

Groton Daily Independent

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Kindness is a passport that opens doors and fashions friends. It softens hearts and molds relationships that can last lifetimes.

JOSEPH B. WIRTHLIN



The Groton Community Transit is taking the bus to Redfield on May 10, to Clark on May 11th and to Volga on May 17th. For ride information, call (605) 397-8661.

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

Tuesday, May 11

Senior Menu: Ham, sweet potatoes, peas, acini depepi fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Sloppy joes, fries.

Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m., UMYF at 7 p.m.

6 p.m.: Emmanuel Confirmation.

6:30 p.m.: Emmanuel League

7 p.m.: High School Baseball at Clark

Wednesday, May 12

Senior Menu: Honey glazed chicken, parsley buttered potatoes, mixed vegetables, ambrosia salad, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Chicken fries, puzzle tots.

10 a.m.: Girls Golf at Madison

11 a.m.: NEC Track meet at Britton



HELP WANTED!

Groton 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.

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

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DEX Construction Underway

Huron, SD –Construction on the DEX: Dakota Events CompleX has begun on the South Dakota State Fairgrounds. The Open Class Sheep Barn was demolished in April and construction has begun to replace the water main and storm sewer down Livestock Avenue from Grandstand Way south to 2nd Street.

Due to construction activities Livestock Avenue and Gate 4 are closed to traffic. Visitors can access the fairgrounds buildings using Flag Avenue.

The Open Class Sheep Barn was demolished in partnership with Advanced Sunflower who salvaged most of the materials. Built in the early 1950s, over 65 years of world class sheep shows have taken place creating lifelong memories for participants. Generations of South Dakotans have shown in this facility. To make sure the camaraderie, world class shows, and celebrations carry on for generations to come, a task force of sheep industry and fair representatives has been meeting to formulate a plan for what type of facility will be needed to showcase the fair's world class sheep exhibitors and their breeds.

The DEX is the new multipurpose livestock and equestrian facility replacing the Open Class Beef Complex destroyed by fire in 2020.

The 150,000 square-foot facility will be able to house two, full-sized equestrian arenas, or 1,700 plus cattle stalls and seat up to 5,000 people. The facility will be heated for year-round usage and include a ventilation system to ensure proper air movement. Additionally, to create a positive experience for livestock shows and equestrian events, adequate electrical drops and a variety of access points for water, including water drops throughout the building, will be available.

The DEX will have a pre-function and concession area with restrooms. Future plans also include an enclosable, heated wash rack connected to the DEX.

Project renderings are available at <https://www.sdstatefairfoundation.com/>.

Henry Carlson, a Sioux Falls based company, was selected as the construction manager for the project. The prefabricated metal building was ordered in September, with several of the remaining components being bid out in March. While the project has been impacted by increases in construction material costs, as well as delays in construction materials, substantial completion is still on target for June 2023. The DEX construction costs are estimated at \$24.6 million.

Due to the demolition of the Open Class Sheep Barn and construction of the DEX, the 2022 Open Class Sheep and Beef Shows will be relocated to the 4-H Livestock Complex.

The project is being funded through a state – private partnership with the state contributing \$16 million. Private support for the DEX has been outstanding with over \$6 million pledged to date. However, the fundraising effort continues to help offset increased construction costs and ensure the facility has every amenity in place to hit the ground running in 2023. There are still many great donor opportunities available including interior naming rights and donor wall recognition. In addition, livestock producers can leave their legacy by having their brand on display at the DEX brand wall. The brand wall will be in a highly visible area that can be enjoyed year-round by DEX visitors. If you are interested in participating, please contact the SD State Fair Foundation at 605.353.7340.

If you would like to learn more about the DEX or are interested in contributing to the project, please visit <https://www.sdstatefairfoundation.com/>.

For information about the South Dakota State Fair, contact the Fair office at 800-529-0900, visit www.sdstatefair.com or find them on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

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Final Day of School to be a full day

The last day of school this year will be a full day of the school instead of half a day. The last day is May 18th. It will be regular bus schedule and regular class schedule.

Sue Wattier is compiling and filing the annual Department of Education figures.

Track and Field Day is in question due to the rain. If more rain comes Wednesday and Thursday, the field may be too wet for the event. They are looking to see if there are any open days next week if it cannot be held on Friday.

The second of two water heaters sprung a leak. A 199 gallon rapid water heater was installed for \$18,000. The original estimate was \$40,000. They will see if one water heater will work. It was necessary to replace as it supplies hot water to the kitchen.

Superintendent Joe Schwan said that both libraries have a Veteran book written by Lee Raines. "It's kind of neat," he said.

Business Manager Mike Weber talked about a time management system that could replace the time clock punch. He is getting a cost estimate to present at a later school board meeting. This would eliminate the time being spent to calculate time sheets manually.

Weber presented a preliminary FY2023 budget. The preliminary data show that the district's valuation increased from \$1,239,610,317 to \$1,287,812,474.

The signed teacher contacts were approved. All expected contacts were turned in.

The summer employment agreements were approved.

The SDHSAA Amendment #7 was discussed. This would include a multiplier for the free and reduced meals to calculate average daily membership for athletics. The board took no action.

The board decided to move forward with having no varsity boys soccer schedule this year and leave the option on the table for a possible junior varsity schedule in case there is some interest. "We don't have the numbers right now," said Superintendent Joe Schwan. There is also no coach right now.

The board reviewed the COVID-19 policy and decided to delete the part that deals with working with local health officials for contact tracing.

The resignation of Jill Helvig as Title Math Interventionist at the end of the school year was approved. The board also approved the resignation of Mike Nehls as head custodian effective June 3, 2022.

The board approved the re-assignment of Alexa Schuring from junior kindergarten/kindergarten to Title Math/Reading Interventionist for the 2022-23 school year, pending finding a suitable replacement for the JK/K teaching position.

Off-staff extra curricular agreements were approved: Rylee Furman as MS/HS special ed and junior high volleyball coach, Chelsea Hanson as head volleyball coach, Jenna Strom as assistant girls volleyball coach, Chris Kucker as head soccer coach, Seth Erickson as assistant football coach, Aubrey Harry and Jasmine Schinkel as co-cheering advisors, Matt Locke as head and Trent Traphagen as assistant girls basketball coaches, Darin Zoellner as head and Ryan Scepaniak as assistant wrestling coaches, Ryan Scepaniak as junior high football coach, Kristi Peterson and yearbook advisor, Brenda Madsen as senior class advisor, Brian Dolan as head boys basketball coach and athletic director, Joni Groeblichhoff as co-DI coordinator.

A 4.5 percent increase in the base salary of certified teachers was approved.

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Principal's Middle School 6th Grade Honor Roll

Congratulations to these 6th graders who have been selected for the Principal's Middle School 6th Grade Honor Roll at Groton Area High School. To be eligible for this award, the sixth graders had to be on the honor roll at Groton Area High School every quarter for one year.

Back Left: De Eh June Say, Thomas Schuster, Wyatt Wambach, Easton Weber, Chesney Weber, Addison Hoeft, Ryder Schelle, Jace Johnson, Layne Johnson, John Bisbee, Ethan Kroll,
Front Left: Kason Oswald, Rylie Rose, Taryn Thompson, Sydney Locke, Rylene Gilbert, Kyleigh Kroll, Mckenna Krause, Destin Pardick. (Courtesy Photo)



Principal's Middle School 8th Grade Honor Roll

Congratulations to these eighth graders that have been selected for the Principal's Middle School 8th Grade Honor Roll at Groton Area High School. To be eligible for this award, the eighth graders had to be on the honor roll at Groton Area High School every quarter for two years.

Back Left: Benjamin Hoefft, Lucas Carda, Ryder Johnson, Gage Sippel, Keegen Tracy, Logan Warrington, Jayden Schwan, Rylee Dunker, Oliver Stiegelmeier,

Middle Left: Lincoln Krause, Nathan Unzen, Mia Crank, London Bahr, Raelee Lilly Cali Tolifson, Talli Wright, Jaedyn Penning,

Front Left: Carly Gilbert, Jerica Locke, Natalia Warrington, De Eh Tha Say. (Courtesy Photo)

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Weekly Vikings Recap

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

Last week, we discussed the Vikings' draft picks from the first three rounds of this year's draft. This week, we will look at the Vikings' fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh-round picks. Of those four rounds, the Vikings ended up selecting a total of six players from various positions.

Round 4: No. 118 – Akayleb Evans, Cornerback (Missouri)

Leading up to the draft, Vikings General Manager, Kwesi Adofo-Mensah, commented during a press conference how there was one player in this year's draft that he would watch tape of in a dark room that he loved. Turns out that player was Akayleb Evans. Evans is a tall, athletic cornerback who many experts have stated improved every year in college.

The reason Kwesi might have fallen in love with Evans is his physicality. Evans seems to enjoy playing press coverage with wide receivers and is not afraid to get physical in the run game. Obviously, a fourth-round pick will come with weaknesses, but Evans may come to be a reliable player for the Vikings.

Round 5: No. 165 – Ezezi Otomewo, Defensive End (Minnesota)

For the first time in twelve years, the Vikings selected a Gopher in the draft. Although Otomewo is not your typical speedy, athletic edge rusher that you see in the NFL nowadays, Otomewo will provide value on the Vikings' defensive line purely based on his size alone. Otomewo stands 6'5", weighs 280 lbs., and has an impressive 35" arm length. If the Vikings decide to move Otomewo inside as a defensive tackle, he will be able to use his size and strength more than having to rely on his average athleticism.

Round 5: No. 169 – Ty Chandler, Running Back (North Carolina)

It took the Vikings five rounds to finally select a player at an offensive skill position. Ty Chandler will be joining a packed running back room with the Vikings. Although it will likely be hard for Chandler to establish himself as a ball carrier, he will be able to provide value to the Vikings' offense thanks to his pass-catching ability. Although Chandler finished his career with only 73 receptions, he does appear to be comfortable catching passes out of the backfield. For a Vikings team that lacks the traditional 3rd down, pass-catching running back, Chandler might make a name for himself if he can continue to improve on his pass-catching ability.

Round 6: No. 184 – Vederian Lowe, Offensive Tackle (Illinois)

Like every Vikings draft before it, the Vikings took another late-round offensive lineman who will likely never become a reliable starter. Vederian Lowe is a large, fairly athletic tackle who many experts think will eventually move inside to the guard position. Lowe has the ideal size that you want in an offensive lineman, standing 6'6" and weighing 320lbs. However, there is a reason it took six rounds for Lowe to be picked, he is just not an elite blocker.

Round 6: No. 191 – Jalen Nailor, Wide Receiver (Michigan State)

Of the day three picks for the Vikings, this was my favorite. One thing about Nailor that stands out is how much he looks like Stefon Diggs in his movement. Even crazier is how they are pretty much identical in body type. Nailor, who stands 6'0" and weighs 190 lbs., is the same height as Diggs and weighs only one pound less than him. The thought that Nailor could become as good of a player as Diggs was for the Vikings is not that crazy of a thought. Diggs, like Nailor, was also a day three draft pick. Furthermore, it appears the Vikings see something special in Nailor. Rumor is that Vikings wide receivers coach, Keenan McCardell, "pounded the table" for the Vikings to draft Nailor.

Round 7: No. 227 – Nick Muse, Tight End (South Carolina)

The Vikings waited till the seventh round to finally select a tight end, a position of need for the Vikings. Muse is a big tight end who appears to have the ability to both excel as a receiving and blocking tight end. However, like every other 7th-round pick, it will be a long road ahead for Muse to make any impact with the Vikings.

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

Opening
for the
season
on Friday,
May 6th!



**New products!
New Planters!**

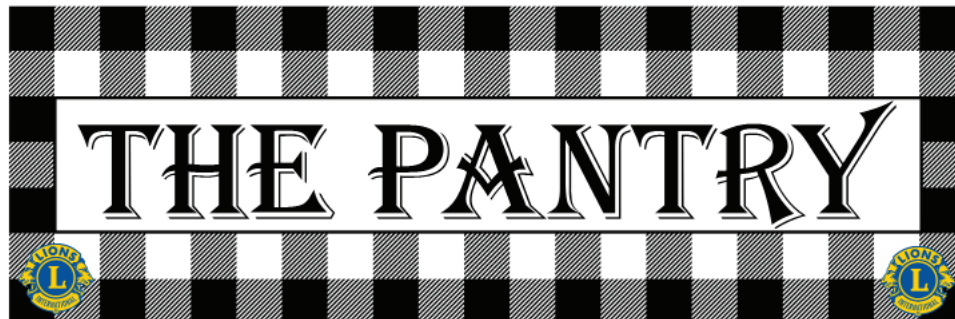


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Look for the green flags! Questions? Call 605-380-6587**



Opening May 9th at the Groton Community Center

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

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

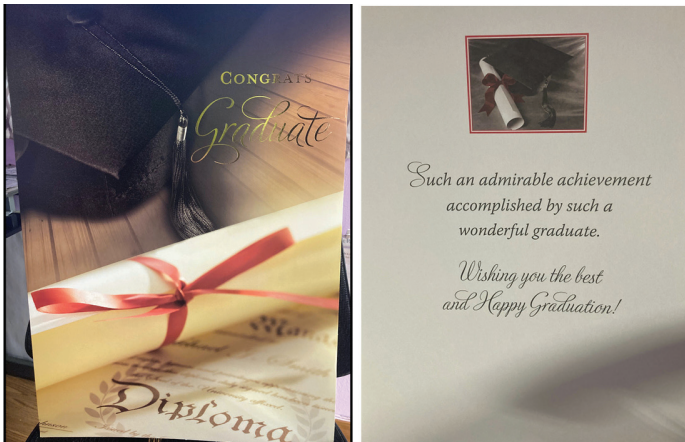
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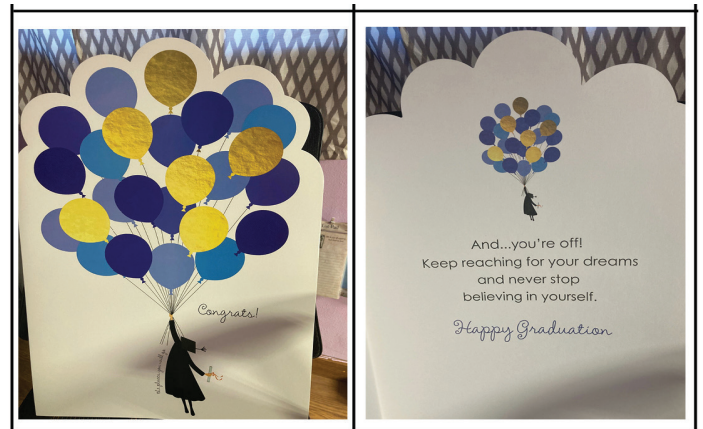
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Only \$7.99 each ~ Card Size: 16.25" x 24"

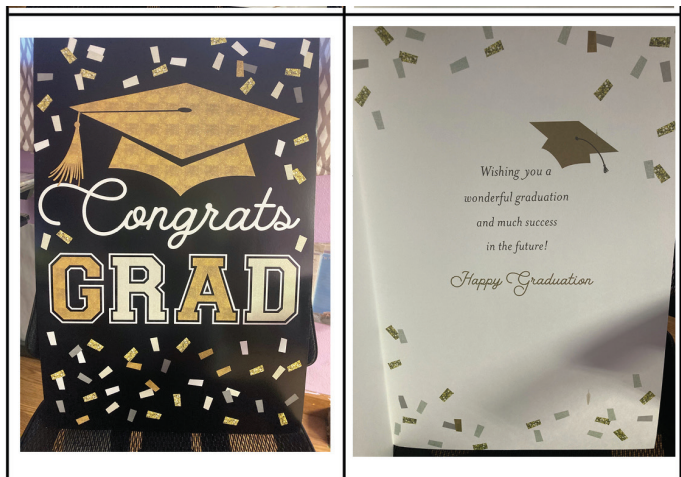
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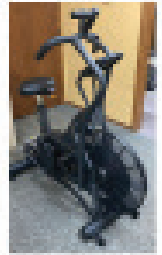
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\$3.50 - 9" on a stick



#7 - \$10 - 36"



#8 - \$5



#9 - \$5



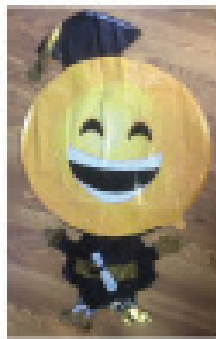
#10 - \$5



#11 - \$5



#12 - \$5



#13 - \$8 35"



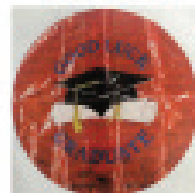
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#15 - \$5



#16 - \$5



#17 - \$5



#18 - \$5



#19 - \$5



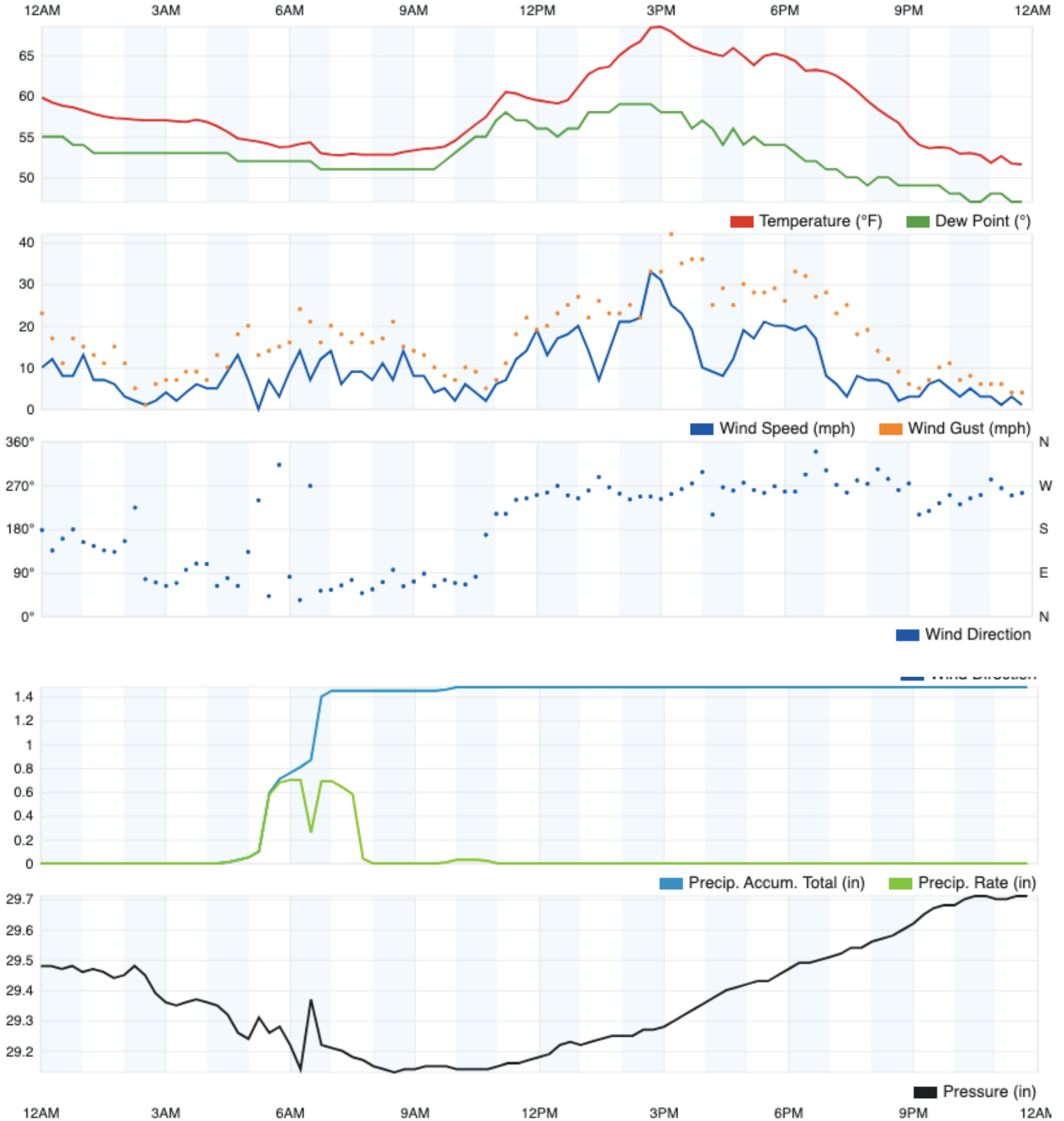
#20 - \$5

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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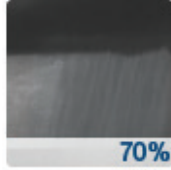

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



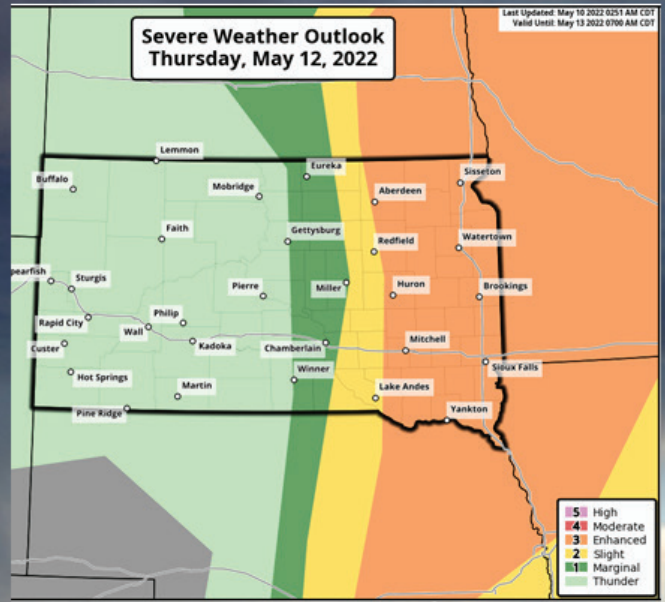
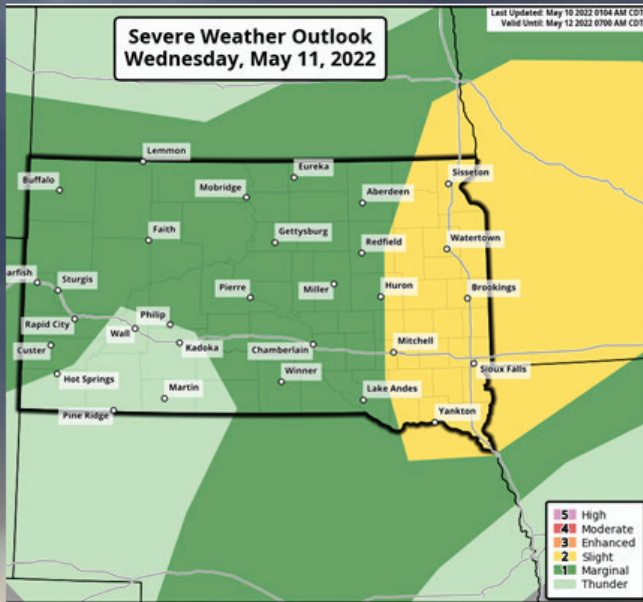
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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
Scattered Sprinkles	Partly Cloudy	20% → 50%	70%	50%
		Slight Chance T-storms then Chance T-storms	Showers Likely	Chance T-storms
High: 71 °F	Low: 48 °F	High: 74 °F	Low: 60 °F	High: 81 °F



A Risk for Severe Weather Midweek



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD  

A low pressure system will push across the Midwest and Northern Plains Wednesday and Thursday bringing more chances of strong/severe storms both days. The Storm Prediction Center has put a slight risk over our eastern counties for Wednesday and an enhanced risk over much of the same area on Thursday. The main threat being large hail, damaging winds, and isolated tornadoes.

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Max Temps Rest of this Work Week

May 10, 2022
2:33 AM

Today

Highs
66-74°F

Wednesday

Highs
67-84°F

Highs
65-78°F

Friday

Highs
65-90°F

Thursday



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The rest of the work week will be mild to very warm over central/northeast SD and west central MN.
#sdwx #mnwx

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Today in Weather History

May 10, 1982: An F3 tornado was first sighted six miles west of Tintah, Minnesota. The storm moved into the town of Tintah and then northeastward, dissipating north of Wendell. Two farms, sites were damaged west of Tintah. Nearly one dozen farm buildings were destroyed, and 50 cows were killed. Hail as large as softballs preceded the tornado into Tintah where there was extensive damage. A school and church received heavy damage, two railroad cars were overturned, homes and grain buildings were damaged, and utility poles and trees were uprooted.

1880: A tornado estimated to be F4 intensity moved across 20 miles of Scott and Morgan Counties in central Illinois. The tornado touched down near Alsey and moved northeast, passing 8 miles south of Jacksonville. The tornado was strongest in the Pisgah area, where 30 buildings were destroyed. Seven people were killed.

1905: On Wednesday, May 10th, 1905, the Oklahoma Territory was struck by one of the worst natural disasters in early American history. Tornadoes pounded the southwest part of the Territory, one of which flattened the town of Snyder. The "official" death toll is listed today as 97, but the actual number of victims may never be known. One hundred years later, this single tornado remains the second most deadly in Oklahoma history.

1953: Four, F4 tornadoes touched down in parts of eastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. One F4 tornado moved northeast from northeast of Fountain City, Wisconsin to Colburn, Wisconsin. Total damage from this storm was \$1 million, and it caused ten injuries. The second F4 tornado moved from 5 miles southwest of Chester, Iowa to 4 miles northeast of Chatfield, Minnesota. One man was killed as his barn was destroyed one mile southeast of Wykoff. A rural school was leveled 3 miles south of Chatfield as well. The third F4 tornado moved northeast and passed about 2 miles northwest of St. Charles, Minnesota. Farms were torn up all along the track. An infant was killed, and four other people were injured in a car that was thrown 100 feet. Overall this tornado killed one person and injured 11 people. The final F4 tornado moved across Rusk, Price, and Taylor counties in Wisconsin. Over \$150,000 worth of damage resulted. An F3 tornado moved northeast across Clayton County, Iowa. At least 60 head of cattle were killed. A farmer was carried 700 feet but suffered only minor injuries.

1966 - Morning lows of 21 degrees at Bloomington-Normal and Aurora, IL, established a state record for the month of May. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Summer-like "Father's Day" type weather prevailed in the north central and western U.S. for "Mother's Day", as seventeen cities reported record high temperatures for the date. Jamestown ND soared to a record high of 96 degrees. Thunderstorms along the Central Gulf Coast deluged Lillian AL with 14.5 inches of rain, and nearby Perdido Key FL with 12.8 inches of rain. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced hail and high winds over the Atlantic Coast Region and the Gulf Coast States marking the end of a five day episode of severe weather associated with a cyclone tracking out of the Great Basin into southeastern Canada. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front crossing the Plateau Region produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Butte MT, and gusts to 77 mph at Choteau MT. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A spring storm produced heavy snow in Upper Michigan and eastern Wisconsin. Totals ranged up to 12 inches at Marquette MI, with eight inches reported at Muskego WI and Hartford WI. The heavy wet snow, and winds gusting to 35 mph, damaged or destroyed thousands of trees, and downed numerous power lines. Total damage from the storm was more than four million dollars. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2010: On this day, Oklahoma experienced its largest tornado outbreak since May 3, 1999. Fifty-five twisters tore through the state, including two rated EF4. The EF4 storms took three lives and injured 81 people. Ironically, both EF4 tornadoes struck Norman, Oklahoma, home of the Storm Prediction Center and the National Severe Storms Laboratory. Fourteen additional tornadoes hit Oklahoma during May 11-13. The May 10 disaster racked up insured property losses of \$2 billion.

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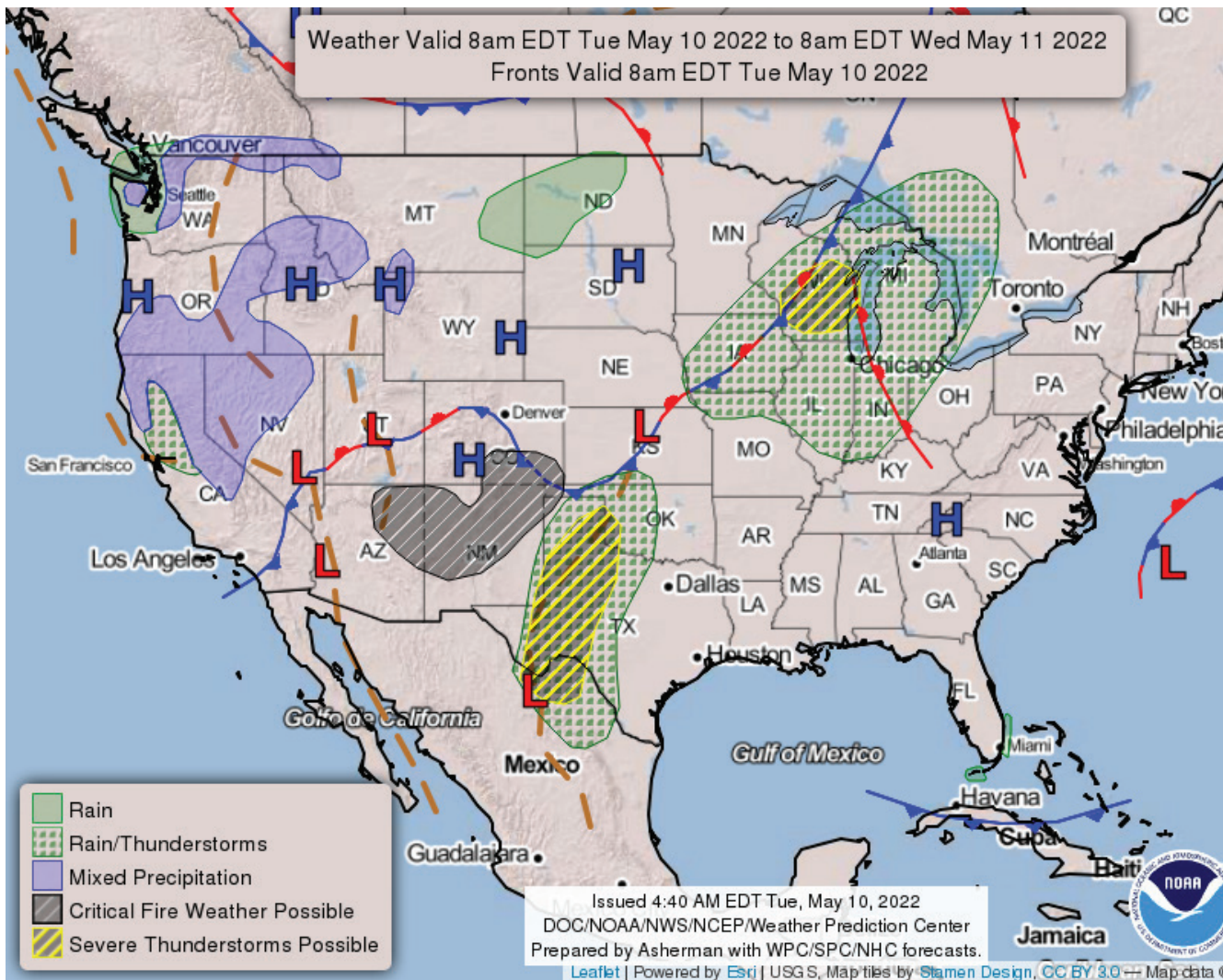
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 69 °F at 2:58 PM
Low Temp: 51 °F at 11:40 PM
Wind: 42 mph at 3:13 PM
Precip: 1.48

Day length: 14 hours, 45 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 95 in 1911
Record Low: 20 in 1981
Average High: 68°F
Average Low: 42°F
Average Precip in May.: 1.10
Precip to date in May.: 2.08
Average Precip to date: 5.07
Precip Year to Date: 8.58
Sunset Tonight: 8:51:44 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:04:35 AM



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ARE YOU LISTENING HARD, LORD?

Eight-year-old Greg was having a difficult time with his prayers one evening. It seemed the more he prayed the less God listened. Finally, in desperation, he said, "OK God, when is the best time I can talk to You? I know You are always listening, but when will You be listening hard for someone who lives in Augusta, Georgia?"

God is always "listening hard" no matter where we are. And, He is never so busy caring for His creation that He forgets where you are or what you need. He is always thinking about us and is aware of every need we have or ever will have.

We may talk to Him for a minute or a moment, an hour or two, or an entire day and night. But, there is one important matter about prayer that we must never forget.

It is always good to bring everything to God in prayer first. If we go to Him before we begin a plan, make a decision, attempt to solve a problem, or try to manage our finances, the best He has to offer us will be ours.

"Let the morning bring me word of Your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in You; show me the way I should go, for to You I lift up my soul."

Prayer is a very important key to success. It is comforting to know that when we awaken in the morning God's unfailing love is there waiting for us. And, when we put our trust in Him and ask Him to show us the way He has planned for us, we can be certain that He will do just that because of His unfailing love! If we lift up our voice to Him, He will give us all we need.

Prayer: Lord, You offer us so much, and we ask for so little. Help us to look more to You for everything we need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Let the morning bring me word of Your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in You; show me the way I should go, for to You I lift up my soul. Psalm 143:8

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2022 Community Events

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

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$86 million

Powerball

18-30-35-52-56, Powerball: 5, Power Play: 2

(eighteen, thirty, thirty-five, fifty-two, fifty-six; Powerball: five; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$59 million

Marcos presidency complicates US efforts to counter China

By DAVID RISING and JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s apparent landslide victory in the Philippine presidential election is giving rise to immediate concerns about a further erosion of democracy in the region, and could complicate American efforts to blunt growing Chinese influence and power in the Pacific.

Marcos, the son and namesake of longtime dictator Ferdinand Marcos, captured more than 30.8 million votes in Monday's election according to an unofficial count, more than double those of his closest challenger.

If the results stand, he will take office at the end of June for a six-year term with Sara Duterte, the daughter of outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte, as his vice president.

Duterte — who leaves office with a 67% approval rating — nurtured closer ties with China and Russia, while at times railing against the United States.

He has walked back on many of his threats against Washington, however, including a move to abrogate a defense pact between the two countries, and the luster of China's promise of infrastructure investment has dulled, with much failing to materialize.

Whether the recent trend in relations with the U.S. will continue has a lot to do with how President Joe Biden's administration responds to the return of a Marcos to power in the Philippines, said Manila-based political scientist Andrea Chloe Wong, a former researcher in the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs.

"On the one hand you have Biden regarding the geostrategic interests in the Philippines, and on the other hand he has to balance promoting American democratic ideals and human rights," she said.

"If he chooses to do that, he might have to isolate the Marcos administration, so this will definitely be a delicate balancing act for the Philippines, and Marcos' approach to the U.S. will highly depend on how Biden will engage with him."

His election comes at a time when the U.S. has been increasingly focused on the region, embarking on a strategy unveiled in February to considerably broaden U.S. engagement by strengthening a web of security alliances and partnerships, with an emphasis on addressing China's growing influence and ambitions.

Thousands of American and Filipino forces recently wrapped up one of their largest combat exercises in years, which showcased U.S. firepower in the northern Philippines near its sea border with Taiwan.

Marcos has been short on specifics about foreign policy, but in interviews he said he wanted to pursue closer ties with China, including possibly setting aside a 2016 ruling by a tribunal in The Hague that invalidated almost all of China's historical claims to the South China Sea.

China has refused to recognize the ruling, and Marcos was quoted as saying "that arbitration is no longer an arbitration if there's only one party."

Marcos has also said he would maintain his nation's alliance with the U.S., but the relationship is complicated by American backing of the administrations that took power after his father was deposed, and a 2011 U.S. District Court ruling in Hawaii finding him and his mother in contempt of an order to furnish information on assets in connection with a 1995 human rights class action suit against Marcos Sr.

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The court fined them \$353.6 million, which has never been paid and could complicate the possibility of him visiting the U.S. in the future.

The U.S. has a long history with the Philippines, which was an American colony for most of the first half of the last century before it was granted independence in 1946.

The U.S. closed its last military bases on the Philippines in 1992, but the country's location on the South China Sea means it remains strategically important, and under a 1951 collective defense treaty the U.S. guarantees its support if the Philippines is attacked.

Even though the Biden administration may have preferred to work with Marcos' leading opponent, Leni Robredo, the "U.S.-Philippines alliance is vital to both nations' security and prosperity, especially in the new era of competition with China," said Gregory B. Poling, director of the Southeast Asia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

"Unlike Leni, with her coherent platform for good governance and development at home and standing up to China abroad, Marcos is a policy cipher," Poling said in a research note. "He has avoided presidential debates, shunned interviews, and has been silent on most issues."

Marcos has been clear, however, that he would like to try again to improve ties with Beijing, Poling said.

"But when it comes to foreign policy, Marcos will not have the same space for maneuver that Duterte did," he said. "The Philippines tried an outstretched hand and China bit it. That is why the Duterte government has re-embraced the U.S. alliance and gotten tougher on Beijing over the last two years."

Marcos Sr. was ousted in 1986 after millions of people took to the streets, forcing an end to his corrupt dictatorship and a return to democracy. But the election of Duterte as president in 2016 brought a return to a strongman-type leader, which voters have now doubled-down on with Marcos Jr.

Domestically, Marcos, who goes by his childhood nickname "Bongbong," is widely expected to pick up where Duterte left off, stifling a free press and cracking down on dissent with less of the outgoing leader's crude and brash style, while putting an end to ongoing attempts to recover some of the billions of dollars his father pilfered from the state coffers.

But a return to the hard-line rule of his father, who declared martial law for much of his rule, is not likely, said Julio Teehankee, a political science professor at Manila's De La Salle University.

"He does not have the courage or the brilliance, or even the ruthlessness to become a dictator, so I think what we will see is a form of authoritarian-lite or Marcos-lite," Teehankee said.

The new Marcos government will not mean the end of Philippine democracy, Poling said, "though it may accelerate its decay."

"The country's democratic institutions have already been battered by six years of the Duterte presidency and the rise of online disinformation, alongside the decades-long corrosives of oligarchy, graft, and poor governance," he said.

"The United States would be better served by engagement rather than criticism of the democratic headwinds buffeting the Philippines."

Marcos' approach at home could have a spillover effect in other countries in the region, where democratic freedoms are being increasingly eroded in many places and the Philippines had been seen as a positive influence, Wong said.

"This will have an impact on Philippine foreign policy when it comes to promoting its democratic values, freedoms and human rights, particularly in Southeast Asia," she said. "The Philippines is regarded as a bastion of democracy in the region, with a strong civil society and a noisy media, and with Bongbong Marcos as president, we will have less credibility."

With pomp but no queen, UK govt sets out the year's agenda

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's Conservative government made sweeping promises to cut crime, improve health care and revive the pandemic-scarred economy as it laid out its plans for the next year in a tradition-steeped ceremony in Parliament — but without Queen Elizabeth II, who was absent for the first time in six decades.

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The 96-year-old monarch pulled out of reading the Queen's Speech at the ceremonial State Opening of Parliament because of what Buckingham Palace calls "episodic mobility issues." Her son and heir, Prince Charles, stood in, rattling through a short speech laying out 38 bills the government plans to pass.

The speech, which is written by the government, promised Prime Minister Boris Johnson's administration would "grow and strengthen the economy and help ease the cost of living for families."

But it contained few immediate measures to relieve households struggling with soaring prices for domestic energy and food.

As well as bills on education, health care funding and "levelling up" economic opportunity to poorer regions, the speech promised laws aimed at pleasing the government's right-leaning voter base, including promises to seize "Brexit freedoms" by cutting red tape for businesses and overhauling financial services and data regulation now that Britain has left the European Union.

Some of the plans are already strongly criticized by opposition parties and civil liberties groups, including a contentious new law to outlaw disruptive protest tactics favored by groups such as Extinction Rebellion.

Human rights groups also have criticized plans for a British Bill of Rights to replace current rights laws based on the European Convention on Human Rights. Some environmentalists worry that a bill to allow "precision bred plants and animals" opens the door to genetically modified food, which is currently banned.

Johnson said before the speech that its measures would "get our country back on track" and press on with "our mission to create the high wage, high skilled jobs that will drive economic growth across our whole United Kingdom."

In a video message, he said the government's focus was on "growing the economy to address the cost of living."

But there was no specific new relief for soaring grocery and energy bills. Britain's inflation rate has hit 7%, and prices for domestic energy have spiked even higher, as the war in Ukraine and Western sanctions on energy-rich Russia compounded economic disruption from Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government has given most households a 150 pound (\$185) tax refund, but has rejected opposition calls for a windfall tax on the profits of big energy firms, saying that could discourage them from investing in U.K. renewable energy projects.

The opening of a new session of Parliament comes days after Johnson's Conservatives suffered a drubbing in local elections across the U.K., losing hundreds of city and regional council seats to opposition parties.

Johnson's personal popularity has been hurt by months of headlines over parties in his office and other government buildings that breached coronavirus restrictions.

Johnson was fined 50 pounds (\$62) by police for attending his own surprise birthday party in June 2020 when lockdown rules barred social gatherings.

Johnson has apologized but denies knowingly breaking the rules. He faces the possibility of more fines over other parties, a parliamentary investigation into whether he misled lawmakers about his behavior and a possible no-confidence vote from his own lawmakers.

The state opening ceremony itself is a spectacular pageant steeped in the two sides of Britain's constitutional monarchy: royal pomp and political power. Traditionally the monarch travels from Buckingham Palace to Parliament in a horse-drawn carriage and reads the speech to assembled lawmakers from a golden throne, wearing a crown studded with 3,000 diamonds.

The queen has only missed two previous state openings during her 70-year reign, in 1959 and 1963, when she was pregnant with sons Andrew and Edward, respectively.

This year, Charles travelled to Parliament by car, rather than carriage, and did not wear the crown, which got its own seat. But other symbolic elements were present, including scarlet-clad Yeomen of the Guard and an official known as Black Rod who summoned lawmakers from the House of Commons to the House of Lords.

The ceremony takes place in the House of Lords, the unelected upper chamber of Parliament, because the monarch isn't allowed to set foot in the House of Commons. Ever since King Charles I tried to arrest lawmakers in 1642 and ended up deposed, tried and beheaded, the monarch has been barred from en-

tering the Commons chamber.

In another symbol of the struggle between Commons and crown, a lawmaker is ceremonially held hostage at Buckingham Palace during the ceremony to ensure the royals' safe return.

Russia pounds Ukraine's vital port of Odesa, Mariupol plant

By ELENA BECATOROS and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces pounded away at the vital port of Odesa, Ukrainian officials said Tuesday, as part of an apparent effort to disrupt supply lines and weapons shipments. On the other end of the southern coast, they hammered a steel plant where Ukrainian fighters are denying Moscow full control of another critical port.

Days after the dramatic rescue of what some officials said were the last civilians trapped at the plant in Mariupol, authorities said about 100 were still believed to be in the network of underground tunnels under bombardment. The strikes come as the grisly toll of the war continued to take shape, with the Ukrainians saying they found the bodies of 44 civilians in the rubble of a building in the northeast that was destroyed weeks ago.

The Ukrainian military said Tuesday that Russian forces fired seven missiles a day earlier from the air at the crucial Black Sea port of Odesa, hitting a shopping center and a warehouse. One person was killed and five were wounded, the military said.

Ukraine alleged at least some of the munitions used dated back to the Soviet era, making them unreliable in targeting. But the Center for Defense Strategies, a Ukrainian think tank tracking the war, said Moscow did use some precision weapons against Odesa: Kinzhal, or "Dagger," hypersonic air-to-surface missiles.

Ukrainian, British and American officials warn Russia is rapidly using up its stock of precision weapons and may not be able to quickly build more, raising the risk of more imprecise rockets being used as the conflict grinds on.

Ever since President Vladimir Putin's forces failed to take Kyiv in the early days of the war, he has said his focus is the country's eastern industrial heartland of the Donbas — but one general has suggested Moscow's aims also include cutting Ukraine off from its entire Black Sea coast.

That would give it a swath of territory that would link Russia to both the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized in 2014, and Transnistria, a pro-Russian breakaway region of Moldova.

Even if it falls short in the goal of severing Ukraine from the Black Sea Coast — and it appears to lack the forces to do so — continuing missile strikes on Odesa reflect the city's importance as a strategic transport hub. The Russian military has repeatedly targeted the city's airport and claimed that it has destroyed several batches of the Western weapons that have been key to Ukraine's resistance.

Odesa, Ukraine's largest port, is also a major gateway for grain shipments, and Russia's blockade of it is already threatening global food supplies. And the city is also a cultural jewel, dear to Ukrainians and Russians alike and targeting carries symbolic significance as well.

The strikes came the same day Russian President Vladimir Putin marked his country's biggest patriotic holiday without being able to boast of major new battlefield successes. On Monday, he watched troops march in formation and military hardware roll by in a Victory Day parade on Moscow's Red Square to celebrate the Soviet Union's role in the 1945 defeat of Nazi Germany.

A symbol of Russia's difficulties is the city of Mariupol, where Russian forces have sought for weeks to end the resistance of Ukrainian defenders making their last stand.

Petro Andryushchenko, advisor to the city's mayor, estimated in a social-media post that at least 100 civilians remain trapped in underground bunkers in the Azovstal mill. Ukrainian and Russian authorities previously said a convoy over the weekend led a third evacuation of hundreds of civilians from the mill to safety in a government-controlled city.

Separately, Donetsk regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said Tuesday that those civilians were people "that the Russians have not selected" for evacuation. It wasn't immediately clear how the two officials knew that, and the fighters still at the plant were yet to confirm it.

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Earlier, Ukrainian and Russian officials had said all civilians had been evacuated from the plant.

With Russian forces struggling to gain ground in the Donbas, military analysts suggest that hitting Odesa might serve to stoke concern about southwestern Ukraine, thus forcing Kyiv to station more forces there. That would pull them away from the eastern front as its military stages counteroffensives near the city of Kharkiv, aiming to push the Russians back across the border there.

Kharkiv and the surrounding area has been under sustained Russian attack since the beginning of the war in late February. Dozens of bodies were found in a five-story building that collapsed in March in Izyum, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) from Kharkiv, Oleh Synhubov, the head of the regional administration, said Tuesday in a social media message.

"This is another horrible war crime of the Russian occupiers against the civilian population!" said Synhubov.

Izyum lies on a key route to the eastern industrial region of the Donbas, now the focus of Russia's war in Ukraine. Synhubov did not say specifically where the building was.

Also Tuesday, the Ukrainian military warned that Russia could target the country's chemical industries. The claim wasn't immediately explained in the report. But Russian shelling has previously targeted oil depots and other industrial sites during the war.

Meanwhile, satellite photos showed intense fires in Russian-held territory in southern Ukraine on Monday. A cause for the fires wasn't immediately clear. However, Planet Labs images showed thick smoke rising to the east of Vasylivka, a city which is flanked by nature preserves.

Also, satellite pictures analyzed by The Associated Press showed two ships off Ukraine's Snake Island on Monday afternoon.

One of the ships seen in the images from Planet Labs PBC appeared to be a landing craft. Ukraine has repeatedly struck Russian positions there recently, suggesting Russian forces may be trying to re-staff or remove personnel from the Black Sea island.

In Washington, President Joe Biden signed a bipartisan measure to reboot the World War II-era "lend-lease" program, which helped defeat Nazi Germany, to bolster Kyiv and Eastern European allies.

Elsewhere on the diplomatic front, Western powers continued to rally around Kyiv's embattled government. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock travelled to the Kyiv suburb of Bucha, where the bodies of many civilians were found — some killed at short range — after Russian forces withdrew last month.

The office of French President Emmanuel Macron said he was speaking with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, one of the most Putin-friendly leaders in the European Union, who has resisted calls from many bloc members to ban oil imports from Russia.

Shanghai re-tightens on COVID, frustrating trapped residents

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The city of Shanghai is doubling down on pandemic restrictions after a brief period of loosening up, frustrating residents who were hoping a more than monthlong lockdown was finally easing as the number of new cases falls in China's financial center.

Teams in white protective suits have begun entering the homes of coronavirus-infected people to spray disinfectant, prompting worries among some about damage to clothes and valuables and leaving their keys with a community volunteer when they are taken to quarantine — a new requirement so disinfectant workers can get in.

Shanghai also has ordered people in some areas to stay in their homes again after letting them out for limited shopping in recent weeks. On Tuesday, service was suspended on the last two subway lines that were still operating, marking the first time the city's entire system has been shut down, according to The Paper, an online media outlet.

China's adherence to a "zero-COVID" strategy, as many other countries loosen restrictions and try to live with the virus, is exacting a growing economic and human cost. Evermore extreme measures have been required to bring outbreaks under control, because the omicron variant spreads so easily. China's

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ruling Communist Party, with an eye on a major party congress this fall, is showing no signs of backing off anytime soon.

Escape from Shanghai is all but impossible, but that didn't stop an unofficial how-to guide — detailing how to navigate lockdown controls and nab a seat on the few trains and planes leaving the city — from circulating widely on social media. Many in the city of 25 million people shared their frustration with the renewed restrictions in chat groups.

The daily number of new cases in Shanghai had fallen to about 3,000 by Monday, down from a peak of 26,000 in mid-April. Six more COVID-19-related deaths were reported, raising the toll from the outbreak to 553.

Beijing began another round of three days of mass testing for millions of its residents Tuesday in a bid to prevent an outbreak in the nation's capital from growing to Shanghai proportions. The city, which recorded 74 new cases on Monday, has locked down individual buildings and residential compounds, shut about 60 subway stations and banned dining at restaurants, allowing only takeout and delivery.

The outbreak has not exploded but it also has not stopped spreading. Beijing spokesperson Xu Hejian described the situation Tuesday as a "stalemate" and said that the city needs to continue its strict measures.

While traffic is sparse in Beijing, it is almost non-existent in Shanghai, where the lockdown has been going on longer and is citywide. AP video shot Monday showed a silent and deserted city, with only a very occasional vehicle and a few food delivery drivers on scooters moving down empty roads. Most people are confined to their apartments or residential complexes, though there has been some easing in outlying suburban areas without new cases in their communities.

But notices issued in several Shanghai districts in recent days ordered residents to stay home and barred them from receiving nonessential deliveries as part of a "quiet period" lasting until Wednesday or longer. The measures could be extended depending on the results of mass testing, the notices said. The sudden re-tightening took residents by surprise.

Shanghai official Jin Chen appeared to acknowledge Tuesday the complaints about the disinfecting of people's homes, thanking them for their cooperation and saying the government would analyze and fix any problems. He said that residents can inform the teams about any items that need protection.

"Carrying out household disinfection is an important part of the overall epidemic prevention and control," he told a daily virus news conference.

A constitutional law professor, Tong Zhiwei, posted an article recently calling for Shanghai to end what he called "excessive pandemic prevention measures" such as quarantining residents and forcing them to surrender their house keys, saying the requirements contravene the rule of law.

The article has been removed from the internet as the government censors criticism of its response.

Thousands of people have been forced into quarantine centers after testing positive or having been in contact with an infected person, standard procedure in China's zero-COVID approach.

For widows in Africa, COVID-19 stole husbands, homes, future

By KRISTA LARSON and CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

UMUIDA, Nigeria (AP) — As Anayo Mbah went into labor with her sixth child, her husband battled COVID-19 in another hospital across town. Jonas, a young motorcycle taxi driver, had been placed on oxygen after he started coughing up blood.

Jonas would never meet his daughter, Chinaza. Hours after the birth, Mbah's sister-in-law called to say he was gone. Staff at the hospital in southeastern Nigeria soon asked Mbah and her newborn to leave. No one had come to pay her bill.

Mbah began the rites of widowhood at the home where she lived with her in-laws: Her head was shaved, and she was dressed in white clothing. But just weeks into the mourning period that traditionally lasts six months, her late husband's relatives stopped providing food, then confronted her directly.

"They told me that it was better for me to find my own way," Mbah, now 29, said. "They said even if I have to go and remarry, that I should do so. That the earlier I leave the house, the better for me and my

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children.”

She left on foot for her mother’s home with only a plastic bag of belongings for Chinaza and her other children.

“I decided that I might die if I continue to stay here with my children,” she said.

Across Africa, widowhood has long befallen great numbers of women — particularly in the continent’s least developed countries where medical facilities are scarce. Many widows are young, having married men decades older. And in some countries, men frequently have more than one wife, leaving several widows behind when they die.

Now, the coronavirus pandemic has created an even larger population of widows on the continent, with African men far more likely to die of the virus than women, and it has exacerbated the issues they face. Women such as Mbah say the pandemic has taken more than their husbands: In their widowhood, it’s cost them their extended families, their homes and their futures.

This story is part of a yearlong series on how the pandemic is impacting women in Africa, most acutely in the least developed countries. The Associated Press series is funded by the European Journalism Centre’s European Development Journalism Grants program, which is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The AP is responsible for all content.

Once widowed, women are often mistreated and disinherited. Laws prohibit many from acquiring land or give them only a fraction of their spouse’s wealth, and widows in places like southeastern Nigeria face suspicion over their husband’s death during the mourning period. In-laws can claim custody of children; tradition says kids belong to the father. Other in-laws disown the children and refuse to help, even if they’re the family’s only source of money and food. And young widows have no adult children to support them in communities with extreme poverty and few jobs for women with limited education.

In Nigeria, Africa’s most populous nation, some 70 percent of confirmed COVID-19 deaths have been men, according to data tracked by the Sex, Gender and COVID-19 Project. Similarly, more than 70 percent of deaths in Chad, Malawi, Somalia and Congo have been men, according to figures from the project, which is the world’s largest database tracking coronavirus differences between men and women. Other countries likely show similar trends but lack the resources to gather detailed figures.

Experts say some of the widows left behind have nothing while others are pressured to remarry brothers-in-law or be cut off. Widows can start experiencing mistreatment by their in-laws before their husbands are even buried.

“Some are treated as outcasts, accused of being responsible for the death of their husband,” said Egodi Blessing Igwe, spokeswoman for WomenAid Collective, which has aided thousands of widows with free legal services and family mediation.

Some experts say widows face the harshest reality in Nigeria. There, Mbah now raises her children without financial support from her in-laws, who even kept the motorcycle her husband drove as a taxi. She works four jobs, including one as a cleaner at a school where she can no longer afford to send her children.

Her husband had no will, and she hasn’t pursued a legal case against her in-laws. She fears it would only make her situation worse, and finding the time would be nearly impossible.

For some widows who pursue legal action, a will saves the day, said Igwe, with the women’s rights organization.

“The will can really help if men can have the courage to prepare it and continue to update it,” she said. “Unfortunately in this part of the world, we don’t like to talk about death.”

Even in widowhood, women are often still under the oversight of men — adult sons or brothers — and may not be able to pursue a case if the family believes it will bring stigma or shame.

In Congo, Vanessa Emedy Kamana had known her husband for a decade before he proposed marriage. She worked for the scholar as a personal assistant. By the time their friendship turned romantic, Godefroid Kamana was in his late 60s; she, a single mother in her late 20s. She said she was drawn to his youthful

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spirit and intellect: He worked at a think tank and had two doctorates from European universities.

When he first tested positive for COVID-19, there was no hospital bed for him, despite his age and status as a diabetic, in the eastern city of Goma, a humanitarian hub with a large U.N. peacekeeping mission presence. Once a spot was secured, his wife spent most of his final days searching for oxygen and pleading with vendors.

The night of his burial, relatives came to the family home where Kamana had just begun her period of mourning. Generally, widows are required to stay in their homes and can receive visitors. Mourning lengths vary by religion and ethnic group. Kamana, whose family is Muslim, was supposed to stay home for four months and 10 days. But her husband's relatives didn't wait that long to force her and her young son out on the street.

"I was stripped of everything, of all my possessions," she said.

She feared her husband's family would seek custody of her son, Jamel, whom Kamana had adopted and given his surname. Ultimately the relatives did not, because the boy — now 6 — wasn't his biological child. They did, however, move swiftly to amass the financial assets.

"I was not aware because I was at the house crying for my husband," she said. "But they came and said: 'These bank accounts belong to us.'"

She, her son and their cat now live in a smaller home her mother kept as a rental property. Kamana sells secondhand clothing at a market while her son is at school. And while she initially received 40% of her late husband's salary, those funds will soon stop entirely.

Kamana's marriage was relatively new. He had paid the dowry to her family in 2020, but they had no public ceremony because of COVID-19 restrictions. What mattered most, she said, was that he had accepted her son as his own. Now, the family has taken a bank account set up for the boy.

And it's painful, Kamana said, when some of her late husband's relatives insist they've lost more than she did.

"No one will be able to replace him," she said.

In West Africa, widowhood is particularly fraught in the large swaths where many marriages are polygamous. Each wife performs the rituals of grief, but it is the first wife or her children who usually lay claim to the family home and other financial assets.

Saliou Diallo, 35, said she would have been left with nothing after a decade of marriage had her husband not thought to put her home under her name instead of his. Even after his death, she lives in fear that her husband's older children or relatives will try to take over her small residence on the outskirts of the Guinean capital, Conakry.

Under Guinean law, a man's multiple wives share a small percentage of his estate, with nearly all of it — 87.5 percent — going to his children, said Yansane Fatou Balde, a women's rights advocate. Women rarely contest their inheritance, given the stigma and expense.

Diallo's husband, El Hadj, 74, had been building the home just for her and their 4-year-old daughter when he fell ill with COVID-19. Diallo was infected, too — and terrified. She already knew the burden of losing a spouse: At 13, she became a second wife, only to be widowed in her early 20s.

Her next attempt at marriage unraveled when the man did not take to her three children. Then she was introduced to El Hadj, who already had married multiple women but was willing to raise Diallo's three kids as his own.

They spent a decade together before the virus hit El Hadj. In his final conversations with his wife, he lamented that her home didn't have windows yet. That he hadn't lived long enough to build a well so she wouldn't have to carry water on her head each day. That other relatives would try to chase her off once he was gone.

During mourning, the first wife refused to provide financially for Diallo — who couldn't attend the funeral because she tested positive for the virus. Then the first wife's children came to Diallo's house and reclaimed the car he'd given her. They took all his documents and checkbooks.

"They wanted to chase me away, too," Diallo said. "I told them: 'Let me finish my mourning and see my husband's grave.'"

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The children asked for the papers of the house El Hadj had built for her. She provided photocopies but secretly kept the originals.

Her extended family ultimately helped raise money to put windows on her house. Still, she feels her husband's absence. There is electricity, but no light fixtures. The walls are finished but not painted, and only a few plastic lawn chairs and a mini-fridge furnish the home.

"I am sure God is saving a surprise for me. I surrender to him," she said. "In the meantime I live on the help of my parents. They support me, and I keep my faith."

In Diallo's case, the law has protected her home. But where laws fail to protect widows, the resolution of disinheritance disputes often comes down to family mediation alone.

Back in Nigeria, Roseline Ujah, 49, spent three decades as part of her husband's extended family. She shared chores and meals with them, even helping to care for her mother- and father-in-law in their later years.

But she said her husband's brother began scheming to disinherit her and her seven children before her husband, Godwin, had even been buried. Her sister-in-law intervened and managed to save a small portion of land where Ujah now cultivates cocoyam, a root vegetable.

When her husband — who harvested palm wine — first became ill, everyone assumed it was malaria. But medications failed, and his breathing became labored. Hospital doctors diagnosed him with COVID-19, even though no tests were available for confirmation. Without money for a hospital stay, Ujah turned to traditional medicine.

"I kept begging God not to let him die," she said. "He kept getting weaker and weaker, and we were looking for solutions for him." He died in their home and was buried in his front yard.

Only her sister-in-law brought food to the family during their six months of mourning. Ujah was forbidden to leave home. Without support from her extended family, she had to send her children to work on neighbors' farms for income. Some days they ate nothing at all.

"It was only from the door that I could call the attention of passersby to help me get something at the market," she said.

Godwin's youngest two children — 13-year-old Chidimma and 11-year-old Chimuanya — have been especially affected by his death, as their relationship with their father's family has soured.

Ujah is left to scramble for her family's survival, making brooms to sell at the local market. She knows her husband would have confronted his family over their mistreatment of her. Without him, she turns to her faith.

"I look up to God, telling him I have no one else," she said. "He is my husband and the father of my children and of the family, and I will not marry another man."

Afghans still adjusting to US: New life, new struggles

By BEN FOX, JACQUELYN MARTIN and JULIE WATSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Taliban forces had taken the Afghan capital. Crowds of panicked people thronged the airport. And a young man who had worked as a subcontractor for the U.S. military faced a terrible choice.

Hasibullah Hasrat, after having navigated the chaotic streets and Taliban checkpoints to make it inside the airport, could either go back for his wife and two young children or board an evacuation flight and get them later. Not taking the flight likely meant none of them would get out of Afghanistan.

Hasrat's decision haunts him. He is in the U.S., one of more than 78,000 Afghans admitted into the country following the U.S. troop withdrawal in August that ended America's longest war. But his family hasn't been able to join him. They're still in Afghanistan, where an economic crisis has led to widespread hunger and where Taliban repression is on the rise.

"My wife is alone there," he said, his voice breaking as he describes nightly phone calls home. "My son cries, asks where I am, when am I coming. And I don't know what to say."

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It's a reminder that the journey for many of the Afghans who came to the United States in the historic evacuation remains very much a work in progress, filled with uncertainty and anxiety about the future.

Afghan refugees, some of whom faced possible reprisals for working with their government or American forces during the war with the Taliban, say in interviews that they are grateful to the U.S. for rescuing them and family members.

But they are often struggling to gain a foothold in a new land, straining to pay their bills as assistance from the government and resettlement agencies starts to run out, stuck in temporary housing, and trying to figure out how to apply for asylum because most of the Afghans came under a two-year emergency status known as humanitarian parole.

"We are not sure what may happen," said Gulsom Esmaelzade, whose family has been shuttled between hotel rooms in the San Diego area since January, after spending three months at a New Jersey military base. "We don't have anything back at home in Afghanistan and here we also don't have any future."

It's taken a toll. Esmaelzade said her mother has had to be rushed three times to the emergency room when her blood pressure shot up to dangerous levels. The younger woman attributes it to the stress of their lives.

Then there are more mundane challenges that are nonetheless daunting for many Afghans. They include learning English, navigating government bureaucracies and public transportation, and finding a job.

There is also the isolation for those, like Hasrat, who came alone. "I don't know anyone here," he said in the apartment outside Washington he shares with two other evacuees. "I have no friends, no family, no relatives. I just live with my roommates and my roommates are from other parts of Afghanistan."

Some have managed to get established. "But there are many more who are not doing fine than are doing well," said Megan Flores, executive director of the Immigrant & Refugee Outreach Center in McLean, Virginia.

The experience of the evacuated Afghans is not unlike what refugees have historically faced in coming to the United States. In some ways it's a preview for the up to 100,000 Ukrainians who President Joe Biden says will be welcomed, also in many cases on two years of humanitarian parole.

Afghans on humanitarian parole must apply for a way to stay in the country such as through asylum. It's a time-consuming process that typically requires finding an immigration attorney, at a cost of thousands of dollars not readily available to most refugees unless they can find someone to do it pro bono.

The Department of Homeland Security says about half of the 78,000 likely will ultimately qualify for the special immigrant visa, or SIV, program. It grants permanent residency to people, along with their immediate family, who worked for the U.S. government. Hasrat hasn't been able to secure an SIV, at least not yet, despite his work as a subcontractor setting up transmission lines for the U.S. Army.

Congress could resolve the situation by passing the Afghan Adjustment Act, which would enable evacuees to apply for permanent residency after a year in the country, similar to relief granted in the past to people from Iraq, Cuba and Vietnam. Biden recently gave the effort a boost when he endorsed the idea of adding it to an upcoming Ukraine aid bill, a move welcomed by a coalition that includes veterans, religious organizations and resettlement agencies.

"They are facing a ticking time bomb of what happens if they don't get SIV or asylum status," said Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, president of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. "Do they get deported back to Afghanistan and into harm's way?"

In the meantime, Afghans are trying to stitch together new lives as public attention has shifted to Ukraine and other matters. At a recent job fair in Alexandria, Virginia, there were hundreds of evacuees, including Arafat Safi, a former senior official in Afghan's foreign affairs ministry who came to the U.S. with his wife, four children and mother.

He's hoping to land a job in project management or international development, to use an education that includes a master's degree from the U.K. So far, he's landed a position as a Pashto-English interpreter and is delivering packages for Amazon on the side while his wife, Madina, works in the bakery section of a supermarket.

Safi said he still hopes to find a better job and is eager to get permanent residency. But he never com-

plained in a lengthy interview at the family's apartment in Alexandria. An intricate and vibrant Afghan rug — the only possession the family brought from home — occupies a prominent place in the living room.

"I'm very lucky to be here, to be welcomed by the U.S. society. I met a lot of friends here who are checking on me almost every day," said the 35-year-old Safi. "And it's amazing. But there's a small part of me that misses Afghanistan and that misses my people."

Hasrat said he has little time to think about anything other than his family back home and the danger they face from the Taliban. A 29-year-old former competitive boxer, he rides a bike to his job as an administrative assistant at a medical office. After taxes and the money he sends home, he barely has enough to pay his bills. His roommates, who are still learning English, have even less and have trouble making the rent.

Most nights, Hasrat waits until it's late enough to have a video chat with his family. On one recent call, he tried to join the celebration of his kids' birthdays but was sad to realize his daughter doesn't even know him.

"I am telling them that, 'yeah, I am happy,' because if I told them my situation here they will be sad," he said. "But if no one is there to take care of your wife, how can you be happy?"

Marcos Jr. won Philippine presidency, unofficial count shows

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The namesake son of late Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos appeared to have been elected Philippine president by a landslide in an astonishing reversal of the 1986 "People Power" pro-democracy revolt that ousted his father.

Marcos Jr. had more than 30.8 million votes in the unofficial results with more than 97% of the votes tabulated as of Tuesday afternoon. His nearest challenger, Vice President Leni Robredo, a champion of human rights, had 14.7 million votes in Monday's election, and boxing great Manny Pacquiao appeared to have the third highest total with 3.5 million.

His running mate, Sara Duterte, the daughter of the outgoing leader and mayor of southern Davao city, had a formidable lead in the separate vice presidential race.

The alliance of the scions of two authoritarian leaders combined the voting power of their families' political strongholds in the north and south but compounded worries of human rights activists.

Dozens of anti-Marcos protesters rallied at the Commission on Elections, blaming the agency for the breakdown of vote-counting machines and other issues that prevented people from casting their votes. Elections officials said the impact of the malfunctioning machines was minimal.

A group of activists, who suffered under the dictatorship said it was enraged by Marcos's apparent victory and would oppose it.

"A possible win based on a campaign built on blatant lies, historical distortions and mass deception is tantamount to cheating your way to victory," said the group Campaign Against the Return of the Marcoses and Martial Law, or CARMMA. "This is not acceptable."

Etta Rosales, a former Commission on Human Rights chairwoman, who was twice arrested and tortured under martial law in the 1970s, said Marcos Jr.'s apparent victory drove her to tears but would not stop her from continuing efforts to hold the Marcoses to account.

"I'm just one among the many who were tortured; others were killed, I was raped. We suffered under the Marcos regime in the fight for justice and freedom and this happens," Rosales said.

Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte avoided volatile issues during their campaign and steadfastly stuck instead to a battle cry of national unity, even though their fathers' presidencies opened some of the most turbulent divisions in the country's history.

Marcos Jr. has not claimed victory but thanked his supporters in a late-night "address to the nation" video, where he urged them to stay vigilant until the vote count is completed.

"If we'll be fortunate, I'll expect that your help will not wane, your trust will not wane because we have a lot of things to do in the times ahead," he said.

Robredo has not conceded defeat but acknowledged the massive Marcos Jr. lead in the unofficial count. She told her supporters the fight for reforms and democracy won't end with the elections.

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"The voice of the people is getting clearer and clearer," she said. "In the name of the Philippines, which I know you also love so dearly, we should hear this voice because in the end, we only have this one nation to share."

She asked her supporters to continue to stand up: "Press for the truth. It took long for the structure of lies to be erected. We have the time and opportunity now to fight and dismantle this."

The election winner will take office on June 30 for a single, six-year term as leader of a Southeast Asian nation hit hard by two years of COVID-19 outbreaks and lockdowns and long-troubled by crushing poverty, gaping inequalities, Muslim and communist insurgencies and deep political divisions.

The next president will also likely face demands to prosecute outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte for thousands of killings during his anti-drug crackdown — deaths already under investigation by the International Criminal Court.

Amnesty International said it was deeply concerned by Marcos Jr.' and Sara Duterte's avoidance of discussing human rights violations, past and present, in the Philippines. "If confirmed, the Marcos Jr administration will face a wide array of urgent human rights challenges," the rights group said in a statement Tuesday.

Human Rights Watch also called for Marcos Jr., if he takes office, to improve the human rights situation in the Philippines.

"He should declare an end to the 'war on drugs' that has resulted in the extrajudicial killing of thousands of Filipinos, and order the impartial investigation and appropriate prosecution of officials responsible for these unlawful killings," said Phil Robertson, the group's deputy director for Asia.

Marcos Jr., a 64-year-old former provincial governor, congressman and senator, has defended the legacy of his father and steadfastly refused to acknowledge and apologize for the massive human rights violations and plunder under his father's strongman rule.

After his ouster by the largely peaceful 1986 uprising, the elder Marcos died in 1989 while in exile in Hawaii without admitting any wrongdoing, including accusations that he, his family and cronies amassed an estimated \$5 billion to \$10 billion while he was in power. A Hawaii court later found him liable for human rights violations and awarded \$2 billion from his estate to compensate more than 9,000 Filipinos who filed a lawsuit against him for torture, incarceration, extrajudicial killings and disappearances.

His widow, Imelda Marcos, and their children were allowed to return to the Philippines in 1991 and worked on a stunning political comeback, helped by a well-funded social media campaign to refurbish the family name.

Crucial NATO decisions expected in Finland, Sweden this week

By KARL RITTER Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — To join or not to join? The NATO question is coming to a head this week in Finland and Sweden where Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shattered the long-held belief that remaining outside the military alliance was the best way to avoid trouble with their giant neighbor.

If Finland's president and the governing Social Democrats in both countries come out in favor of accession in the next few days, NATO could soon add two members right on Russia's doorstep.

That would be a historic development for the two Nordic countries: Sweden has avoided military alliances for more than 200 years, while Finland adopted neutrality after being defeated by the Soviet Union in World War II.

NATO membership was never seriously considered in Stockholm and Helsinki until Russian forces attacked Ukraine on Feb. 24. Virtually overnight, the conversation in both capitals shifted from "Why should we join?" to "How long does it take?"

Along with hard-nosed Ukrainian resistance and wide-ranging Western sanctions, it's one of the most significant ways in which the invasion appears to have backfired on Russian President Vladimir Putin.

If Finland and Sweden join the alliance, Russia would find itself completely surrounded by NATO countries in the Baltic Sea and the Arctic.

"There is no going back to the status quo before the invasion," said Heli Hautala, a Finnish diplomat previ-

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ously posted to Moscow and a research fellow at the Center for a New American Security in Washington.

Finnish President Sauli Niinisto, the Western leader who appeared to have the best rapport with Putin before the Ukraine war, is expected to announce his stance on NATO membership on Thursday. The governing Social Democratic parties in both countries are set to present their positions this weekend.

If their answer is "yes," there would be robust majorities in both parliaments for NATO membership, paving the way for formal application procedures to begin right away.

The Finnish Social Democrats led by Prime Minister Sanna Marin are likely to join other parties in Finland in endorsing a NATO application. The situation in Sweden isn't as clear.

The Swedish Social Democrats have always been staunchly committed to nonalignment, but party leader and Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson has said there's a clear "before and after Feb. 24."

The party's women's faction, led by Climate and Environment Minister Annika Strandhall, has come out against NATO membership.

"We believe that our interests are best served by being militarily nonaligned," Strandhall told Swedish broadcaster TV4. "Traditionally, Sweden has been a strong voice for peace and disarmament."

Neither Finland nor Sweden is planning a referendum, fearing it could become a prime target of Russian interference.

Sweden and Finland have sought — and received -- assurances of support from the U.S. and other NATO members in the application period should they seek membership.

Both countries feel they would be vulnerable in the interim, before they're covered by the alliance's one-for-all, all-for-one security guarantees.

The Kremlin has warned of "military and political repercussions" if the Swedes and Finns decide to join NATO.

Dmitry Medvedev, the former Russian president who is deputy head of Russia's Security Council, said last month it would force Moscow to strengthen its military presence in the Baltic region.

However, analysts say military action against the Nordic countries appears unlikely, given how bogged down Russian forces are in Ukraine.

Many of the Russian troops stationed near the 1,300-kilometer (830-mile) border with Finland were sent to Ukraine and have suffered "significant losses" there, Hautala said.

She said potential Russian countermeasures could include moving weapons systems closer to Finland, disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, economic countermoves and steering migration toward the Russian-Finnish border, similar to what happened on Poland's frontier with Belarus last year.

There are signs that Russia already has increased its focus on Sweden and Finland, with several airspace violations by Russian military aircraft reported in recent weeks and an apparent campaign in Moscow with posters depicting famous Swedes as Nazi sympathizers. Putin used similar tactics against Ukraine's leaders before launching what the Kremlin called its "special military operation."

After remaining firmly against membership for decades, public opinion in both countries shifted rapidly this year. Polls show more than 70% of Finns and about 50% of Swedes now favor joining.

The shocking scenes playing out in Ukraine made Finns draw the conclusion that "this could happen to us," said Charly Saloni-Pasternak, a researcher at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs.

During the Cold War, Finland stayed away from NATO to avoid provoking the Soviet Union, while Sweden already had a tradition of neutrality dating to the end of the Napoleonic Wars. But both countries built up robust conscription-based armed forces to counter any Soviet threat. Sweden even had a nuclear weapons program but scrapped it in the 1960s.

The threat of a conflict flared up in October 1981 when a Soviet submarine ran aground off the coast of southwestern Sweden. Eventually the sub was tugged back out to sea, ending a tense standoff between Swedish forces and a Soviet rescue fleet.

As Russia's military power declined in the 1990s, Finland kept its guard high, while Sweden, considering a conflict with Russia increasingly unlikely, downsized its military and shifted its focus from territorial defense toward peacekeeping missions in faraway conflict zones.

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 prompted the Swedes to reassess the security situation. They reintroduced conscription and started rebuilding defensive capabilities, including on the strategically important Baltic Sea island of Gotland.

Defense analysts say Finland and Sweden have modern and competent armed forces that would significantly boost NATO's capabilities in Northern Europe. Finnish and Swedish forces train so often with NATO that they are essentially interoperable.

Adding new members typically takes months, because those decisions need to be ratified by all 30 NATO members. But in the case of Finland and Sweden, the accession process could be done "in a couple of weeks," according to a NATO official who briefed reporters on condition that he not be identified because no application has been made by the two countries.

"These are not normal times," he said.

Bodies found in Lake Mead renew interest in Vegas mob lore

By KEN RITTER Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Las Vegas is being flooded with lore about organized crime after a second set of human remains emerged within a week from the depths of a drought-stricken Colorado River reservoir just a 30-minute drive from the notoriously mob-founded Strip.

"There's no telling what we'll find in Lake Mead," former Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman said Monday. "It's not a bad place to dump a body."

Goodman, as a lawyer, represented mob figures including the ill-fated Anthony "Tony the Ant" Spilotro before serving three terms as a martini-toting mayor making public appearances with a showgirl on each arm.

He declined to name names about who might turn up in the vast reservoir formed by Hoover Dam between Nevada and Arizona.

"I'm relatively sure it was not Jimmy Hoffa," he laughed. But he added that a lot of his former clients seemed interested in "climate control" — mob speak for keeping the lake level up and bodies down in their watery graves.

Instead, the world now has climate change, and the surface of Lake Mead has dropped more than 170 feet (52 meters) since 1983.

The lake that slakes the thirst of 40 million people in cities, farms and tribes across seven Southwestern states is down to about 30% of capacity.

"If the lake goes down much farther, it's very possible we're going to have some very interesting things surface," observed Michael Green, a University of Nevada, Las Vegas history professor whose father dealt blackjack for decades at casinos including the Stardust and the Showboat.

"I wouldn't bet the mortgage that we're going to solve who killed Bugsy Siegel," Green said, referring to the infamous gangster who opened the Flamingo in 1946 on what would become the Strip. Siegel was shot dead in 1947 in Beverly Hills, California. His assassin has never been identified.

"But I would be willing to bet there are going to be a few more bodies," Green said.

First, the dropping lake level exposed Las Vegas' uppermost drinking water intake on April 25, forcing the regional water authority to switch to a deep-lake intake it completed in 2020 to continue to supply casinos, suburbs and 2.4 million residents and 40 million tourists per year.

The following weekend, boaters spotted the decomposed body of a man in a rusted barrel stuck in the mud of newly exposed shoreline.

The corpse has not been identified, but Las Vegas police say he had been shot, probably between the mid-1970s and the early 1980s, according to the shoes found with him. The death is being investigated as a homicide.

A few days later, a second barrel was found by a KLAS-TV news crew, not far from the first. It was empty.

On Saturday, two sisters from suburban Henderson who were paddle boarding on the lake near a former marina resort noticed bones on a newly surfaced sand bar more than 9 miles (14.5 kilometers) from the

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barrels.

Lindsey Melvin, who took photos of their find, said they thought at first it was the skeleton of a bighorn sheep native to the region. A closer look revealed a human jaw with teeth. They called park rangers, and the National Park Service confirmed in a statement that the bones were human.

There was no immediate evidence of foul play, Las Vegas police said Monday, and they are not investigating. A homicide probe would be opened if the Clark County coroner determines the death was suspicious, the department said in a statement.

More bodies will be discovered, predicted Geoff Schumacher, vice president of The Mob Museum, a renovated historic downtown Las Vegas post office and federal building that opened in 2012 as The National Museum of Organized Crime & Law Enforcement.

"I think a lot of these individuals will likely have been drowning victims," Schumacher said, referring to boaters and swimmers who've never been found. "But a barrel has a signature of a mob hit. Stuffing a body in a barrel. Sometimes they would dump it in the water."

He and Green both cited the death of John "Handsome Johnny" Roselli, a mid-1950s Las Vegas mobster who disappeared in 1976 a few days before his body was found in a 55-gallon (208-liter) steel drum floating off the coast of Miami.

David Kohlmeier, a former police officer who now co-hosts a Las Vegas podcast and fledgling TV show called "The Problem Solver Show," said Monday that after offering a \$5,000 reward last week for qualified divers to find barrels in the lake, he heard from people in San Diego and Florida willing to try.

But National Park Service officials said that's not allowed, and that there are hundreds of barrels in the depths — some dating to the construction of Hoover Dam in the 1930s.

Kohlmeier said he also heard from families of missing people and about cases like a man suspected of killing his mother and brother in 1987, a hotel employee who disappeared in 1992, and a father from Utah who vanished in the 1980s.

"You'll probably find remains all throughout Lake Mead," Kohlmeier said, including Native Americans who were the area's earliest inhabitants.

Green said the discoveries have people talking not only about mob hits, but about bringing relief and closure to grieving families. Not to mention the ever-growing white mineral markings on steep lake walls showing where water used to be.

"People will talk about this for the right reasons and the wrong reasons," the professor said. "They're going to think we're going to solve every mob murder. In fact, we may see some.

"But it's also worth remembering that the mob did not like murders to take place in the Las Vegas area, because they did not like bad publicity going out under the Las Vegas dateline."

The right reason, Green said, is the visible evidence that the West has a serious water problem. "The 'bathtub ring' around the lake is big and getting bigger," he said.

Whatever story emerges about the body in the barrel, Goodman predicted it will add to the lore of a city that, with lake water, sprouted from a creosote bush-covered desert to become a marquee gambling mecca.

"When I was the mayor, every time I went to a ground breaking, I'd begin to shake for fear that somebody I may have run into over the years will be uncovered," he said.

"We have a very interesting background," Goodman added. "It certainly adds to the mystique of Las Vegas."

1 in 3 fears immigrants influence US elections: AP-NORC poll

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — With anti-immigrant rhetoric bubbling over in the leadup to this year's critical midterm elections, about 1 in 3 U.S. adults believes an effort is underway to replace U.S.-born Americans with immigrants for electoral gains.

About 3 in 10 also worry that more immigration is causing U.S.-born Americans to lose their economic, political and cultural influence, according to a poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs

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Research. Republicans are more likely than Democrats to fear a loss of influence because of immigration, 36% to 27%.

Those views mirror swelling anti-immigrant sentiment espoused on social media and cable TV, with conservative commentators like Tucker Carlson exploiting fears that new arrivals could undermine the native-born population.

In their most extreme manifestation, those increasingly public views in the U.S. and Europe tap into a decades-old conspiracy theory known as the "great replacement," a false claim that native-born populations are being overrun by nonwhite immigrants who are eroding, and eventually will erase, their culture and values. The once-taboo term became the mantra of one losing conservative candidate in the recent French presidential election.

"I very much believe that the Democrats — from Joe Biden and Nancy Pelosi, all the way down — want to get the illegal immigrants in here and give them voting rights immediately," said Sally Gansz, 80. Actually, only U.S. citizens can vote in state and federal elections, and attaining citizenship typically takes years.

A white Republican, Gansz has lived her whole life in Trinidad, Colorado, where about half of the population of 8,300 identifies as Hispanic, most with roots going back centuries to the region's Spanish settlers.

"Isn't it obvious that I watch Fox?" quipped Gansz, who said she watches the conservative channel almost daily, including the top-rated Fox News Channel program "Tucker Carlson Tonight," a major proponent of those ideas.

"Demographic change is the key to the Democratic Party's political ambitions," Carlson said on the show last year. "In order to win and maintain power, Democrats plan to change the population of the country."

Those views aren't held by a majority of Americans — in fact, two-thirds feel the country's diverse population makes the U.S. stronger, and far more favor than oppose a path to legal status for immigrants brought into the U.S. illegally as children. But the deep anxieties expressed by some Americans help explain how the issue energizes those opposed to immigration.

"I don't feel like immigration really affects me or that it undermines American values," said Daniel Valdes, 43, a registered Democrat who works in finance for an aeronautical firm on Florida's Space Coast. "I'm pretty indifferent about it all."

Valdes' maternal grandparents came to the U.S. from Mexico, and he said he has "tons" of relatives in the border city of El Paso, Texas. He has Puerto Rican roots on his father's side.

While Republicans worry more than Democrats about immigration, the most intense anxiety was among people with the greatest tendency for conspiratorial thinking. That's defined as those most likely to agree with a series of statements, like much of people's lives is "being controlled by plots hatched in secret places" and "big events like wars, recessions, and the outcomes of elections are controlled by small groups of people who are working in secret against the rest of us."

In all, 17% in the poll believe both that native-born Americans are losing influence because of the growing population of immigrants and that a group of people in the country is trying to replace native-born Americans with immigrants who agree with their political views. That number rises to 42% among the quarter of Americans most likely to embrace other conspiracy theories.

Alex Hoxeng, 37, a white Republican from Midland, Texas, said he found those most extreme versions of the immigration conspiracies "a bit far-fetched" but does believe immigration could lessen the influence of U.S.-born Americans.

"I feel like if we are flooded with immigrants coming illegally, it can dilute our culture," Hoxeng said.

Teresa Covarrubias, 62, rejects the idea that immigrants are undermining the values or culture of U.S.-born Americans or that they are being brought in to shore up the Democratic voter base. She is registered to vote but is not aligned with any party.

"Most of the immigrants I have seen have a good work ethic, they pay taxes and have a strong sense of family," said Covarrubias, a second grade teacher in Los Angeles whose four grandparents came to the U.S. from Mexico. "They help our country."

Republican leaders, including border governors Doug Ducey of Arizona and Greg Abbott of Texas — who

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is running for reelection this year — have increasingly decried what they call an “invasion,” with conservative politicians traveling to the U.S.-Mexico border to pose for photos alongside former President Donald Trump’s border wall.

Vulnerable Democratic senators up for election this year in Arizona, Georgia, New Hampshire and Nevada have joined many Republicans in calling on the Biden administration to wait on lifting the coronavirus-era public health rule known as Title 42 that denies migrants a chance to seek asylum. They fear it could draw more immigrants to the border than officials can handle.

U.S. authorities stopped migrants more than 221,000 times at the Mexican border in March, a 22-year high, creating a fraught political landscape for Democrats as the Biden administration prepares to lift Title 42 authority May 23. The pandemic powers have been used to expel migrants more than 1.8 million times since it was invoked in March 2020 on the grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Newly arrived immigrants are barred from voting in federal elections because they aren’t citizens, and gaining citizenship is an arduous process that can take a decade or more — if they are successful. In most cases, they must first obtain permanent residency, then wait five more years before they can apply for citizenship.

Investigations have failed to turn up evidence of widespread voting by people who aren’t eligible, including by non-citizens. For example, a Georgia audit of its voter rolls completed this year found fewer than 2,000 instances of non-citizens attempting to register and vote over the last 25 years, none of which succeeded.

Blake Masters, a candidate for Senate in Arizona, is among the Republicans running for office this year who have played into anxieties about a changing population.

“What the left really wants to do is change the demographics of this country,” he said in a video recorded in October. “They want to do that so they can consolidate power so they can never lose another election.”

Biden signs Ukraine bill, seeks \$40B aid, in Putin rejoinder

By ZEKE MILLER and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Washington sought to portray a united front against Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as President Joe Biden signed a bipartisan measure to reboot the World War II-era “lend-lease” program, which helped defeat Nazi Germany, to bolster Kyiv and Eastern European allies.

The signing Monday came as the U.S. Congress is poised to unleash billions more to fight the war against Russia — with Democrats preparing \$40 billion in military and humanitarian aid, larger than the \$33 billion package Biden has requested.

It all serves as a rejoinder to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has seized on Victory in Europe Day — the anniversary of Germany’s unconditional surrender in 1945 and Russia’s biggest patriotic holiday — to rally his people behind the invasion.

“This aid has been critical to Ukraine’s success on the battlefield,” Biden said in a statement.

Biden said it was urgent that Congress approve the next Ukraine assistance package to avoid any interruption in military supplies being sent to help fight the war, with a crucial deadline coming in 10 days.

“We cannot allow our shipments of assistance to stop while we await further Congressional action,” he said. He urged Congress to act — and “to do so quickly.”

In a letter delivered to Capitol Hill on Monday, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged Congress to act before May 19, when the existing drawdown funds run out. The Pentagon has already sent or committed all but \$100 million of the \$3.5 billion in weapons and equipment that it can send to Ukraine from its existing stockpiles. And that final \$100 million is expected to be used no later than May 19, they said.

“In short, we need your help,” they said in the letter, which was obtained by The Associated Press. “The ability to draw upon existing DoD stocks has been a critical tool in our efforts to support the Ukrainians in their fight against Russian aggression, allowing us to quickly source equipment and ensure a sustained flow of security assistance to Ukraine.”

The resolve from Biden and Congress to maintain support for Ukraine has been lasting, but also surpris-

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ing. Still, as the months-long war with Russia grinds on, the bipartisan showing for Ukraine will be tested as the U.S. and allies are drawn closer toward the conflict.

The House could vote as soon as this week on the bolstered Ukraine aid package, sending the legislation to the Senate, which is working to confirm Biden's nominee Bridget Brink as the new Ukrainian ambassador. The House's Tuesday schedule mentioned the Ukraine legislation, but it was unclear how firm that was.

With the president's party holding only the slimmest majorities in the House and Senate, Republican cooperation is preferred, if not vital in some cases, for passage of the president's strategy toward the region.

"I think we will be able to do it as quickly as possible," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said over the weekend about an emerging aid package. "We have great bipartisanship in terms of our support for the fight for democracy that the people of Ukraine are making."

Despite their differences over Biden's approach to foreign policy and perceived missteps in confronting Russia, when it comes to Ukraine the members of the House and Senate have held together to support the president's strategy.

The lend-lease bill that Biden signed into law Monday revives the strategy to more quickly send military equipment to Ukraine. Launched during World War II, lend-lease signaled the U.S. would become what Franklin D. Roosevelt called the "arsenal of democracy" helping Britain and the allies fight Nazi Germany.

Before signing the bill, Biden said "Putin's war" was "once more bringing wanton destruction of Europe," drawing reference to the significance of the day.

Flanked by two Democratic lawmakers and one Republican, Biden signed the bill, which had widespread bipartisan support. It sailed through the Senate last month with unanimous agreement, without even the need for a formal roll call vote. It passed overwhelmingly in the House, drawing opposition from just 10 Republicans.

"It really matters," Biden said of the bipartisan support for Ukraine. "It matters."

One of the bill's chief Republican sponsors, Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, said in a statement the measure will give Ukraine "the upper hand against Russia, and I'm glad America could act as the arsenal of democracy for this critical partner."

Other measures, including efforts to cut off Russian oil imports to the U.S. and calls to investigate Putin for war crimes, have also gained widespread support, though some lawmakers have pushed Biden to do even more.

"While President Putin and the Russian people celebrated Victory Day today, we're seeing Russian forces commit war crimes and atrocities in Ukraine, as they engage in a brutal war that is causing so much suffering and needless destruction," said White House press secretary Jen Psaki. She said Putin was "perverting" history to attempt to "justify his unprovoked and unjustified war."

Biden acknowledged his request for more in military and humanitarian aid for Ukraine would have to be separated from money he also sought from Congress to address the COVID-19 crisis at home.

Decoupling the two funding requests would be a setback for the president's push for more COVID-19 spending, but a nod to the political reality of the Congress.

Republicans in Congress are resisting spending more money at home as the pandemic crisis shifts to a new phase, and Biden did not want to delay money for Ukraine by trying to debate the issue further.

Biden said he was told by congressional leaders in both parties that keeping the two spending packages linked would slow down action.

"We cannot afford delay in this vital war effort," Biden said in the statement. "Hence, I am prepared to accept that these two measures move separately, so that the Ukrainian aid bill can get to my desk right away."

As the now bolstered Ukraine package makes its way through the House and Senate, with votes possible soon, lawmakers are showing no signs of flinching. Countless lawmakers have made weekend excursions to the region to see firsthand the devastation of the war on Ukraine and surrounding countries, as more than 5 million refugees flee the country.

Rather than fight the spending overseas — as had been an increasingly popular viewpoint during the Trump era — some lawmakers in both parties want to boost the amount of U.S. aid being sent to Ukraine.

Trump's clout factors into US House races in W.Va., Nebraska

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Roads, bridges and former President Donald Trump will be on West Virginia and Nebraska voters' minds as they choose congressional candidates in Tuesday's Republican primary elections.

Two incumbent GOP congressmen who have taken dramatically different approaches to their time in office are facing off in West Virginia's 2nd Congressional District, one of the most-watched U.S. House primaries on the day's ballot. Reps. David McKinley and Trump-backed Alex Mooney were pitted against each other after West Virginia lost a congressional seat based on the results of the 2020 U.S. census.

West Virginia's election is the first of five primaries in which two incumbent U.S. House members will face off. It will be followed by similar contests in Georgia and Michigan and in two Illinois districts.

The primary comes on the heels of a victory by Trump-endorsed conservative JD Vance, author of the bestselling memoir "Hillbilly Elegy," who defeated six other candidates to win the Ohio Republican primary for U.S. Senate last week. The West Virginia contest will once again test the former president's clout when his own name isn't on the ballot.

Nebraska voters will nominate candidates on Tuesday to fill the seat abandoned by U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, a Republican who resigned from office and ended his reelection bid after he was convicted of lying to federal authorities about an illegal campaign contribution. Fortenberry's name will still appear on the ballot for the 1st Congressional District because he withdrew after a deadline to certify the ballot, but Sen. Mike Flood, a former speaker of the Nebraska Legislature, appears to have the advantage over five other Republican candidates.

Voters will also pick nominees for Nebraska's 2nd Congressional District in the Omaha area. Three-term Republican Rep. Don Bacon faces a long-shot challenge from Steve Kuehl, an Omaha consultant who got a shoutout from Trump when the former president visited earlier this month.

Trump blasted Bacon as a "bad guy" during a recent rally in the state and had criticized him previously for his support of a federal infrastructure bill that most GOP lawmakers opposed. Bacon also has been mildly critical of Trump in the past, saying the former president bore some responsibility for the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol.

Trump stopped far short of officially endorsing Kuehl, however, saying: "I think Steve will do well. Good luck, Steve, whoever the hell you are."

Democrats in Nebraska will nominate either state Sen. Tony Vargas of Omaha or Alisha Shelton, an Omaha mental health therapist, to challenge Bacon in the 2nd, the state's only competitive district.

In the rural, geographically vast 3rd Congressional District, Republican U.S. Rep. Adrian Smith faces a challenger but is expected to win his party's nomination. Two Democrats are vying for their party's nomination within the district, which is overwhelmingly Republican.

In West Virginia, incumbent Rep. Carol Miller is expected to hold her seat in the 1st Congressional District against four Republican challengers.

In the state's 2nd Congressional District, where McKinley and Mooney are battling each other for the GOP nomination, openly gay former Morgantown city councilor Barry Wendell is competing against security operations manager Angela Dwyer in the Democratic primary.

Mooney has attacked McKinley for voting with 12 other House Republicans in favor of President Joe Biden's \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill. Trump, who won every single county in West Virginia in two presidential elections and said Republicans who voted for the infrastructure bill should be "ashamed of themselves," endorsed Mooney on the same day Biden signed the infrastructure law.

Rep. David McKinley, a civil engineer by trade, received endorsements and praise from Democratic U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin and GOP Gov. Jim Justice over his infrastructure vote. He said it was time to put party politics aside to meet the needs of his constituents.

"This wasn't for Joe Biden — this was to help West Virginia," he told The Associated Press.

Election 2022: Groping claims roil Nebraska governor primary

By GRANT SCHULTE Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska Republicans will pick a nominee for governor Tuesday in a bitter primary race that was upended in recent weeks after a leading candidate endorsed by former President Donald Trump was accused of groping at least eight women over the last few years.

Charles Herbster, a businessman and cattle breeder who has denied the allegations, is in a nine-way GOP primary to replace Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts, who's prevented by term limit laws from running again. Other leading candidates include Jim Pillen, a veterinarian and hog farm owner endorsed by Ricketts, and state Sen. Brett Lindstrom, an Omaha financial adviser who gained traction recently with a surge of money and support from the city's Republican mayor.

The winner will emerge as a strong favorite in November's general election in Republican-dominated Nebraska. State Sen. Carol Blood is the top candidate for the Democratic nomination for governor.

Both Nebraska and West Virginia are holding primary elections on Tuesday night, with select races providing some measure of the former president's enduring sway with GOP voters. In addition to the Nebraska governor's race, Trump has weighed in on a West Virginia congressional primary between two Republican incumbents. The former president backed Rep. Alex Mooney over Rep. David McKinley, who angered Trump by voting for President Joe Biden's bipartisan infrastructure package and the creation of the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

Trump is facing some of the biggest tests of his influence in Republican primary elections later this month. In Pennsylvania, his endorsed Senate candidate, TV's Dr. Mehmet Oz, is locked in a competitive race against former hedge fund CEO David McCormick and five others, while his candidate in North Carolina, U.S. Rep. Ted Budd, is competing in a field that includes a dozen other Republicans. In Georgia, Trump has endorsed primary challengers to Gov. Brian Kemp and Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, both of whom defied him by rejecting his false claims of voter fraud in the 2020 election.

In Nebraska, the allegations against Herbster, a longtime supporter of Trump's, didn't stop the former president from holding a rally with him earlier this month.

"I really think he's going to do just a fantastic job, and if I didn't feel that, I wouldn't be here," Trump said at the rally at a racetrack outside Omaha.

In a story last month, the Nebraska Examiner interviewed six women who claimed Herbster had groped their buttocks, outside of their clothes, during political events or beauty pageants. A seventh woman said Herbster once cornered her privately and kissed her forcibly.

One of the accusers, Republican state Sen. Julie Slama, said Herbster reached up her skirt and touched her inappropriately at the Douglas County Republican Party's annual Elephant Remembers dinner in 2019. The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they are victims of sexual assault unless they choose to come forward publicly, as Slama has done.

Herbster filed a defamation lawsuit against Slama, saying she falsely accused him in an effort to derail his campaign. Slama responded with a countersuit against Herbster, alleging sexual battery.

Herbster has suggested in television ads that Pillen and Ricketts conspired with Slama to falsely accuse him of sexual assault — allegations the three deny.

Lindstrom has faced a barrage of attacks as well, with third-party television ads funded by Ricketts that portray him as too liberal for the conservative state. One digitally altered ad shows Lindstrom standing in front of a rainbow flag with a coronavirus mask superimposed over his face. A mail ad notes that Lindstrom was endorsed by U.S. Rep. Brad Ashford, a moderate Republican-turned-Democrat who died last month of brain cancer.

Nebraska Secretary of State Bob Evnen, a Republican, predicted that 35% of registered voters will cast ballots in the primary, the highest percentage since 2006, based on what he's seen so far.

Nebraska Republicans and Democrats will also pick their candidates to run for the seat previously held by Republican U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, who resigned from office and ended his reelection bid in March

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after he was convicted of federal corruption charges.

State Sen. Mike Flood, a former speaker of the Nebraska Legislature, is a top contender for the Republican nomination, while state Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks is likely to win the Democratic nod. Flood will enter the race as a strong favorite in the Republican-heavy 1st Congressional District, which includes Lincoln, small towns and a large swath of eastern Nebraska farmland.

In the Omaha area, Republican U.S. Rep. Don Bacon faces a long-shot primary challenge from Omaha consultant Steve Kuehl in the 2nd Congressional District. Democrats Alisha Shelton and state Sen. Tony Vargas are running for their party's nomination as well in Nebraska's only competitive congressional district.

Trump blasted Bacon during his visit, calling him a "bad guy." The former president has criticized the three-term Republican for supporting Biden's infrastructure law. Bacon has been mildly critical of Trump in the past, saying he bore some responsibility for the Jan. 6 attack.

Trump stopped short of officially endorsing Kuehl, however, saying: "I think Steve will do well. Good luck, Steve, whoever the hell you are."

As Putin marks Victory Day, his troops make little war gains

By ELENA BECATOROS and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin marked his country's biggest patriotic holiday Monday without a major new battlefield success in Ukraine to boast of, as the war ground on through its 11th week with the Kremlin's forces making little or no progress in their offensive.

The Russian leader oversaw a Victory Day parade on Moscow's Red Square, watching as troops marched in formation and military hardware rolled past in a celebration of the Soviet Union's role in the 1945 defeat of Nazi Germany.

While Western analysts in recent weeks had widely expected Putin to use the holiday to trumpet some kind of victory in Ukraine or announce an escalation, he did neither. Instead, he sought to justify the war again as a necessary response to what he portrayed as a hostile Ukraine.

"The danger was rising by the day," Putin said. "Russia has given a preemptive response to aggression. It was forced, timely and the only correct decision."

He steered clear of battlefield specifics, failing to mention the potentially pivotal battle for the vital southern port of Mariupol and not even uttering the word "Ukraine."

On the ground, meanwhile, intense fighting raged in Ukraine's east, the vital Black Sea port of Odesa in the south came under repeated missile attack, and Russian forces sought to finish off the Ukrainian defenders making their last stand at a steel plant in Mariupol.

Putin has long bristled at NATO's creep eastward into former Soviet republics. Ukraine and its Western allies have denied the country posed any threat.

As he has done all along, Putin falsely portrayed the fighting as a battle against Nazism, thereby linking the war to what many Russians consider their finest hour: the triumph over Hitler. The Soviet Union lost 27 million people in what Russia refers to as the Great Patriotic War.

After unexpectedly fierce resistance forced the Kremlin to abandon its effort to storm Kyiv over a month ago, Moscow's forces have concentrated on capturing the Donbas, Ukraine's eastern industrial region.

But the fighting there has been a back-and-forth, village-by-village slog, and many analysts had suggested Putin might use his holiday speech to present the Russian people with a victory amid discontent over the country's heavy casualties and the punishing effects of Western sanctions.

Others suggested he might declare the fighting a war, not just a "special military operation," and order a nationwide mobilization, with a call-up of reserves, to replenish the depleted ranks for an extended conflict.

In the end, he gave no signal as to where the war is headed or how he might intend to salvage it. Specifically, he left unanswered the question of whether or how Russia will marshal more forces for a continuing war.

"Without concrete steps to build a new force, Russia can't fight a long war, and the clock starts ticking on the failure of their army in Ukraine," tweeted Phillips P. O'Brien, professor of strategic studies at the

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University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

Nigel Gould Davies, former British ambassador to Belarus, said: "Russia has not won this war. It's starting to lose it."

He said that unless Russia has a major breakthrough, "the balance of advantages will shift steadily in favor of Ukraine, especially as Ukraine gets access to growing volumes of increasingly sophisticated Western military equipment."

Despite Russia's crackdown on dissent, antiwar sentiment has seeped through. Dozens of protesters were detained around the country on Victory Day, and editors at a pro-Kremlin media outlet revolted by briefly publishing a few dozen stories criticizing Putin and the invasion.

In Warsaw, antiwar protesters splattered Russia's ambassador to Poland with what appeared to be red paint as he arrived at a cemetery to pay respects to Red Army soldiers who died during World War II.

As Putin laid a wreath in Moscow, air raid sirens echoed again in the Ukrainian capital. But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared in his own Victory Day address that his country would eventually defeat the Russians.

"Very soon there will be two Victory Days in Ukraine," he said in a video. He added: "We are fighting for freedom, for our children, and therefore we will win."

A Zelenskyy adviser interpreted Putin's speech as indicating that Russia has no interest in escalating the war through the use of nuclear weapons or direct engagement with NATO.

Speaking late Monday in an online interview, Oleksiy Arestovych pointed to Putin's statement that Russia would honor the memory of those who fought in World War II by doing "everything so that the horror of a global war does not happen again."

Instead, he predicted Russia would make "a sluggish attempt" to take control of the Donbas, including Mariupol, and a land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014.

Arestovych said Russia would drag out the war while bleeding the Ukrainian economy with the aim of getting Ukraine to agree to give up that territory.

Russia has about 97 battalion tactical groups in Ukraine, largely in the east and the south, a slight increase over last week, according to a senior U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the Pentagon's assessment. Each unit has roughly 1,000 troops, according to the Pentagon.

The official said that overall, the Russian effort in the Donbas hasn't achieved any significant progress in recent days and continues to face stiff resistance from Ukrainian forces.

The Ukrainian military warned of a high probability of missile strikes around the holiday, and some cities imposed curfews or warned people not to gather in public places.

More than 60 people were feared dead over the weekend after Russian bombardment flattened a Ukrainian school being used as a shelter in the eastern village of Bilohorivka, Ukrainian officials said.

Russia is perhaps closest to a victory in Mariupol. The U.S. official said roughly 2,000 Russian forces were around Mariupol, and the city was being pounded by airstrikes. As many as 2,000 Ukrainian defenders were believed to be holding out at the steel plant, the city's last stronghold of resistance.

The fall of Mariupol would also deprive Ukraine of a vital port, free up troops to fight elsewhere in the Donbas and give the Kremlin a badly needed success.

Odesa, too, has increasingly been bombarded in recent days. The Ukrainian military said Russian forces fired seven missiles from the air at Odesa on Monday night, hitting a shopping center and a warehouse. One person was killed and five were wounded, the military said.

The war in the country long known as the "breadbasket of Europe" has disrupted global food supplies.

"I saw silos full of grain, wheat and corn ready for export," Charles Michel, president of the European Council, lamented in a tweet after a visit to Odesa. "This badly needed food is stranded because of the Russian war and blockade of Black sea ports. Causing dramatic consequences for vulnerable countries."

Earth given 50-50 chance of hitting key warming mark by 2026

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

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The world is creeping closer to the warming threshold international agreements are trying to prevent, with nearly a 50-50 chance that Earth will temporarily hit that temperature mark within the next five years, teams of meteorologists across the globe predicted.

With human-made climate change continuing, there's a 48% chance that the globe will reach a yearly average of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels of the late 1800s at least once between now and 2026, a bright red signal in climate change negotiations and science, a team of 11 different forecast centers predicted for the World Meteorological Organization late Monday.

The odds are inching up along with the thermometer. Last year, the same forecasters put the odds at closer to 40% and a decade ago it was only 10%.

The team, coordinated by the United Kingdom's Meteorological Office, in their five-year general outlook said there is a 93% chance that the world will set a record for hottest year by the end of 2026. They also said there's a 93% chance that the five years from 2022 to 2026 will be the hottest on record. Forecasters also predict the devastating fire-prone megadrought in the U.S. Southwest will keep going.

"We're going to see continued warming in line with what is expected with climate change," said UK Met Office senior scientist Leon Hermanson, who coordinated the report.

These forecasts are big picture global and regional climate predictions on a yearly and seasonal time scale based on long term averages and state of the art computer simulations. They are different than increasingly accurate weather forecasts that predict how hot or wet a certain day will be in specific places.

But even if the world hits that mark of 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial times — the globe has already warmed about 1.1 degrees (2 degrees Fahrenheit) since the late 1800s — that's not quite the same as the global threshold first set by international negotiators in the 2015 Paris agreement. In 2018, a major United Nations science report predicted dramatic and dangerous effects on people and the world if warming exceeds 1.5 degrees.

The global 1.5 degree threshold is about the world being that warm not for one year, but over a 20- or 30- year time period, several scientists said. This is not what the report predicts. Meteorologists can only tell if Earth hits that average mark years, maybe a decade or two, after it is actually reached there because it is a long term average, Hermanson said.

"This is a warning of what will be just average in a few years," said Cornell University climate scientist Natalie Mahowald, who wasn't part of the forecast teams.

The prediction makes sense given how warm the world already is and an additional tenth of a degree Celsius (nearly two-tenths of a degree Fahrenheit) is expected because of human-caused climate change in the next five years, said climate scientist Zeke Hausfather of the tech company Stripe and Berkeley Earth, who wasn't part of the forecast teams. Add to that the likelihood of a strong El Nino — the natural periodic warming of parts of the Pacific that alter world weather — which could toss another couple tenths of a degree on top temporarily and the world gets to 1.5 degrees.

The world is in the second straight year of a La Nina, the opposite of El Nino, which has a slight global cooling effect but isn't enough to counter the overall warming of heat-trapping gases spewed by the burning of coal, oil and natural gas, scientists said. The five-year forecast says that La Nina is likely to end late this year or in 2023.

The greenhouse effect from fossil fuels is like putting global temperatures on a rising escalator. El Nino, La Nina and a handful of other natural weather variations are like taking steps up or down on that escalator, scientists said.

On a regional scale, the Arctic will still be warming during the winter at rate three times more than the globe on average. While the American Southwest and southwestern Europe are likely to be drier than normal the next five years, wetter than normal conditions are expected for Africa's often arid Sahel region, northern Europe, northeast Brazil and Australia, the report predicted.

The global team has been making these predictions informally for a decade and formally for about five years, with greater than 90% accuracy, Hermanson said.

NASA top climate scientist Gavin Schmidt said the figures in this report are "a little warmer" than what

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the U.S. NASA and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration use. He also had doubts about skill level on long-term regional predictions.

"Regardless of what is predicted here, we are very likely to exceed 1.5 degrees C in the next decade or so, but it doesn't necessarily mean that we are committed to this in the long term — or that working to reduce further change is not worthwhile," Schmidt said in an email.

Pulitzer Prizes award Washington Post for Jan. 6 coverage

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Washington Post won the Pulitzer Prize in public service journalism Monday for its coverage of the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, an attack on democracy that was a shocking start to a tumultuous year that also saw the end of the United States' longest war, in Afghanistan.

The Post's extensive reporting, published in a sophisticated interactive series, found numerous problems and failures in political systems and security before, during and after the Jan. 6, 2021, riot in the newspaper's own backyard.

The "compellingly told and vividly presented account" gave the public "a thorough and unflinching understanding of one of the nation's darkest days," said Marjorie Miller, administrator of the prizes, in announcing the award.

Five Getty Images photographers were awarded one of the two prizes in breaking news photography for their coverage of the riot.

The other prize awarded in breaking news photography went to Los Angeles Times correspondent and photographer Marcus Yam, for work related to the fall of Kabul.

The U.S. pullout and resurrection of the Taliban's grip on Afghanistan permeated across categories, with The New York Times winning in the international reporting category for reporting challenging official accounts of civilian deaths from U.S. airstrikes in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Pulitzer Prizes, administered by Columbia University and considered the most prestigious in American journalism, recognize work in 15 journalism categories and seven arts categories. This year's awards, which were livestreamed, honored work produced in 2021. The winner of the public service award receives a gold medal, while winners of each of the other categories get \$15,000.

The intersection of health, safety and infrastructure played a prominent role among the winning projects.

The Tampa Bay Times won the investigative reporting award for "Poisoned," its in-depth look into a polluting lead factory. The Miami Herald took the breaking news award for its work covering the deadly Surfside condo tower collapse, while The Better Government Association and the Chicago Tribune won the local reporting award for "Deadly Fires, Broken Promises," the watchdog and newspaper's examination of a lack of enforcement of fire safety standards.

"As a newsroom, we poured our hearts into the breaking news and the ongoing daily coverage, and subsequent investigative coverage, of the Champlain Towers South condominium collapse story," The Miami Herald's executive editor, Monica Richardson, wrote in a statement. "It was our story to tell because the people and the families in Surfside who were impacted by this unthinkable tragedy are a part of our community."

Elsewhere in Florida, Tampa Bay Times' editor and vice president Mark Katches mirrored that sentiment, calling his newspaper's win "a testament to the importance of a vital local newsroom like the Times."

The prize for explanatory reporting went to Quanta Magazine, with the board highlighting the work of Natalie Wolchover, for a long-form piece about the James Webb space telescope, a \$10 billion engineering effort to gain a better understanding about the origins of the universe.

The New York Times also won in the national reporting category, for a project looking at police traffic stops that ended in fatalities, and Salamishah Tillet, a contributing critic-at-large at the Times, won the criticism award.

A story that used graphics in comic form to tell the story of Zumrat Dawut, a Uyghur woman who said she was persecuted and detained by the Chinese government as part of systemic abuses against her community, brought the illustrated reporting and commentary prize to Fahmida Azim, Anthony Del Col,

Josh Adams and Walt Hickey of Insider.

Jennifer Senior of The Atlantic won the award for feature writing, for a piece marking the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks through a family's grief.

Melinda Henneberger of The Kansas City Star won for commentary, for columns about a retired police detective accused of sexual abuse and those who said they were assaulted calling for justice.

The editorial writing prize went to Lisa Falkenberg, Michael Lindenberger, Joe Holley and Luis Carrasco of the Houston Chronicle, for pieces that called for voting reforms and exposed voter suppression tactics.

The staffs of Futuro Media and PRX took the audio reporting prize for the profile of a man who had been in prison for 30 years and was re-entering the outside world.

The prize for feature photography went to Adnan Abidi, Sanna Irshad Mattoo, Amit Dave and Danish Siddiqui of Reuters for photos of the COVID-19 toll in India. Siddiqui, 38, who won a 2018 Pulitzer in the same category, was killed in Afghanistan in July while documenting fighting between Afghan forces and the Taliban.

The Pulitzer Prizes also awarded a special citation to journalists of Ukraine, acknowledging their "courage, endurance and commitment" in covering the ongoing Russian invasion that began earlier this year. Last August, the Pulitzer board granted a special citation to Afghan journalists who risked their safety to help produce news stories and images from their own war-torn country.

Accuser testifies in Mario Batali sexual misconduct trial

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Mario Batali's sexual misconduct trial opened Monday in a Boston court with his accuser recounting how she'd been "shocked, surprised and alarmed" as the celebrity chef aggressively kissed and groped her while taking selfies at a restaurant in 2017.

The 32-year-old Boston-area software company worker said she felt confused and powerless to do anything to stop Batali.

"It was all happening so quickly and it was happening essentially the whole time," the woman testified in the trial, which resumes Tuesday in Boston Municipal Court. "Just a lot of touching."

She said she felt embarrassed until she saw other women step forward to share similar encounters with Batali.

"This happened to me and this is my life," the woman responded when prosecutors asked why she'd come forward. "I want to be able to take control of what happened, say my piece and have everyone be accountable for their actions."

But Batali's lawyer, Anthony Fuller, sought to discredit her, arguing that the assault never happened.

He said the accuser has a financial incentive to lie as she's seeking more than \$50,000 in damages from Batali in a separate civil lawsuit pending in Suffolk County Superior Court in Boston.

"She's not being truthful," Fuller said. "This is being fabricated for money and for fun."

During cross examination, he produced financial statements showing the woman ate at Eataly, the Italian marketplace Batali once had an ownership stake in, weeks after the encounter and continued to patronize the Boston bar where the alleged assault took place.

"You go to the restaurant of the guy who you claimed brutally assaulted you?" he said. "That doesn't make sense."

The woman said she didn't recall going to Eataly and maintained she isn't speaking out for financial gain. She also strongly pushed back at Fuller for questioning why none of the many photos taken with Batali that night showed the alleged assault.

The woman said the photos were all taken relatively close up and didn't show how Batali, who she said was visibly drunk, was grabbing her private areas, touching her face and even sticking his tongue in her ear. She said he also invited her up to his hotel room afterward, which she declined.

"I have never been touched before like that," the woman said. "Squeezing my vagina to pull me closer to him, as if that's a normal way to grab someone."

But Fuller argued the accuser isn't a credible witness. He honed in on her recent admission of attempt-

ing to avoid jury service by claiming to be clairvoyant. She was also accused in that case of violating the judge's orders to keep an open mind and not discuss the case with others. In court on Monday, however, she maintained that she can predict major events before they happen "to a certain extent."

Monday's trial opened after Batali — in a surprise move — waived his right to a jury trial and opted instead to have a judge decide his fate.

Batali, who pleaded not guilty to indecent assault and battery in 2019, could face up to 2 1/2 years in jail and be required to register as a sex offender if convicted.

Batali is among a number of high-profile men who have faced a public reckoning during the #MeToo social movement against sexual abuse and harassment in recent years.

The 61-year-old was once a Food Network fixture on shows like "Molto Mario" and "Iron Chef America." But the ponytail-and-orange Croc-wearing personality's high-flying career crumbled amid sexual misconduct allegations.

Four women accused him of inappropriate touching in 2017, after which he stepped down from day-to-day operations at his restaurant empire and left the since-discontinued ABC cooking show "The Chew."

Batali has offered an apology, acknowledging the allegations "match up" with ways he has acted.

"I have made many mistakes," he said in an email newsletter at the time. "My behavior was wrong and there are no excuses. I take full responsibility."

Last year, Batali, his business partner and their New York City restaurant company agreed to pay \$600,000 to resolve a four-year investigation by the New York attorney general's office into allegations that Batali and other staff sexually harassed employees.

In Boston, he opened the downtown Eataly location and Babbo Pizzeria e Enoteca in the city's Seaport District. Batali has since been bought out of his stake in Eataly and the Babbo restaurant has closed.

Putin's Victory Day speech passionate but empty

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

Vladimir Putin had no victories in Ukraine to proclaim on Victory Day. Nor did his speech at the Red Square military parade offer any clear pictures of when a victory may come or how it would be achieved.

Instead, the Russian president's address Monday seemed to suggest that the war that many expected would be brief and decisive could be a long and brutal grind.

Victory Day commemorates another campaign of grisly determination: the Red Army's offensive against Nazi forces that eventually brought the Soviet troops to Berlin, ending the European theater of World War II. The suffering was immense on the battlefield and among civilians; the Soviet Union lost 27 million people in the war.

The pain of all the deaths combines with the defeat of odious opponents to give Victory Day a deep emotional resonance in Russia. Putin on Monday tried to portray the war in Ukraine as having the same high moral purpose as the fight against Adolf Hitler's forces.

He repeated his frequent contention that Ukraine is in thrall to Nazism and that this war, too, is necessary to repel a malign aggressor — even though Ukraine had made no incursions into Russia and is led by a president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is Jewish and lost relatives in the Holocaust.

The strategy appears aimed in part at diverting attention from Russia's failure to overcome the smaller Ukrainian military.

"The regime has no more screws to turn. The brakes have clearly failed, and only one pedal is left: conflating what Russia is doing in Ukraine with the 1945 victory over Nazi Germany. This explains why the Kremlin continues to insist that in Ukraine it is fighting neo-Nazis cultivated by the West," Andrei Kolesnikov, a fellow at the Carnegie Moscow Center, wrote shortly before Victory Day.

"Every word is a lie, of course," he added, "but the regime has no other justification for what is happening in Ukraine. So the discourse has been reduced to agitprop and shouting,"

Ahead of the holiday, expectations were wide that Putin would push for at least one unequivocal military success that he could flaunt in his speech. That might have been the city of Mariupol, but despite Russian

forces laying waste to the city, a determined Ukrainian contingent still puts up resistance while holed up in a steel mill.

Some speculated that recent explosions in Moldova's separatist region of Transnistria, where Russia has about 1,500 troops based, could be provocations to justify Russia trying to take control of that area by Victory Day. But Russia has only bombed a railway bridge in Ukraine that is the main transport link to Transnistria.

The most intense speculation was that Putin would use Victory Day to declare the fight in Ukraine was a full-fledged war, rather than a "special military operation" as the Kremlin insists it be called, and that this would prompt a general mobilization to bring in vast numbers of new soldiers. But he did not do that either.

"There seems an awareness of the political risks at home of national mobilization. So there is a real sense in which the Kremlin is faced with growing difficulties and dilemmas in this war that it has chosen to unleash," Nigel Gould-Davies, a fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, told The Associated Press.

In any case, announcing a national mobilization would not foretell a swift end to the war.

"Mobilization isn't like a button you press and then suddenly Russia has more access to military power than before. It takes time to mobilize and not just to call up, but to conscript the population essentially, but also to supply them as well. And so it wouldn't make any immediate difference," Gould-Davies said.

An indelible image for Victory Day is the dramatic photo of a soldier raising the Soviet hammer-and-sickle flag atop the Reichstag in 1945, ruined buildings stretching to the horizon. Putin's speech gave no hint of whether he envisions a similar scene of occupation as the final goal of the Ukraine war, or whether Russia would settle for partitioning off of the eastern republics that it has declared are sovereign states.

And Putin has never explained what his call for "denazification" of Ukraine entails.

The speech was full of emotion and self-justification, yet empty of information.

"It's the dog that didn't bark," Gould-Davies said. "There was no new announcement, but no clear way out of the problems that they have created for themselves."

Running an abortion clinic while waiting for court decision

By REBECCA SANTANA and LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

The people who run America's abortion clinics agree: There's no job like it.

There are the clients -- so many of them desperate, in need, grateful. There are the abortion opponents -- passionate, relentless, often furious. And hovering over it all are legal challenges, and the awareness that your clinic may be just a judicial ruling away from extinction.

That reality became more urgent last week with a leaked, draft opinion from the U.S. Supreme Court suggesting a majority of justices support overturning the 1973 Roe vs Wade decision legalizing abortion. If that happens it could spell the end of abortion in about half the states.

The Associated Press talked with three women and one man who run abortion clinics in such states about their work. Some came to the work through personal brushes with abortion; for others it started as a job. For all, it has become a calling.

SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA -- When Kathaleen Pittman was growing up in a small, conservative community in rural Louisiana, abortion was not openly discussed. When she started working at the Hope Medical Group for Women, she sat her mother down and told her.

"To my shock ... she told me then: 'Women have always had abortions and always will. They need a safe place,'" she recalls. "That moment was kind of a watershed moment."

She was not drawn to the work as an activist. The part-time job counseling women undergoing abortions was a good fit while she was trying to finish her master's degree.

But she knew the fear some women feel with an unwanted pregnancy. When she was in her early 20s, a good friend asked for her help getting an abortion. At the time, in the early '80s, the procedure was legal but they didn't know where to find someone in northwestern Louisiana who performed it.

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Pittman dialed information. It took 20 minutes to find a doctor in nearby Arkansas. Her friend despaired. "I'm sitting there watching her cry," Pittman says.

Pittman was counselor, director of counseling and assistant administrator before becoming director of the clinic in 2010. The clinic has survived numerous efforts to restrict abortion, such as requirements for waiting periods or admitting privileges for doctors.

When she started working there, about 11 other clinics operated in the state, and some private doctors performed abortions. Now, Hope is one of three remaining.

To alleviate stress, she does needlepoint. She also texts other clinic administrators. A few times a month they gather on Zoom to compare notes or just to vent.

"It can be very isolating, particularly running a clinic in the South," she says.

Pittman knows the Supreme Court ruling could end abortion in her state. When the draft opinion leaked, Pittman says she had a "horrible feeling" in the pit of her stomach. But then she took stock, and reminded herself that it was not final. For now, abortion is legal.

And as always, she focused on the women who walk past her office every day, after their appointments. "They no longer look like they have the weight of the world on their shoulders," she says.

CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA -- Katie Quinonez had the first of her two abortions when she was 17, months after graduating from high school. She was in an emotionally abusive relationship with a man seven years her senior.

She wanted to attend college, have a career. "I didn't want to be chained to this person for the rest of my life because of a mistake that I made in high school," says Quinonez, now 31.

Ashamed to tell her mother, Quinonez worked at a pizzeria after school to save up for an abortion. Weeks passed; finally, Quinonez broke down and revealed her plight. Her mother was immediately supportive and helped her schedule an abortion appointment.

But by then, she was in her second trimester. The experience was traumatic. She remembers crying in pain as she walked out the door.

Shortly after she graduated college, she found out she was pregnant again, and was ashamed.

But this time, the experience was different. She had a supportive partner — now her husband — who went with her to a different clinic, the Women's Health Center of West Virginia in Charleston. From the nurses who held her hand to the recovery room with big comfy chairs, it was an "affirming experience."

"There was no judgment or shame," she says.

It was that experience that led her to apply in 2017 as the center's development director. By that time, it was the only clinic left in the state. She became the leader in January 2020.

It was, she says, her dream job.

Every day is a challenge. Bills to ban or limit abortion care are introduced every year. The clinic is nearly surrounded by anti-abortion activists: A pregnancy crisis center moved in next door, and a pro-life organization purchased land across the street and erected a large white cross.

But she and her staff see the clinic as a safe haven from those outside forces. Even if Roe is overturned, she is determined that the clinic stay open and continue providing resources like birth control, emergency contraception and testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections.

And a clinic fund that pays for abortions for those who can't afford them will continue to do that — and it will also help with the cost of traveling to states where the procedure will be legal.

"I know firsthand how critical being able to get the abortion that you need is," she says.

HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA -- Dalton Johnson says his mother always thought he'd grow up to work in a dangerous job, perhaps join the FBI or the DEA. But his current line of work -- owning and operating the last abortion clinic in Huntsville, Alabama -- has come with its own threats and dangers.

In fact, when he and his then-partner, a Huntsville doctor, decided to open the clinic, his partner told him that it was hazardous work. The partner felt a responsibility to meet Johnson's parents first to address

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any concerns and questions they might have about their son's new business.

Johnson initially expected to spend a few years at the Alabama Women's Center for Reproductive Alternatives and then move on to something else. But he quickly realized that this was what he was meant to do. He also realized that if he closed down, no one would take his place, and that weighed on him.

"I just really believed that ... we're really helping women," he says.

It took roughly two years to get the approvals to open the clinic. And the challenges have not stopped.

The clinic's doctor -- who would become Johnson's wife -- was arrested for Medicaid fraud, charges that were later dismissed. There were legal obstacles involving admitting privileges for doctors at the center and the clinic's proximity to a school. Johnson has been the target of threats; he stepped down from the board of his church to protect it from harassment.

He says he's also been accused of preying on the Black community -- an accusation that's particularly galling because he is African American: "They're pulling the race card on me," he says, incredulously.

His wife has a ob/gyn practice that is located in a separate facility. If the Supreme Court overturns Roe and his clinic is forced to close, they'll likely turn that space into another branch of his wife's practice and transfer the staff there without having to lay anyone off.

But he's worried about the effect on Alabama women of a loss of abortion services.

"It's really just sad how so few people can make the choice for so many women," he says.

FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA -- Tammi Kromenaker has given over her entire adult life to helping women get abortions. And with the leak of the Supreme Court's draft opinion, she's beginning to think the days of the Red River Women's Clinic are numbered.

"The writing has been on the wall for a long time, but I think now it's in ink," she says.

It wasn't necessarily a career she foresaw growing up in a Catholic family in suburban Minneapolis, where she attended Christian music festivals with her boyfriend.

But during her freshman year in college in Fargo, a good friend got pregnant. Kromenaker remembers her immediate reaction: Her friend needed an abortion. She sent her money to help pay for it.

In a flash, her thinking had changed. "It was like night and day," she says.

A professor recommended her for a part-time position at an abortion clinic. That turned into a fulltime job; then, when the Red River clinic opened in 1998, she moved there as the director. Finally, in 2016, she bought Red River -- now the only surviving abortion clinic in North Dakota.

The clinic sits right on the street, and even in frigid North Dakota winters protesters are outside, calling to the women and volunteers who escort them in. There's never been any violence, she says, but one time a protester did get into the building. Kromenaker confronted him at the top of the stairs.

"I said, 'You need to go,'" she recalls. "And he did."

Kromenaker, 50, talked to the clinic staff about the draft Supreme Court opinion, emphasizing that it's not yet final. And she took solace in a story of a woman who was doing a pre-abortion consultation and took time to tell the staff she'd seen the news and was grateful for the clinic.

Kromenaker worries about her staff if abortion is outlawed in the state. Most employees work there the one day a week they perform abortions, but there are a few fulltime employees. She hopes the draft leak will galvanize Americans to support abortion rights.

But if not, she's prepared. No state line, she says, will prevent her from continuing her life's work.

She plans to cross the Red River to Minnesota and open another clinic there.

Transgender treatment, doctors threatened by new Alabama law

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Dr. Hussein Abdul-Latif spent the last week typing out prescription refills for his young transgender patients, trying to make sure they had access to their medications for a few months before Alabama made it illegal for him to prescribe them.

He also answered questions from anxious patients and their parents: What will happen to me if I sud-

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denly have to stop taking testosterone? Should we go out of state for care?

A new state law that took effect Sunday makes it a felony, punishable by up to 10 years in prison, for doctors to prescribe puberty blockers and hormones to trans people under age 19. A judge has not yet ruled on a request to block the state from enforcing the law.

The measure is part of a wave of legislation in Republican-controlled states focused on LGBTQ youth. Bills have been introduced to limit discussion of gender and sexual identity issues in younger grades or to prohibit kids from using school restrooms or playing on sports teams that don't align with their sex at birth.

Abdul-Latif, a pediatric endocrinologist and co-founder of a clinic in Birmingham to treat children with gender dysphoria, said he is very discouraged by the Alabama law. He said it was already hard enough for families in this very conservative state to come to terms themselves with their children's situations. They had already faced the social stigma and "the difficult decision of leaving their church family or being viewed less worthy," he said.

But gradually, he said, trans kids became more visible and there was a greater openness in the state for them to come out.

"They always existed, but they often did not have the feeling of empowerment to come out, or come out to their physicians," he said. "And now that they are, we're hitting them back with legal action."

Abdul-Latif notes that the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Pediatric Endocrine Society both endorse the treatments that clinics here and in other states are providing for transgender youth.

In contrast, "The state is not only saying I am criminal for prescribing those medications, but it's saying that my organization of thousands of physicians, pediatricians and pediatric endocrinologists are maybe partners in that criminal enterprise," he said.

Four Alabama families with transgender children have filed a lawsuit challenging the new state law as unconstitutional. The U.S. Department of Justice has joined the suit. A federal judge heard evidence this week on a request to block the state from enforcing the statute while the legal challenge goes forward. More than 20 medical and mental health organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, have also urged the judge to block the law. A decision is expected sometime this week.

Alabama maintains the law is about protecting children. "The science and common sense are on Alabama's side. We will win this fight to protect our children," Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said last week.

Now that the law is in effect, families are wondering if they will have to move out of state and doctors are worried about what will become of their patients.

Abdul-Latif, who is originally from Jordan, and pediatrician Dr. Morissa Ladinsky both moved to Alabama years ago to work as instructors and physicians at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. In 2015, after seeing more families with kids identifying as trans and seeking help for gender-related issues, they decided to found a clinic to treat children with gender dysphoria. They now treat more than 150 young people who are transgender or gender diverse.

Ladinsky, who testified last week as a witness in the lawsuit, told The Associated Press that she felt like she was "walking in a nightmare" when the Alabama Legislature approved the ban. She says the measure is an unprecedented legislative overreach into the decisions of parents and the practice of medicine.

"This is the first time ever that I can remember, at least for pediatricians, that we are literally forced to choose between the Hippocratic Oath we took to 'do no harm' and never abandon our patients versus the facing of a potential felony conviction," she said.

Ladinsky quickly agreed to co-found the gender clinic in Birmingham when Abdul-Latif approached her about it. She had moved to the city from a hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio, that had a pediatric gender health team, and was familiar with the treatments.

But that wasn't all. She also had taken a route to work each morning that brought her by the spot where Ohio transgender teen Leelah Alcorn had stepped in front of an oncoming tractor-trailer in 2014. Leelah left a suicide note that read, "My death needs to mean something. ... Fix society. Please."

Some of the children Abdul-Latif and Ladinsky have treated in the Birmingham clinic came to them after

suicide attempts, the doctors said. One patient tried to kill themselves five times, he said. A 2021 survey by the Trevor Project, a nonprofit organization focused on suicide prevention efforts among LGBTQ youth, found that 52% of transgender and nonbinary youth seriously considered suicide in the past year, and 1 in 5 reported attempting suicide.

"In our minds, there is no doubt they saved my daughter's life," said David Fuller, whose daughter was among the first patients treated in Birmingham.

Jessica Fuller, now 22, was 16 when she first came to the clinic after telling her father that she was trans. "The dysphoria was awful and I was thinking about suicide more often than I wish to talk about," Fuller wrote in an email.

She called the new Alabama law "a waste of time and money."

"It's terrifying not just for the kids but the doctors and nurses just trying to help kids not kill themselves," she wrote. "Are you gonna arrest him for something so harmless?"

Abdul-Latif said he understands that some people may be skeptical over the medical treatments for transgender kids.

"But to make it into a law and make it into a felony — that is way beyond skepticism," he said, adding that the law "basically closes ... a very important dialogue in the country about what is better and what is best for kids with gender dysphoria."

"I welcome an argument. I welcome skeptical voices. I do not welcome imposing voices that leave no discussion," he said.

David Fuller, a police sergeant in the city of Gadsden, said he's angry that the law could lead to officers putting handcuffs on the people he calls heroes and credits with saving his child.

"I'm a police officer and I know what a crime is," Fuller said. "I know what a criminal is. These people are not criminals. It's political crap."

Queen won't attend Parliament opening due to mobility issues

LONDON (AP) — Buckingham Palace says Queen Elizabeth II will not attend the opening of Parliament on Tuesday amid ongoing mobility issues.

The palace said in a statement Monday that the decision was made in consultation with her doctors and that the 96-year-old monarch had "reluctantly" decided not to attend.

Prince Charles will read her speech, which sets out the government's agenda for the coming parliamentary session. Prince William will also attend.

Elizabeth has attended only a handful of public events in recent months, though she continues to hold virtual audiences regularly.

Embattled Israeli leader vows to keep government afloat

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's embattled prime minister on Monday vowed to continue to lead the country as his shaky government limped into the opening of parliament's summer session on the verge of collapse.

Less than a year after taking office, Naftali Bennett has lost his parliamentary majority, his own party is crumbling and a key governing partner has suspended cooperation with the coalition. That has set the stage for a possible attempt by the opposition, led by former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to topple the government later this week.

While Bennett appears to be poised to fend off this immediate challenge, his longer-term prospects are uncertain at a time when the government is deeply divided over major issues, Israel is facing an ongoing wave of stabbings and shootings by lone-wolf Palestinian attackers and a confrontation with the United States over West Bank settlement construction is looming.

Boaz Toporovsky, the acting coalition chairman, acknowledged the coalition is in the midst of a "serious crisis" but said he was optimistic it would survive. "Everyone understands that we're at a crossroads that can bring about, heaven forbid, elections in Israel," he told the Israeli public broadcaster Kan early Monday.

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The new government made history when it took office last June, ending prolonged deadlock in which the country went through four rounds of inconclusive elections in just two years. Racing to head off what would have been another election, Bennett cobbled together a diverse coalition of eight parties with little in common beyond their shared animosity toward Netanyahu.

The new coalition, including hard-line religious nationalists that oppose Palestinian statehood, dovish left-wingers and for the first time in an Israeli coalition, an Islamist Arab party, agreed to sideline the country's most divisive issues and focus on areas of broad consensus.

The government has managed to pass a budget, navigate the coronavirus pandemic and strengthen relations with both the Biden administration and Israel's Arab allies. Bennett also has emerged as a surprising mediator in the Ukraine-Russia war, regularly speaking to the leaders of both countries.

Although Bennett, who leads a small religious-nationalist party, has ruled out peace talks with the Palestinians, he has tried to reduce tensions by taking steps to improve living conditions in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

This cautious approach has repeatedly been tested. One member of Bennett's Yamina party defected when the government took office, accusing him of abandoning their nationalist ideology. A second member followed suit last month, leaving the coalition and opposition equally divided in the 120-seat parliament.

Weeks of Israeli-Palestinian violence, much of it fueled by tensions and fighting at Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site, prompted Mansour Abbas, leader of the Islamist Arab Ra'am faction in the coalition, to suspend cooperation. Abbas has not said whether he will resume cooperation or join the opposition in attempts to topple the coalition this week.

"We're in a not so simple crisis with Ra'am," Toporovsky said, adding that he understood the Islamist party's disappointment in the slow pace of effecting change for Israel's Arab citizens.

A public opinion survey in April by the Israel Democracy Institute found that only 30% of respondents believed the government was likely to survive the year, down from 49% in February. The think tank polled 751 Israeli Jews and Arabs, and reported a margin of error of 3.65 percentage points.

Netanyahu is weighing whether to introduce a motion this week to dissolve parliament and trigger new elections. Such a move is risky. It would require at least one of the remaining members of the coalition to join him, and there is no guarantee that will happen. If he fails, he would not be able to introduce a similar motion for the next six months as an ongoing corruption trial against Netanyahu moves ahead.

A pair of no-confidence motions floated by the opposition on Monday quickly failed. That prompted Bennett and his main coalition partner, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, to release a video together on Twitter saying they had defied the skeptics.

"We are going to continue with victories, to sustain an excellent government in the state of Israel for the citizens of Israel," Bennett said.

Yohanan Plesner, a former lawmaker who is now president of the Israel Democracy Institute, said he expects the coalition to weather the storm, at least in the short term.

He said that even unhappy coalition members would have much to lose if the country were to plunge into new elections. Abbas, for instance, is just beginning to see the huge budgets he has secured to flow into the impoverished Arab communities he represents.

But any member of the coalition can now pressure the government into pushing pet projects opposed by other partners. This week, an Israeli planning committee is expected to approve plans to build some 4,000 new homes in Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, despite vociferous opposition from the United States and most of the international community. The construction project is being pushed by members of Bennett's own party, which draws much of its support from the settler community.

"The next few days will allow us to know whether the coalition is in critical but stable condition or critical but unstable condition," Plesner said. "The immediate areas to look at are either the Ra'am party, as a whole or parts of it, or elements from within Yamina."

Rare cases of COVID returning pose questions for Pfizer pill

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By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — As more doctors prescribe Pfizer's powerful COVID-19 pill, new questions are emerging about its performance, including why a small number of patients appear to relapse after taking the drug.

Paxlovid has become the go-to option against COVID-19 because of its at-home convenience and impressive results in heading off severe disease. The U.S. government has spent more than \$10 billion to purchase enough pills to treat 20 million people.

But experts say there is still much to be learned about the drug, which was authorized in December for adults at high risk of severe COVID-19 based on a study in which 1,000 adults received the medication.

WHY DO SOME PATIENTS SEEM TO RELAPSE?

Doctors have started reporting rare cases of patients whose symptoms return several days after completing Paxlovid's five-day regimen of pills. That's prompted questions about whether those patients are still contagious and should receive a second course of Paxlovid.

Last week, the Food and Drug Administration weighed in. It advised against a second round because there's little risk of severe disease or hospitalization among patients who relapse.

Dr. Michael Charness reported last month on a 71-year-old vaccinated patient who saw his symptoms subside but then return, along with a spike in virus levels nine days into his illness.

Charness says Paxlovid remains a highly effective drug, but he wonders if it might be less potent against the current omicron variant. The \$500 drug treatment was tested and OK'd based on its performance against the delta version of the coronavirus.

"The ability to clear the virus after it's suppressed may be different from omicron to delta, especially for vaccinated people," said Charness, who works for Boston's VA health system.

Could some people just be susceptible to a relapse? Both the FDA and Pfizer point out that 1% to 2% of people in Pfizer's original study saw their virus levels rebound after 10 days. The rate was about the same among people taking the drug or dummy pills, "so it is unclear at this point that this is related to drug treatment," the FDA stated.

Some experts point to another possibility: The Paxlovid dose isn't strong enough to fully suppress the virus. Andy Pekosz of Johns Hopkins University worries that could spur mutations that are resistant to the drug.

"We should really make sure we're dosing Paxlovid appropriately because I would hate to lose it right now," said Pekosz, a virologist. "This is one of the essential tools we have to help us turn the corner on the pandemic."

HOW WELL DOES PAXLOVID WORK IN VACCINATED PEOPLE?

Pfizer tested Paxlovid in the highest-risk patients: unvaccinated adults with no prior COVID-19 infection and other health problems, such as heart disease and diabetes. The drug reduced their risk of hospitalization and death from 7% to 1%.

But that doesn't reflect the vast majority of Americans today, where 89% of adults have had at least one shot. And roughly 60% of Americans have been infected with the virus at some point.

"That's the population I care about in 2022 because that's who we're seeing -- vaccinated people with COVID -- so do they benefit?" asked Dr. David Boulware, a University of Minnesota researcher and physician.

There's no clear answer yet for vaccinated Americans, who already have a hospitalization rate far below 1%.

That may come from a large, ongoing Pfizer study that includes high-risk vaccinated people. No results have been published; the study is expected to wrap up in the fall.

Pfizer said last year that initial results showed Paxlovid failed to meet the study's goals of significantly resolving symptoms and reducing hospitalizations. It recently stopped enrolling anyone who's received a vaccination or booster in the past year, a change Boulware says suggests those patients aren't benefitting.

At a minimum, the preliminary data should be released to federal officials, Boulware said. "If the U.S. government is spending billions of dollars on this medicine, what's the obligation to release that data so that they can formulate a good policy?"

CAN PAXLOVID BE USED TO HELP PREVENT COVID-19 INFECTION?

Pfizer recently reported that proactively giving Paxlovid to family members of people infected with COVID-19 didn't significantly reduce their chances of catching it. But that's not the end of the story. Pfizer is studying several other potential benefits of early use, including whether Paxlovid reduces the length and severity of COVID-19 among households.

"It's a high bar to protect against infection but I'd love to see data on how Paxlovid did against severe disease because it may be more effective there," said Pekosz.

'A Strange Loop' earns a leading 11 Tony Award nominations

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "A Strange Loop," Michael R. Jackson's critically cheered theater meta-journey earned a leading 11 Tony Award nominations Monday as Broadway joined the national discussion of race by embracing an envelope-pushing Black-written and Black-led musical.

Jackson's 2020 Pulitzer Prize drama winner about a Black gay man writing a show about a Black gay man earned nods for best musical, best leading man in newcomer Jaquell Spivey and best featured actress for L Morgan Lee, who becomes the first openly transgender performer to be nominated for a Tony Award. The show also was nominated for scenic design, lighting, sound, orchestrations, Stephen Brackett's direction and John-Andrew Morrison for featured actor.

"I hoped my collaborators would be acknowledged. That actually, in a weird way, was much more exciting to me," Jackson told The Associated Press. "Even if we hadn't gotten any nominations, I would have been disappointed, but I also would have known how powerful the show has been resonating with people."

Playwright Lynn Nottage had two reasons to smile Monday morning: Her book for the Michael Jackson musical "MJ" was nominated for best book and her play "Clyde's" got a nod for best play.

"This has been a historic season for a multitude of reasons. There's been a diversity of Black voices on Broadway in unprecedented numbers. Theater came back after being dark for almost two years and we made art while facing down COVID. And so this feels particularly good given all of the circumstances," Nottage said.

Jesse Tyler Ferguson of "Modern Family" fame got a nomination for "Take Me Out," as did Jesse Williams, the "Grey's Anatomy" star making his Broadway debut. Williams thanked the audience for coming with him on a complex ride.

"This is my first time having this experience in the box, having experience on stage, and that fellowship, that dynamic, that partnership, that reliance we have with each other, that interplay with the audience is critical and something new to me. So it's a thrilling ride," Williams said.

Right behind "A Strange Loop" is a tie with 10 nominations each for "MJ," a bio musical of the King of Pop stuffed with his biggest hits, and "Paradise Square," a musical about Irish immigrants and Black Americans jostling to survive in New York City around the time of the Civil War.

The rest of the best new musical category includes "Six," the corrective feminist take on the six wives of England's Henry VIII, "Girl From the North Country," which uses the songs of Bob Dylan to weave a Depression-era story in the Midwest, and "Mr. Saturday Night," a reworking of Billy Crystal's film about a bitter, old insult comic chasing a last laugh.

Two of the best play nominees are about economics — "Skeleton Crew," Dominique Morisseau's play about blue-collar job insecurity in a Detroit auto stamping plant in 2008, and "The Lehman Trilogy," Stefano Massini's play spanning 150 years about what led to the collapse of financial giant Lehman Brothers.

There's also "Clyde's," Nottage's play about a group of ex-cons trying to restart their lives at a truck stop diner, and "The Minutes," Tracey Letts' depiction of a small-town city council meeting that exposes backstabbing, greed and the larger delusions in American history. "Hangmen," Martin McDonagh's look at an executioner-turned-pub owner forced to grapple with his past when capital punishment is made illegal in the United Kingdom, also earned a best play nod.

One of its actors is Alfie Allen, making his Broadway debut and who got nominated as a featured actor.

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"I'm out having some pancakes, and I am having a lovely morning," he said. The "Hangmen" ensemble has been welcoming, he said, like a family: "Everybody was just so supportive of each other, and I'm still pinching myself a little bit. It's amazing."

There were four musical revivals during the season, but only three got nominations: "The Music Man" which celebrates America's soul with a traveling con man in a small Iowa town starring Hugh Jackman and Sutton Foster, who each have two Tonys and were each nominated this time as well.

The two other entries in the musical revival category are "Caroline, Or Change," Tony Kushner and Jeanine Tesori's show that explores America's racial, social and economic divisions in 1963 Louisiana, and "Company," Stephen Sondheim's exploration of a single person's conflicted feelings about commitment, this time with a gender-switching of the lead character. That left "Funny Girl," the classic American show starring Beanie Feldstein about the rise of a comic star of the Ziegfeld Follies, out of the running — it got only one nod, for Jared Grimes as best featured actor in a musical.

Grimes, a triple threat whose heroes include Sammy Davis Jr. and Gregory Hines and whose performance includes an electrifying tap dance number, took the traditionally white character Eddie Ryan and remade it as a young Black man.

"Eddie Ryan is a big leap for us in the direction of just understanding that we can be everything and anything. We just need a chance," he said. "I like to think that we're making good strides."

Nominations for best play revival are "Trouble in Mind," Alice Childress' play about a Broadway play that explores the racial divide in the 1950s, "How I Learned to Drive," Vogel's Pulitzer Prize-winning memory play told by the survivor of childhood sexual abuse, starring two nominees: Mary-Louise Parker and David Morse and "American Buffalo," David Mamet's look at loyalty and greed set in a junk shop starring Laurence Fishburne, Darren Criss and Sam Rockwell, the latter the only actor in the play nominated.

The others are "Take Me Out," Richard Greenberg's exploration of what happens when a baseball superstar comes out as gay, and "for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enough," playwright Ntozake Shange's exploration of Black womanhood. That work also made history: Camille A. Brown the first Black woman to direct and choreograph a Broadway play since 1955 earned nominations in both categories.

Brown noted the amazing amount of Black playwrights represented this season and wanted to acknowledge another Black woman in her category: Lileana Blain-Cruz, who was nominated for directing a revival of "The Skin of Our Teeth."

"I'd love to see more Black female directors get opportunities to direct on Broadway, more people of color sharing stories and just for it to continue to expand," she said, on her way to celebrate with her mother.

The season — with a whopping 34 new productions — represents a full return to theaters after nearly two years of a pandemic-mandated shutdown. Many nominees talked about how they had worried theater might never return.

"I'm just so grateful, and also just so happy that Broadway is alive and well," said Jennifer Simard, nominated for "Company." "Because there was a minute there when I wasn't sure we'd be back after the pandemic. So I am so grateful."

Neither Matthew Broderick nor his wife Sarah Jessica Parker earned nominations for a revival of "Plaza Suite," but Patti LuPone got one for "Company" and so did LaChanze for "Trouble in Mind." Ruth Negga earned a nomination for "Macbeth," but her co-star Daniel Craig came up empty. Tony-winner Phylicia Rashad got her first nomination in more than 15 years with "Skeleton Crew" and "Saturday Night Live" veteran Rachel Dratch earned a Tony nod in the feminist farce "POTUS." One eye-raising decision was not to hand Katrina Lenk a nod for her work in "Company."

The nominees for best actress in a musical nominees are Sharon D Clarke of "Caroline, Or Change," Foster in "The Music Man," Joaquina Kalukango for "Paradise Square," Carmen Cusack in "Flying Over Sunset" and Mare Winningham in "Girl From the North Country."

Joining Spivey, Jackman and McClure in the best actor in a musical category are Crystal for "Mr. Saturday Night" and Myles Frost, whose King of Pop in "MJ" was a moonwalking triumph. The best actor in

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a play category is dominated by the three leads in "The Lehman Trilogy" — Simon Russell Beale, Adam Godley and Adrian Lester. The rest are Morse, Rockwell, Ruben Santiago-Hudson in "Lackawanna Blues" and David Threlfall from "Hangmen."

The Tony Awards will be held at Radio City Music Hall on June 12. The ceremony will air live on CBS and Paramount+ starting at 8 p.m. ET. Film and stage star Ariana DeBose will host.

Dictator's son far ahead in Philippine presidential vote

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The son and namesake of ousted Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos took a commanding lead in an unofficial vote count in Monday's presidential election in the deeply divided Asian democracy.

With 80% of the votes tabulated, Marcos Jr. had 25.9 million, far ahead of his closest challenger, current Vice President Leni Robredo, a champion of human rights, who had 12.3 million.

The election winner will take office on June 30 for a single, six-year term as leader of a Southeast Asian nation hit hard by two years of COVID-19 outbreaks and lockdowns.

Still more challenging problems include deeper poverty and unemployment and decades-long Muslim and communist insurgencies. The next president is also likely to hear demands to prosecute outgoing President Rodrigo Duterte for thousands of killings during his anti-drug crackdown — deaths already under investigation by the International Criminal Court.

Duterte's daughter, southern Davao city Mayor Sara Duterte, is Marcos Jr.'s vice presidential running mate in an alliance of the scions of two authoritarian leaders. Their partnership has combined the voting power of their northern and southern political strongholds, boosting their chances but compounding worries of human rights activists.

Sara Duterte also had a formidable lead with 25.8 million votes for vice president in the unofficial count from the Commission on Elections server. The president and vice president are elected separately in the Philippines.

"History may repeat itself if they win," said Myles Sanchez, a 42-year-old human rights worker. "There may be a repeat of martial law and the drug killings that happened under their parents."

In a late-night video statement, Marcos Jr. did not claim victory but thanked his supporters for accompanying him on "this sometimes very difficult journey" and urged them to keep up their guard until the vote count is completed.

"Let us keep watch on the vote," he said. "If we'll be fortunate, I'll expect that your help will not wane, your trust will not wane because we have a lot of things to do in the times ahead."

Marcos Jr., whose father was ousted in a 1986 army-backed "People Power" uprising, held a wide lead in pre-election surveys. But Robredo tapped into shock and outrage over the prospect of a Marcos recapturing the seat of power and harnessed a network of campaign volunteers to underpin her candidacy.

Officials said the election was relatively peaceful despite pockets of violence in the country's volatile south. Thousands of police and military personnel were deployed to secure election precincts, especially in rural regions with a history of violent political rivalries.

Filipinos stood in long lines to cast their ballots, with the start of voting delayed by a few hours in a few areas due to malfunctioning vote machines, power outages, bad weather and other problems.

Eight others were in the presidential race, including former boxing star Manny Pacquiao, Manila Mayor Isko Moreno and former national police chief Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

Sanchez said the violence and abuses that marked the martial-law era under Marcos, and Duterte's drug war more than three decades later, victimized loved ones from two generations of her family. Her grandmother was sexually abused and her grandfather tortured by counterinsurgency troops under Marcos in the early 1980s in their impoverished farming village in Southern Leyte province.

Under Duterte's crackdown, Sanchez's brother, a sister and a sister-in-law were wrongfully linked to illegal drugs and separately killed, she told The Associated Press in an interview. She described the killings

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of her siblings as “a nightmare that has caused unspeakable pain.”

She begged Filipinos not to vote for politicians who either openly defended the widespread killings or conveniently looked away.

Marcos Jr. and Sara Duterte avoided such volatile issues in the campaign and steadfastly stuck instead to a battle cry of national unity, even though their fathers’ presidencies opened some of the Philippines’ most turbulent divisions.

“I have learned in our campaign not to retaliate,” Sara Duterte told followers Saturday night on the final day of campaigning, where she and Marcos Jr. thanked a huge crowd in a night of rap music, dance shows and fireworks near Manila Bay.

At her own rally, Robredo thanked her supporters who jammed her star-studded sorties and waged a house-to-house battle to endorse her brand of clean and hands-on politics. She asked them to fight for patriotic ideals beyond the elections.

“We’ve learned that those who have awoken will never close their eyes again,” Robredo told a crowd that filled the main avenue in the capital’s Makati financial district. “It’s our right to have a future with dignity and it’s our responsibility to fight for it.”

In Maguindanao province, a security hot spot in the south, three village guards were killed by gunmen outside an elections center in Buluan town, briefly disrupting voting. Nine would-be voters and their companions were wounded separately Sunday night when unidentified men fired five rifle grenades in the Datu Unsay town hall, police said.

Aside from the presidency, more than 18,000 government posts are being contested, 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.

More than 67 million people were registered to vote, including about 1.6 million Filipinos overseas.

In the 2016 contest, Duterte emerged as the clear winner within a few hours after polls closed and his key challengers quickly conceded. The vice presidential race that year was won narrowly by Robredo over Marcos Jr., and the outcome was slower to become known.

EXPLAINER: Recession fears grow. But how high is the risk?

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Inflation is at a 40-year high. Stock prices are sinking. The Federal Reserve is making borrowing much costlier. And the economy actually shrank in the first three months of this year.

Is the United States at risk of enduring another recession, just two years after emerging from the last one?

For now, even the more pessimistic economists don’t expect a downturn anytime soon. Despite the inflation squeeze, consumers — the primary driver of the economy — are still spending at a healthy pace. Businesses are investing in equipment and software, reflecting a positive outlook. And the job market is more robust than it’s been in years, with hiring strong, layoffs way down and many employers desperate for more workers.

Yet several worrisome developments in recent weeks suggest that the risk of recession may be rising. High inflation has proved far more stubborn than many economists had expected. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has exacerbated global food and energy prices. Extreme lockdowns in China over COVID-19 are worsening supply shortages.

And when Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell spoke at a news conference last week, he reinforced the central bank’s determination to do whatever it might take to curb inflation, including raising interest rates so high as to weaken the economy. If that happens, the Fed could potentially trigger a recession, perhaps in the second half of next year, economists say.

By mid-2023, the Fed’s benchmark short-term rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, could reach levels not seen in 15 years. Analysts say the U.S. economy, which has thrived for years on the fuel of ultra-low borrowing costs, might not be able to withstand the impact of much higher rates.

“Recession risks are low now but elevated in 2023 as inflation could force the Fed to hike until it hurts,” Ethan Harris, global economist at Bank of America, said in a note to clients.

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The nation's unemployment rate is at a near-half-century low of 3.6%, and employers are posting a record-high number of open jobs. So what might cause an economy with such a healthy labor market to suffer a recession?

Here's what the path to an eventual downturn could look like:

— The Fed's rate hikes are sure to slow spending in areas that require consumers to borrow, with housing the most visible example. The average rate on a 30-year fixed mortgage has already jumped to 5.25%, the highest level since 2009. A year ago, the average was below 3%. Home sales have fallen in response, and so have mortgage applications, a sign that sales will keep slowing. A similar trend could occur in other markets, for cars, appliances and furniture, for example.

— Borrowing costs for businesses are rising, as reflected in increased yields on corporate bonds. At some point, those higher rates could weaken business investment. If companies pull back on buying new equipment or expanding capacity, they will also start to slow hiring.

— Falling stock prices may discourage affluent households, who collectively hold the bulk of America's stock wealth, from spending as much on vacation travel, home renovations or new appliances. Broad stock indexes have tumbled for five straight weeks. Falling share prices also tend to diminish the ability of corporations to expand.

— Rising caution among companies and consumers about spending freely could further slow hiring or even lead to layoffs. If the economy were to lose jobs and the public were to grow more fearful, consumers would pull back further on spending.

— The consequences of high inflation would worsen this scenario. Wage growth, adjusted for inflation, would slow and leave Americans with even less purchasing power. Though a weaker economy would eventually reduce inflation, until then high prices could hinder consumer spending.

— Eventually, the slowdown would feed on itself, with layoffs mounting as economic growth slowed, leading consumers to increasingly cut back out of concern that they, too, might lose their jobs.

The clearest sign that a recession might be nearing, economists say, would be a steady rise in job losses and a surge in unemployment. As a rule of thumb, an increase in the unemployment rate of three-tenths of a percentage point, on average over the previous three months, has meant a recession will eventually follow.

Many economists also monitor changes in the interest payments, or yields, on different bonds for a recession signal known as an "inverted yield curve." This occurs when the yield on the 10-year Treasury falls below the yield on a short-term Treasury, such as the 3-month T-bill. That is unusual, because longer-term bonds typically pay investors a richer yield in exchange for tying up their money for a longer period.

Inverted yield curves generally mean investors expect a recession will occur and will compel the Fed to slash rates. Inverted curves often predate recessions. Still, it can take as long as 18 or 24 months for the downturn to arrive after the yield curve inverts.

A very brief inversion occurred last month, when the yield on the 2-year Treasury fell below the 10-year yield. Yet most economists downplayed it because it was short-lived. Many analysts also say that comparing the 3-month yield to the 10-year has a better track record. Those rates are not close to inverting now.

At his news conference last week, Powell said the Fed's goal was to raise rates to cool borrowing and spending so that companies would reduce their huge number of job openings. In turn, Powell hopes, companies won't have to raise pay as much, thereby easing inflation pressures, but without significant job losses or an outright recession.

"We have a good chance to have a soft, or soft-ish landing," Powell said. "But I'll say I do expect that this will be very challenging. It's not going to be easy."

Though economists say it's possible for the Fed to succeed, most also say they're skeptical that the central bank can tame such high inflation without eventually derailing the economy.

"That's never been done before," said Peter Hooper, Deutsche Bank's global head of economic research. "It would be remarkable if the Fed is able to achieve it."

Deutsche Bank economists think the Fed will have to raise its key rate to at least 3.6% by mid-2023,

enough to cause a recession by the end of that year. Still, Hooper suggested that the recession would prove relatively mild, with unemployment rising to only about 5%.

Karen Dynan, a Harvard economics professor and a former top economist at the Treasury Department, also said she thought a recession, if there is one, would likely be mild. American families are in much better financial shape than they were before the extended 2008-2009 Great Recession, when plunging home prices and lost jobs ruined many households' finances.

"Considerably more people have some financial cushion," Dynan said. "Even if it does take a recession to bring down inflation, it probably won't have to be a deep or long one."

Russia marks WWII victory overshadowed by Ukraine

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday sought to cast Moscow's military action in Ukraine as a forced response to Western policies and a necessary move to ward off a potential aggression.

Speaking at a military parade on Red Square marking the World War II victory over the Nazis, Putin drew parallels between the Red Army's fighting against the Nazi troops and the Russian forces' action in Ukraine.

While lambasting the West, Putin gave no indication of a shift in strategies or made any indication that he was going to declare a broad mobilization, as some in Ukraine and the West have feared.

Addressing the phalanxes of elite Russian troops filling Red Square, Putin said the campaign in Ukraine was a necessary move to avert what he described as "a threat that was absolutely unacceptable to us (that) has been methodically created next to our borders."

"The danger was rising by the day," he claimed, adding that "Russia has given a preemptive response to an aggression" in what he described as a "forced, timely and the only correct decision by a sovereign, powerful and independent country."

The Russian leader has repeatedly accused Ukraine of harboring aggressive intentions, with support from the U.S. and its allies — claims Ukrainian and Western officials have denied.

In his speech at the parade, Putin again scolded the West for failing to heed Russian demands for security guarantees and a rollback to NATO's expansion, arguing that it left Moscow no other choice but to launch an action in Ukraine.

The Russian leader emphasized that the Russian troops were fighting for the country's security in Ukraine and called a minute of silence to honor the soldiers who fell in combat. Putin noted that some of the troops taking part in the parade previously have fought in Ukraine.

He said that the troops in Ukraine have been "fighting for the Motherland, so that no one will forget the lessons of World War II and there will be no place in the world for hangmen, executioners and the Nazis."

The Victory Day that Russia marks on May 9 is the country's most important holiday, celebrated with military parades and fireworks across the country.

As part of celebrations later in the day, Putin also joined demonstrators who carried portraits of their relatives who fought in World War II in the so-called Immortal Regiment march, walking with a photo of his father who fought the Nazis in the siege of Leningrad.

The Soviet Union lost a staggering 27 million people in World War II, which it calls the Great Patriotic War. The conflict, which devastated the country and caused enormous suffering, has left a deep scar in the national psyche.

Some in Ukraine and the West expected Putin to use his speech at the parade to switch from describing the Russian action in Ukraine that the Russian officials have called the "special military operation" to calling it a war.

Putin didn't make any such shift in rhetoric or give any indication that the Kremlin may change its strategy and declare a broad mobilization to beef up the ranks.

The Kremlin has focused on Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland known as the Donbas, where Moscow-backed rebels have been fighting Ukrainian government forces since 2014. That conflict erupted weeks after Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

The Russian military has rearmed and resupplied its forces withdrawn from areas near Kyiv and other

regions in Ukraine's northeast and moved them to Donbas in an apparent attempt to encircle and destroy the most capable and seasoned Ukrainian troops concentrated there.

Call Trump or Pence? It's decision time for Jan. 6 panel

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection has interviewed nearly 1,000 people. But the nine-member panel has yet to talk to the two most prominent players in that day's events — former President Donald Trump and former Vice President Mike Pence.

As the investigation winds down and the panel plans a series of hearings in June, members of the committee are debating whether to call the two men, whose conflict over whether to certify Joe Biden's 2020 presidential election win was at the center of the attack. Trump pressured Pence for days, if not weeks, to use his ceremonial role presiding over the Jan. 6 count to try to block or delay Biden's certification. Pence refused to do so, and rioters who broke into the building that day called for his hanging.

There are reasons to call either or both of them. The committee wants to be as thorough as possible, and critics are sure to pounce if they don't even try. But some lawmakers on the panel have argued that they've obtained all the information they need without Trump and Pence.

Nearly a year into their wide-ranging investigation into the worst attack on the Capitol in more than two centuries, the House committee has interviewed hundreds of witnesses and received more than 100,000 pages of documents. Interviews have been conducted out of the public eye in obscure federal office buildings and private Zoom sessions.

The Democratic chairman, Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, said in early April that the committee has been able to validate a lot of the statements attributed to Trump and Pence without their testimony. He said at that time there was "no effort on the part of the committee" to call Pence, though there have been discussions since then about potentially doing so.

Speaking about Pence, Thompson said the panel had "initially thought it would be important" to call him, but "there are a lot of things on that day we know — we know the people who tried to get him to change his mind about the count and all of that, so what is it we need?"

A lot of the people they are interviewing, Thompson added, "are people we didn't have on the original list." The panel, comprised of seven Democrats and two Republicans, has said that the evidence it has compiled is enough to link Trump to a federal crime.

Much of the evidence the committee has released so far has come from White House aides and staff — including little-known witnesses like Cassidy Hutchinson, a former special assistant in the Trump White House, and Greg Jacob, who served as Pence's chief counsel in the vice president's office. The panel also has thousands of texts from Trump's final chief of staff, Mark Meadows, and has talked to two of the former president's children, Ivanka Trump and Donald Trump Jr., who were with their father the day of the attack.

Among hundreds of others, the committee has also interviewed former White House aide Jared Kushner, Ivanka's husband, former communications director Alyssa Farah and multiple Pence aides, including his chief of staff, Marc Short, and his national security adviser, Keith Kellogg. Former White House press secretaries Kayleigh McEnany and Stephanie Grisham have also appeared, as has former senior policy adviser Stephen Miller.

There are still questions that Trump and Pence could answer, including what they talked about the morning of Jan. 6, when Trump made his final plea for Pence to overturn the election when he presided over the Electoral College count in Congress. Lawmakers have been able to document most of Trump's end of the call but not what Pence said in response.

In the hours after Trump and Pence spoke, the vice president issued a statement saying he did not have the power to object to the counting of electoral votes. But the president did not relent, and went on to publicly pressure Pence at his massive rally in front of the White House and then on Twitter even after his supporters had broken into the Capitol.

Still, it is unlikely that the two former leaders would speak about the conversation to the committee —

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and it's unclear if they would cooperate at all.

While Pence has yet to comment on the committee's work, Trump would certainly be a hostile witness. He has fought the investigation in court, demonized the committee on TV and tried to assert executive privilege over White House papers and any conversations he had with his aides — demands that would certainly apply to his morning call with Pence.

In addition, calling a former president or vice president to testify in a congressional investigation is a rare, if not unprecedented, move that could face major legal hurdles and backfire politically.

The Jan. 6 committee has given only a glimpse of what it has found, mostly in court filings where excerpts of transcripts have been used.

A recent filing from the committee revealed portions of interviews with Hutchinson that took place in February and March of this year. That testimony provided new evidence about the involvement of GOP lawmakers in Trump's effort to overturn the 2020 election, including a meeting at the White House in which attorneys for the president advised that putting up an alternate slate of electors declaring Trump the winner was not "legally sound."

Another court document revealed testimony from Jacob, who served as Pence's chief counsel. In a series of emails, Jacob repeatedly told lawyer John Eastman, who was working with Trump, that Pence could not intervene in his ceremonial role and halt the certification of the electoral votes. Jacob told Eastman the legal framework he was putting forward to do just that was "essentially entirely made up."

Meadows' texts have also been revelatory, detailing how people inside Trump's orbit pleaded for him to forcefully condemn the attack on the Capitol as it unfolded. The pleas came from Trump's children, members of Congress and even Fox News hosts.

"He has to lead now. It has gone too far and gotten out of hand," Donald Trump Jr. texted Meadows as protesters breached the security perimeter at the Capitol.

Today in History: May 10, transcontinental railroad finished

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, May 10, the 130th day of 2022. There are 235 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 10, 1940, during World War II, German forces began invading the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium and France. The same day, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain resigned, and Winston Churchill formed a new government.

On this date:

In 1775, Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys, along with Col. Benedict Arnold, captured the British-held fortress at Ticonderoga, New York.

In 1818, American patriot Paul Revere, 83, died in Boston.

In 1865, Confederate President Jefferson Davis was captured by Union forces in Irwinville, Georgia.

In 1869, a golden spike was driven in Promontory, Utah, marking the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in the United States.

In 1924, J. Edgar Hoover was named acting director of the Bureau of Investigation (later known as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or FBI).

In 1933, the Nazis staged massive public book burnings in Germany.

In 1941, Adolf Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, parachuted into Scotland on what he claimed was a peace mission. (Hess ended up serving a life sentence at Spandau Prison until 1987, when he apparently committed suicide at age 93.)

In 1994, Nelson Mandela took the oath of office in Pretoria to become South Africa's first Black president. The state of Illinois executed serial killer John Wayne Gacy, 52, for the murders of 33 young men and boys.

In 1995, 104 miners were killed in an elevator accident in Orkney, South Africa.

In 2002, a tense 39-day-old standoff between Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen at the Church of

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the Nativity in Bethlehem ended with 13 suspected militants flown into European exile and 26 released into the Gaza Strip.

In 2013, the Internal Revenue Service apologized for what it acknowledged was "inappropriate" targeting of conservative political groups during the 2012 election to see if they were violating their tax-exempt status.

In 2014, Michael Sam was picked by the St. Louis Rams in the seventh round of the NFL draft, becoming the first openly gay player drafted by a pro football team. (Sam retired after an unsuccessful stint with the Rams and the Dallas Cowboys.)

Ten years ago: Presumptive Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney apologized for "stupid" high school pranks that might have gone too far and moved quickly to stamp out any notion that he'd bullied schoolmates because they were gay. In Syria, twin suicide car bombs exploded outside a military intelligence building, killing 55 people. Legendary car designer Carroll Shelby, 89, died in Dallas.

Five years ago: All but ignoring the unfurling drama over Russia and the U.S. election, President Donald Trump sought to advance prospects for cooperation between the former Cold War foes in Syria and elsewhere in a rare Oval Office meeting with Vladimir Putin's top diplomat, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (sir-GAY' lahv-RAWF').

One year ago: Eleven days of fierce fighting between Israel and Hamas broke out when Hamas fired a barrage of long-range rockets toward Jerusalem in response to what it said were Israeli provocations; Israel quickly responded with a series of airstrikes. U.S. regulators expanded the use of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine to children as young as 12. The White House said it was monitoring fuel supply shortages in parts of the Southeast resulting from a ransomware attack that shut down a major pipeline system.

Today's Birthdays: Author Barbara Taylor Bradford is 89. R&B singer Henry Fambrough (The Spinners) is 84. Actor David Clennon is 79. Writer-producer-director Jim Abrahams is 78. Singer Donovan is 76. Singer-songwriter Graham Gouldman (10cc) is 76. Singer Dave Mason is 76. Actor Mike Hagerty is 68. Sports anchor Chris Berman is 67. Actor Bruce Penhall is 65. Former Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., is 64. Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith, R-Miss., is 63. Actor Victoria Rowell is 63. Rock singer Bono (BAH'-noh) (U2) is 62. Former Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., is 62. Rock musician Danny Carey (Tool) is 61. Actor Darryl M. Bell is 59. Playwright Suzan-Lori Parks is 59. Model Linda Evangelista is 57. Rapper Young MC is 55. Actor Erik Palladino is 54. Rock singer Richard Patrick (Filter) is 54. Actor Lenny Venito is 53. Actor Dallas Roberts is 52. Actor Leslie Stefanson is 51. Actor-singer Todd Lowe is 50. Actor Andrea Anders is 47. Race car driver Helio Castroneves is 47. Rock musician Jesse Vest is 45. Actor Kenan Thompson is 44. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jason Dalyrimple (Soul For Real) is 42. Actor Odette Annable is 37. Actor Lindsey Shaw is 33. Actor Lauren Potter is 32. Olympic gold medal swimmer Missy Franklin is 27.