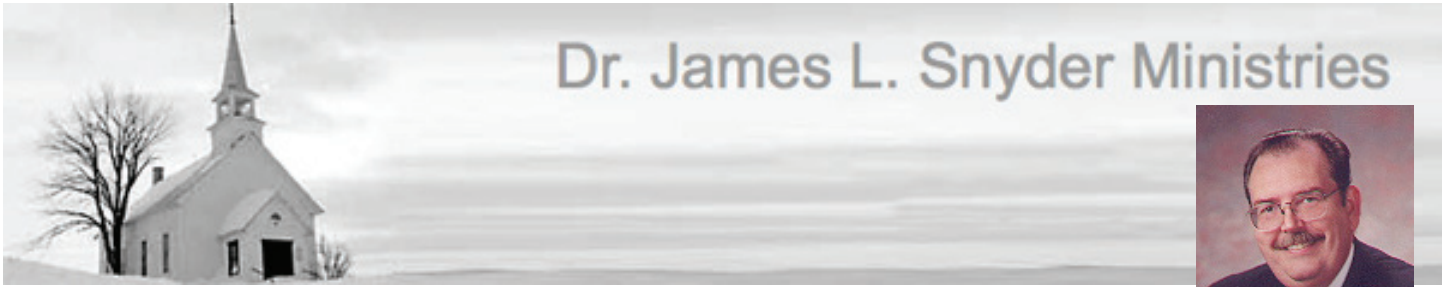
President Biden's press secretary, when referring to the repayment deferment, recently said that "between now and August 31, it's either going to be extended again or we're going to make a decision about canceling student debt." This statement, coming directly from the president's spokeswoman, makes it alarmingly clear that these repeated deferrals aren't temporary relief measures. They're meant to buy time while the president figures out how he can cancel a significant portion of federal student loan debt – money that borrowers agreed to pay back.

Contrary to the radical left's view, cancelling student loan debt won't magically solve every problem. It would do absolutely nothing to address the root cause of student debt – the rising cost of higher education. Also, from a fairness perspective, why should the federal government force Americans who incurred no college debt to shoulder the bill for those who did – especially when a substantial portion of that debt is incurred by those with the greatest earning potential like doctors and lawyers. And beyond that, what about the Americans who worked hard for years to pay off their loans? Or, what about parents who have sacrificed and set aside money in order to send their kid to college?

I supported providing temporary relief when it was really needed, but the continuation of student loan deferment or any type of student loan cancellation is a terrible policy at this point. I am doing everything in my power to end President Biden's unnecessary and outdated student loan deferment and prevent him from perusing his radical wish list at the expense of hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

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## And Then, There It Was

In getting older, I have discovered, I pay a little more attention to my dietary habits. Or, maybe I should say, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage pays more attention to my dietary habits.

As we get older, she is more obsessed with vegetables than anything else. But, for the life of me, I cannot figure out exactly why.

With a close handle on my diet, she leads the way in what she refers to as "A healthy diet."

Being married as long as I have, I have learned to go along with the program from the kitchen. I like what someone once said, "Do you want to be right or happy?" Obviously, you can't be both; you have to choose one or the other.

As obsessed as The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage is with vegetables, particularly green vegetables, she has the opposite view when it comes to cookies. Cookies are not necessarily a "no-no," but they are under her strict supervision.

Several times a week, she will give me a cookie. As she gives it to me, she will say, "One is enough."

I usually respond by saying, "One more is never enough."

I laugh while she just stares at me. I must say I have never eaten a cookie I did not like. I am especially partial to Girl Scout cookies. I usually tell my wife that buying a Girl Scout cookie goes for a very good cause. I don't tell her, but I'm not thinking about the Girl Scouts.

If the Girl Scouts are selling cookies, those cookies must be good for you. After all, they wouldn't sell anything bad for you, would they? My wife never has an answer to that question.

Things turned around just last week.

I was taking some things to the trashcan, and as I put in something, I noticed a receipt from the grocery store. I'm always interested to see how much she's spending and how much she's saving. So I pulled out the receipt and found that she had spent \$45, but she saved \$48. I'm not quite sure how she does that or how that works, but I leave that responsibility to her.

I was about to throw it back into the trashcan when I noticed something on the receipt. There were boxes of cookies on her receipt that she had purchased that day. I think it was something like six boxes.

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So, as I was thinking, those cookies must be somewhere in the house. That receipt was dated several days ago, and so was a recent purchase. Where are those cookies?

The kitchen area is my wife's responsibility, and she has it very well organized. I can't find anything, but she can always. I was beginning to think that there were boxes of cookies somewhere in this kitchen area. If I could find just one box of cookies, I could eat one or two or three behind her back and her not knowing it.

She was away for the afternoon, and so I spent the time looking all through the kitchen for where she might hide those cookies. If I did not know there were cookies there, I would not even begin to look. But my curiosity, not to mention my appetite, got the best of me, and I wanted to find them.

For the first hour and ½, I searched everywhere and could not come up with one box of cookies. I knew they had to be somewhere right in front of me, but I couldn't find them for the life of me.

Then it occurred to me. I'm a little over 1 foot taller than my wife. That got me thinking that perhaps those cookies are closer to the floor than I was looking. So I got on my hands and knees and opened up one of the doors at the bottom of the cabinet. I searched through that and then went to the next and then to the next.

Then, much to my dietary delight, I found a stack of cookie boxes way in the back of that lower door. There they were, in all of their beauty.

I carefully pulled one out, opened it, extracted three, and then decided to make it four cookies. They look so delicious, especially in my hand. So I carefully closed up the box and put it way in the back so she wouldn't see it right away.

I enjoyed eating those cookies that afternoon, the next afternoon, and the next afternoon. Before I knew it, I had eaten two boxes of Girl Scout cookies. And I got away with it. What a dietary victory.

When I came back from a project I was working on, standing in the kitchen and looking at me with both hands on her hips, she said, "Do you know anything about the missing cookies in the cabinet?"

"No," I said, "but I'll help you look for them."

"No, you will not, but you will stay clear of all of those cookies."

Then I shared one of my favorite verses of Scripture with her. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

Having a giving attitude is one of the most important aspects of the Christian life.

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## EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Since when did cargo ships start using wind power (again)? Does this save us from a lot of carbon emissions?  
-- Bill H. Elizabeth, NJ

To many, sailboats invoke either the 18th century "Age of Sail" or preppy regattas. But some environmentalists and engineers are looking past these connotations and rewiring the art of sailing to suit modern technology.

In fact, the 21st century Age of Sail is already in its infancy, due to concerns about fossil fuel shortages that are used in exorbitant amounts to power enormous cargo ships.

This rewiring of sailing matters because of the immense emissions that cargo ships produce. Because they consume fossil fuels, much of our supply chain is riddled with emissions problems. In fact, marine emissions contribute to ocean acidification and greenhouse gas buildups in the atmosphere, and even an alarming feedback loop between the two. This may influence, among other things, coral reef die-offs. Cargo ships that use sails could partially or even completely eliminate the environmental impacts of diesel usage.

Very practical examples abound. Wine companies like Grain de Sail are not just paying lip service to sustainability or otherwise "greenwashing" their products. They are making sure their products truly reject fossil fuel usage by using canvas sails on a boat similar to 19th century schooners. Its ship uses 100 percent wind energy to propel itself across the ocean.

OceanBird, manufactured by Wallenius, is another innovation. OceanBird is a cargo ship that can reach speeds similar to normal cargo ships using high tech modifications of sails that are closer to helicopters or airplane wings than canvas sails. They use changing air currents and automated shifts in the positioning of the "wings" to maximize speed of transport. While this may sound like science fiction, OceanBird's experimental prototype will soon be on the market.

Grassroots efforts to support wind-powered cargo ships are still in their infancy, but you can "vote with your wallet" to support companies like Grain de Sail that use cargo sailboats to propel their goods across the water, if you can afford luxuries like their wines.

If not, you can do your part to avoid the shipping industry by shopping at your local thrift store or farmer's market for local or secondhand goods.

Wind-propelled technologies are not only more picturesque than diesel-based cargo ships belching out emissions, dirtying the air and creating noise pollution. They have an opportunity to revolutionize the shipping industry and break our addiction to fossil fuels. To paraphrase Jimmy Dean, "[We] can't change the direction of the wind, but [we] can adjust [our] sails to always reach [our] destination." And when the end destination is a world free from fossil fuels, the journey is worth it.

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. See more at <https://emagazine.com>. To donate, visit <https://earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: [question@earthtalk.org](mailto:question@earthtalk.org).



**A few pioneering companies — like Wallenius with its OceanBird concept — are harnessing the power of the wind to reduce the carbon footprints of their cargo shipping operations.**

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## South Dakota COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

373

Active Cases

766  
+226

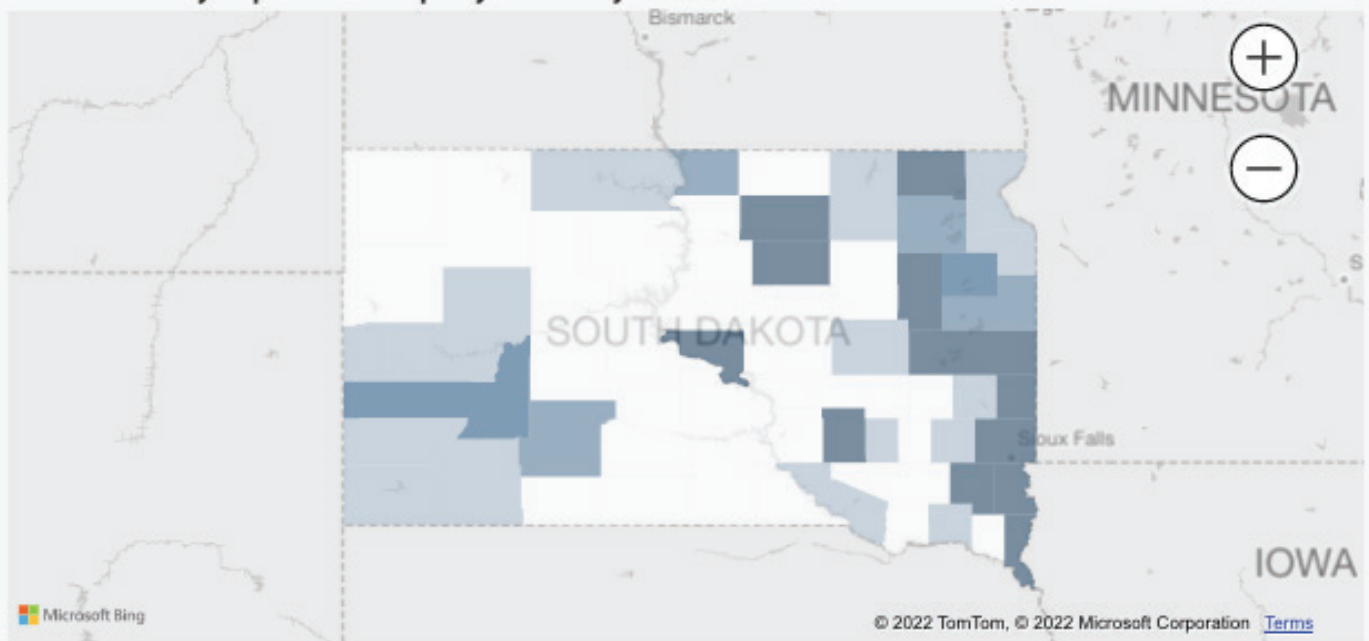
Recovered Cases

234,504

Currently Hospitalized

25

### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread Low Moderate Substantial High

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

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

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

238,185

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days

7.4%

4/26/2022 - 5/2/2022

Total Tests

2,169,231

Ever Hospitalized

10,781

Deaths Among Cases

2,915

% Progress (March Goal: 44233 Tests)

100%

% Progress (April Goal: 44233 Tests)

60%

% Progress (May Goal: 44233 Tests)

5%

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## Brown County COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

7

Active Cases

30  
+3

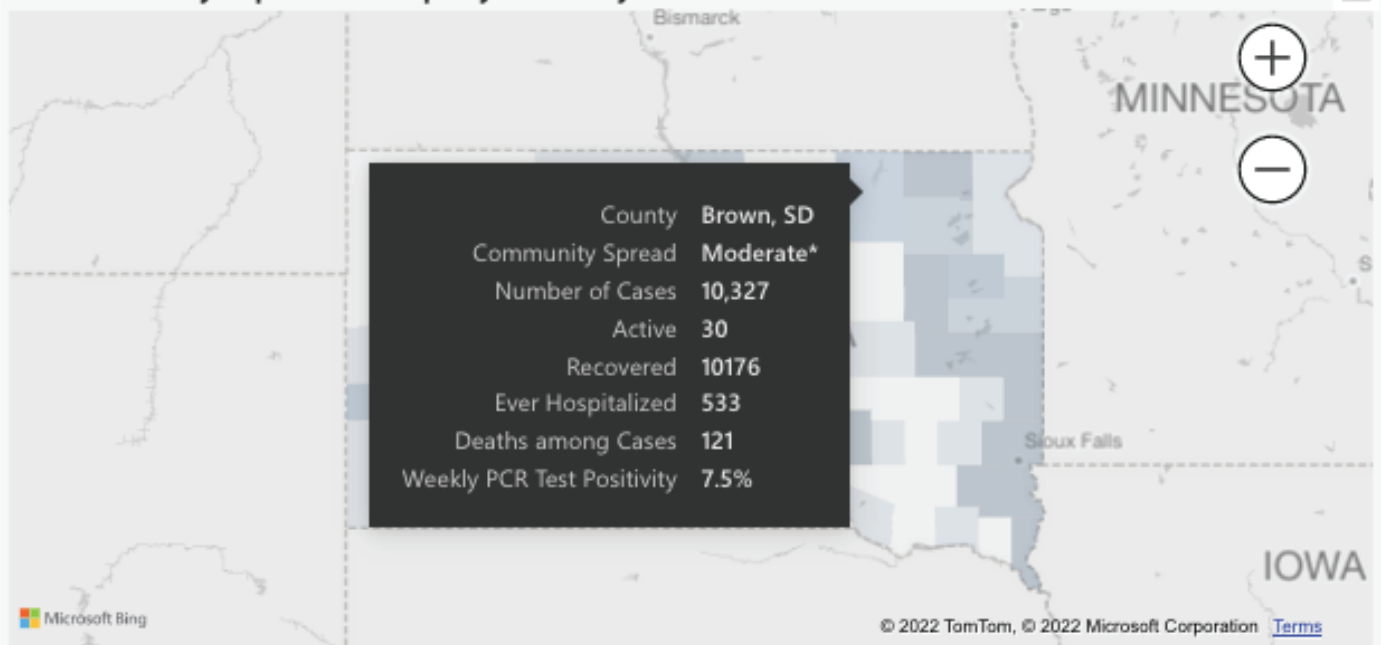
Recovered Cases

10,176

Currently Hospitalized

25

### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Low ● Moderate ● Substantial ● High

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

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

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

10,327

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days

6.6%

4/26/2022 - 5/2/2022

Total Tests

104,151

Ever Hospitalized

533

Deaths Among Cases

121

% Progress (March Goal: 44233 Tests)

100%

% Progress (April Goal: 44233 Tests)

60%

% Progress (May Goal: 44233 Tests)

5%

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## Day County COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

5

Active Cases

11  
-1

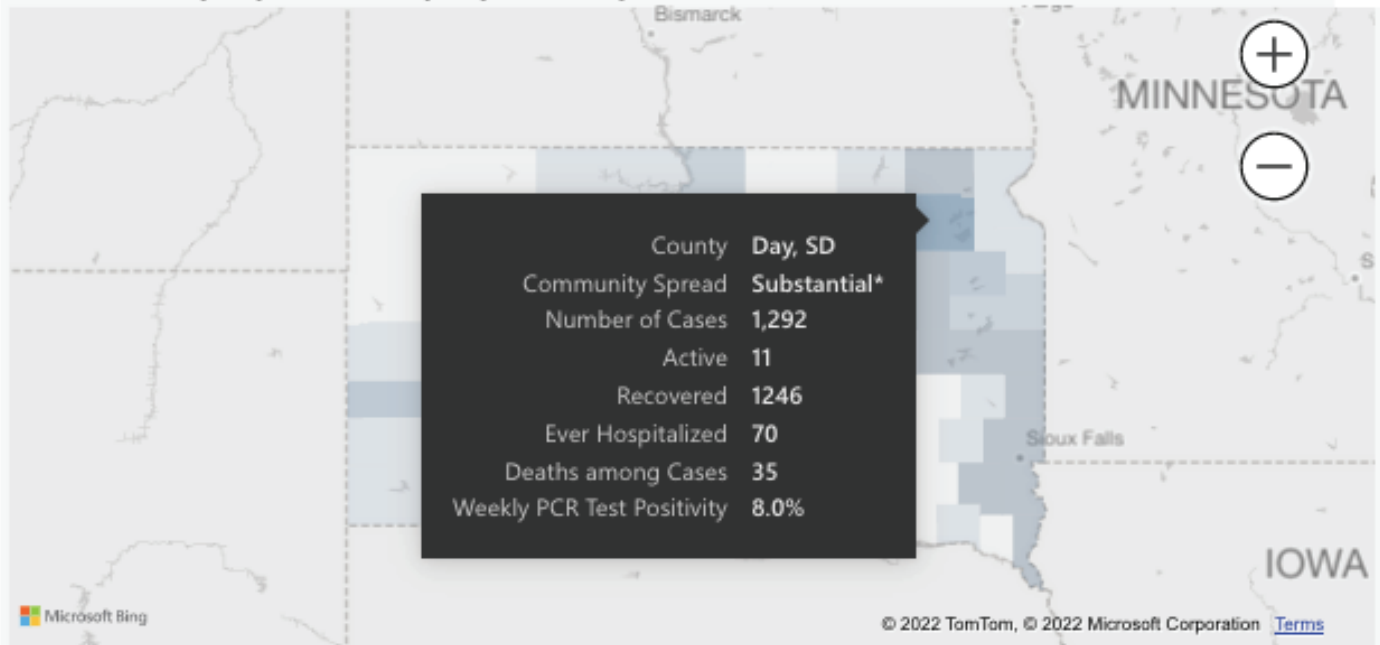
Recovered Cases

1,246

Currently Hospitalized

25

### Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Low ● Moderate ● Substantial ● High

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

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

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

1,292

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days

8.7%

4/26/2022 - 5/2/2022

Total Tests

17,067

Ever Hospitalized

70

Deaths Among Cases

35

% Progress (March Goal: 44233 Tests)

100%

% Progress (April Goal: 44233 Tests)

60%

% Progress (May Goal: 44233 Tests)

5%

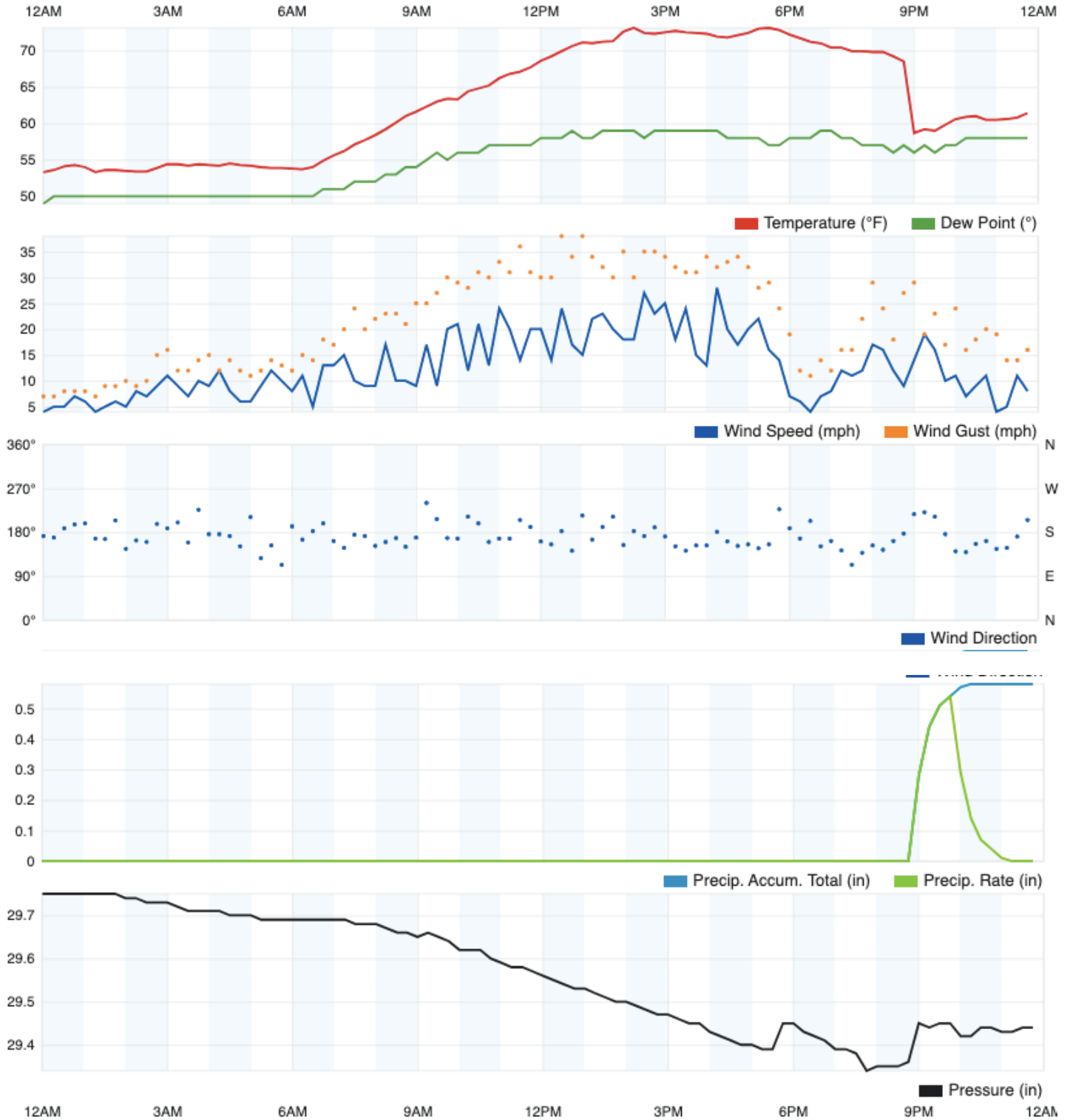




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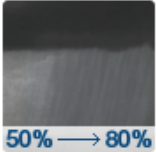
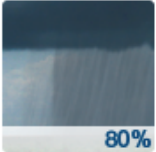


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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
 40%	 50% → 80%	 80%		
Scattered Showers and Breezy	Scattered Showers then Showers	Showers and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Breezy then Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 68 °F	Low: 54 °F	High: 73 °F	Low: 47 °F	High: 69 °F



## Marginal Severe Risk Tonight

May 8, 2022  
3:42 AM

### What

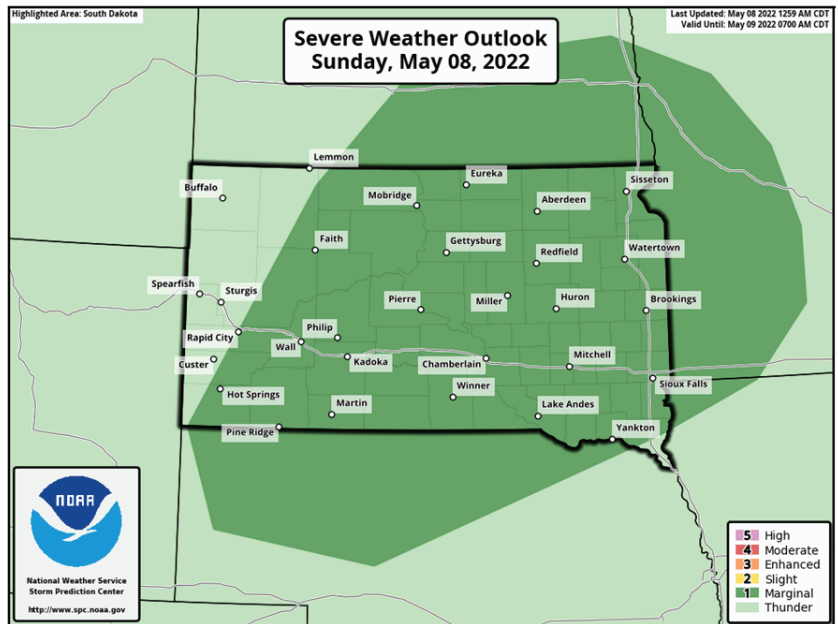
→ Isolated severe storms this evening and overnight. Hail and wind are the main risks.

### Where

→ Central and eastern South Dakota as well as western Minnesota

### When

→ Isolated severe possible this evening, more thunderstorm coverage is expected overnight from southwest to northeast over the region with isolated severe storms remaining possible.



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

The region is under a marginal risk of severe storms again toward evening. More widespread activity is expected late tonight, along with a continued risk for isolated severe storms. #sdwx #mnwx

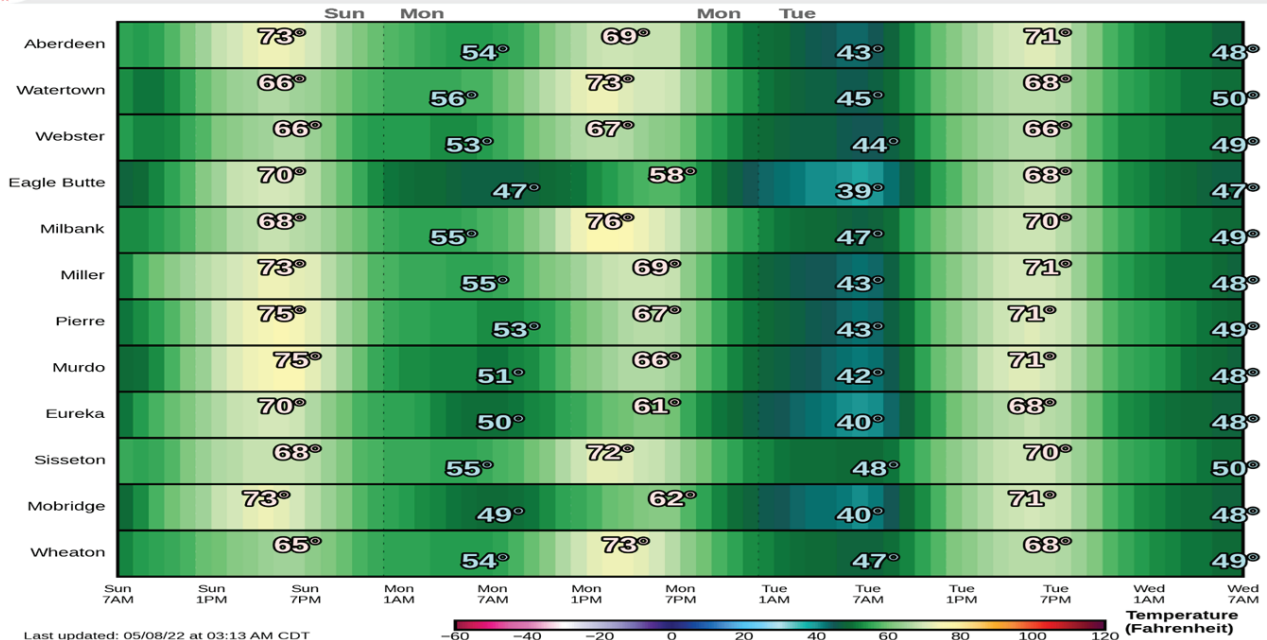
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## Early Week Temperature Forecast

May 8, 2022  
3:49 AM



Last updated: 05/08/22 at 03:13 AM CDT



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Temperatures should average out near to a bit above normal early this week. #sdwx #mnwx

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## Today in Weather History

May 8, 1934: Pierre recorded its' earliest 100 degrees when the high temperature reached 103 degrees. Mobridge also reached 103 degrees, which is the earliest yearly date for the city Mobridge.

May 8, 1965: The strongest tornado recorded in South Dakota tracked across eastern Tripp County. It was part of a larger tornado outbreak in Nebraska and South Dakota during the afternoon through late evening hours.

May 8, 1986: Thunderstorms produced torrential rainfall of two to four inches over much of central and eastern South Dakota. The very heavy rains caused extensive flooding with Walworth and Potter Counties reporting the most damage. In those counties, most roads were under water. Several bridges and roads were also washed out in that area. The heavy rain washed out the dam at Lake Byre in Lyman County, which produced water waist deep in Kennebec. The city of Kennebec lost their sole source of water when the dam broke. Cow Creek in Lyman County also flooded and broke a part of a dam, causing minor property damage. Rain continued to fall into the morning hours on the 9th. Some two-day rainfall totals include; 4.33 inches in Kennebec; 4.21 in Shelby; 3.91 at 4 miles west of Mellette; 3.30 in Gettysburg; 3.06 in Blunt; 2.99 in Eureka; 2.75 at 2 NNW of Mobridge; 2.70 inches 2 miles south of Ashton and in Britton.

May 8, 1995: Flooding caused by snowmelt from two significant snowstorms in April continued throughout May. The flooding was aggravated by widespread torrential rains, especially from the early morning of the 8th through the early morning of the 9th. Rainfall amounts ranged from one to four inches. Some higher rainfall amounts include; 5.50 inches at Wakpala, 4.50 at Chelsea and Leola, 4.20 at Ipswich, 4.10 inches 12 north of McLaughlin, and 3.91 inches at Aberdeen. A worker was injured near Claremont when the train derailed due to the weakening of the rail-bed caused by high water. The extensive flooding continued to cause road damage and many road closures.

1784: Deadly hailstorm in South Carolina hits the town of Winnsborough. The hailstones, measuring as much as nine inches in circumference, killed several persons, and a great number of sheep, lambs, and birds.

1902: On May 7th, Martinique's Mount Pelee began the deadliest volcanic eruption in the 20th century. On this day, the city of Saint Pierre, which some called the Paris of the Caribbean, was virtually wiped off the map. The volcano killed an estimated 30,000 people.

1979: Widespread damage occurred in the Tampa Bay area. The 19 tornadoes reported are the most in one day in Florida history. Three people drowned in Pinellas County where flooding was most severe. Rainfall amounts of 18 inches in 24 hours were reported with 12.73 inches falling at Tampa, FL; with 7.84 inches of that in just six hours. Worst hit was the Polk County community of Auburndale where a tornado made a direct hit on the Auburndale School. Flying debris hurt only eight students. An 83-year-old woman was killed as she hid in an unreinforced concrete block storage shed. 98 trailers were damaged or destroyed, and 40 people were injured.

2003: This was the second of three consecutive days with strong to violent tornadoes around Oklahoma City. A violent F4 tornado that affected Moore, Oklahoma City, Midwest City and Choctaw took on a path very similar to the 5/3/1999 devastating tornado. This particular storm back in 2003 affected areas from Newcastle and Moore to Del City and Choctaw. Although over 130 people were injured, there were no fatalities.

2009: A deadly derecho squall line crosses far southern Illinois at midday devastating the Carbondale area on its way across a 1,200-mile swath of terrain covering sections of nine states. Hundreds of homes and businesses are damaged or destroyed in Kansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri. The wind gusts to 106 mph in the Carbondale area with sustained winds measured at up to 90 mph. In southern Illinois, the storm system peels siding and roofs off homes and other buildings, blowing out car windows and tearing up trailer parks.

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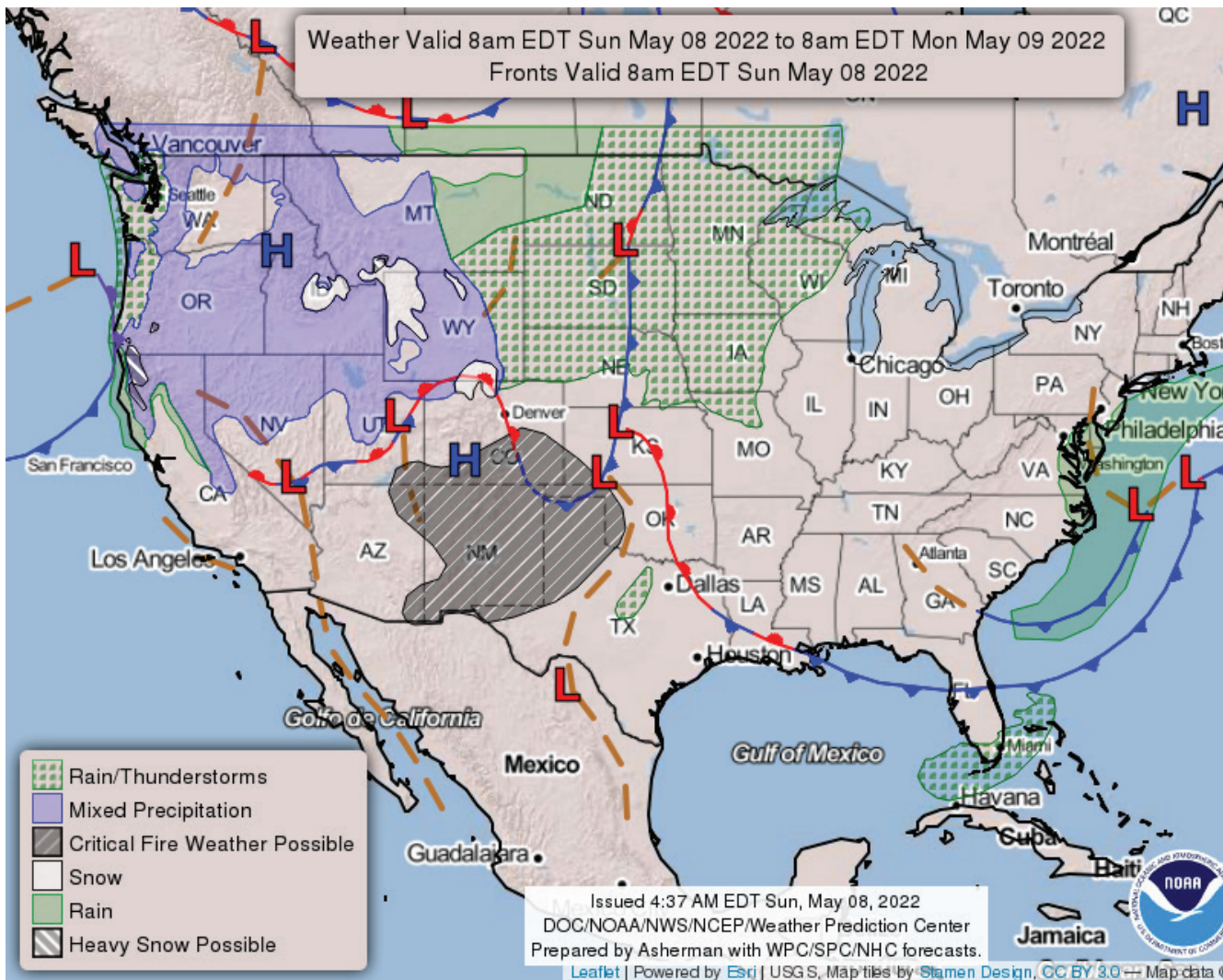
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 73 °F at 2:08 PM**  
**Low Temp: 53 °F at 12:01 AM**  
**Wind: 38 mph at 12:27 PM**  
**Precip: 0.58**

Day length: 14 hours, 40 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 105 in 1934  
Record Low: 22 in 1945  
Average High: 67°F  
Average Low: 41°F  
Average Precip in May.: 0.87  
Precip to date in May.: 0.60  
Average Precip to date: 4.84  
Precip Year to Date: 7.10  
Sunset Tonight: 8:49:17 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:07:09 AM



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## SEARCHING, EVERYONE IS SEARCHING

Not everyone knows what they are searching for in life. Most people seem to have an "emptiness" that they can't fill. Search as they do, and try as many different things as they can, travel to far distant places, and ask one person after another for help, the emptiness lingers on, and there seems to be no solution.

We all have this "built-in-thirst" that the world cannot quench. It begins at birth, and for many, it is still there at death. It came from our Creator and was placed in us by Him for a reason. He put this "built-in-unquenchable-thirst" within us to cause us to seek Him with all of our heart.

But most people do not understand what they are looking for or why. All they know is "it" is there: that life is empty and meaningless and purposeless. There is a feeling deep inside that there is more to life than what they have discovered. So, the search is on.

When a person begins this search, it grows until the emptiness, hopefully, is filled and the "right" thing found. A certain king describes his search like this: "I spread out my hands to You; my soul thirsts for You like a parched land!"

And God made this promise to the searcher: "When you seek Me, you will find Me if you search for Me with all your heart."

God will fill every longing in every heart if we turn to Him in faith believing. And when we find Him, we are obligated to Him to help others fill their needs with Him.

Prayer: Father, You have created us for Yourself, and our hearts will be restless until we open them to You. What a comfort to find the Living Water in You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I spread out my hands to You; my soul thirsts for You like a parched land. Psalm 143:6

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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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### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

03-10-14-18-33

(three, ten, fourteen, eighteen, thirty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

18-32-43-48-51, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 2

(eighteen, thirty-two, forty-three, forty-eight, fifty-one; Star Ball: ten; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$12.65 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$86 million

Powerball

04-05-06-28-67, Powerball: 10, Power Play: 2

(four, five, six, twenty-eight, sixty-seven; Powerball: ten; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$51 million

### Child killed in drive-by shooting on Pine Ridge Reservation

PINE RIDGE, S.D. (AP) — Authorities are investigating a drive-by shooting that killed a child on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

Tribal officers said the shooting occurred at 9 p.m. Thursday on U.S. Highway 18 in Pine Ridge. Witnesses said the vehicle shot at the home and left before officers arrived.

Law information officials are asking for information from the public. No further information has been released.

### Beijing loyalist John Lee elected as Hong Kong's next leader

HONG KONG (AP) — John Lee, a hard-line security chief who oversaw a crackdown on Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, was elected as the city's next leader on Sunday in a vote cast by a largely pro-Beijing committee.

Lee was the only candidate and won with over 99% of the vote in which nearly all 1,500 committee members were carefully vetted by the central government in Beijing.

He will replace current leader Carrie Lam on July 1. Her five-term was marked by huge pro-democracy protests calling for her resignation, a security crackdown that has quashed virtually all dissent, the recent COVID-19 wave that had overwhelmed the health system — events that have undermined Hong Kong's reputation as an international business hub with Western-style freedoms.

"I look forward to all of us starting a new chapter together, building a Hong Kong that is caring, open and vibrant, and a Hong Kong that is full of opportunities and harmony," Lee said in his victory speech.

Lam congratulated Lee in a statement and said she would submit the election results to Beijing.

The election followed major changes to Hong Kong's electoral laws last year to ensure that only "patriots" loyal to Beijing can hold office. The legislature was also reorganized to all but eliminate opposition voices.

The elaborate arrangements surrounding the predetermined outcome speak to Beijing's desire for a veneer of democracy. The committee members voted in a secret ballot, and Lee's 1,416 votes were the highest support ever for the city's top leadership position.

Without opposition, Lee would likely have easier time governing Hong Kong compared to Lam, said Ivan

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Choy, a senior lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Department of Government and Public Administration.

"A major reason for easier governance is that the electoral system has changed," he said. "In the legislature and the election committee, there is almost no political opposition and the political spectrum is concentrated towards the pro-establishment camp."

"With no democrats, it will be easier for the chief executive to govern as there are fewer checks and balances," he said.

The European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that Lee's election "violates democratic principles and political pluralism in Hong Kong."

"Selection process is yet another step in the dismantling of the 'one country, two systems' principle," Borrell tweeted.

The Chinese government's liaison office in Hong Kong congratulated Lee and said the election was conducted in a "fair, just and orderly manner in accordance with laws and regulations."

Mainland China's Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council said in its congratulatory note that the "successful election" proved that the city's new electoral system is "good" and in line with the "one country, two systems" framework that Hong Kong is governed by.

Critics say freedom of speech and assembly that Hong Kong was promised to keep for 50 years when it was handed over by Britain to China in 1997 has vanished as Beijing exerts greater control over the territory.

On Sunday morning, three members of the League of Social Democrats, a local activist group, protested the election by attempting to march toward the election venue while displaying a banner demanding universal suffrage that would allow Hong Kongers to vote both for the legislature and the chief executive.

"Human rights over power, the people are greater than the country," the banner read. "One person, one vote for the chief executive. Immediately implement dual universal suffrage."

One protester was handing out flyers before police arrived and cordoned them off. Police also searched the protesters' belongings and took down their personal details, though they made no immediate arrests.

The pro-democracy camp in Hong Kong has long demanded universal suffrage, which they say is promised in its mini-constitution, the Basic Law. It was also a key demand during massive protests in 2014 and 2019.

Lee's role as Hong Kong's next leader has sparked concern that Beijing could further tighten its grip. He spent most of his civil service career in the police and security bureau, and is a staunch supporter of a national security law imposed on Hong Kong in 2020 to stamp out dissent.

As security secretary during 2019 clashes between police and demonstrators, he oversaw the use of tear gas and rubber bullets and arrests that snuffed out further protests.

More than 150 people have been arrested under the security law, which outlaws secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces in the city's affairs. Almost all prominent pro-democracy activists have been jailed, with others fleeing abroad or being intimidated into silence.

Thousands of residents have left the city of 7.4 million people amid the 2019 protests and subsequent harsh pandemic restrictions, including many professionals and expatriates.

In his election campaign in the weeks leading up to Sunday's polls, Lee pledged to enact long-shelved local legislation to protect against security threats and vowed to increase housing supply in the world's most expensive real estate market.

He also said he would improve the city's competitiveness and set a firm foundation for Hong Kong's development.

## Dozens feared dead after Russian bomb levels Ukraine school

By ELENA BECATOROS and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — Dozens of Ukrainians were feared dead Sunday after a Russian bomb destroyed a school sheltering about 90 people in the basement as Moscow's invading forces kept up their barrage of cities, towns and villages in eastern and southern Ukraine.

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The governor of Luhansk province, one of two areas that make up the eastern industrial heartland known as the Donbas, said the school in the village of Bilohorivka caught fire after Saturday's bombing. Emergency crews found two bodies and rescued 30 people, he said.

"Most likely, all 60 people who remain under the rubble are now dead," Gov. Serhiy Haidai wrote on the Telegram messaging app. Russian shelling also killed two boys, ages 11 and 14, in the nearby town of Pryvillia, he said.

Since failing to capture Ukraine's capital, Russia has focused its offensive in the Donbas, where Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting since 2014 and occupy some territory. The largest European conflict since World War II has developed into a punishing war of attrition due to the Ukrainian military's unexpectedly effective defense.

To demonstrate success, the Russian military worked to complete its conquest of the besieged port city of Mariupol, which has been under relentless assault since the start of the war, in time for Victory Day celebrations on Monday. A sprawling seaside steel mill is the only part of the city not under Russian control.

All the remaining women, children and older civilians who had been sheltering with Ukrainian fighters in the Azovstal plant were evacuated Saturday. The troops still inside have refused to surrender; hundreds are believed to be wounded.

After rescuers evacuated the last civilians Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly address that the focus would turn to extracting the wounded and medics. Zelenskyy said in his nightly address that work would also continue Sunday on securing humanitarian corridors for residents of Mariupol and surrounding towns to leave.

The Ukrainian government has been reaching out to international organizations to try to secure safe passage for the estimated 2,000 fighters remaining in the plant's underground tunnels and bunkers. Zelenskyy acknowledged the difficulty, but said: "We are not losing hope, we are not stopping. Every day we are looking for some diplomatic option that might work."

The Ukrainian leader was expected to hold online talks Sunday with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, U.S. President Joe Biden and leaders from other Group of Seven countries. The meeting is partly meant to display unity among Western allies on Victory in Europe Day, which marks Nazi Germany's 1945 surrender.

Elsewhere on Ukraine's coast, explosions echoed again Sunday across the major Black Sea port of Odesa, which Russia struck with six cruise missiles on Saturday. Authorities offered no immediate damage reports.

The Odesa city council said four of the missiles launched Saturday hit a furniture company, with the shock waves and debris badly damaging high-rise apartment buildings. The other two hit the Odesa airport, where a previous Russian attack destroyed the runway.

Ukrainian leaders warned that attacks would only worsen in the lead-up to Victory Day, the May 9 holiday when Russia celebrates Nazi Germany's defeat in 1945 with military parades. Russian President Vladimir Putin is believed to want to proclaim some kind of triumph in Ukraine when he addresses the troops on Red Square on Monday.

In neighboring Moldova, Russian and separatists troops were on "full alert," the Ukrainian military warned. The region has increasingly become a focus of worries that the conflict could expand beyond Ukraine's borders.

Pro-Russian forces broke off the Transnistria section of Moldova in 1992, and Russian troops have been stationed there since, ostensibly as peacekeepers. Those forces are on "full combat readiness," Ukraine said, without giving details on how it came to the assessment.

Moscow has sought to sweep across southern Ukraine both to cut off the country from the Black Sea and to create a corridor to Transnistria. But it has struggled to achieve those objectives.

In a sign of the dogged resistance that has sustained the fighting into its 11th week, Ukraine's military struck Russian positions on a Black Sea island that was captured in the war's first days and has become a symbol of Ukrainian resistance.

Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press showed Ukraine targeting Russian-held Snake Island in a bid to impede Russia's efforts to control the sea.

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A satellite image taken Sunday morning by Planet Labs PBC showed smoke rising from two sites on the island. On the island's southern edge, a fire smoked next to debris. That corresponded to a video released by the Ukrainian military showing a strike on a Russian helicopter that had flown to the island.

A Planet Labs image from Saturday showed most of the island's buildings, as well as what appeared to be a Serna-class landing craft, destroyed by Ukrainian drone attacks.

The most intense combat in recent days has taken place in eastern Ukraine. A Ukrainian counteroffensive near Kharkiv, a city in the northeast that is the country's second-largest, "is making significant progress and will likely advance to the Russian border in the coming days or weeks," according to the Institute for the Study of War.

The Washington-based think tank added that "the Ukrainian counteroffensive demonstrates promising Ukrainian capabilities."

However, the Ukrainian army withdrew from Luhansk province's embattled city of Popasna, Haidai, the regional governor, said Sunday.

In a video interview posted on his Telegram channel, Haidai said that Kyiv's troops had "moved to stronger positions, which they had prepared ahead of time."

The Russia-backed rebels have established a breakaway region in Luhansk and neighboring Donetsk, which together make up the Donbas. Russia has targeted areas still under Ukrainian control.

"All free settlements in the Luhansk region are hot spots," Haidai said. "Right now, there are shooting battles in (the villages) of Bilohorivka, Voivodivka and towards Popasna."

## Jill Biden to Ukrainian mom: Russia war 'hard to understand'

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

KOSICE, Slovakia (AP) — U.S. first lady Jill Biden spent Mother's Day in Slovakia, meeting with Ukrainian mothers who have been displaced by Russia's war and assuring them that the "hearts of the American people" are behind them.

At a bus station in the city of Kosice that is now a 24-hour refugee processing center, Biden found herself in an extended conversation with an emotional Ukrainian woman who said she struggles to explain the war to her three children because she cannot even explain it to herself.

"I cannot explain because I don't know myself and I'm a teacher," Viktoriia Kutocha, who had her arms around her 7-year-old daughter, Yulia, told Biden.

At one point, Kutocha asked "why?" seeming to seek an explanation for Russia's decision to invade Ukraine on Feb. 24.

"It's so hard to understand," the first lady replied.

The 24-hour facility is one of six refugee centers in Slovakia, providing an average of 300 to 350 people daily with food, showers, clothing, emergency on-site accommodations and other services, according to information provided by the White House.

Biden, wearing a flower corsage on her wrist — a Mother's Day gift from President Joe Biden — also dropped in at a Slovakian public school that has taken in displaced students.

Slovakian and Ukrainian moms were brought together at the school for a Mother's Day event while their children made crafts to give them as gifts.

Biden went from table to table meeting the mothers and kids. She told some of the women that she wanted to come "and say the hearts of the American people are with the mothers of Ukraine."

"I just wanted to come and show you our support," she said before departing for the border village of Vysne Nemecke to tour its border processing facility.

Biden is on a four-day visit to Eastern Europe to highlight U.S. support for Ukrainian refugees and for the allied countries, like Romania and Slovakia, that are providing a safe haven for them.

She spent Friday and Saturday in Romania, visiting with U.S. troops and meeting with Ukrainian refugee mothers and children.

## Syrians in desperate need of aid hit hard by Ukraine fallout

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Umm Khaled hardly leaves the tent where she lives in northwest Syria, and she says she doesn't pay attention to the news. But she knows one reason why it is getting harder and harder to feed herself and her children: Ukraine.

"Prices have been going up, and this has been happening to us since the war in Ukraine started," said the 40-year-old, who has lived in a tent camp for displaced people in the last rebel-held enclave in Syria for the past six years since fleeing a government offensive.

Food prices around the world were already rising, but the war in Ukraine has accelerated the increase since Russia's invasion began on Feb. 24. The impact is worsening the already dangerous situation of millions of Syrians driven from their homes by their country's now 11-year-old civil war.

The rebel enclave in Syria's northwest province of Idlib is packed with some 4 million people, most of whom fled there from elsewhere in the country. Most rely on international aid to survive, for everything from food and shelter to medical care and education.

Because of rising prices, some aid agencies are scaling back their food assistance. The biggest provider, the U.N. World Food Program, began this week to cut the size of the monthly rations it gives to 1.35 million people in the territory.

The Ukraine crisis has also created a whole new group of refugees. European nations and the U.S. have rushed to help more than 5.5 million Ukrainians who have fled to neighboring countries, as well as more than 7 million displaced within Ukraine's borders.

Aid agencies are hoping to draw some of the world's attention back to Syria in a two-day donor conference for humanitarian aid to Syrians that begins Monday in Brussels, hosted by the U.N. and the European Union. The funding also goes toward aid to the 5.7 million Syrian refugees living in neighboring countries, particularly Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

Last year, the EU, the United States and other nations pledged \$6.4 billion to help Syrians and neighboring countries hosting refugees. But that fell well short of the \$10 billion that the U.N. had sought — and the impact was felt on the ground. In Idlib, 10 of its 50 medical centers lost funding in 2022, forcing them to dramatically cut back services, Amnesty International said in a report released Thursday.

Across Syria, people have been forced to eat less, the Norwegian Refugee Council said. The group surveyed several hundred families around the country and found 87% were skipping meals to meet other living costs.

"While the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine continues to demand world attention, donors and governments meeting in Brussels must not forget about their commitment to Syria," NRC's Mideast Regional Director Carsten Hansen said in a report Thursday.

The U.N.'s children's agency UNICEF said more than 6.5 million children in Syria are in need of assistance calling it the highest recorded since the conflict began. It said that since 2011, over 13,000 children have been confirmed killed or injured.

Meanwhile, UNICEF said funding for humanitarian operations in Syria is dwindling fast, saying it has received less than half of its funding requirements for this year. "We urgently need nearly \$20 million for the cross-border operations" in Syria, the agency said in a statement.

Umm Khaled is among those who rely on food aid. With her aid rations reduced, she has gone deeper in debt to feed her family.

Her husband and eldest son were killed in a Syrian government airstrike in their home city of Aleppo in 2016. Soon after, she escaped with her three surviving children to the rebel enclave in Idlib province. Ever since, they have lived in a tent camp with other displaced people on the outskirts of the town of Atmeh near the Turkish border.

Her family lives on two meals a day -- a small breakfast and a main meal late in the afternoon that serves as lunch and dinner. Her only income is from picking olives for a few weeks a year, making 20 Turkish liras (\$1.35) a day.

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"We used to get enough rice, bulgur, lentils and others. Now they keep reducing them," she said by telephone from the camp. She spoke on condition her full name is not made public, fearing repercussions. She lives with her two daughters, ages six and 16, and 12-year-old son, who suffered head and arm injuries in the strike that killed his brother and father.

The price of essential food items in northwest Syria has already increased by between 22% and 67% since the start of the Ukraine conflict, according to the aid group Mercy Corps. There have also been shortages in sunflower oil, sugar and flour.

Mercy Corps provides cash assistance to displaced Syrians to buy food and other needs and it says it has no plans to reduce the amount.

"Even before the war in Ukraine, bread was already becoming increasingly unaffordable," said Mercy Corps Syria Country Director, Kieren Barnes. The vast majority of wheat brought into northwest Syria is of Ukrainian origin, and the territory doesn't produce enough wheat for its own needs.

"The world is witnessing a year of catastrophic hunger with a huge gap between the resources and the needs of the millions of people around the world," said WFP spokeswoman Abeer Etefa.

In many of its operations around the world, WFP is reducing the size of the rations it provides, she said. Starting this month in northwest Syria, the provisions will go down to 1,177 calories a day, from 1,340. The food basket will continue to provide a mix of commodities, including wheat flour, rice, chickpeas, lentils, bulgur wheat, sugar and oil.

Rising prices have increased the cost of WFP's food assistance by 51% since 2019 and that cost will likely go even higher as the impact of the Ukraine crisis is felt, Etefa said.

Earlier in the year, before the Ukraine conflict began, a 29% jump in costs prompted the Czech aid agency People in Need to switch from providing food packages to giving food vouchers. The vouchers, worth \$60, buy less food than the group's target level, but it had to take the step to "maximize its coverage of food assistance to the most vulnerable," a spokesperson told The Associated Press.

As the world turns to other conflicts, "Syria is on the verge of becoming yet another forgotten crisis," Assistant U.N. Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya warned in late April.

In northwest Syria, "a staggering 4.1 million people" need humanitarian aid, Msuya said — not just food, but also medicines, blankets, school supplies and shelter. She said almost a million people in the territory, mainly women and children, live in tents, "half of which are beyond their normal lifespan."

Many fear that the situation could only get worse in July, because Russia may force international aid for the northwest to be delivered through parts of Syria under the control of its ally, President Bashar Assad.

Currently, aid enters the Idlib enclave directly from Turkey via a single border crossing, Bab al-Hawa. The U.N. mandate allowing deliveries through Bab al-Hawa ends on July 9, and Russia has hinted it will veto a Security Council resolution renewing the mandate.

A Russian veto would effectively hand Assad control over the flow of aid to the opposition enclave and the U.S. and EU had warned earlier they will stop funding in that case.

The result will be a severe humanitarian crisis, likely triggering a new flood of Syrian migrants into Turkey and Europe, the German Institute for International and Security Affairs warned in a report.

Umm Khaled said she has no choice but to endure her deteriorating living conditions.

"They keep reducing our food basket," she said. "May God protect us if they cut it completely."

## Burkina Faso's displaced numbers swell amid jihadi violence

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso (AP) — Ami Sana hangs a tattered tarp for a bit of shade where she can rest on a break from pounding stones under the scorching sun.

"The work is hard. It makes my body weak, but what else can I do?" she asked.

The mother of six is one of 2 million people displaced by Burkina Faso's rapidly rising Islamic extremist violence, according to the U.N.

Amid the clamor of clanging pickaxes and falling rocks, Sana has found work in the Pissy granite mine

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on the outskirts of Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou.

Lifting heavy rocks and hammering them into gravel to sell to construction companies is tough work that doesn't earn her enough to adequately feed or educate her children, Sana said. But it's the best work that she could find.

The rush of civilians from rural villages plagued by extremist violence has put pressure on Burkina Faso's cities.

"Some of the host cities have doubled or tripled in size in the past three years, and their infrastructures are often stretched to a breaking point," said Hassane Hamadou, country director for the Norwegian Refugee Council.

"Schools can't absorb all the new children, water points can't provide enough for all. Hundreds of thousands are left without access to an education, clean water or healthcare as a result," he said.

The influx of displaced people is causing competition among the approximately 3,000 people working at the granite mine. At least 500 displaced people started working at the mine last year making it harder for the original miners to earn a living, said Abiba Tiemtore, head of the site.

"With more people, it's hard to collect as many rocks and it's impacting our daily income," she said. Miners who used to make approximately \$1 a day say they are now lucky if they make 80 cents.

When it seized power in January, Burkina Faso's ruling junta vowed to stamp out extremist violence but it has done little about the swelling numbers of displaced.

The government has a responsibility to provide the swelling numbers of displaced with those social services, said Alexandra Lamarche, senior advocate for West and Central Africa for Refugees International.

The minister of humanitarian affairs did not respond to a request for comment on the situation.

So far the junta has not succeeded in stemming the extremist violence. In January, 160,000 people were newly displaced, the second-largest monthly increase in three years, according to a report by international aid groups. Hard-hit areas like the Center North region, which hosts Burkina Faso's largest displaced population, are buckling under the pressure.

"The impact of people moving from their farms into big cities is disorientation (and) the increase of poverty (and) fear," said Abdoulaye Pafadnam, former mayor of Barsalogo, one of the main towns in the Center North region.

The violence is cutting off access for aid groups to reach people in need. Roads that were safe to travel six months ago are lined with explosives and the United Nations had only one helicopter until recently to transport people and aid across the country.

The pressure on cities has also started creating rifts between some host and displaced communities. In the northern town of Ouahigouya, people sheltering in a crowded displacement camp said locals chase them from the forest if they try to chop wood for cooking, accusing them of trying to destroy it.

With no end to the jihadi violence in sight, the numbers of Burkina Faso's displaced are expected to continue flooding urban centers where they'll be hunting for jobs.

"I worry that I have no means to take care of my children," said Fati Ouedraogo, a displaced mother of 10 in Ouahigouya. "When the children are crying I don't know what to do."

## Detailed 'open source' news investigations are catching on

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — One of the more striking pieces of journalism from the Ukraine war featured intercepted radio transmissions from Russian soldiers indicating an invasion in disarray, their conversations even interrupted by a hacker literally whistling "Dixie."

It was the work of an investigations unit at The New York Times that specializes in open-source reporting, using publicly available material like satellite images, mobile phone or security camera recordings, geolocation and other internet tools to tell stories.

The field is in its infancy but rapidly catching on. The Washington Post announced last month it was adding six people to its video forensics team, doubling its size. The University of California at Berkeley

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last fall became the first college to offer an investigative reporting class that focuses specifically on these techniques.

Two video reports from open-source teams — The Times' "Day of Rage" reconstruction of the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot and the Post's look at how a 2020 racial protest in Washington's Lafayette Square was cleared out — won duPont-Columbia awards for excellence in digital and broadcast journalism.

The Ukraine radio transmissions, where soldiers complained about a lack of supplies and faulty equipment, were verified and brought to life with video and eyewitness reports from the town where they were operating.

At one point, what appears to be a Ukrainian interloper breaks in.

"Go home," he advised in Russian. "It's better to be a deserter than fertilizer."

The Times' visual investigations unit, begun in 2017 and now numbering 17 staff members, "is absolutely one of the most exciting areas of growth that we have," said Joe Kahn, incoming executive editor.

The work is meticulous. "Day of Rage" is composed mostly of video shot by protesters themselves, in the heady days before they realized posting them online could get them into trouble, along with material from law enforcement and journalists. It outlines specifically how the attack began, who the ringleaders were and how people were killed.

Video sleuthing also contradicted an initial Pentagon story about an American drone strike that killed civilians in Afghanistan last year. "Looking to us for protection, they instead became some of the last victims in America's longest war," the report said.

"There's just this overwhelming amount of evidence out there on the open web that if you know how to turn over the rocks and uncover that information, you can connect the dots between all these factoids to arrive at the indisputable truth around an event," said Malachy Browne, who leads the Times' team.

"Day of Rage" has been viewed nearly 7.3 million times on YouTube. A Post probe into the deaths at a 2021 Travis Scott concert in Houston has been seen more than 2 million times, and its story on George Floyd's last moments logged nearly 6.5 million views.

The Post team is an outgrowth of efforts begun in 2019 to verify the authenticity of potentially newsworthy video. There are many ways to smoke out fakes, including examining shadows to determine if the apparent time of day in the video corresponds to when the activity supposedly captured actually took place.

"The Post has seen the kind of impact that this kind of storytelling can have," said Nadine Ajaka, leader of its visual forensics team. "It's another tool in our reporting mechanisms. It's really nice because it's transparent. It allows readers to understand what we know and what we don't know, by plainly showing it."

Still new, the open-source storytelling isn't bound by rules that govern story length or form. A video can last a few minutes or, in the case of "Day of Rage," 40 minutes. Work can stand alone or be embedded in text stories. They can be investigations or experiences; The Times used security and cell-phone video, along with interviews, to tell the story of one Ukraine apartment house as Russians invaded.

Leaders in the field cite the work of the website Storyful, which calls itself a social media intelligence agency, and Bellingcat as pioneers. Bellingcat, an investigative news website, and its leader, Eliot Higgins, are best known for covering the Syrian civil war and investigating alleged Russian involvement in shooting down a Malaysian Airlines flight over Ukraine in 2014.

The Arab Spring in the early 2010s was another key moment. Many of the protests were coordinated in a digital space and journalists who could navigate this had access to a world of information, said Alexa Koenig, executive director of the Human Rights Center at the University of California at Berkeley's law school.

The commercial availability of satellite images was a landmark, too. The Times used satellite images to quickly disprove Russian claims that atrocities committed in Ukraine had been staged.

Other technology, including artificial intelligence, is helping journalists who seek information about how something happened when they couldn't be on the scene. The Times, in 2018, worked with a London company to artificially reconstruct a building in Syria that helped contradict official denials about the use of chemical weapons.

Similarly, The Associated Press constructed a 3D model of a theater in Mariupol bombed by the Rus-



sians and, combining it with video and interviews with survivors, produced an investigative report that concluded more people died there than was previously believed.

AP has also worked with Koenig's team on an investigation into terror tactics by Myanmar's military rulership, and used modeling for an examination on the toll of war in a neighborhood in Gaza. It is collaborating with PBS' Frontline to gather evidence of war crimes in Ukraine and is further looking to expand its digital efforts. Experts cite BBC's "Africa Eye" as another notable effort in the field.

As efforts expand, Koenig said journalists need to make sure their stories drive the tools that are used, instead of the other way around. She hears regularly now from news organizations looking to build their own investigate units and need her advice — or students. Berkeley grad Haley Willis is on Browne's team at The Times.

It feels, Koenig said, like a major shift has happened in the past year.

Browne said the goal of his unit's reporting is to create stories with impact that touch upon broader truths. A probe about a Palestinian medic shot by an Israeli soldier on the Gaza strip was as much about the conflict in general than her death, for example.

"We have similar mandates," the Post's Ajaka said, "which is to help make sense of some of the most urgent news of the day."

## Protect the body: Ukraine volunteers craft armor, camouflage

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — Sparks fly as a circular saw slices into metal, while welders nearby work feverishly to the sound of blaring heavy metal. Upstairs, sewing machines clatter as women mark patterns on cloth being shaped into bulletproof vests.

An old industrial complex in the southeastern Ukrainian riverside city of Zaporizhzhia has become a hive of activity for volunteers producing everything from body armor and anti-tank obstacles to camouflage nets, portable heating stoves and rifle slings for Ukrainian soldiers fighting Russia's invasion. One section specializes in vehicles, armor-plating some, converting others into ambulances. Another organizes food and medical deliveries.

With the front line about 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the city, some sections of the operation, such as the stitching of bulletproof vests, are working around the clock in shifts to meet demand. Crowdfunding has brought in enough money to buy steel from Sweden, Finland and Belgium, which is lighter than local steel, organizers say, a crucial quality for body armor.

The operation is the brainchild of local celebrity Vasyl Busharov and his friend Hennadii Vovchenko, who ran a furniture-making business. They named it Palianytsia, a type of Ukrainian bread whose name many Ukrainians say cannot be pronounced properly by Russians.

The operation relies entirely on volunteers, who now number more than 400 and come from all walks of life, from tailors to craftsmen to lawyers. Apart from those involved in production, there are also drivers delivering humanitarian aid and medical equipment bought through donated funds.

"I feel I am needed here," said fashion designer Olena Grekova, 52, taking a brief break from marking fabric for vests.

When Russia invaded on Feb. 24, she was in Thailand seeking inspiration for her spring collection. Initially, she said, she wondered whether it was a sign from God that she shouldn't return. Her husband and two adult sons urged her not to.

"But I made a decision that I had to go back," she said.

She had known Busharov for years. Arriving home on March 3, she gathered her equipment the next day and by March 5 was at Palianytsia. She's been working there every day since, bar one, sometimes even at night.

Shifting from designing backless ballgowns to creating functional bulletproof vests was "a new experience for me," Grekova said. But she sought feedback from soldiers for her designs, which have armor

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plates added. Now she is helping to produce several versions, including a prototype summer vest.

In another section of the industrial complex, 55-year-old Ihor Prytula was busy making a new camouflage net, winding pieces of dyed fabric through a string frame. A furniture-maker by trade, he joined Palianytsia at the start of the war. He had some military experience, he said, so it was easy to get feedback from soldiers on what they needed.

"We speak the same language," he said.

For Prytula, the war is personal. His 27-year-old son was killed in late March as he helped evacuate people from the northern town of Chernihiv.

"The war and death, it's bad, trust me, I know this," he said. "It's bad, it's tears, it's sorrow."

The call for volunteers went out as soon as the war began. Busharov announced his project on Facebook on Feb. 25. The next day, 50 people turned up. "Next day 150 people, next day 300 people. ... And all together, we try (to) protect our city."

They started out making Molotov cocktails in case Russian soldiers advanced on Zaporizhzhia. In 10 days, they produced 14,000, he said. Then they turned to producing anti-tank obstacles known as hedgehogs — three large metal beams soldered together at angles — used as part of the city's defenses. Soon, Busharov and Vovchenko said, they discovered another pressing need: there weren't enough bulletproof vests for Ukraine's soldiers.

But learning how to make something so specialized wasn't easy.

"I wasn't actually connected with the military at all," said Vovchenko. "It took two days and three sleepless nights to understand what needs to be done."

The team went through various types of steel, making plates and testing them to check bullet penetration. Some didn't offer enough protection, others were too heavy to be functional. Then they had a breakthrough.

"It turns out that steel used for car suspension has very good properties for bullet penetration," Vovchenko said, standing in front of four shelves of test plates with varying degrees of bullet damage. The one made of car suspension steel showed dozens of bullet marks but none that penetrated.

The vests and everything else made at Palianytsia are provided free to soldiers who request them, so long as they can prove they are in the military. Each plate is numbered and each vest has a label noting it is not for sale.

So far, Palianytsia has produced 1,800 bulletproof vests in two months, Busharov said, adding there was a waiting list of around 2,000 more from all over Ukraine.

Vovchenko said they have heard about up to 300 people whose lives have been saved by the vests.

Knowing that is "incredibly inspiring and it keeps us going," he said.

## **Patriotism, unease mix as Russia marks Victory Day in WWII**

By The Associated Press undefined

Red Soviet flags and orange-and-black striped military ribbons are on display in Russian cities and towns. Neighborhoods are staging holiday concerts. Flowers are being laid by veterans' groups at monuments to the Great Patriotic War, as World War II is known in the country.

At first glance, preparations for Monday's celebration of Victory Day, marking the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945, seem to be the same as ever.

But the mood this year is very different, because Russian troops are fighting and dying again.

And this battle, now in its 11th week, is going on in neighboring Ukraine, against what the government has falsely called a campaign against "Nazis."

The pride and patriotism usually associated with Russia's most important holiday, marked by a huge parade of soldiers and military hardware through Red Square, is mixing with apprehension and unease over what this year's Victory Day may bring.

Some Russians fear that President Vladimir Putin will use it to declare that what the Kremlin has previously called a "special military operation" in Ukraine will now be a full-fledged war — bringing with it a

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broad mobilization of troops to bolster Russia's forces.

"I can't remember a time when the May 9 holiday was anticipated with such anxiety," historian Ivan Kurilla wrote on Facebook.

Ukraine's intelligence chief, Kyrylo Budanov, said Moscow was covertly preparing such a plan. British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace told LBC Radio that Putin was "laying the ground for being able to say, 'Look, this is now a war against Nazis, and what I need is more people.'"

The Kremlin denied having such plans, calling the reports "untrue" and "nonsense."

Asked by The Associated Press on Friday whether mobilization rumors could dampen the Victory Day mood, Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said "nothing will cast a shadow" over "the sacred day, the most important day" for Russians.

Still, human rights groups reported a spike in calls from people asking about laws concerning mobilization and their rights in case of being ordered to join the military.

"Questions about who can be called up and how have started to flow on a mass scale through our hotline about the rights of conscripts and the military," said Pavel Chikov, founder of the Agora legal aid group, on the messaging app Telegram.

Russian state TV has ramped up the patriotic rhetoric. In announcing the Feb. 24 military operation, Putin declared it was aimed at the "demilitarization" of Ukraine to remove a perceived military threat to Russia by "neo-Nazis."

A recent TV commentary said Putin's words were "not an abstract thing and not a slogan" and praised Russia's success in Ukraine, even though Moscow's troops have gotten bogged down, making only minor gains in recent weeks.

Ukraine, which has a democratically elected Jewish president who lost relatives in the Holocaust, and the West have condemned the remarks as a fictitious cover for a blunt act of aggression.

But many Russians fed a steady diet of the official narrative have cheered on their troops, comparing them to "our grandfathers" who fought the Germans.

Popular support in Russia for the war in Ukraine is difficult to gauge in a country that has seen a steady crackdown on journalists in recent years, with independent media outlets shut down and state-controlled television providing a pervasive influence.

A recent poll by the respected independent Levada Center found that 82% of Russians remain concerned by the military campaign in Ukraine. The vast majority of them – 47% – are worried about the deaths of civilians and Russian soldiers in the war, along with the devastation and suffering. Only 6% of those concerned by the war said they were bothered by the alleged presence of "Nazis" and "fascists" in Ukraine.

"A significant part of the population is horrified, and even those who support the war are in a permanent psychological militant state of a perpetual nightmare," said political analyst Andrei Kolesnikov in a recent commentary.

A government campaign encouraging support for the military is using the distinctive black-and-orange St. George's ribbon that is traditionally associated with Victory Day. The letter "Z" has become a symbol of the conflict, decorating buildings, posters and billboards across Russia, and many forms of it use the ribbon's colors and pattern.

Rallies supporting the troops have taken place in recent days at World War II memorials, with participants singing wartime songs from the 1940s.

One official has suggested that Victory Day marchers display photos of soldiers now fighting in Ukraine. Normally on the holiday, Russians carry portraits of their relatives who took part in World War II to honor those in the so-called "Immortal Regiment" from a conflict in which the Soviet Union lost a staggering 27 million people.

## **New Mexico residents brace for extreme wildfire conditions**

By CEDAR ATTANASIO and BRIAN MELLELY Associated Press

LAS VEGAS, N.M. (AP) — With the worst of the thick wildfire smoke having blown out of town, residents

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of this small northern New Mexico city tried to recapture a sense of normalcy Saturday as their rural neighbors hunkered down amid predictions of extreme fire conditions.

Shops and restaurants reopened, the historic center was no longer just populated by firefighters, but there was a widely felt sense of anxiety, loss, and wariness of what lay ahead.

"It's literally like living under a dark cloud," said Liz Birmingham, whose daughter had persistent headaches from the smoke. "It's unnerving."

While the city for now seemed spared of danger, rural areas were still threatened as the fire was driven by winds so fierce all firefighting aircraft had to be grounded. And the worst could be yet to come.

A combination of strong winds, high temperatures and low humidity were forecast by the National Weather Service to create an "exceptionally dangerous and likely historic stretch of critical to extreme fire weather conditions" for several days.

Some 1,400 firefighters worked feverishly to contain the largest fire burning in the U.S. The blaze, now more than a month old, has blackened more than 269 square miles (696 square kilometers) — an area larger than the city of Chicago.

Part of the fire was started by Forest Service workers who lost control of a prescribed burn meant to reduce fire risk. State leaders have called on the federal government for accountability, including reparations.

Nationwide, close to 2,000 square miles (5,180 square kilometers) have burned so far this year, with 2018 being the last time this much fire had been reported at this point, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. And predictions for the rest of the spring do not bode well for the West, where long-term drought and warmer temperatures brought on by climate change have combined to worsen the threat of wildfire.

Thousands of residents have evacuated due to flames that have charred large swaths of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in northeastern New Mexico.

The fire's main threat was now to the north, where flames burning vegetation clogging the forest floor threatened several small rural communities, fire spokesman Ryan Berlin said.

Firefighters, who typically rely on calmer winds and lower temperatures to make progress in the evening, have been hindered by unexpectedly strong winds at night.

The threat to Las Vegas, a city of 13,000, was reduced after vegetation was cleared to create containment lines. Local officials on Saturday allowed residents of several areas on the city's northwestern outskirts to return to their homes, Berlin said.

The city looked like a ghost town earlier in the week, with businesses shuttered, schools closed and the tourist district empty but for resting firefighters. By Saturday, it was in a partial state of recovery.

National Guard troops carried cases of water, people lined up to sign up for relief from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., met with local officials and toured the shelter housing some of the displaced.

"We don't know if our houses are getting burned, or if it's gonna stop," said Domingo Martinez, an evacuee from rural Manuelitas northwest of Las Vegas. "I hope it dies down so we can go home."

Martinez, who is staying with his son on the east side of town, visited an old friend and neighbor who had been living in the middle school shelter for 15 days.

Outside the school, Martinez got a free haircut from Jessica Aragón, a local hairdresser who volunteered her time.

"I love that everyone is coming together," Aragón said. "I think a smile is worth a thousand words."

Birmingham was one of four dog owners leading German shepherds and a black Labrador through an obedience course in a park next to a library. All had been touched in some way by the fire.

One was a construction worker whose work sites had all been reduced to ash.

Fire officials warned Las Vegas residents that they should still be ready to leave and not to let their guards down because winds will pick up. High winds and increasing smoke will also make it difficult — or impossible — to fly water-dropping choppers and planes dumping fire retardant.

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On a mountain ridgeline outside of town, a sloppy line of red retardant could be seen on the trees. Residents were praying that the line and the wall of rock would hold.

## Dictator's son, rights lawyer vie for Philippine presidency

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — More than three decades after a largely peaceful "People Power" revolt overthrew Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos, his son and namesake has emerged as the top contender in Monday's presidential election based on most voter-preference surveys.

Here are some key facts about the major issues, the leading candidates and election concerns:

### WHAT'S AT STAKE

If Ferdinand Marcos Jr. triumphs, it will be a stunning reversal of the 1986 pro-democracy uprising that booted his father out of office into global infamy. Many Filipinos remember the human rights atrocities and plunder that unfolded under his dictatorship and would likely push back against any perceived threat to democracy or Marcos Jr.'s attempt to recover his family's assets that were seized by the government as ill-gotten wealth.

The winner stands to inherit immense problems, including an economy battered by the coronavirus pandemic, deeper poverty and unemployment, hyperinflation due to skyrocketing oil and gas prices, decades-old insurgencies and inflamed political divisions. Outgoing populist leader Rodrigo Duterte's successor also likely faces calls to prosecute him for his bloody crackdown on illegal drugs that has left thousands of mostly poor suspects dead and alarmed the international community. The International Criminal Court has been investigating the killings as a possible crime against humanity.

### FERDINAND MARCOS JR.

A former provincial governor, congressman and senator, the 64-year-old son of the late dictator is waging the most impressive attempt yet of the Marcos family to recapture the presidency. His mother, Imelda Marcos, twice unsuccessfully attempted to retake the seat of power after returning with her children to the Philippines from exile in the United States, where her husband died in 1989.

Marcos Jr. has defended his father's legacy and steadfastly refuses to apologize for and acknowledge the atrocities and plunder during the dictatorship. Married to a lawyer, with whom he has three sons, he has stayed away from controversies, including a past tax conviction and the Marcos family's refusal to pay a huge estate tax. Throughout his campaign, he tenaciously stuck to a battle cry of national unity. He denies accusations that he financed a yearslong social media campaign that harnessed online trolls to smear opponents and whitewash the Marcos family's checkered history, daring critics to "show me one."

### LENI ROBREDO

As an economics student at the state-run University of the Philippines in the 1980s, Leni Robredo joined the massive protests that led to the ouster of the elder Marcos. The 57-year-old also took up law and successfully ran for a seat in the House of Representatives in 2013 in her first foray into politics after her husband, a respected politician, died in a plane crash in 2012. She defeated Marcos Jr. in the 2016 vice presidential race with a narrow margin in their first electoral faceoff. Her advocacies center on defending human rights and empowering the poor partly by teaching them their legal rights.

The daughter of a trial court judge, Robredo does not belong to any of the prominent families that have dominated Philippine politics for generations, and is running as an independent propped by a network of campaign volunteers. As the opposition vice president, who was separately elected from Duterte, she condemned the killings of mostly poor drug suspects as part of his crackdown, angering the brash-talking leader and straining their ties for years. The mother of three has been cited for her integrity and a lifestyle that shuns the trappings of power — she used to regularly travel alone by bus to her home province as a congresswoman.

### OTHER CONTENDERS

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Eight other presidential aspirants have lagged far behind in pre-elections surveys, including Manny Pacquiao, the 43-year-old former boxing star, who vowed to build houses for the poor and lock up corrupt politicians in a "mega-prison." Manila Mayor Isko Moreno, a 47-year-old former TV heartthrob, banked on his rags-to-power life story and public awe over his massive cleanup of the capital. Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a 73-year-old former national police chief, has promised to continue exploiting his investigative skills to expose major government corruption.

## SECURING THE VOTE

Aside from the presidency, more than 18,000 government posts will be contested in the elections, including half of the 24-member Senate, more than 300 seats in the House of Representatives, as well as provincial and local offices across the archipelago of more than 109 million Filipinos. About 67 million have registered to cast their ballot during the 13-hour voting starting at 6 a.m., an hour longer than the midterm elections in 2019 to compensate for slower queues due to social distancing and other coronavirus safeguards.

Thousands of police and military personnel have been deployed given longstanding risks posed by communist and Muslim rebels and a history of often bloody family and political rivalries in rural areas. In 2009, gunmen deployed by the family of southern Maguindanao province's then-governor massacred 58 people, including 32 journalists, in an attack on an election convoy that shocked the world.

## Pandemic pushes Oregon's public defender system to the brink

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Oregon's public defender system has shown cracks for years, but a post-pandemic glut of delayed cases has exposed shocking constitutional landmines impacting defendants and crime victims alike in a state with a national reputation for progressive social justice.

An acute shortage of public defenders means that at any given time at least several hundred low-income criminal defendants don't have legal representation, sometimes in serious felony cases that could put them away for years. Judges have dismissed nearly four dozen cases in the Portland area alone — among them a domestic violence case with allegations of strangulation as well as other major felonies — and have threatened to hold the state public defenders office in contempt of court for failing to provide attorneys.

Oregon sends out a weekly list of unrepresented defendants to private attorneys begging for help. Some of the accused have been jailed without a lawyer for months on charges of rape, sodomy, child sexual abuse or attempted murder, records show. Meanwhile, court proceedings for those not in custody are repeatedly pushed back, leaving defendants in limbo and the courts spinning their wheels.

"We're overwhelmed. The pandemic is exposing all the problems that we have, the under-resourcing and the underfunding, and it just hit a breaking point," said Carl Macpherson, executive director of Metropolitan Public Defender, a large nonprofit public defender firm in Portland that temporarily stopped taking new cases when its attorneys couldn't keep up.

"It just became abundantly clear that we are broken. You cannot do your job when you have 130 open felony cases per attorney," Macpherson said.

Public defenders warned that the system was on the brink of collapse before the pandemic. In 2019, some attorneys even picketed outside the state Capitol for higher pay and reduced caseloads. But lawmakers didn't act and months later, COVID-19 shut down the courts. Now, the system is "buckling before our eyes," said Kelly Simon, legal director for the Oregon American Civil Liberties Union, which is closely watching the situation and hasn't ruled out litigation.

Macpherson estimates there are now about 500 defendants going without public defenders statewide and that's likely a significant undercount, because many are initially arraigned and then have their case deferred up to 60 days with plans to appoint permanent counsel later.

"If you do not have a lawyer, then your constitutional rights are being violated from the very beginning," he said. "But if there's no attorney to appoint, what do you expect them to do?"

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The crisis in Oregon, while extreme, reflects a nationwide reckoning on indigent defense, as courts seek to absorb a pandemic backlog of criminal cases with public defender systems that have long been underfunded and understaffed. From New England to New Mexico to Wisconsin, states are struggling to keep public defender services running amid an onslaught of cases and attorney departures.

After a lawsuit from the ACLU, lawmakers in Maine this month earmarked nearly \$1 million to hire that state's first five public defenders, with a focus on rural counties where the system is overwhelmed. Maine until now has relied entirely on contracts with private attorneys, and many remote areas don't have enough qualified lawyers for the work.

In New Mexico, a recent report found the state was short 600 full-time public defenders. State lawmakers in New Hampshire approved more than \$2 million in March to raise public defenders' salaries in a state where about 800 defendants were without attorneys. Three dozen public defenders resigned in the 2021 fiscal year due to low pay and high caseloads, the state Judicial Council said.

And in Wisconsin, where starting pay for public defenders is \$27 an hour, there's a shortage of 60 attorney positions statewide while one-third of the private attorneys who contract out for cases have quit the system, according to authorities there.

"This is America's dirty little secret: Thousands of people in courtrooms all across the country go to jail every single day without having talked to a lawyer," said Jon Mosher, deputy director of the Sixth Amendment Center, which studies state public defender systems, including Oregon's, and advocates for reforms.

"We see it all over the place. It happens in upstate New York, it happens in Mississippi. It's everywhere."

In Oregon, a report by the American Bar Association released in January found the state has 31% of the public defenders it needs. Every existing attorney would have to work more than 26 hours a day during the work week to cover the caseload, the authors said.

The situation is more complicated than in other states because Oregon's public defender system is the only one in the nation that relies entirely on contractors, Mosher said. Cases are doled out to either large nonprofit defense firms, smaller cooperating groups of private defense attorneys that contract for cases or independent attorneys who can take cases at will.

Now, some of those large nonprofit firms are periodically refusing to take new cases because of the overload. Private attorneys — they normally serve as a relief valve where there are conflicts of interest — are increasingly also rejecting new clients because of the workload, poor pay rates and late payments from the state.

For victims, the situation is devastating and it's hurting the most vulnerable the hardest.

Cassie Trahan, co-founder and executive director of an Oregon nonprofit that works with teen and young adult victims of sex trafficking, said trust in the judicial system is fading amid minority and immigrant communities and the young people with whom she works. Victims no longer want to come forward when they see cases being dismissed or ending in weak plea bargains to reduce pressure on the courts.

One such young woman who is a victim in a pending trafficking case "lives in constant fear that it's going to be dismissed," Trahan said.

Prosecutors can get an indictment from a grand jury when cases are dismissed for lack of a public defender and police will re-arrest the alleged perpetrator, but that's small consolation to victims.

"In her mind, it's like, 'Now I've outed myself, now I've talked against him and what's going to happen if he gets off?'" Trahan said of the victim. "That's what we're seeing more of, especially in communities of color and groups that don't trust the judicial system anyway."

Other victims' advocates say that even when cases aren't dismissed, they are taking much longer because hearings are constantly pushed back and trials delayed. Victims can't move on because "you need to keep your testimony fresh ... and there's so much emotional preparedness that comes with that," said Jessica Mindlin, director of the Oregon office of the Victim Rights Law Center, which provides free legal help to rape and sexual assault survivors.

Amid the crisis, the state Legislature passed \$12.8 million in one-time funding for the state to hire 36 new public defenders in the four hardest-hit counties, as well as a suite of legislation to reform the state's

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public defender agency. New contracts to be finalized in July will institute lower attorney case caps and lawmakers are withholding \$100 million from the agency's budget until it shows good faith on numerous reforms, including a restructuring, financial audits and performance metrics.

A working group of all three branches of state government will convene this month to begin tackling deeper reforms.

"It's horrifying. I don't I don't want to mince words about this. I am not going to make excuses for this. It's awful. I think it's unconstitutional and I think it's incredibly problematic," said state Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, who co-chairs the state Legislature's Ways and Means committee. "That being said, we can't manufacture attorneys out of thin air."

Autumn Shreve, government relations manager for the state's Office of Public Defense Services, said the pandemic finally forced the hand of state lawmakers who haven't taken a close look at public defenders in nearly 20 years.

"It's been a rag-tag group of people trying to cover the caseloads year to year and because of that there's been a lot of past papering over of problems, of just keeping the ship floating and not really being thoughtful about how the money is being spent," she said.

"We're working really hard," she said. "We very much appreciate the attention and the help that all the branches of government want to provide, because we haven't always gotten that."

Meanwhile, the situation in the state's courtrooms and jails is dire. Often those going without attorneys are charged with heinous crimes that come with hefty prison sentences if convicted, making it even harder to find public defenders qualified to handle such complex cases in an overtaxed system.

And those who handle misdemeanor charges are often young attorneys carrying 100 cases or more at a time — and they also spend hours helping clients access mental health or drug treatment services and keeping their family informed.

"You can't keep everything in your head when you have that many clients at the same time. Even things like, you know, 'What's your current plea offer?' I can't remember that for 100 people. Or I can't remember, 'What exactly does the police report say?'" said Drew Flood, a public defender with just eight months on the job at Metropolitan Public Defender.

"This is the scariest thing they have going on in their life," he said. "It's hard when those people, you can tell, don't think you're giving their case the time and attention it deserves — and I feel that way too, sometimes."

Other public defender services funded by the state, including private investigators and legal advisors, have also reached a breaking point.

Renardo Mitchell, who is jailed on attempted murder charges, said he chose to represent himself after he didn't hear from his public defender for five months. But his state-provided legal adviser — an attorney assigned by the court to help self-representing defendants hire expert witnesses and file motions — died unexpectedly in February and he's been without legal counsel since then.

Two years after his arrest, he still hasn't seen all the discovery in his case, said Mitchell, 37.

"We're all innocent until proven guilty. Nothing has been proven yet — I haven't been found guilty," said Mitchell, who faces more than 22 years in prison if convicted on all charges. "Even if I did those things that they allege, I still have a right to due process of law. Period."

In a surprising twist, the chief prosecutor in Portland has become an outspoken advocate of public defender reform for that very reason.

Multnomah County District Attorney Michael Schmidt recently penned an editorial in The Oregonian/OregonLive saying a lack of public defenders is hurting public safety, taxing an already overworked police force and re-traumatizing victims.

"The most important thing is everybody has a right to an attorney, it's a constitutional right. There's a reason why we don't want to win every single case that we bring. That's what protects everybody, that protects me and that protects you because the government unchecked has a lot of power," Schmidt told The Associated Press in a phone interview.



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"It's an ecosystem, like a coral reef. If you take away one aspect of this system, then all the other aspects fall apart," Schmidt said. "I can't do my job without everyone else doing theirs."

## 80-1 shot Rich Strike races to huge upset in Kentucky Derby

By BETH HARRIS AP Racing Writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Anyone anticipating a return to normalcy in the Kentucky Derby got a dose of crazy Saturday when an 80-1 shot came charging up the rail to win at Churchill Downs.

With favorite Epicenter and Zandon engaged in a duel at the front, Rich Strike stole the show with the second-biggest upset in the Derby's 148-year history.

The chestnut colt beat 4-1 favorite Epicenter by three-quarters of a length. Zandon finished another three-quarters of a length back in third.

"I about fell down in the paddock when he hit the wire," winning trainer Eric Reed said. "I about passed out."

Rich Strike paid \$163.60 Only Donerail in 1913 had a higher payout of \$184.90.

"What a crazy Derby," said trainer Kenny McPeck, whose horses finished eighth and ninth.

Rich Strike wasn't even in the Derby until Friday when Hall of Fame trainer D. Wayne Lukas scratched Ethereal Road, making room for the chestnut colt who had just two previous wins in his career.

"We found out about 30 seconds before the deadline on Friday," owner Rick Dawson said. "It put us in the race and really we always felt if we just got in we've got a shot."

Rich Strike ran 1 1/4 miles in 2:02.61. After taking a bite out of his much costlier competition, he playfully chomped on the pony guiding him to the winner's circle.

"I can't believe it after Epicenter's effort," said losing trainer Steve Asmussen, who fell to 0 for 24 in the Derby. "I got beat by the horse that just got in."

Jockey Sonny Leon and Rich Strike had just two horses beat in the early going. Leon eventually guided his mount between horses and to the inside rail. Rich Strike made a deft move around Messier in the stretch and went right back to the rail intent on picking off Epicenter and Zandon.

"When I was in the last 70 yards, I said, 'I think I got this race,'" Leon said.

Both Leon, from Venezuela, and Reed were in their first Derby. Reed endured a tragedy five years ago when he lost nearly two dozen horses in a barn fire at his training center in Lexington.

He briefly considered the fire might be a signal for him to leave the sport.

"People I hadn't seen, people I haven't talked to in years, my best friends were there in the morning to pick me up," Reed recalled. "It let me know there's so much good out there, and then I just decided I wasn't going to let it take me out."

Leon regularly rides on some of the country's smallest circuits, where the horse flesh is inexpensive and the purse money modest. But he matched wits with such veteran riders as Joel Rosario, aboard Epicenter, and Mike Smith, aboard Messier.

Leon's rail ride was reminiscent of jockey Calvin Borel's stealth move aboard Mine That Bird in 2009. Mine That Bird sprang what was then the Derby's third-biggest upset, paying \$103.20 to win.

Reed had no argument with the bettors ignoring his colt, whose victory surely inspired little guys everywhere.

"Small trainer, small rider, small stable, he should have been 80-1," Reed said. "And so anybody that's in this business, lightning can strike."

Rich Strike was purchased by Dawson, who races as RED TR-Racing LLC, for \$30,000 last fall when the colt was entered in a low-level claiming race by his former owner.

Calumet Farm head Brad Kelley might be rueing that decision now. Calumet Farm has won a record eight Kentucky Derbies, but none since 1968, when Forward Pass was placed first via disqualification.

Rich Strike earned \$1.86 million for his first stakes victory. The colt lost to Zandon in his most recent start last month and was beaten by Epicenter in the John Battaglia Memorial in March.

Simplification finished fourth and Mo Donegal was fifth.

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Churchill Downs returned to full capacity, including former President Donald Trump, on the first Saturday in May for the first time in three years.

But the final result was the more upheaval for America's greatest horse race.

In 2019, winner Maximum Security was disqualified for interference after 22 minutes and runner-up Country House wore the garland of red roses.

In 2020, an eerie silence enveloped the track when no fans were allowed because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the race was pushed to September.

Last year's winner, Medina Spirit, was disqualified after nine months, having failed a post-race drug test that led to six-time Derby-winning trainer Bob Baffert being banned from Churchill Downs for two years. The 2021 Derby was back to its usual spot on the calendar with attendance limited to about 52,000.

The bourbon was flowing again Saturday, cigar smoke curled in the air on a cloudy and unusually cool day, and fans strutted in their huge hats, floral-print dresses and seersucker suits.

Then came Rich Strike thundering along the rail and all heck broke loose.

A few days ago, Reed sent Dawson a photo of the colt sprawled in his straw-covered stall with his handlers laying on him, all of them napping. Reed typed, "I think our horse is cool and ready to run."

Dawson responded, "If we can wake him up."

Did they ever.

"I feel like the luckiest man alive," Dawson said, grinning.

## **S Korea's next leader faces escalating N Korean nuke threat**

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — During his election campaign, South Korean President-elect Yoon Suk Yeol had tough words for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, saying he would teach his rival some manners and sternly deal with his provocative missile tests with a strengthened alliance with the United States.

But as he takes office Tuesday for a single five-year term, the conservative Yoon must now confront an increasingly belligerent Kim, who openly threatens to use atomic bombs and is reportedly preparing for his first nuclear test explosion since 2017, part of an effort to build warheads that specifically target South Korea.

North Korea has a history of trying to rattle new governments in Seoul and Washington to gain leverage in future negotiations. But if Kim orders a nuclear test, Yoon would be left with very limited options to deal with Kim at the start of his presidency.

There's skepticism among experts over whether Yoon, despite his rhetoric, can accomplish something meaningfully different from outgoing President Moon Jae-in while North Korea continues to reject talks and focuses instead on expanding its nuclear and missile programs despite limited resources and economic difficulties.

"North Korea has the initiative. Regardless of whether conservatives or liberals are in power in South Korea, North Korea is pressing ahead with (missile tests) under its own weapons development timetable before it tries to tip the balance later," said Park Won Gon, a professor at Seoul's Ewha Womans University. "North Korea will now continue its provocations, but there are no ways to stop it."

Moon championed engaging North Korea and once shuttled between Pyongyang and Washington to arrange the now-stalled nuclear diplomacy. Even after North Korea urged Moon not to meddle in its dealings with Washington and insulted him, Moon still worked to improve relations and shied away from hitting back at the North.

Yoon has described Moon's appeasement policy as "subservient" and accused him of undermining South Korea's seven-decade military alliance with the United States. To neutralize North Korea's nuclear threats, Yoon said he would seek a stronger U.S. security commitment and enhance South Korea's own missile strike capabilities, though he remains open to dialogue with the North.

During a rally before the March 9 election, as he slammed Moon for failing to strongly criticize Kim's repeated missile tests, Yoon said that if elected, "I would teach (Kim) some manners and make him come

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to his senses completely.”

Yoon has faced criticism that some of his policies are unrealistic and largely rehash past policies that failed to persuade North Korea to denuclearize.

For example, Yoon said he would push for economic cooperation projects linked to progress in denuclearization steps by the North. Two past South Korean conservative presidents offered similar proposals from 2008 to 2017, but North Korea rejected the overtures.

Yoon said he would seek to establish a trilateral dialogue channel among Seoul, Pyongyang and Washington, but experts see little chance North Korea, which destroyed an unoccupied South Korean-built liaison office on its territory in 2020, will accept that idea now.

“The U.S.-South Korea alliance could flourish, but North Korea’s nuclear weapons and missile program will further advance and that could elevate tensions on the Korean Peninsula to maximum levels. It’s hard to expect any meaningful progress in inter-Korean relations,” said Yang Moo Jin, a professor at Seoul’s University of North Korean Studies.

Nam Sung-wook, a professor at Korea University in South Korea, said a policy of linking incentives to denuclearization “has reached its limits and will eventually never appeal to North Korea” because Pyongyang is highly unlikely to abandon a nuclear program that has reached such strength.

During his confirmation hearing last Monday, Yoon’s nominee for foreign minister, Park Jin, told lawmakers that North Korea “appears to have no intentions of denuclearizing voluntarily.” He said the best option to stop North Korean provocation would be using a combination of pressure and dialogue to convince Pyongyang to opt for a path toward denuclearization.

After test-launching a dozen missiles potentially capable of reaching the U.S. mainland, South Korea or Japan this year, Kim recently said his nuclear weapons won’t be confined to their primary mission of deterring war if his country’s interests are threatened. Park, the professor, called Kim’s comments “dangerous” because they suggest North Korea could use its nukes even in an accidental border clash or if it misjudges Seoul’s military moves.

Recent satellite photos show North Korea is restoring a previously closed nuclear testing facility in possible preparation for its seventh atomic explosion. Experts say that test is related to North Korea’s push to manufacture warheads small enough to be mounted on tactical short-range missiles targeting South Korea, citing some of the North’s recent tests of such weapons. Nam said a nuclear test would make it extremely difficult for the Yoon government to try to resume talks with North Korea.

Kim seems to be trying to use his weapon tests to force the West to accept his country as a nuclear power so he can try to negotiate sanctions relief and security concessions from a position of strength. Experts say Kim is able to push forward his weapons programs because the U.N. Security Council cannot impose new sanctions while its veto-wielding members are divided. The U.S. is involved in confrontations with Russia over its invasion of Ukraine and with China over their strategic rivalry.

Yoon’s possible overdependence on the U.S. alliance may cause Seoul to further lose voice in international efforts to defuse the North Korean nuclear issue while giving Pyongyang less reason to engage in serious talks with Seoul, said Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University’s Institute for Far Eastern Studies in Seoul. He said Seoul would need to create wiggle room for nuclear diplomacy and lure Pyongyang to talks with a flexible carrots-and-sticks approach.

How to boost the South Korea-U.S. alliance to better deal with North Korean nuclear advancement will likely top the agenda when Yoon meets President Joe Biden in Seoul on May 21.

Yoon has promised to seek a tougher U.S. extended deterrence, a reference to Washington’s ability to use military and nuclear forces to deter attacks on its allies. But some experts question whether such a security commitment can effectively protect South Korea from aggression from North Korea because the decision to use U.S. nuclear weapons lies with the U.S. president.

“Historically, it’s true the extended deterrence has never been enforced. In some sense, it’s like a gentlemen’s agreement,” Park, the professor, said. “Even if we succeed in institutionalizing that to the maximum level, that still doesn’t guarantee an automatic U.S. involvement” in the event of a war on the

Korean Peninsula.

## Ukraine evacuates civilians from steel plant under siege

By ELENA BECATOROS and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces fired cruise missiles at the southern Ukrainian city of Odesa on Saturday and bombarded a besieged steel mill in Mariupol, hoping to complete their conquest of the port in time for Victory Day celebrations. Officials announced that the last women, children and older adults had been evacuated from the mill, but Ukrainian fighters remained trapped.

In a sign of the unexpectedly effective defense that has sustained the fighting into its 11th week, Ukraine's military flattened Russian positions on a Black Sea island that was captured in the war's first days and has become a symbol of resistance.

Western military analysts also said a Ukrainian counteroffensive was advancing around the country's second-largest city, Kharkiv, even as it remained a key target of Russian shelling.

The largest European conflict since World War II has developed into a punishing war of attrition that has killed thousands of people, forced millions to flee their homes and destroyed large swaths of some cities. Ukrainian leaders warned that attacks would only worsen in the lead-up to Russia's holiday on Monday celebrating Nazi Germany's defeat 77 years ago, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged people to heed air raid warnings.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Saturday that Zelenskyy and his people "embody the spirit of those who prevailed during the Second World War." He accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of trying "to twist history to attempt to justify his unprovoked and brutal war against Ukraine."

"As war again rages in Europe, we must increase our resolve to resist those who now seek to manipulate historical memory in order to advance their own ambitions," Blinken said in a statement as the United States and United Kingdom commemorated the Allied victory in Europe.

The most intense fighting in recent days has been in eastern Ukraine, where the two sides are entrenched in a fierce battle to capture or reclaim territory. Moscow's offensive there has focused on the Donbas, where Russia-backed separatists have been fighting since 2014.

The governor of the Luhansk region, one of two that make up the Donbas, said a Russian strike destroyed a school in the village of Bilogorivka where 90 people were seeking safety in the basement. Gov. Serhiy Haidai, who posted pictures of the burning rubble on Telegram, said 30 people were rescued. The emergency services later reported that two bodies had been found and more could still be buried under the rubble. Rescue work was suspended overnight but was to resume on Sunday.

Haidai also said two boys aged 11 and 14 were killed by Russian shelling in the town of Pryvillia, while two girls aged 8 and 12 and a 69-year-old woman were wounded.

Moscow also has sought to sweep across southern Ukraine both to cut off the country from the sea and create a corridor to the breakaway Moldovan region of Transnistria, long home to Russian troops. But it has struggled to achieve those objectives.

On Saturday, six Russian cruise missiles fired from aircraft hit Odesa, where a curfew is in place until Tuesday morning. Videos posted on social media showed thick black smoke rising over the Black Sea port city as sirens wailed.

The Odesa city council said four of the missiles hit a furniture company, with the shock waves and debris badly damaging high-rise apartment buildings. The other two missiles hit the Odesa airport, where the runway had already been taken out in a previous Russian attack.

Air raid sirens sounded several times early Sunday, the city council said.

Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press showed Ukraine targeting Russian-held Snake Island in a bid to impede Russia's efforts to control the Black Sea. An image taken early Saturday by Planet Labs PBC showed that most of the island's buildings had been destroyed by Ukrainian drone attacks, as well as what appeared to be a Serna-class landing craft against the island's northern beach.

The image corresponds with a Ukrainian military video showing a drone striking the Russian vessel,

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engulfing it in flames. Snake Island, located some 35 kilometers (20 miles) off the coast, figured in a memorable incident early in the war when Ukrainian border guards stationed there defied Russian orders to surrender, purportedly using colorful language.

In Mariupol, Ukrainian fighters made a final stand against a complete Russian takeover of the strategically important city, which would give Moscow a land bridge to the Crimean Peninsula, annexed from Ukraine during a 2014 invasion.

Satellite photos shot Friday by Planet Labs PBC showed vast devastation at the sprawling Azovstal sea-side steel mill, the last pocket of Ukrainian resistance in the city. Buildings had gaping holes in the roofs, including one under which hundreds of fighters were likely hiding.

After rescuers evacuated the last civilians Saturday, Zelenskyy said in his nightly address that the focus would turn to extracting the wounded and medics: "Of course, if everyone fulfills the agreements. Of course, if there are no lies."

He added that work would also continue Sunday on securing humanitarian corridors for residents of Mariupol and surrounding towns to leave.

The situation at the plant has drawn the world's attention, with the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross desperately trying to organize evacuations.

In recent days, fighters inside described bringing out small groups of civilians who had been hiding there for weeks. The fighters said via social media that both they and the Russians had used a white flag system to halt fighting in order to get civilians out.

But Russian forces have intensified fire on the mill with mortars, artillery, truck-mounted rocket systems, aerial bombardment and shelling from the sea, making evacuation operations difficult.

Three Ukrainian fighters were reportedly killed and six more wounded during an evacuation attempt Friday. Capt. Sviatoslav Palamar, the deputy commander of the Azov Regiment, said his troops had waved white flags, and he accused Russian forces of firing an anti-tank weapon at a vehicle.

It remains unclear what will happen to the estimated 2,000 fighters at Azovstal, both those still in combat and the hundreds believed to be wounded. In recent days the Ukrainian government has been reaching out to international organizations to try to secure safe passage for them. The fighters have repeatedly vowed not to surrender.

Zelenskyy said officials were trying to find a way to evacuate them. He acknowledged the difficulty, but said: "We are not losing hope, we are not stopping. Every day we are looking for some diplomatic option that might work."

Russian forces have probed the plant and even reached into its warren of tunnels, according to Ukrainian officials.

Kharkiv, which was the first Soviet capital in Ukraine and had a prewar population of about 4 million, remained a key target of Russian shelling in the northeast. Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Saturday that the Russian military also hit large shipments of weapons from the U.S. and other Western countries with Iskander missiles in the region. His claims couldn't be independently verified.

But Western military analysts said Ukrainian forces were making progress in securing positions around the city. The Ukrainian military said it retook control of five villages and part of a sixth, and that Russian forces destroyed three bridges on a road northeast of the city to try to slow Ukraine's advance.

A Washington-based think tank, the Institute for the Study of War, said in its most recent assessment that Ukraine may be able to push Russian forces "out of artillery range of Kharkiv in the coming days," providing a respite for the city and an opportunity to build the defenders' momentum "into a successful, broader counteroffensive."

Overnight, a Russian missile destroyed a national museum in the Kharkiv region dedicated to the life and work of 18th-century philosopher and poet Gregory Skovoroda, the local council said. It posted photographs on Facebook showing the building engulfed in flames.

Zelenskyy expressed outrage at the missile attacks on the museum and on Odesa, "where almost every street has something memorable, something historical." He said Russian forces have destroyed or dam-

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aged about 200 cultural heritage sites.

"Every day of this war, the Russian army does something that leaves you speechless," he said. "But then the next day it does something that makes you feel this way in a new way."

## New Mexico residents brace for extreme wildfire conditions

By CEDAR ATTANASIO and BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LAS VEGAS, N.M. (AP) — With the worst of the thick wildfire smoke having blown out of town, residents of this small northern New Mexico city tried to recapture a sense of normalcy Saturday as their rural neighbors hunkered down amid predictions of extreme fire conditions.

Shops and restaurants reopened, the historic center was no longer just populated by firefighters, but there was a widely felt sense of anxiety, loss, and wariness of what lay ahead.

"It's literally like living under a dark cloud," said Liz Birmingham, whose daughter had persistent headaches from the smoke. "It's unnerving."

While the city for now seemed spared of danger, rural areas were still threatened as the fire was driven by winds so fierce all firefighting aircraft had to be grounded. And the worst could be yet to come.

A combination of strong winds, high temperatures and low humidity were forecast by the National Weather Service to create an "exceptionally dangerous and likely historic stretch of critical to extreme fire weather conditions" for several days.

Some 1,400 firefighters worked feverishly to contain the largest fire burning in the U.S. The blaze, now more than a month old, has blackened more than 269 square miles (696 square kilometers) — an area larger than the city of Chicago.

Part of the fire was started by Forest Service workers who lost control of a prescribed burn meant to reduce fire risk. State leaders have called on the federal government for accountability, including reparations.

Nationwide, close to 2,000 square miles (5,180 square kilometers) have burned so far this year, with 2018 being the last time this much fire had been reported at this point, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. And predictions for the rest of the spring do not bode well for the West, where long-term drought and warmer temperatures brought on by climate change have combined to worsen the threat of wildfire.

Thousands of residents have evacuated due to flames that have charred large swaths of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in northeastern New Mexico.

The fire's main threat was now to the north, where flames burning vegetation clogging the forest floor threatened several small rural communities, fire spokesman Ryan Berlin said.

Firefighters, who typically rely on calmer winds and lower temperatures to make progress in the evening, have been hindered by unexpectedly strong winds at night.

The threat to Las Vegas, a city of 13,000, was reduced after vegetation was cleared to create containment lines. Local officials on Saturday allowed residents of several areas on the city's northwestern outskirts to return to their homes, Berlin said.

The city looked like a ghost town earlier in the week, with businesses shuttered, schools closed and the tourist district empty but for resting firefighters. By Saturday, it was in a partial state of recovery.

National Guard troops carried cases of water, people lined up to sign up for relief from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., met with local officials and toured the shelter housing some of the displaced.

"We don't know if our houses are getting burned, or if it's gonna stop," said Domingo Martinez, an evacuee from rural Manuelitas northwest of Las Vegas. "I hope it dies down so we can go home."

Martinez, who is staying with his son on the east side of town, visited an old friend and neighbor who had been living in the middle school shelter for 15 days.

Outside the school, Martinez got a free haircut from Jessica Aragón, a local hairdresser who volunteered her time.

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"I love that everyone is coming together," Aragón said. "I think a smile is worth a thousand words."

Birmingham was one of four dog owners leading German shepherds and a black Labrador through an obedience course in a park next to a library. All had been touched in some way by the fire.

One was a construction worker whose work sites had all been reduced to ash.

Fire officials warned Las Vegas residents that they should still be ready to leave and not to let their guards down because winds will pick up. High winds and increasing smoke will also make it difficult — or impossible — to fly water-dropping choppers and planes dumping fire retardant.

On a mountain ridgeline outside of town, a sloppy line of red retardant could be seen on the trees. Residents were praying that the line and the wall of rock would hold.

## Mickey Gilley, who helped inspire 'Urban Cowboy,' dies at 86

NEW YORK (AP) — Country star Mickey Gilley, whose namesake Texas honky-tonk inspired the 1980 film "Urban Cowboy" and a nationwide wave of Western-themed nightspots, has died. He was 86.

Gilley died Saturday in Branson, Missouri, where he helped run the Mickey Gilley Grand Shanghai Theatre. He had been performing as recently as last month, but was in failing health over the past week.

"He passed peacefully with his family and close friends by his side," according a statement from Mickey Gilley Associates.

Gilley — cousin of rock 'n' roll pioneer Jerry Lee Lewis — opened Gilley's, "the world's largest honky tonk," in Pasadena, Texas, in the early 1970s. By mid-decade, he was a successful club owner and had enjoyed his first commercial success with "Room Full of Roses." He began turning out country hits regularly, including "Window Up Above," "She's Pulling Me Back Again" and the honky-tonk anthem "Don't the Girls All Get Prettier at Closing Time."

Overall, he had 39 Top 10 country hits and 17 No. 1 songs. He received six Academy of Country Music Awards, and also worked on occasion as an actor, with appearances on "Murder She Wrote," "The Fall Guy," "Fantasy Island" and "The Dukes of Hazzard."

"If I had one wish in life, I would wish for more time," Gilley told The Associated Press in March 2001 as he celebrated his 65th birthday. Not that he'd do anything differently, the singer said.

"I am doing exactly what I want to do. I play golf, fly my airplane and perform at my theater in Branson, Missouri," he said. "I love doing my show for the people."

Meanwhile, the giant nightspot's attractions, including its famed mechanical bull, led to the 1980 film "Urban Cowboy," starring John Travolta and Debra Winger and regarded by many as a countrified version of Travolta's 1977 disco smash, "Saturday Night Fever." The film inspired by Gilley's club was based on an Esquire article by Aaron Latham about the relationship between two regulars at the club.

"I thank John Travolta every night before bed for keeping my career alive," Gilley told the AP in 2002. "It's impossible to tell you how grateful I am for my involvement with 'Urban Cowboy.' That film had a huge impact on my career, and still does."

The soundtrack included such hits as Johnny Lee's "Lookin' for Love," Boz Scaggs' "Look What You've Done for Me" and Gilley's "Stand by Me." The movie turned the Pasadena club into an overnight tourist draw and popularized pearl snap shirts, longneck beers, the steel guitar and mechanical bulls across the country.

But the club shut down in 1989 after Gilley and his business partner Sherwood Cryer feuded over how to run the place. A fire destroyed it soon after.

An upscale version of the old Gilley's nightclub opened in Dallas in 2003. In recent years, Gilley moved to Branson.

He was married three times, most recently to Cindy Loeb Gilley. He had four children, three with his first wife, Geraldine Garrett, and one with his second, Vivian McDonald.

A Natchez, Mississippi, native, Gilley grew up poor, learning boogie-woogie piano in Ferriday, Louisiana, alongside Lewis and fellow cousin Jimmy Swaggart, the future evangelist. Like Lewis, he would sneak into the windows of Louisiana clubs to listen to rhythm and blues. He moved to Houston to work construction

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but played the local club scene at night and recorded and toured for years before catching on in the '70s.

Gilley had suffered health problems in recent years. He underwent brain surgery in August 2008 after specialists diagnosed hydrocephalus, a condition characterized by an increase in fluid in the cranium. Gilley had been suffering from short-term memory loss, and credited the surgery with halting the onset of dementia.

He underwent more surgery in 2009 after he fell off a step, forcing him to cancel scheduled performances in Branson. In 2018, he sustained a fractured ankle and fractured right shoulder in an automobile accident.

## Grand jury indicts suspect in Brooklyn subway mass shooting

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal grand jury has indicted a man suspected of shooting up a New York City subway train last month — an attack that wounded 10 people and rattled a city already experiencing a rise in violent crime.

The panel charged Frank James, 62, on Friday with committing a terrorist attack or other violence against a mass transportation system and discharging a firearm during a violent crime. Both counts carry a maximum sentence of life in prison. The weapons count has a 10-year mandatory minimum sentence.

James was arrested on April 13, about 30 hours after authorities say he drove from Philadelphia and unleashed smoke bombs and dozens of bullets in a train full of morning commuters as it approached a Brooklyn station. The shooting victims ranged in age from 16 to 60; all were expected to survive.

Authorities said James's bank card, cellphone and a key to a van he had rented were found at the shooting scene. Police also said they found the handgun used in the shooting and traced it to James.

James is jailed without bail. An arraignment hasn't yet been scheduled, according to the U.S. attorney's office for New York's Eastern District.

A lawyer representing James at the time of his arrest cautioned not to rush to judgment and noted that James alerted police to his whereabouts. James was arrested in Manhattan's East Village after he called a tip line saying he was at a fast food restaurant in that section of the city.

A motive for the attack is unclear. In numerous rants he posted on YouTube, James, who is Black, made bigoted remarks about people of various backgrounds and railed against New York Mayor Eric Adams and complained about mental health care he received in the city years ago.

## Judge rejects Trump lawsuit challenging ban from Twitter

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A San Francisco judge tossed out former President Donald Trump's lawsuit challenging his permanent ban from Twitter.

U.S. District Judge James Donato said Friday that Trump failed to show Twitter violated his First Amendment right to free speech. Free speech rights don't apply to private companies and Trump failed to show Twitter was working as a state actor on behalf of Democrats, the judge wrote.

"The amended complaint merely offers a grab-bag of allegations to the effect that some Democratic members of Congress wanted Mr. Trump, and 'the views he espoused,' to be banned from Twitter because such 'content and views' were 'contrary to those legislators' preferred points of view,'" Donato wrote. "But the comments of a handful of elected officials are a far cry from a 'rule of decision for which the State is responsible.' Legislators are perfectly free to express opinions without being deemed the official voice of 'the State.'"

Trump sued Twitter, Facebook and Google's YouTube in July 2021, claiming they illegally censored him.

The platforms suspended Trump after the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection, in which his followers violently stormed the Capitol building in an attempt to block Congress from certifying Joe Biden's presidential win. The companies cited concerns he would incite further violence.

The ruling comes as Elon Musk, the world's wealthiest man, is in the process of purchasing Twitter for \$44 billion. The deal has raised questions about whether, Musk, a self-described free speech absolutist, would reinstate the former president.



Trump, who has continued to repeat lies about his 2020 election defeat in speeches, has started his own social network, Truth Social. He said last week that he wouldn't rejoin Twitter if given the chance.

The suit had sought to reinstate Trump's account, which had roughly 89 million followers, and those of five others who claimed they were also censored by Twitter. The group had sought unspecified damages and class action status on behalf of others removed from the platform.

Legal experts had predicted the lawsuit would fail but suggested Trump would milk it for political purposes. Trump's political action committee immediately began raising money after the lawsuit was announced last year.

The lawsuit had also sought a declaration that Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act was unconstitutional.

The act says providers such as Twitter can moderate services by removing obscene posts that violate their standards and cannot be held responsible for content posted by others.

Trump had only shown a "vague and speculative allegation" that he believed he would not have been banned if Twitter wasn't granted immunity by Section 230, Donato said.

Donato gave Trump another opportunity to amend his complaint. Trump's lawyer did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

## 'This has to end': Jill Biden sees Ukraine moms' heartbreak

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — Jill Biden heard heartbreaking stories Saturday from Ukrainian women and children who fled Russia's war and found safe haven in Romania, with one mother telling the U.S. first lady of a harrowing escape after being holed up in a cramped, cold basement with her traumatized 8-year-old daughter.

Reaching Romania "was a game change for us," Svitlana Gollyak of Kharkiv, Ukraine, told Biden in her native language during the first lady's tour of a Bucharest public school hosting refugee children. Gollyak said her daughter "feels much better here. ... No more tears and she adapted very nicely."

Biden told Gollyak and the other women, "I think mothers will do anything for their children," adding that they were "amazingly strong and resilient."

Biden said her message to the families was "we stand with you." During a craft activity, she watched as the children scrawled messages on paper cutouts of their hands. One young Ukrainian girl wrote, "I want to return to my father." Biden later told reporters the girl's words were "heartbreaking."

The first lady praised the Romanian government and relief organizations for the range of humanitarian aid they are providing to refugees. At the school, the first lady — herself a teacher — saw how teachers are helping some of the approximately 900,000 Ukrainians who have fled to Romania since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24.

"Really, in a lot of ways, the teachers are the glue that help these kids deal with their trauma and deal with the emotion and help give them a sense of normalcy," Biden said.

She added that she saw signs of hope for families who "felt that there was some structure to their lives and they were getting supplies. They all realized how much money the United States has been giving to Ukraine and to the refugee situation and to Romania to support the refugees."

Most of the Ukrainians who have fled to Romania, mainly women and children, have moved on to other countries, but about 100,000 remain, officials said.

Earlier, Biden was briefed at the U.S. Embassy on the relief effort. Her visit to Eastern Europe comes as President Joe Biden is pressing Congress to pass an additional \$33 billion in security and economic assistance for Ukraine.

Jill Biden called the show of solidarity "amazing" but also "just the beginning." She said it was inspiring for Romanians "to welcome all these refugees into their homes and offer them food and clothing and shelter and give them their hearts."

But she also cautioned that much more needs to be done by the U.S. and allies to assist Ukraine.

"We're all hopeful, right," she told reporters. "We wake up every morning and think 'this has to end'

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but it still keeps going on and on.”

About 7,000 Ukrainians cross the border and arrive in Romania daily, said Pablo Zapata, the Romanian representative for the U.N. refugee agency.

The United Nations, other agencies and the Romanian government are assisting refugees with food, shelter, education, health and mental health care, and counseling, among other services.

Biden asked specifically about the provision of mental health services and whether summer school was available to help refugee students catch up on their education. She said later that “the whole world is seeing that we need more mental health” assistance for the children and their parents.

The first lady is on the second day of a four-day trip to Romania and Slovakia, which shares a border with Ukraine, that is designed to showcase U.S. support for the refugees. Biden was scheduled to spend Sunday, Mother’s Day, meeting with refugees in Slovakia and visiting a border village.

Biden had lunch with Romania’s first lady, Carmen Iohannis, at her private residence. Iohannis, who accompanied Biden during the school visit, kept her job as an English teacher when her husband took office, just like Biden kept hers teaching at a Virginia community college.

The emotional thread to Biden’s day continued after she arrived in Slovakia’s capital. At her first stop, she left flowers at a memorial dedicated to Jan Kuciak, a 26-year-old investigative journalist, and his fiancée, who were assassinated in 2018. The case triggered a political crisis and brought down the country’s government.

## **EXPLAINER: What’s next for N. Ireland after Sinn Fein wins?**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The election of Sinn Fein as the biggest party in Northern Ireland’s Assembly is a historic moment -- the first time an Irish nationalist party, rather than a British unionist one, has topped the voting.

With all but two of the assembly’s seats filled Saturday, Sinn Fein has won with 27 seats out of 90. The Democratic Unionist Party, which had been the largest for two decades, has 24 seats and the Alliance Party, which defines itself as neither nationalist nor unionist, has 17.

**WHY IS THIS A BIG DEAL?**

The outcome is hugely symbolic. A party that aims to unite Northern Ireland with the neighboring Republic of Ireland has a mandate to take the reins in a state established a century ago as a Protestant-majority region within the United Kingdom.

It’s a major milestone for a party long linked to the Irish Republican Army, a paramilitary group that used bombs, bullets and violence to try to take Northern Ireland out of U.K. rule during decades of unrest. More than 3,500 people died in 30 years of violence involving Irish republican militants, Protestant Loyalist paramilitaries and the U.K. army and police.

A 1998 peace accord ended large-scale violence and Northern Ireland now has a government that splits power between British unionists and Irish nationalists. The arrangement has often been unstable, but has endured.

**WILL SINN FEIN NOW GOVERN NORTHERN IRELAND?**

The result gives Sinn Fein the right to hold the post of first minister in Northern Ireland’s power-sharing government, with the DUP taking the deputy first minister role.

But it’s unlikely a government will be set up smoothly soon.

Under Northern Ireland’s delicate power-sharing system, the posts of first minister and deputy first minister have equal status, and both posts must be filled for a government to be formed.

While Sinn Fein is ready to nominate its Northern Ireland leader Michelle O’Neill as first minister, the DUP says it will not follow suit unless there are major changes to post-Brexit border arrangements that it says are undermining Northern Ireland’s place in the U.K.

**WHAT DOES BREXIT HAVE TO DO WITH IT?**

Britain’s decision in 2016 to leave the European Union and its borderless free-trade zone has complicated

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Northern Ireland's position. It is the only part of the U.K. that has a border with an EU nation. Keeping that border open to the free flow of people and goods is a key pillar of the peace process.

So instead, the post-Brexit rules have imposed customs and border checks on some goods entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the U.K. -- a border in the Irish Sea, rather than on the island of Ireland.

Unionists say the new checks have created a barrier between Northern Ireland and the rest of the U.K. that undermines their British identity. The largest unionist party, the DUP, is demanding the arrangements, known as the Northern Ireland Protocol, are scrapped.

Britain's Conservative government says the arrangements cannot work without unionist support, and is pressing the EU to agree to major changes. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has threatened to unilaterally suspend the rules if the bloc refuses.

But the U.K.-EU negotiations have reached an impasse, with the bloc accusing Johnson of refusing to implement rules he agreed to in a legally binding treaty.

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Northern Ireland Assembly must meet within eight days so the newly elected legislators can take their seats. Assembly members will then choose a Speaker, followed by the nomination of ministers, starting with the first and deputy first ministers.

If, as seems likely, no executive can be formed because the DUP refuses, ministers from the previous government will stay in power and basic governance can continue — though ministers are barred from making major or controversial decisions.

If there is still no executive after 24 weeks, a new election must be held.

## IS IRISH REUNIFICATION LIKELY?

Irish unity did not play a big role in this year's Northern Ireland election campaign, which was dominated by more immediate worries, especially a cost-of-living crisis driven by the soaring costs of food and fuel.

But it remains Sinn Fein's goal, and party leader Mary Lou McDonald says a referendum in Northern Ireland could be held within a "five-year framework."

The 1998 Good Friday peace deal stated that Irish reunification can occur if referendums support it in both Northern Ireland and the republic.

In Northern Ireland, such a vote would have to be called by the British government, "if at any time it appears likely to him that a majority of those voting would express a wish that Northern Ireland should cease to be part of the United Kingdom and form part of a united Ireland."

There are no set rules for deciding when that threshold has been met.

Complicating the picture is the fact that Northern Ireland's identity is in flux, with a growing number of people -- especially the young -- identifying as neither unionist nor nationalist. That is reflected in the strong showing of the centrist Alliance Party. There are growing calls for the power-sharing rules to be changed to reflect the move beyond Northern Ireland's traditional religious and political divide.

## Brazil's Lula courts centrists at unofficial campaign launch

By MAURICIO SAVARESE and DÉBORA ÁLVARES Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — At the effective launch of his campaign on Saturday, Brazil's former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva aimed to lure centrists into his coalition to strengthen his bid to unseat incumbent President Jair Bolsonaro.

"We want to unite democrats of all origins and colors to face and beat the totalitarian threat, the hatred," da Silva told thousands of supporters of his Workers' Party, members of unions and political allies who gathered in Sao Paulo.

"We want to come back so no one ever again dares to challenge our democracy and so fascism returns to the gutters of history, which it should never have left," the former president added. "To end this crisis and grow, Brazil needs to be a normal country again."

The event was technically the launch of da Silva's pre-campaign, as the law doesn't permit people to formally declare themselves candidates before Aug. 5. The leftist leads all polls to return to the job he

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held from 2003 to 2010, but his sizeable advantage against the far-right Bolsonaro in the October election has been narrowing in recent weeks, according to some surveys.

Bolsonaro has challenged Supreme Court justices and their decisions, sown doubt about the reliability of Brazil's electronic voting system and portrayed upcoming elections as a fight between good and evil. Analysts have expressed concern he is preparing to challenge election results.

The most concrete effort on Da Silva's part to make inroads with moderates so far was his selection of a rival, Geraldo Alckmin, as his running mate. Alckmin, a center-right Catholic, appeared via video because he tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday. The former Sao Paulo governor lost his 2006 and 2018 bids for the presidency, during which he fiercely criticized the Workers' Party administrations.

"No disagreement of the past, no difference with the president and not even the possible discords of today and tomorrow will allow me to excuse myself from supporting and defending with resolve that Lula should return to Brazil's presidency," Alckmin said, adding that Bolsonaro's administration is "the most disastrous and cruel of the country's history."

"When President Lula gave me his hand, I saw more than a gesture of reconciliation between two historical opponents. I saw a call to reason," he said.

Alckmin has been compared to former Vice President José Alencar, who died in 2011 and was instrumental for da Silva's campaign to pivot to the center and win in 2002.

Members of other moderate political parties not aligned with da Silva also attended, including Sen. Otto Alencar and Sen. Veneziano Vital do Rego.

"We need to broaden this coalition and that's what today is for, too," Alencar told reporters. His party is unlikely to field a presidential candidate this year. "If we can't bring centrist parties to Lula in the first voting round, let them come in the second. We need to have our arms open for every democrat."

Da Silva's effort to woo moderates runs in line with what many analysts say he must do in order to ensure victory. Political analyst Bruno Carazza told The Associated Press that polling data shows him consolidating support among leftist voters, but having less success connecting with people elsewhere on the spectrum.

For example, da Silva said on April 5 that he sees the legalization of abortion as a public health issue and defended abortion rights. His comments spurred instant backlash from critics who said he risked unsettling moderates he should be prioritizing.

The next day, da Silva partially walked back his statement, saying in a radio interview he is personally against abortions, but believes they should be legal.

Political scientist Antonio Lavareda told the AP that he sees little room for da Silva's support to grow, given that he is already Brazil's best-known politician.

Likewise, polls already reflect the feelings of voters who won't for him under any circumstance, particularly as a result of his arrest and conviction for corruption and money laundering that sidelined him from the 2018 race. Those convictions have since been annulled, because the judge presiding over the cases was deemed to be biased.

Many of da Silva's supporters seemed less than excited about his nods to moderates and the right-leaning politician joining him on the ticket.

"I don't think we can trust people who were against us until very recently," said Eleonora Santos, a 47-year-old bank teller, wearing a shirt featuring da Silva's face during his first presidential campaign in 1989. When posing for pictures in front of a giant poster of Da Silva and Alckmin, she stood in front of Alckmin's image so as to prevent him from appearing next to her candidate.

"I understand Bolsonaro gives us different challenges and we need to have more support. I just don't think this guy gives us anything," she said. "His voters will never be Lula voters."

Most of da Silva's comments in recent weeks have touted the achievements of his two-term presidency, including lifting tens of millions of people from poverty. He did the same Saturday, saying his administration put an end to hunger in Brazil, only to have Bolsonaro bring it back.

In a recent interview with Time magazine, he said he wouldn't discuss economic policy until after winning

the election -- despite the fact many Brazilians, struggling to make ends meet amid double-digit inflation and high unemployment, are eager to hear how candidates intend to come to their aid.

"It is clear that he will capitalize on data from his administrations, but Brazil has changed a lot, new demands have arisen," Carraza said. "The economic situation is much more challenging and much more difficult after the pandemic and with the war in Ukraine. It's a very different context than the one 20 years ago."

For now, though, da Silva's focus appears to be casting himself as a protector of democracy amid a threat of authoritarianism. Wellington Dias, one of the coordinators of da Silva's campaign, told reporters da Silva will continue to win moderate votes.

"He will increasingly show democrats that their choice is important, that they can accept there are differences, but democracy should be above all," Dias said. \_\_\_\_ Alvares contributed from Brasilia.

## Ukrainian scientists see working amid war as act of defiance

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

Anton Vlaschenko often hears shelling outside his office in Ukraine's second-largest city of Kharkiv, not far from the front lines of the war. He sometimes even sees smoke rising from Russian tanks hit by missiles.

But the 40-year-old zoologist continues his work, dissecting and labeling bat tissue, as he probes the disease ecology of the flying mammals. When news of the war overwhelms him, he says, it helps to have something familiar to do with his hands.

He also sees it as an act of defiance.

"Our staying in Ukraine, our continuing to work — it's some kind of resistance of Russian invasion," Vlaschenko said via Zoom, a barrage of shelling audible in the background. "The people together in Ukraine are ready to fight, not only with guns. We don't want to lose our country."

His resolve isn't unique. Like other Ukrainians whose labors aren't essential to the war effort, the scientists and academics want to continue their important work where they can.

A common refrain is that they want to stay connected to their scholarly community, which provides a shard of normalcy amid the chaos and violence, and "keep the light of Ukrainian science and humanities alive," said Yevheniia Polishchuk, who teaches at Kyiv National Economic University.

As vice chair of the Young Scientists Council at Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science, Polishchuk organized an online survey of academics to assess their situation and needs after the Feb. 24 invasion. An estimated 4,000 to 6,000 scholars had left Ukraine by early April — mostly women with families — but about 100,000 stayed.

Most who went abroad wound up in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, getting temporary positions at European institutions. Some scientists have received grants from the Polish Academy of Sciences, U.S. National Academy of Sciences, and other organizations. Polishchuk, now in Krakow with her children and husband, is a visiting professor at a university for May and June but says she hopes to return to Kyiv when fighting stops.

"We don't want the war to result in a brain drain from Ukraine," she said.

While Ukrainian scholars are appealing to international scientific bodies for assistance — including remote work opportunities and access to journals, datasets, archives and other materials — there is also a will to prevent the war from permanently sapping talent and momentum from the country's academic and professional ranks, which will be needed to rebuild after fighting stops.

"Most of our scholars do not want to move abroad permanently; they want to stay in Ukraine," Polishchuk said.

Shortly after the war began, Ivan Slyusarev, a 34-year-old astronomer, helped the director of Kharkiv National University's observatory move computers, monitors and other materials into the basement, which had sheltered equipment and historical artifacts when Nazi forces occupied the city during World War II.

The observatory's main telescope is located in a field in Russia-occupied territory, about 70 kilometers (43 miles) from Kharkiv on the road to Donetsk. Slyusarev said he doesn't know its condition, but thinks

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Ukrainian forces blew up a nearby bridge to stop the Russian advance.

He is relying on scientists outside Ukraine to continue his work. Astronomers in the Czech Republic have sent him observational data from their telescope so he can keep analyzing the properties of metallic asteroids. He also can see data from a small robotic telescope in Spain's Canary Islands. He operates mostly from a home office on the outskirts of Kharkiv.

Slyusarev, who says he became an astronomer because of "romantic" ideas about the stars, finds refuge in scientific discovery. Astronomy "produces only positive news" and is a welcome respite from daily life, he said.

"It's very important in wartime," he added.

After the war started, theoretical physicist and astronomer Oleksiy Golubov left Kharkiv to join his parents in Batkiv, a village in western Ukraine.

Although the buildings of the Kharkiv Institute of Physics and Technology were "bombed and shelled and virtually destroyed," Golubov said, the school continues to offer some remote classes. He has been keeping in touch with students online — in Kharkiv, in western Ukraine and in Poland and Germany.

The 36-year-old scientist is also a coordinator and trainer for the Ukrainian students preparing to compete in the International Physicists Tournament, a competition for tackling unsolved physics problems that is being held in Colombia this month. The students, who had been training online, met this week in Lviv for the first time — following train journeys delayed by the war.

"We still want to take part and prove that even inconveniences like war can't stop us from doing good science and having a good education," he said.

Golubov, who was turned down from joining the military because of a paralyzed hand, submitted a paper in March to the journal *Astronomy and Astrophysics* and wrote in the acknowledgements, "We are grateful to Ukrainians who are fighting to stop the war so that we can safely finish the revision of this article."

Some scholars, like Ivan Patrilyak, dean of the history department at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, have enlisted. Eighteen months ago, he was hosting a speaker series on the legacy of World War II and lecturing about the Holocaust. Now, he's with a territorial defense unit in Kyiv.

Igor Lyman, a historian at the State Pedagogical University in Berdyansk, had to flee when Russian forces occupied the port city early in the war. Before leaving, he had seen the troops break into dormitories to interrogate students and order administrators to teach in Russian, rather than Ukrainian, and use a Moscow-approved curriculum. He said the directors "refused and resigned."

He later settled in a camp for internally displaced persons at Chernivtsi National University, living in a dormitory with academics from Kyiv, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Kherson and other cities.

"Each of these families has its own terrible story of war," he wrote in an email. "And everyone, like me, dreams of our victory and coming back home."

He said the Russian forces "are doing everything they can to impose their propaganda."

Vlaschenko, the Kharkiv zoologist, wanted to protect 20 bats in his care from the shelling, so he carried them to his home, a walk of about an hour. It also helped to preserve his valuable research, which couldn't be easily replaced, even if buildings and labs can be rebuilt after the war.

"All the people who decided to stay in Kharkiv agreed to play this dangerous and potentially deadly lottery," he said, "because you never know in what areas a new rocket or new shell would hit."

As he scrambles to record data and safeguard his rare samples, he sees it as part of his mission — "not only for us, but also for science in general."

## Less immigrant labor in US contributing to price hikes

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

Just 10 miles from the Rio Grande, Mike Helle's farm is so short of immigrant workers that he's replaced 450 acres of labor-intensive leafy greens with crops that can be harvested by machinery.

In Houston, Al Flores increased the price of his BBQ restaurant's brisket plate because the cost of the cut doubled due to meatpacking plants' inability to fully staff immigrant-heavy production lines. In the

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Dallas area, Joshua Correa raised prices on the homes his company builds by \$150,000 to cover increased costs stemming partly from a lack of immigrant labor.

After immigration to the United States tapered off during the Trump administration — then ground to a near complete halt for 18 months during the coronavirus pandemic — the country is waking up to a labor shortage partly fueled by that slowdown.

The U.S. has, by some estimates, 2 million fewer immigrants than it would have if the pace had stayed the same, helping power a desperate scramble for workers in many sectors, from meatpacking to homebuilding, that is also contributing to supply shortages and price increases.

“These 2 million missing immigrants are part of the reason we have a labor shortage,” said Giovanni Peri, an economist at the University of California at Davis, who calculated the shortfall. “In the short run, we are going to adjust to these shortages in the labor market through an increase in wages and in prices.”

The labor issues are among several contributors to the highest inflation in 40 years in the United States — from supply chains mangled by the pandemic to a surge in energy and commodity prices following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

Steve Camarota, a researcher at the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for less immigration, believes a spike in illegal immigration under President Joe Biden will make up whatever shortfall lingers from the pandemic. He also contends wage increases in low-paying sectors like agriculture are minor contributors to inflation.

“I don’t think wages going up is bad for the poor, and I think mathematically it is not possible to drive down inflation by limiting wages at the bottom,” Camarota told The Associated Press.

Immigration is rapidly returning to its pre-pandemic levels, researchers say, but the U.S. would need a significant acceleration to make up its deficit. Given a sharp decline in births in the United States over the past two decades, some economists forecast the overall pool of potential workers will start shrinking by 2025.

The immigrant worker shortage comes as the U.S. political system is showing less of an appetite for increasing immigration. Democrats — who control all branches of the federal government and more recently have been the party more friendly to immigration — haven’t tried to advance major legislation permitting more new residents to the country. A recent Gallup poll showed worries about illegal immigration at a two-decade high. With a tough election for their party looming in November, Democrats are increasingly divided about the Biden administration’s attempt to end pandemic-related restrictions on seeking asylum.

“At some point we either decide to become older and smaller or we change our immigration policy,” said Douglas Holtz-Eakin, an economist and former official in President George W. Bush’s administration who is president of the center-right American Action Forum. He acknowledged a change in immigration policy is unlikely: “The bases of both parties are so locked in.”

That’s certainly the case in Republican-dominated Texas, which includes the longest and busiest stretch of the southern border. The Legislature in 2017 forced cities to comply with federal immigration agents seeking people who are in the U.S. illegally. Gov. Greg Abbott sent the Texas National Guard to patrol the border and recently created traffic snarls by ordering more inspections at border ports.

The turn against immigration distresses some Texas business owners. “Immigration is very important for our workforce in the United States,” said Correa. “We just need it.”

He’s seeing delays of two to three months on his projects as he and his subcontractors — from dry-wallers to plumbers to electricians — struggle to field crews. Correa has raised the standard price of his houses from \$500,000 to about \$650,000.

“We’re feeling it and, if we’re feeling it at the end of the day as builders and developers, the consumer pays the price,” said Correa, who spoke from Pensacola, Florida, where he brought a construction crew as a favor to a client whose hasn’t been able to find laborers to fix a beach house damaged by Hurricane Sally in 2020.

The share of the U.S. population born in another country — 13.5% in the latest census — is the highest it has been since the 19th century. But even before Donald Trump won the 2016 presidential election

vowing to cut immigration, migration to the United States was slowing. The Great Recession dried up many jobs that drew workers to the country, legally or illegally. Rising standards of living in Latin America have prodded more people to stay put — or to return from the United States.

Flores, who runs a chain of Mexican restaurants as well as his barbecue restaurant, said while the COVID-19 pandemic was a bigger shock to his industry, the immigration slowdown has hit it hard — and not just for meatpackers that supply his restaurant's brisket. "You've got a lot of positions that aren't being filled," he said.

He's steadily raised pay, up to \$15 an hour recently. "This is a culmination of years and years," said Flores, who's president of the Greater Houston Restaurant Association.

Helle, who raises onion, cabbage, melons and kale just outside the border town of McAllen, Texas, is also paying more to his workers, who are almost exclusively immigrants. People born in the U.S., he says, won't work the fields regardless of the pay.

Before he could find farmworkers just in the region. Now he's joined a federal program to bring agricultural workers across the border. It's more expensive for him, but he said it's the only way he can keep his crops from spoiling in the ground.

Helle, 60, has farmed the area for decades. "I live 10 miles from the Rio Grande river and I never in my life thought we'd be in this situation."

## For Parkland survivor, a long road to recovery from trauma

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON The Associated Press

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. (AP) — More than a year after she witnessed a gunman kill three fellow students and injure five others in her Parkland classroom, Eden Hebron came home from lunch to find a strange white car parked in her driveway.

Since the shooting, surprise visitors were rare. Eden had struggled to cope, and her family tried to protect her. Now, nearly 20 months after the Valentine's Day massacre where 17 people were killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, a therapist had arrived to send Eden to a mental health facility on the other side of the country.

The intervention was her family's latest and most drastic attempt to help their daughter. Eden, then 16, screamed and tried to reason with her parents. Her life was in Parkland — her school, her friends. She learned she'd be leaving in a couple of hours; she'd have little contact with anyone outside the California facility.

"I was freaking out. I was more scared than anything else," she said. "I was like, 'What's going to happen?'"

Eden's troubles after Feb. 14, 2018, and her long journey in recovery are not unique — students who survived the deadliest high school shooting in the U.S. have grappled with trauma for years. Even for the students who became vocal activists for changes in gun legislation, mental health issues have surfaced — delivering blows not only for them in their coming-of-age years but also for their families. Experts say that's expected for survivors of mass shootings, especially those who are children or young adults.

In Eden's case, her parents hoped the move to California would save her life. While her classmates — many in therapy themselves, some struggling but making it through their last years at Stoneman Douglas — went on to take exams, attend dances and find their way to graduation, Eden headed some 2,600 miles away.

The days before Eden's intervention were filled with angst. She wasn't eating, she slept too much, and she'd turned to drinking. Eden's parents feared she might harm herself. They hid all the belts in the house and checked on her hourly every night.

"We really had no way to help our daughter," Nicole Cook said. "She was unraveled."

Police intended to commit Eden to a psychiatric hospital because of the risk she presented to herself. But Cook held them off, promising she'd get Eden treatment. Within seven days, Cook had chosen the



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California center.

There, Eden's phone, makeup and clothes were taken away. The center was really a big house, with a pool and its own cook. Five or six other teens were typically there. To Eden, it seemed like the Four Seasons of treatment centers, but she felt desperate and alone.

"I didn't have my family. I didn't have contact with anybody," she said. "I had no idea what was going on, how long I'd be there. And I was just excruciatingly wanting to get out."

At home, Eden's family worried. The facility was their last resort — they'd sought ways to help Eden heal, but nothing had worked.

Her mother wanted to develop resources for families of survivors, once holding a meeting at their home to make plans. But she was discouraged, in part by lack of funding — she said money was going to agencies that were already registered.

"There was just nothing nimble about it. They couldn't pay for therapy, they couldn't pay for anything that people really needed," Cook said. "They didn't know what to do with a community in trauma."

Eden said back at school, she'd found stigma for those visiting the resource center or a new wellness facility — even after the apparent suicides of two students. Still, Eden continued to get straight As; she went to Homecoming and parties. But she was getting argumentative, suspicious and paranoid.

She turned to alcohol and bad relationships. She closed off but presented herself as a normal teenager. Her therapist even told her she didn't need further sessions, Eden said.

"That was me trying to control myself, trying to manipulate myself, trying to take care of things that I didn't have the power to take care of," Eden said.

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In California, Eden was angry. She begged her parents to let her leave.

"But as much as I wanted to get out, my parents wanted me to get better," she said.

They flew in weekly to visit. In early 2020, Cook, an epidemiologist, started to worry about COVID-19. Anticipating a lockdown that would prevent visits, the family moved to California. Eden had transitioned into a group home, and her parents would be able to see her more.

On Wednesdays, the family would drive to Malibu, eat along the beach, practice yoga or run. They saw Eden expressing herself more and enjoying her time with them.

When Eden turned 18 in February 2021, she left the group home and moved in with her parents. But the pandemic worried them, and they feared a relapse for their daughter.

"We were afraid of getting sick," Cook said. "I felt she was going to make bad decisions."

So the family moved back to Florida, but not Parkland. They chose instead the suburb of Hollywood, about 30 miles away. Eden continued seeing her therapist remotely, and finished school online. She made plans for college — a future her parents could only dream of just a couple years earlier.

The intervention, Eden realized, saved her life.

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Today, Eden, 19, is studying in New Jersey. She wants a degree in computer science or neuroscience.

"It feels free, in a way," she said.

Navigating college life on her own, Eden's aware of little things she needs to do to stay on track: She meditates, she writes, she sees a therapist.

Some peers have kept up their advocacy for gun control and mental health resources. It's hard for any to ignore the shooting or the drumbeat of headlines — jury selection for the death penalty trial of the gunman is underway, with lengthy proceedings expected to follow.

Eden wishes she could do more for all the teens who've witnessed shootings across the U.S. She knows not everyone has the resources she did. She feels powerless.

"Some people are struggling," she said. "People are really having a hard time. As much as I want to go and help people and save people, I need to focus on me because I know how it can get for me."

**For Parkland survivor, a long road to recovery from trauma**

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By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON The Associated Press

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. (AP) — More than a year after she witnessed a gunman kill three fellow students and injure five others in her Parkland classroom, Eden Hebron came home from lunch to find a strange white car parked in her driveway.

Since the shooting, surprise visitors were rare. Eden had struggled to cope in the aftermath, and her family tried to protect her. Now, nearly 20 months after the Valentine's Day massacre where 17 people were killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, a therapist had arrived to send Eden to a mental health facility on the other side of the country.

The intervention was her family's latest and most drastic attempt to help their daughter. Eden, then 16, screamed and tried to reason with her parents. Her life was in Parkland — her school, her friends. She learned she'd be leaving in just a couple of hours; she'd have little contact with the world outside the California facility. She pulled out her cellphone to tell friends as quickly as she could, and a few were able to stop by for tearful goodbyes.

"I was freaking out. I was more scared than anything else," she said. "I was like, 'What's going to happen?'"

Eden's troubles after Feb. 14, 2018, and her long journey in recovery are not unique — students who survived the deadliest high school shooting in the U.S. have grappled with trauma for years. Even for the students who became vocal activists for changes in gun legislation, mental health issues have surfaced — delivering blows not only for them in their coming-of-age years but also for their families. Experts say that's expected for survivors of mass shootings, especially those who are children or young adults.

In Eden's case, her parents hoped the move to California would save her life. While her classmates — many in therapy themselves, some struggling but making it through their last years at Stoneman Douglas — went on to take exams, attend dances and find their way to graduation, Eden headed some 2,600 miles away.

The days before Eden's intervention were filled with angst. She wasn't eating, she slept too much, and she'd turned to drinking. Sometimes, she broke down for no reason. Her friends worried. Her parents were even more alarmed — fearing Eden might harm herself, they hid all the belts in the house and checked on her every hour of every night.

"We really had no way to help our daughter," Nicole Cook said. "She was unraveled. She was 100% unraveled."

Local police intended to commit Eden to a psychiatric hospital because of the risk she presented to herself. But Cook held them off, promising she'd take steps to get Eden treatment. Within seven days, Cook had narrowed options down to the residential mental health center in California.

When the therapist arrived, Eden quickly realized through her tears that she had little choice but to cooperate — she was a minor. She packed her bags, and her father drove her to the airport. The two flew to Los Angeles.

Her phone and makeup were taken away, and most of her wardrobe was replaced with sweats. The center was really a big house, with a pool and its own cook. Five or six other teens were typically there, being treated for anxiety, eating disorders or other mental health issues. To Eden, it seemed like the Four Seasons of treatment centers, but she felt desperate and alone.

"I didn't have my family. I didn't have contact with anybody," she said. "I had no idea what was going on, how long I'd be there. And I was just excruciatingly wanting to get out."

At home, Eden's family worried for her. The facility was their last resort — they'd all sought ways to help Eden heal, but nothing had worked.

Her mother wanted to develop resources for families of survivors, once holding a meeting at their home to make plans. But she was discouraged, in part by lack of funding — she said money was going to agencies that were already registered and had experience with disadvantaged youths.

"There was just nothing nimble about it. They couldn't pay for therapy, they couldn't pay for anything

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that people really needed," Cook said. "They also had no roadmap. They didn't know what to do with a community in trauma."

Eden said she found stigma at school for those visiting the resource center or a new wellness facility — even after the apparent suicides of two students. Teachers suspected kids just wanted to skip class, she said.

Still, Eden continued to get straight As for a while, and she went to Homecoming and parties. But she was getting argumentative, suspicious and paranoid. She often felt scared and sad. When alone, she cried.

She turned to alcohol and bad relationships. She closed off but presented herself as a normal teenager, going through the motions. Her therapist even told her she didn't need further sessions, Eden said.

"That was me trying to control myself, trying to manipulate myself, trying to take care of things that I didn't have the power to take care of," Eden said.

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In California, Eden was angry. For the first few days at the treatment center, she was required to stay within a few feet of staff members at all times. She begged her parents to let her leave.

"But as much as I wanted to get out, my parents wanted me to get better," she said.

Eden was allowed five minutes a day to call them. She continued school under Florida's homebound program for students who are absent because of a medical condition. Between therapy and treatment, she watched episodes of "The Office" with the other teens, swam in the pool and played in the game room. A few times she was caught using the computer to send emails, so she lost coffee privileges.

Her parents flew in weekly to visit. In early 2020, Cook, an epidemiologist, started to worry about COVID-19. Anticipating a nationwide lockdown that would prevent visits, the family prepared to move to California. Eden had just transitioned into a group home, and her parents would be able to see her more. They arranged to work remotely and left their home in Parkland.

"We could see Eden was making progress, even though it was really slow, painful progress," Cook said. "It was also nice to have distance from Parkland."

On Wednesdays, the family would drive to Malibu, eat along the beach, practice yoga or go for a run. They saw Eden expressing herself more and enjoying her time with them.

When Eden turned 18 in February 2021, she left the group home and moved in with her parents. But the pandemic worried them, and they feared a relapse for their daughter, who was going out a lot even though vaccines weren't yet widely available for young people.

"We were afraid of getting sick," Cook said. "I felt she was going to make bad decisions."

So the family moved back to Florida, but not to Parkland. They chose instead a house by the ocean in the suburb of Hollywood, about 30 miles away. Eden continued seeing her therapist in California remotely, and she finished school online. She started making plans for college — a future her parents could only dream of just a couple of years earlier.

The intervention, Eden realized, had indeed saved her life.

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Today, Eden, 19, is studying in New Jersey, close to her aunt and uncle. She wants a degree in computer science or neuroscience.

"It feels free, in a way, to know that I have trust from my parents and that I have a lot of options for what to do," she said.

Eden's mother said the guilt of sending her daughter away for treatment — of being unable to help her on her own, at home — did not ease recently. And Eden admits she still holds some resentment for her parents' decision.

Cook knows they are fortunate compared with those who lost children in the shooting, but the family is still healing.

"Of course, we are lucky and grateful," she said. "But being grateful doesn't take away the pain."

As Eden navigates college life on her own, she's aware of little things she needs to do daily to stay on track: She meditates, she sings and writes, and she avoids spending too much time in bed. She takes

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notes of things that make her proud. She's in constant communication with her parents. She has a therapist and a life coach.

The 2018 shooting will never leave her — she understands there's no magic pill for trauma like hers.

"I don't think it'll ever be fixed. I think those images don't go away," she said. "It's just a matter of self-regulating and choosing the good things for me."

Some of her peers have kept up their advocacy for gun control and mental health resources. They, too, are moving into adulthood and the next chapters of their lives. It's hard for any to ignore the shooting or the drumbeat of headlines — jury selection for the death penalty trial of the gunman is underway, with lengthy proceedings expected to follow.

Eden wishes she could do more for her fellow students, and for all the teens who've witnessed shootings across the U.S. She knows not everyone has the resources she did, and it often makes her feel powerless.

"Some people are struggling," she said. "People are really having a hard time. As much as I want to go and help people and save people, I need to focus on me because I know how it can get for me."

## Fred Savage dropped from 'The Wonder Years' amid allegations

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Fred Savage has been dropped as an executive producer and director of the rebooted "The Wonder Years" amid allegations of inappropriate conduct, the television show's production company has confirmed.

"Recently, we were made aware of allegations of inappropriate conduct by Fred Savage, and as is policy, an investigation was launched. Upon its completion, the decision was made to terminate his employment as an executive producer and director of 'The Wonder Years,'" a statement Saturday from 20th Television said.

20th Television did not immediately provide any additional details. A spokesperson for Savage did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Savage, 45, was a child star when he appeared in the original series, which ran on ABC from 1988-93 and followed a suburban white family in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A new version of the show, which features Don Cheadle as the narrator, premiered last fall. The new series revolves around a Black family living in Montgomery, Alabama, in the late 1960s.

## Abortion rights may rest on governor's races in some states

By STEVE PEOPLES, MARC LEVY and JEFF AMY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — All four leading Republicans in Pennsylvania's governor's race have vowed to ban abortion if given the chance.

In Georgia, one top Republican candidate for governor wants to outlaw all abortions. The sitting Republican governor is backed by the anti-abortion lobby, but refuses to clarify his position. And in Michigan, all but one of the five leading Republicans running for governor oppose abortion even in cases of rape or incest.

The fight for Congress often dominates midterm elections, but the revelation this week that the Supreme Court may soon overturn its landmark Roe v. Wade decision has thrust candidates for governor — and their positions on abortion — into the forefront of the 2022 campaign. Some states, including Pennsylvania and Georgia, have primary elections this month, but the ultimate fight won't be decided until the November general election.

In a handful of battleground states with Republican-controlled state legislatures, every GOP candidate for governor supports severe abortion restrictions, if not a complete ban with no exceptions. That's prompting urgent warnings from Democrats that women's access to abortion in some states may rest almost entirely on which party wins the governor's race this fall.

"This is an issue that is now front and center in this governor's race," said Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro, his state's presumed Democratic nominee for governor. "The battle will be in the states."

Thirteen deep-red states have so-called "trigger laws" that would ban abortion almost immediately if

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Roe is overturned, but the future of abortion access is less certain across several other more moderate states with Republican-controlled legislatures: Arizona, Georgia, Florida, Michigan, Ohio, Texas and Wisconsin, among them.

In almost every case, GOP legislatures have already approved restrictive abortion laws, including so-called "heartbeat" bills that would outlaw abortions before most women know they're pregnant. Some legislation is tied up in the courts, while others have yet to move through Republican legislatures. But if Roe falls, such laws — or more restrictive bans — could only be stopped by a veto from a Democratic governor or Democrat-backed court challenge, if at all.

Some states, including Michigan, Wisconsin and Texas, have decades-old abortion bans predating Roe that would presumably take effect almost immediately after a formal Supreme Court reversal of the case. But even in those states, Democratic governors would have an opportunity to fight the change in their state courts.

That's what Michigan's Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer is doing as she prepares for a challenging reelection this fall.

Anticipating that Roe would be overturned or weakened, Whitmer asked the Michigan Supreme Court last month to declare a state constitutional right to abortion and to strike down a near-total abortion ban that would go back into effect if Roe is overruled. The law, which dates to the 1800s, has an exception when the woman's life is at risk, but not for cases of rape and incest.

"I'm using every tool at my disposal. I'm going to fight like hell to protect this right for women in the state of Michigan," Whitmer said this week. "Regardless of what happens with SCOTUS, we have an opportunity in Michigan."

The situation is different in Pennsylvania and Georgia, where there is no outright ban on the books, but Republican candidates for governor have indicated they would support a full ban if given the chance. Most refused to clarify their positions in recent days when asked directly by The Associated Press.

Pennsylvania law currently allows abortions during the first 24 weeks of pregnancy. But all four leading Republican candidates for governor have told the Pro-Life Coalition of Pennsylvania, in questionnaire responses, that they support "legal protection for all pre-born children from abortion" — in other words, banning an abortion of any diagnosed pregnancy, according to Mike McMonagle, the organization's president.

Two of the Pennsylvania Republicans, Bill McSwain and Lou Barletta, said they support exceptions for rape, incest or to protect the life of the mother. The other two, Doug Mastriano and Dave White, said they support no exceptions.

Only White agreed to discuss his position in an AP interview this week. The others declined interview requests and didn't answer specific written questions.

White said he would sign legislation banning all abortions with no exceptions for rape, incest or the life of the mother if given the chance. He noted that he's ninth of 14 children from a Catholic family in which his parents taught him the "blessing of every child that comes into this world."

In a televised debate last week, Mastriano said he supports banning abortion from conception, with no exceptions. He called abortion "the No. 1 issue" and pointed to the "heartbeat" bill that he has sponsored, which effectively bans abortion at six weeks.

Anticipating that Mastriano may emerge from the GOP's May 17 primary election, Shapiro has begun running attack ads against the Republican state senator this week highlighting his plans to "outlaw abortion."

"They are wildly out of touch with where Pennsylvanians are," Shapiro said in an interview of his would-be Republican challengers. "This issue boils down to whether or not we're going to build a Pennsylvania where freedom is respected."

Polling shows relatively few Americans want to see Roe overturned.

In 2020, AP VoteCast found that 69% of voters in the presidential election said the Supreme Court should leave the Roe v. Wade decision as is; just 29% said the court should overturn the decision. In general, AP-NORC polling finds a majority of the public favors abortion being legal in most or all cases.

In Georgia, Democrat Stacey Abrams will face the winner of the state's May 24 GOP primary, which pits incumbent Republican Gov. Brian Kemp against the Donald Trump-backed former Sen. David Perdue.

Kemp has declined to clarify his position on abortion in recent days. His office ignored direct questions

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asking whether he would support a complete abortion ban. An anti-abortion group that has endorsed Kemp rallied Friday to celebrate a possible Roe reversal. Speakers vowed to defend Georgia's ban on abortions after fetal cardiac activity is detected. Tied up in courts now, it could take effect with a Supreme Court ruling.

Perdue wants Kemp to call for a special legislative session to approve an abortion ban if the Supreme Court officially overturns Roe, a ruling expected in late June or early July.

"Georgia voters deserve to know where their governor stands on this issue," Perdue said on Thursday. "You are either going to fight for the sanctity of life or you're not."

On the Democratic side, Abrams touted herself as a defender of abortion rights in a speech this week to Emily's List, a political action committee that donates to Democratic women candidates who support abortion rights.

"The abomination of that leaked opinion is coming to find every one of us, and we've got to be ready to fight back," Abrams said, according to a recording provided by her campaign. "This is about our dignity and our freedom. This is about our health and our welfare. This is about our future and our lives, and we have the right to be angry."

The issue could help Abrams — and Democrats in other states — win more votes among college educated white voters, who have been the most frequent swing voters in recent years.

Like a growing number of Democratic candidates elsewhere, Abrams also warned that a Supreme Court that overturns Roe v. Wade could threaten other precedents, including Griswold v. Connecticut, a 1965 decision that struck down restrictions on contraception, and Brown v. Board of Education, the 1954 decision that outlawed racial segregation in schools.

"This is a question of whether equality in America depends on geography and zip code and DNA," Abrams said.

Peoples reported from New York. Amy reported from Atlanta. AP writers David Eggert and Mike Householder in Lansing, Michigan, contributed.

## Wisconsin GOP eyeing shift in control of election oversight

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Doug La Follette is adjusting to a new status in Wisconsin politics: relevance.

The 81-year-old secretary of state has been a forgotten man for four decades, stuffed into a basement office and stripped of most of his duties long ago. That is changing, however, as Republicans explore a push to shift election oversight, including certification of results, from a bipartisan election commission to La Follette's office.

The effort is less a sign of confidence in La Follette than a move by Republicans to shift power to an office they might someday control. While Republicans say the change would make Wisconsin's chief elections officer directly accountable to voters, it is also raising concerns that it would allow the party to rally behind candidates who embrace Donald Trump's lie that the last presidential election was stolen.

That is particularly alarming to those who watched Trump's efforts to pressure election officials to improperly influence certification of the 2020 vote.

"Regardless of the actual vote count, this one individual could then say who won or lost the election," said Matthew Rothschild, executive director of government watchdog group Wisconsin Democracy Campaign. "This would threaten the very foundation of our democracy: that the people choose who represents us, with our sacred freedom to vote."

Multiple reviews, recounts, lawsuits and an investigation by The Associated Press have confirmed there was no widespread fraud in the last White House race. Nationally, federal and state election officials and Trump's own attorney general have said there was no credible evidence the election was tainted anywhere in the country.

The new attention for La Follette's seat is a sign of the lingering fallout from the 2020 election, and

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Wisconsin isn't alone. Once-sleepy secretary of state offices that already oversee elections are now hot-button races, with Trump himself paying close attention. He has endorsed candidates for secretaries of state in places including Georgia, Arizona and Michigan — each of which was crucial to electing Democrat Joe Biden as president in 2020.

The future of La Follette's office is also raising the stakes of Wisconsin's governor's race, which incumbent Gov. Tony Evers, a Democrat, is already casting as a referendum on American democracy.

For Wisconsin to join the 36 other states where the secretary of state is the chief elections official, Republicans would first need to unseat Evers. He is a supporter of the bipartisan commission, whose members are appointed by the governor and legislative leaders in an effort to reduce political influence in the management of elections.

With Evers out, Republicans could use their virtually guaranteed legislative majorities next year to dissolve the elections commission and shift its duties to the secretary of state. That would give the officeholder enhanced power in 2024, when Trump may again seek the White House.

State Rep. Timothy Ramthun, a Republican candidate for governor, introduced a bill in February to do exactly that, though it didn't get a hearing before the legislative session ended. Kevin Nicholson, another GOP candidate for governor, has said he supports the idea, which has also been pushed by a conservative think tank linked to former GOP Gov. Scott Walker.

La Follette said he decided to run again to stop Republicans from meddling with elections. He noted Trump's telephone call in 2020 to Georgia's GOP secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger, asking Raffensperger to "find" enough votes to overturn Trump's loss in the state to Biden. Raffensperger refused despite veiled threats from Trump and now faces a GOP challenger in this month's primary.

"Let's say Mr. X in the future calls the secretary of state in Wisconsin and says 'I just need 5,000 votes.' I would hang up on them," La Follette said. "A Republican of a certain persuasion might not hang up on them."

All four Republicans competing in the August primary for the secretary of state nomination support handing election oversight to the office. Each has sharply criticized the election commission's handling of the 2020 presidential election, saying the commission's interpretations of state law improperly allowed widespread use of ballot drop boxes and unsupervised voting by nursing home residents. That, they wrongly contend, led to fraudulent votes that carried Biden to victory over Trump.

Republicans have tried for months to discredit the commission, including pressuring the nonpartisan administrator, Meagan Wolfe, to resign.

Wolfe declined an interview, but the commission's chair, Democrat Ann Jacobs, called the Republican push to give election oversight to the secretary of state "a veiled attempt to politicize election administration."

"They're looking to change the refs because they lost the game," she said.

State Rep. Amy Loudenbeck, who leads the Republican candidates for secretary of state in fundraising, said putting the secretary of state in charge of elections would make someone directly responsible to voters.

"I feel strongly we need to be looking at every option in increasing transparency and trust in our election process," she said. Loudenbeck said she would "be firm in my refusal" if anyone pressured her to influence election results.

La Follette, a distant relative of Wisconsin's famous progressive governor and 1924 presidential candidate, "Fighting" Bob La Follette, likely has that last name to thank for his long tenure in office. He was first elected secretary of state in 1974. After a failed try for lieutenant governor in 1978, he won his old office back in 1982 and has won reelection nine times since.

The office's only duties are to sit on a state timber board and to verify documents that Americans and foreign nationals need for travel. Republicans banished La Follette to the Capitol basement and stripped the office of a ceremonial duty to affix the state seal to laws after he refused to do so for then-Gov. Walker's law restricting public unions in 2011.

La Follette's once-comfortable margins have tightened in recent years, and in what may be a sign of

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Democrats' concerns about retaining the office, Dane County Democratic Party Executive Board Chair Alexia Sabor recently announced a primary challenge. He's also rarely had a Republican challenger as weighty as Loudenbeck, who spent eight years on the Legislature's powerful budget committee.

La Follette has never relied on raising a lot of money to win, and he said he will not for the primary, either — even as lingering fears of COVID-19 hinder the retail campaigning he has done in the past. If he wins the primary, he said, he knows he will need money to win in November, especially if Trump or others start pouring dollars into the Republican nominee's campaign.

"I would hope the Democratic Party establishment, which wants to keep the office in the hands of a Democrat for very obvious reasons, would be willing to help fund that," he said.

The state party chairman, Ben Wikler, was circumspect about Democrats' plans for the race.

"The Republican secretary of state candidates are seeking powers that can only be granted by a Republican governor," Wikler said. "Evers' veto pen is the most important barrier preventing election subversion in 2024."

## Supreme Court leak shakes trust in one more American pillar

By CALVIN WOODWARD and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Is there a new American motto: In nothing we trust?

By lots of measures, most in the U.S. lack much confidence in large institutions and have for years. Congress? Two big thumbs down. The presidency? Ehh. Americans are also distrustful of big business, unions, public schools and organized religion. Indeed, they hold abysmal views of the functioning of democracy itself.

The Supreme Court has been something of an exception. The one branch of government not dependent on public opinion has traditionally enjoyed higher public esteem than the branches elected by the people. Its above-the-fray reputation, cultivated with exquisite care, once served it well.

Now the justices face a reckoning over the audacious leak of an early draft opinion that strikes down the constitutional right to abortion, an episode that has deepened suspicions that the high court, for all its decorum, is populated by politicians in robes.

Republican members of Congress are suggesting a sinister left-wing plot to derail the outcome of the final decision. Liberals are alleging machinations from the right to lock the justices into their preliminary vote. For all that speculation, neither side knows who leaked the draft to Politico and why.

What's clear is that the affair has popped a deferential bubble around the court.

"My confidence in the court has been rocked," Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, one of the few Republican senators in favor of abortion rights, said with alarm. Vice President Kamala Harris accused the justices of mounting a "direct assault on freedom" if they vote as they signaled. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., accused Trump-nominated justices of lying to Congress about their abortion views in their hearings.

Elected officials do not normally talk this way about the justices. But now, it seems, the jurists are fair game, just another contingent of power players in the Washington viper pit.

In contrast, after mounting a fierce legal fight to settle the implausibly close 2000 election, Democrat Al Gore held back his grievances about political taint on the court when it crushed his hopes in a decision that made Republican George W. Bush the president.

Gore didn't hesitate to "accept the finality of this outcome," as much as he said he disagreed with it. The deferential bubble was evident. But that decision became seen as the modern starting point in the erosion of trust in the court.

In the years since, Democrats gutted the filibuster on one front to help them populate the lower federal courts with as many judges as possible, knowing they were setting a precedent that could bite them in the future.

Then Republicans did the same for Supreme Court nominees in the judicial equivalent of nuclear escalation.



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And there was Donald Trump. During his presidency, Trump specialized in what's known by the political class as saying the quiet part out loud. This included his sizing up the judiciary as a political beast, made up of Democratic judges or Republican ones.

For the justices, who have long cloaked themselves in the notion that the politics ends once they ascend to the bench, it was a step too far when Trump accused "Obama judges" of standing in his way and otherwise disparaged judges he didn't like.

"We do not have Obama judges or Trump judges, Bush judges or Clinton judges," Chief Justice John Roberts said in an unusual statement rebuking Trump's comments. "What we have is an extraordinary group of dedicated judges doing their level best to do equal right to those appearing before them."

Yet people in the United States, in recent times, have grown suspicious about judicial independence, with a strong majority believing justices should keep their political views out of their decisions but not even 1 in 5 polled believing they do an excellent or good job of that.

In 2020, Trump nominee Amy Coney Barrett became the first justice in modern times to win confirmation without a single vote from the minority party. She's aware of how that looks.

"My goal today is to convince you that this court is not comprised of a bunch of partisan hacks," she told an audience in Louisville, Kentucky, in September at a center named for Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, who had engineered her fast confirmation. Barrett was one of five justices signaling a vote against *Roe v. Wade* in the leaked draft, Politico said.

As controversial as the *Roe v. Wade* decision affirming abortion rights was in 1973 and in the years since, it was not a ruling driven by partisanship. The vote was 7-2, with five of the justices in the majority nominated by Republican presidents.

Now, Justice Sonia Sotomayor, a liberal on the conservative-majority court, warns that a reversal in 50 years of abortion rights would shatter the idea that American justice is blind to partisanship or party.

"Will this institution survive the stench that this creates in the public perception that the Constitution and its reading are just political acts?" she asked in a Mississippi abortion case in December. She said she thought it wouldn't survive that.

## OUT OF SIGHT

Except when a monumental decision like this abortion one comes out, or when Congress is screening court nominees in its performative hearings, the Supreme Court works largely out of sight and out of mind. But in New York City, the leak got Sequoia Snyder thinking about the court. Is it just one more institution not to be trusted?

"When you think about it, the power is not in the hands of the people," said Snyder, 22. "We don't vote on that. The Electoral College ... the popular vote is ignored. The police are not very regulated, kind of can do what they want with impunity.

"Like every every facet of our society you go to, we don't really have the power or a voice. So I just think it's crazy that nine people have the final say on like everything in the country and they can never lose their job. It just seems weird."

In Charleston, outside West Virginia's only abortion clinic, Dennis Westover, a 72-year-old retired electrical engineer, sat in a lawn chair with an anti-abortion sign. He, too, sees weird doings from the court.

"One side or the other did it for a political motive to stir up some kind of stink," he said of the leak. "We human beings do what we do for whatever we think is a good reason. ... What was the reason? It couldn't be a good one because you leaked Supreme Court privileged information."

## TRUST DEFICIT

In an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll last month, only 18% of U.S. adults said they have a "great deal" of confidence in the Supreme Court. About 27% have hardly any confidence in it.

The high court has historically received better ratings than the other branches and that remains so. In the most recent poll, just 4% have a great deal of confidence in Congress; 51% have hardly any. And 36% have hardly any confidence in the executive branch.

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Still, the court's standing has been deteriorating in recent years. The 2021 General Social Survey suggested confidence in the high court was among its lowest points in the last half century.

In September, a Gallup poll found 54% said those surveyed had at least a "fair amount" of confidence in the court, down from 67% in 2020. Only one other time in five decades has that confidence fallen below 60%.

The poor ratings of government couple with grim views of U.S. democracy and a disenchantment with the pillars of society almost everywhere you look.

Gallup has tracked public opinion of 14 core institutions across the spectrum — organized labor, the church, the media, the medical community among them — and found confidence in them sagging, with the share expressing high confidence never rising above 36% on average over 15 years. Only the military and small businesses get a resounding vote of confidence.

Overlaying everything is a sense that the very foundation of the republic is in trouble. In January, 53% said in an AP-NORC poll that democracy in the U.S. is not working well; only 8% thought it was working very or extremely well.

That state of affairs emanated from a 2020 election that saw Trump fight fiercely and futilely to reverse Democrat Joe Biden's clear White House victory. Trump's false allegations of a rigged election have resounded across the country as the two parties square off over state election laws in response.

In his effort to cling to power, though, Trump also confronted the limits of political influence in the judiciary as he and his campaign brought a battery of far-fetched legal challenges to courtrooms only to have them systematically fail.

"Trump judges" didn't save him.

## He said, she said: Accounts from Depp and Heard rarely match

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

FAIRFAX, Va. (AP) — There's not much room for middle ground in the testimony thus far from Johnny Depp and Amber Heard in Depp's libel suit against his ex-wife.

One of them is lying.

Heard has not yet finished telling the jury her side of things. Her testimony will continue May 16 once the trial — which has already stretched on for four weeks — resumes after a one-week break. Then she will face what one can safely assume will be an aggressive cross-examination in a case where both sides have employed scorched-earth tactics going back years to when the suit was first filed.

Depp is suing Heard in Virginia for libel over an op-ed she wrote in December 2018 in The Washington Post describing herself as "a public figure representing domestic abuse." The article doesn't mention Depp by name, but his lawyers say the article defames him nevertheless because it's a clear reference to the highly publicized allegations Heard made when she filed for divorce in 2016 and obtained a temporary restraining order against him.

Depp says he never physically abused Heard, while Heard says she was assaulted on more than a dozen occasions.

Below are synopses of a few incidents and their divergent accounts.

### THE FIRST TIME

Heard says the first time Depp ever struck her was in 2013, when she made the mistake of laughing at one of his tattoos. Heard said there was an older tattoo she couldn't make out, and Depp told her it said "Wino."

In fact, it used to say "Winona Forever," a tattoo that Depp got when he was dating actor Winona Ryder. He had it altered to "Wino Forever" when they broke up.

Heard said she laughed, and Depp responded by slapping her. Thinking the slap must be a joke, she laughed. Depp responded by slapping her twice more, with the third slap knocking Heard off balance.

"It was so stupid, so insignificant," Heard told the jury. "I thought it must be a joke."

Depp, while he was on the stand, flatly denied it occurred.

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"It didn't happen," he said. "Why would I take such great offense to someone making fun of a tattoo on my body? That allegation never made any sense to me."

## THE FINGER AND THE BOURBON BOTTLE

Both sides say the worst violence occurred in March 2015 in Australia, when Depp was shooting the fifth "Pirates of the Caribbean" movie.

Heard said Depp sexually assaulted her with a liquor bottle — for the first time Thursday she identified a bottle of Maker's Mark bourbon as the offending instrument after she said she saw a photo of the distinctively square bottle — as part of an alcohol-fueled rage. Heard came to Australia after shooting her own film and Depp immediately accused her of sleeping with her co-stars, she said.

Depp, for his part, says he was the victim of the violence. He testified that Heard was irate over efforts by Depp's lawyers to have her sign a post-nuptial agreement, as well as the fact that Depp wasn't adhering to pledges of sobriety to Heard's satisfaction.

He said he escaped the argument by pouring himself a drink, at which point Heard threw a vodka bottle at him. Depp said he responded by pouring another drink, and this time Heard threw another vodka bottle at him that smashed against his hand while it rested on a counter and severed the tip of his middle finger.

Photos of the aftermath show Depp wrote vulgar messages to his wife in blood on the walls of the house. Jurors have also seen contemporaneous text messages Depp sent to others in which he said he cut off his own finger. Depp said he made up that story to protect Heard and avoid police involvement.

## ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

While not a specific incident, Depp and Heard painted very different portraits of Depp's drug and alcohol use.

Heard said drugs and alcohol — along with paranoid jealousy — is what turned him from the man she loved into the "monster" who made her fear for her life. She said he hid his drug and alcohol use from her and from his family but his behavior made it clear he was high or drunk, often to the point of incoherence.

"Johnny on speed is very different from Johnny on opiates. Johnny on opiates is very different from Adderall and cocaine Johnny, which is very different from Quaaludes Johnny, but I had to get good at paying attention to the different versions of him," Heard said.

Indeed, Heard says Depp's denials of physical abuse lack credibility in part because he would black out and forget what he'd done.

Depp, for his part, admitted that he'd become addicted at one point to oxycodone and underwent a detox process in 2014. But he said the allegations of uncontrolled drug and alcohol use are grossly embellished.

"I've always had a pretty big tolerance for alcohol," he testified. "I've never had a physical addiction to alcohol."

## Today in History: May 8, Truman announces Nazi surrender

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, May 8, the 128th day of 2022. There are 237 days left in the year. This is Mother's Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 8, 1996, South Africa took another step from apartheid to democracy by adopting a constitution that guaranteed equal rights for Blacks and whites.

On this date:

In 1541, Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto reached the Mississippi River.

In 1846, the first major battle of the Mexican-American War was fought at Palo Alto, Texas; U.S. forces led by Gen. Zachary Taylor were able to beat back Mexican forces.

In 1915, Regret became the first filly to win the Kentucky Derby.

In 1945, President Harry S. Truman announced on radio that Nazi Germany's forces had surrendered, and that "the flags of freedom fly all over Europe."

In 1972, President Richard Nixon announced that he had ordered the mining of Haiphong Harbor dur-

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ing the Vietnam War.

In 1973, militant American Indians who had held the South Dakota hamlet of Wounded Knee for 10 weeks surrendered.

In 1978, David R. Berkowitz pleaded guilty in a Brooklyn courtroom to murder, attempted murder and assault in connection with the "Son of Sam" shootings that claimed six lives and terrified New Yorkers. (Berkowitz was sentenced to six consecutive life prison terms.)

In 1984, the Soviet Union announced it would boycott the upcoming Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

In 1993, the Muslim-led government of Bosnia-Herzegovina and rebel Bosnian Serbs signed an agreement for a nationwide cease-fire.

In 2003, the Senate unanimously endorsed adding to NATO seven former communist nations: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

In 2018, President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the nuclear accord with Iran and restored harsh sanctions; Trump had been a severe critic of the deal negotiated by the Obama administration in which Iran agreed to restrictions on its nuclear program.

In 2020, the unemployment level surged to 14.7%, a level last seen when the country was in the throes of the Great Depression; the government reported that 20 million Americans had lost their jobs in April amid the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.

Ten years ago: Six-term veteran Indiana Sen. Richard Lugar lost a bitter Republican primary challenge, his nearly four-decade career in the Senate ended by tea party-backed state Treasurer Richard Mourdock, who was defeated the following November by Democrat Joe Donnelly. North Carolina voters decided overwhelmingly to strengthen their state's gay marriage ban. Children's book author Maurice Sendak, 83, died in Danbury, Connecticut.

Five years ago: A suspect, Aaron Juan Saucedo, was arrested in a string of serial killings that terrified a Phoenix neighborhood, a huge break in a case that involved nine deaths and a dozen separate shootings. (Saucedo has pleaded not guilty; he is still awaiting trial.)

One year ago: Colonial Pipeline, the operator of a major pipeline system that carried fuel across the East Coast, said it had been victimized by a ransomware attack and had halted all pipeline operations to deal with the threat. A car bombing attack in Afghanistan's capital killed more than 90 people, many of them students leaving a girls' school.

Today's Birthdays: Naturalist Sir David Attenborough is 96. Singer Toni Tennille is 82. Actor James Mitchum is 81. Country singer Jack Blanchard is 80. Jazz musician Keith Jarrett is 77. Actor Mark Blankfield is 74. Singer Philip Bailey (Earth, Wind and Fire) is 71. Rock musician Chris Frantz (Talking Heads) is 71. Rockabilly singer Billy Burnette is 69. Rock musician Alex Van Halen is 69. Actor David Keith is 68. Actor Raoul Max Trujillo is 67. Sports commentator/former NFL coach Bill Cowher is 65. Former New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio is 61. Actor Melissa Gilbert is 58. Rock musician Dave Rowntree (Blur) is 58. Country musician Del Gray is 54. Rock singer Darren Hayes is 50. Singer Enrique Iglesias is 47. Blues singer-musician Joe Bonamassa is 45. Actor Matt Davis is 44. Actor Elyes Gabel is 39. Actor Domhnall Gleeson is 39. Actor Julia Whelan (WAY'-lan) is 38. Actor Nora Anezeder is 33.