

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, 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

Thursday, 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

Friday, May 13

Senior Menu: BBQ beef sandwich, potato salad, carrots and peas, seasonal fresh fruit.

School Breakfast: Waffles.

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

"Find the love you seek, by first finding the love within yourself. Learn to rest in that place within you that is your true home."

-SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR



School Lunch: Hot dogs, chips.

12:30 p.m.: Elementary Track and Field Day

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

Saturday, May 14

SEAS Confession: 3:45-4:15 p.m., SEAS Mass: 4:30 p.m.

Ken's **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.

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Johnson is 7th best in the state in the triple jump

The Groton Area track meet took in one meet at Sisseton and there was a lot of movement among the top performers in the state. The top 24 will advance to the state track meet. Aspen Johnson is Groton Area's top honor with a seventh place rating in the triple jump.

Here is a look at the changes for Groton Area as of Tuesday's posting.

Andrew Marzahn is clinging to the 24th spot in the 100m dash with an unchanged time of 11.54.

Andrew Marzahn dropped two spots to 18th place in the 200 dash with an unchanged time of 23.74.

Andrew Marzahn dropped six places to 36th place in the 400m dash with a time of 54.14.

The boys 400m Relay Team's time improved from 46.24 to 46.14, and remain in a tie for 18th spot.

The boys 800m Relay Team slipped one spot to 15th place, improving its time from 1:35.90 to 1:34.70.

The boys 1600m Relay Team's time remains unchanged at 3:45.10. They hold steady at the 22nd spot.

The boys 3200m Relay Team remains in 20th place with an unchanged time of 8:58.10.

The boys Sprint Medley Relay Team moved up two spots with an improved time from 3:59.70 to 3:58.20.

Jackson Cogley improved his height in the high jump from 5-6 to 5-8 and rocketed into the top 24. He is tied at 24th with six other athletes. He was in 35th place at the last posting.

Jackson Cogley improved his 37-2.5 triple jump distance to 38-5.75 and moved back up from 51st place to 37th place.

The girls 400m Relay team remains at 30th place as its time remains unchanged at 54.64. The 24th spot has improved from 54.34 to 54.04.

The girls 800m Relay Team's time remains unchanged and slipped one spot to 22nd. Its time is 1:54.40.

The girls 1600m Relay team's time remains unchanged at 4:28.20 and slipped from 18th place to 20th place.

The girls 3200m Relay Team dropped out of the top 24 to 25th place with an unchanged time of 10:50.50.

The Groton Area girls Sprint Medley Relay team has an unchanged time of 4:40.90 as they dropped one spot to 18th place.

Aspen Johnson moved up to the number seven spot after improving her distance in the triple jump from 32-4 to 34-1.75.

- Paul Kosel

Guthmiller takes first at Groton Invite

Carly Guthmiller placed first at the Groton Invitational golf meet held Tuesday at the Fisher Grove Golf Course in Redfield. She shot a 45 and a 50 for a 95 score, one better than Moberge's Cade Peltier.

Emma Schinkel placed 13th, with a 55 and a 59 score for a total of 114. Other's participating were Shaylee Peterson with a score of 119 and Carly Gilbert with a score of 131. Ava Wienk participated in the JV match with a score of 153.

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New Leanin' Tree Graduation Cards at the GDI

We have a new selection of Leanin' Tree graduation cards at the Groton Daily Independent office. And don't forget, we also have the Jumbo cards and a nice selection of balloons.

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Weber Landscaping Greenhouse
204 N State St., Groton

Opening for the season on Friday, May 6th!



New products!
New Planters!





We have tons of hanging baskets, vegetables, annuals, garden seeds, gift cards and much, much more!



Livingston garden seeds!!!!

Hours: M-F 10-6, Sat 10-4, Sun 12-4
Look for the green flags! Questions? Call 605-380-6587

THE PANTRY



Opening May 9th at the Groton Community Center
Mondays: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Tuesdays: 4 p.m. to 8 p.m

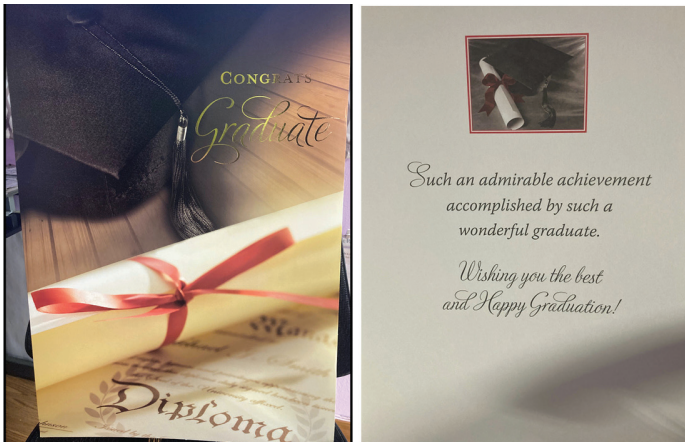
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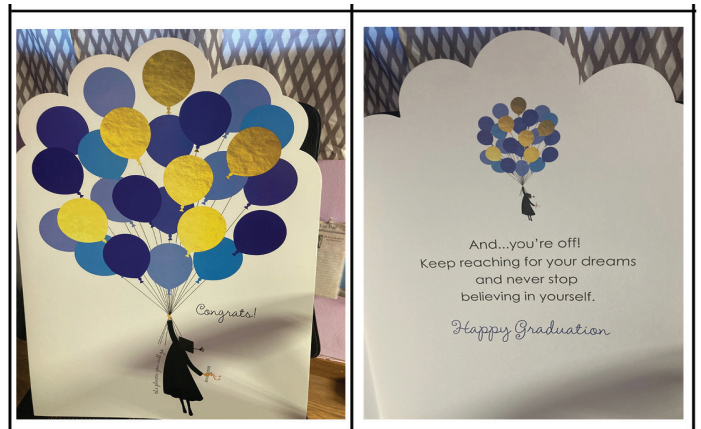
Jumbo Graduation Cards

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

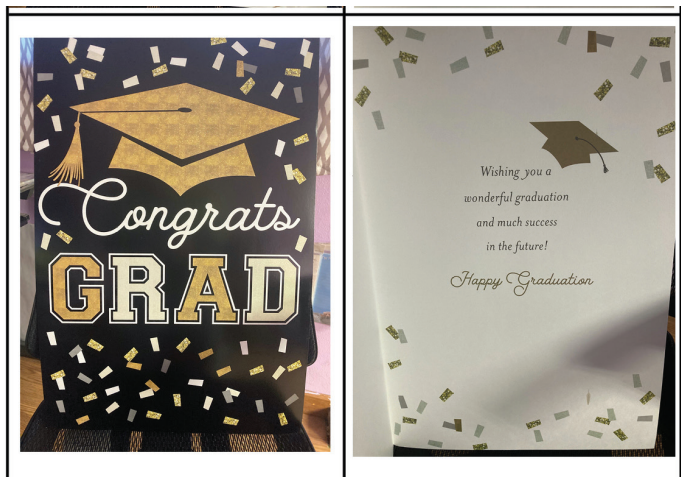
Can now be ordered on-line at 397news.com - Link on Black Bar
Or Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460 or Tina at 605-397-7285
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- NEWS
- LIVE
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PO Box 34, Groton, SD
57445-0034

www.397news.com
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More Details



New at the
GDI FIT
The Stairmaster
and Air Bike



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

Order your Graduation Balloons while we have a good supply!



#1 - \$5



#2 - \$5



#3 - \$6



#4 - \$10 - 45"



#5 - \$5



#6 - \$6



\$3.50 - 9" on a stick



#7 - \$10 - 36"



#8 - \$5



#9 - \$5



#10 - \$5



#11 - \$5



#12 - \$5



#13 - \$8 35"



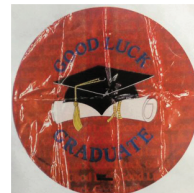
#14 - \$5



#15 - \$5



#16 - \$5



#17 - \$5



#18 - \$5



#19 - \$5



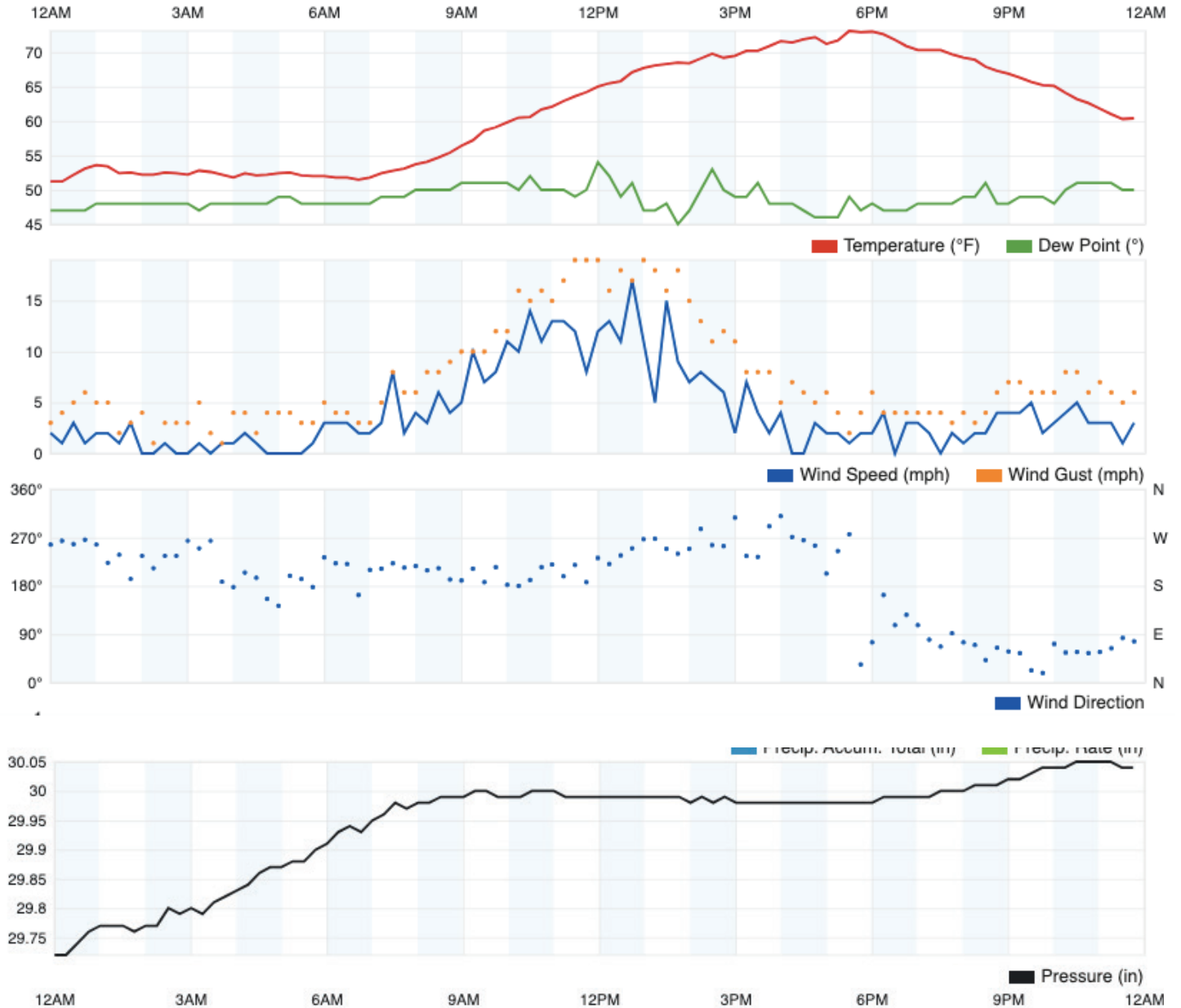
#20 - \$5

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

Groton Daily Independent




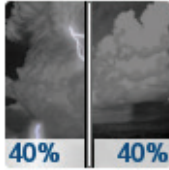

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
				
30%	50% → 20%	50%	40% 40%	
Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms then Slight Chance T-storms	Severe Thunderstorms and Breezy	Severe Thunderstorms then Chance Showers and Breezy	Sunny and Breezy
High: 74 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 85 °F	Low: 51 °F	High: 71 °F




Today's Severe Weather Outlook


May 11, 2022
2:48 AM




Timing

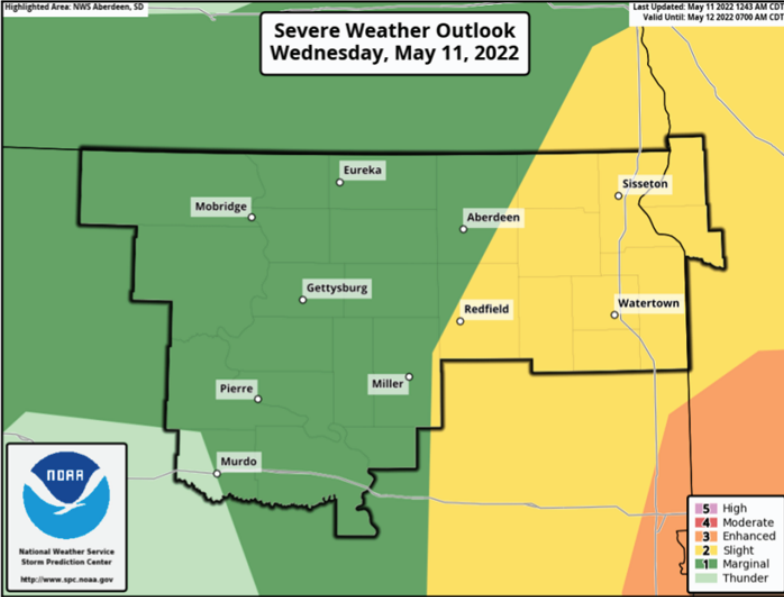
 Severe storms will develop over NE SD and then move east through the evening

Actions

 Be weather aware and ready to act. Have multiple ways to receive warning information!


Severe Threats 

-  **A Few Tornadoes**
Mainly in the orange shaded area
-  **Large Hail**
Golf ball or larger possible
-  **Damaging Wind**
60 mph gusts or higher possible



**Severe Weather Outlook
Wednesday, May 11, 2022**

Highlighted Area: NWS Aberdeen, SD | Last Updated: May 11 2022 12:43 AM CDT | Valid Until: May 12 2022 07:00 AM CDT



5 High


4 Moderate

3 Enhanced

2 Slight

1 Marginal

Thunder



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

**National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD**

Later afternoon and evening severe storms are possible for northeast SD and western MN. #sdwx #mnwx

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Thursday's Severe Weather Outlook

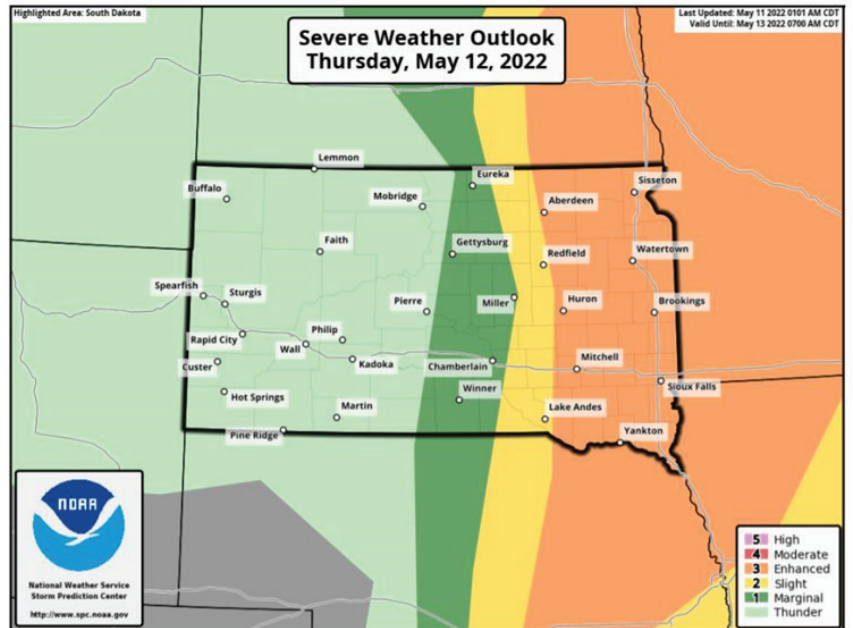
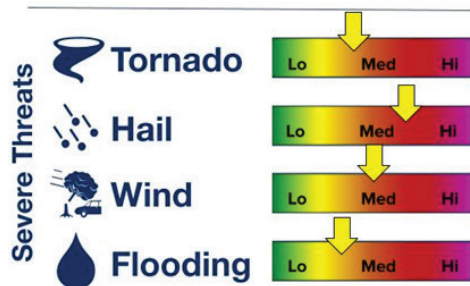
May 11, 2022
4:36 AM

Overview

Severe thunderstorms with large hail, strong winds and even isolated tornadoes possible

Timing

Severe storms may form over the James valley by late afternoon, and then move east through the evening. **Highest severe threat is from 3pm CDT - 11pm CDT**



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

More severe weather is possible on Thursday, especially within the orange shaded region on the map. All severe modes are possible from isolated tornadoes, to large hail and high winds. #sdwx #mnwx

Today in Weather History

May 11, 1966: Late season snow fell in parts of north central and northeast South Dakota and into west central Minnesota. Amounts include; 4 inches in Timber Lake; 3 in Eureka, 2 NNW of Mobridge, and Roscoe; and 2 inches in Artichoke Lake MN, Pollock, and Waubay.

May 11, 1998: Torrential rains of 2 to 4 inches with some amounts nearing 5 inches fell across a large part of Brown, Marshall, Day, Spink, and Clark counties on the evening of the 11th. This round of heavy rain only exacerbated the already extensive flooding occurring from many years of above-average precipitation. Day County was most affected by this round of heavy rain where area lakes were already at new record levels. Blue Dog, Waubay, Rush, and Bitter Lake in Day County were just a few of the lakes hard hit. In fact, extensive sandbagging was done around Blue Dog Lake to save many homes. Some residents of Blue Dog Lake said they had never seen the lake so high in over 35 years of living there. Many more roads become flooded after this heavy rain event and will remain so for quite some time. Spots on U.S. Highway 12 and U.S. Highway 25 become flooded near Holmquist and Webster. Also, more of U.S. Highway 212, 4 miles east of Clark was flooded. There remained only one road opened to the town of Grenville in northeastern Day County. In all five counties, the rising water took away many more acres of farm and pastureland, as well as drowning many crops that had already been planted. One farmer in Spink County said sixty percent of his farm was under water. Some farmhouses and outbuildings became surrounded by water leaving some families stranded. After this heavy rain, around sixty percent of the crop and pastureland in Day County and one-third of it in Spink County had been inundated by a swollen water table and several years of above normal precipitation. Overall, the continued flooding has had a tremendous impact on the economy in the five county areas. Some rainfall amounts on this day include; 4.7 inches just north of Crocker in Clark County; 4.52 at Webster; 4.01 at Doland; 3.81 at Waubay NWR; 3.60 at Turton; 2.63 at Conde; 2.60 at Groton; 2.41 at Clark; and 2.18 inches at Aberdeen.

Additional heavy rain of 2 to 4 inches fell mainly during the evening of the 11th across southern and central Hand County. Many creeks in the area became rushing torrents through the night and the day of the 12th. Also, low-lying areas and a lot of crop and pastureland were flooded. Some businesses and homes in the Miller, Saint Lawrence, Ree Heights, and Vayland areas were flooded. Some sandbagging was done to try and save some properties in Miller. U.S. Highway 14 at the east end of Miller was flooded over for several hours along with many other streets, county and township roads in southern and central Hand County. Many of the roads were damaged as the result of the flooding. Some people in Miller said they had never seen it flood this bad in 35 years. Some rainfall amounts include; 3.99 inches at Miller; 3.10 inches 3 miles south of Ree Heights; and 2.65 at Ree Heights.

1865: A tornado touched down in Philadelphia around 6 PM ET, killing one person and injuring 15 others. There was a considerable destruction of property, with 23 houses blown down, damage to the Reading Railroad depot, with the water tank, carried 150 yards. Fairmont Park was damaged to the amount of \$20,000.

1934: A tremendous dust storm affected the Plains as the Dust Bowl era was in full swing. According to The New York Times, dust "lodged itself in the eyes and throats of weeping and coughing New Yorkers," and even ships some 300 miles offshore sawdust collect on their decks.

1953: A terrifying F5 tornado rips through downtown Waco, Texas, killing 114 people and injuring nearly 600 more. More than 850 homes, 600 businesses, and 2,000 cars are destroyed or severely damaged. Losses have been estimated at \$41 million. The tornado is the deadliest in Texas history and the tenth deadliest in the US.

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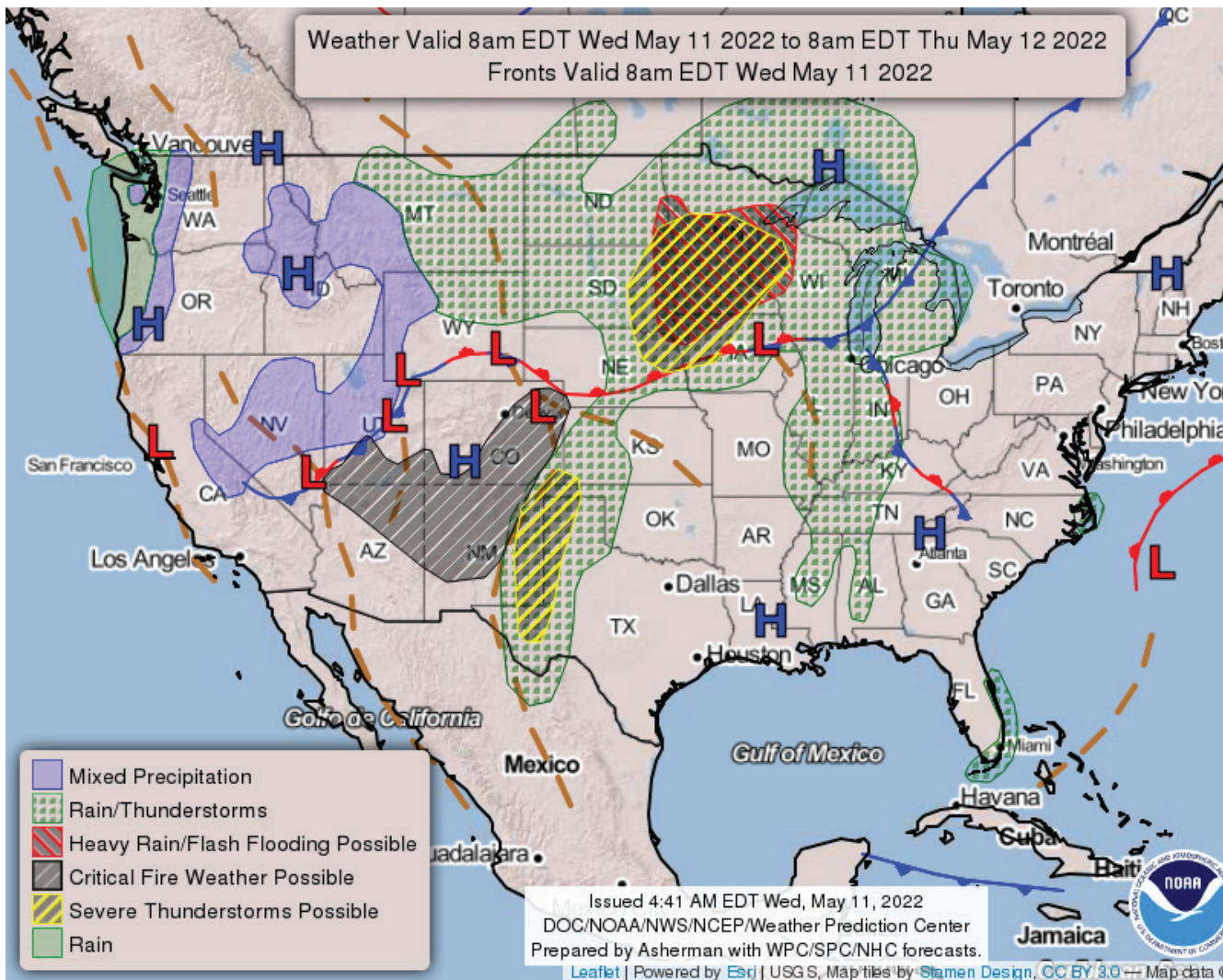
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 74 °F at 5:56 PM
Low Temp: 51 °F at 12:06 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 11:27 AM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 48 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 95 in 1900
Record Low: 18 in 1946
Average High: 69°F
Average Low: 42°F
Average Precip in May.: 1.21
Precip to date in May.: 2.08
Average Precip to date: 5.18
Precip Year to Date: 8.58
Sunset Tonight: 8:52:57 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:03:20 AM



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LEARNING TO DO GOD'S WILL

Little eight-year-old Betsy knelt beside her bed with her mother to say her nighttime prayer. "I've had a good day today, God. I hope You've planned another good one for me for tomorrow."

Does God have a special plan for each little girl, an old man, and a young lady? A plan for each of us? Really?

Before construction workers begin working on the foundation of a building, an architect has drawn elaborate plans that describe every little detail of the building. The same is true of building a ship, planting fields of grain or laying out the route for a highway. First the plan then the product. It is inconceivable that God would have no plan for us - the crowning achievement of His creation.

Even a superficial reading of the Bible reveals that all the men and women of the Bible were guided by God's plan for their lives. He had a plan for each of them, and He has a plan for each of us, as well.

Perhaps, the question is not whether or not He has a plan for us, but whether or not we even want His plan for our lives. Many try to outsmart God with their plans and end up as failures.

David prayed, "Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; may Your good Spirit lead me on level ground." He believed that God had a plan for his life. He also knew that his willingness to follow it was much like the relationship between a teacher and student. He had to be "taught" to follow that plan. Quite often students have to go through a "time of testing" before they get the answers correct. But in the end, a "passing grade" is worth it all.

Prayer: Lord, You have designed a plan for each of us. Enable us to follow it willingly each day of our lives! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; may Your good Spirit lead me on level ground. Psalm 143:10

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2022 Community Events

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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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- Colored \$42.60/6 months
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News from the Associated Press

US Interior to release report on Indigenous boarding schools

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — The U.S. Interior Department says it will release a report Wednesday that will begin to uncover the truth about the federal government's past oversight of Native American boarding schools.

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland announced an initiative last June to investigate the troubled legacy of boarding schools, which the government established and supported for decades. Indigenous children routinely were taken from their communities and forced into schools that sought to strip them of their language and culture.

Catholic, Protestant and other churches also led some of the schools, backed by U.S. laws and policies.

The Interior report was prompted by the discovery of hundreds of unmarked graves at former residential school sites in Canada that brought back painful memories for Indigenous communities. Haaland has said her agency's report will identify past schools, locate known and possible burial sites at or near those schools, and uncover the names and tribal affiliations of students.

The first volume of the report will be released Wednesday. The Interior Department hasn't said how many volumes were produced.

At least 367 boarding schools for Native Americans operated in the U.S., many of them in Oklahoma where tribes were relocated, Arizona, Alaska, New Mexico and South Dakota, according to research by the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.

Children at the schools often were subjected to military-style discipline and had their long hair cut. Early curricula focused heavily on vocational skills, including homemaking for girls. Some children never returned home.

Accounting for the number of children who died at the schools has been difficult because records weren't always kept. Ground penetrating radar has been used in some places to search for remains.

The boarding school coalition has said Interior's work will be an important step for the U.S. in reckoning with its role in the schools, but noted the agency's authority is limited.

Later this week, a U.S. House subcommittee will hear testimony on a bill to create a truth and healing commission modeled after one in Canada. Several church groups are backing the legislation.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:

Mega Millions

15-19-20-61-70, Mega Ball: 6, Megaplier: 3

(fifteen, nineteen, twenty, sixty-one, seventy; Mega Ball: six; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$86 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$68 million

US agency to release report on Indigenous boarding schools

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

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South Dakotans join panel on Native American missing, slain

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A pair of South Dakota law enforcement officials have been named to a federal commission tasked with helping improve how the government addresses a decades-long crisis of missing and murdered Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

Rapid City Police Chief Don Hedrick and Supervisory Assistant U.S. Attorney Gregg Peterman will join the panel of nearly 40 law enforcement officials, tribal leaders, social workers and survivors of violence that was announced by U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland last week.

Native American people have consistently accounted for roughly 70% of the state's missing people in recent years.

Federal, tribal, state and local officials have been trying to address disproportionately high rates of unsolved cases in which Native Americans and Alaska Natives have disappeared or been killed.

The 37-member commission, created under the Not Invisible Act, is expected to hold hearings and gather testimony before making recommendations to the Interior and Justice departments to improve coordination among agencies and to establish best practices for state, tribal and federal law enforcement. The panel also is tasked with boosting resources for survivors and victims' families.

Noem's appeal of abortion pills order put on hold

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A federal appeals court on Tuesday ordered that a case between Planned Parenthood and the state of South Dakota be put on hold until the U.S. Supreme Court issues a decision in a separate case that could overturn the landmark Roe v. Wade case that legalized abortion nationwide.

The South Dakota lawsuit is over a rule pushed by Republican Gov. Kristi Noem that would require abortion-seekers to make three separate visits to a doctor to take abortion pills. Planned Parenthood, which operates the state's only clinic that regularly provides abortions, asserted that the rule would have ended its ability to provide medicine-induced abortions.

A federal judge issued a preliminary injunction against the rule in February, finding that it likely infringed on the right to an abortion. Noem appealed that decision.

But both sides motioned for the appeal to be held in abeyance until the Supreme Court issues a decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*.

The legal fight over requirements to get abortion pills in South Dakota may soon become moot. South Dakota is one of 13 states with a trigger law that would ban abortions altogether if *Roe* is overturned.

Candidate entry suggests South Dakota AG won't seek 2nd term

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A top aide to Republican South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg announced Tuesday he is seeking the GOP nomination for state attorney general, suggesting that Ravnsborg won't seek another term as he faces an impeachment trial in the death of a pedestrian.

David Natvig, who was one of Ravnsborg's closest appointees, announced his candidacy in a video touting his work investigating drug trafficking. He will face Marty Jackley, a former state attorney general and U.S. attorney who mounted a campaign to unseat Ravnsborg as Ravnsborg faced impeachment for his actions surrounding a 2020 car crash in which he struck and killed a man.

Ravnsborg was impeached by the House last month and faces a Senate impeachment trial shortly before the three-day party convention starts June 23. He has said the Senate trial is a chance for him to be "vindicated," but has not said whether he will run for reelection if he is acquitted.

Ravnsborg didn't immediately respond to a message Tuesday.

Natvig would represent a continuation of Ravnsborg's team in the attorney general's office. He was the Brule County State's Attorney for nearly 16 years and was picked to head the Division of Criminal Investigation as Ravnsborg entered office in 2019.

"My plan is to take the success and hard work of the office of the attorney general and build on it," he said in the campaign announcement video.

Jackley said in a statement that he has been traveling the state to earn the backing of Republican Party delegates, who will decide the nominee at the convention.

"I remain committed to running a campaign on experience and my proven record as South Dakota's attorney general and U.S. attorney," he said.

Man facing possible life sentence is a lottery winner in SD

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A man facing a possible life sentence on federal drug and money laundering charges has won the lottery in South Dakota.

Canbie Thompson, 45, was featured on the state lottery's website for winning \$40,000 on a scratch-off ticket, KELO-TV reported.

Thompson earlier pleaded guilty to the charges which resulted from a larger Minnehaha County drug bust involving 11 pounds of methamphetamine and seven other defendants.

According to court documents, when police pulled Thompson over last year, they found drugs in his car. He also admitted he was involved in a money-laundering scheme to hide drug money.

Thompson faces a maximum life in prison when he is sentenced in federal court in July. He was previously sentenced to 10 1/2 years in prison on a 2010 federal drug distribution charge.

According to state lottery officials, Thompson bought his winning lottery ticket in April at Coffee Cup Fuel Stop in Plankinton.

Sri Lanka deploys troops in capital after violence, protests

By KRISHAN FRANCIS Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lankan authorities deployed armored vehicles and troops in the streets of the capital on Wednesday, two days after pro-government mobs attacked peaceful protesters, triggering a wave of violence across the country.

Security forces have been ordered to shoot those deemed to be participating in the violence, as sporadic

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acts of arson and vandalism continued despite a strict nationwide curfew that began Monday evening.

Anti-government protesters have been demanding the resignations of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his brother, who stepped down as prime minister this week, over a debt crisis that has nearly bankrupted Sri Lanka and left its people facing severe shortages of fuel, food and other essentials. In the past few days, eight people have died and more than 200 have been injured in violent attacks in which mobs set fire to buildings and vehicles.

Armored trucks with soldiers riding on top rolled into some areas of Colombo. Defying the curfew, some protesters regrouped opposite the president's office to continue demonstrations that began over three weeks ago.

Videos posted on social media showed lines of military trucks moving out of the capital, along with soldiers riding on motorbikes, and setting up checkpoints across the country amid fears that a political vacuum could pave the way for a military takeover.

The Defense Ministry's top official, Kamal Gunaratne, denied speculation of a military takeover at a news conference held with the country's army and navy chiefs.

"None of our officers has a desire to take over the government. It has never happened in our country and it is not easy to do it here," Gunaratne said. President Rajapaksa is a former top army officer and remains the country's official defense minister.

Gunaratne said the army will return to its barracks once the security situation normalizes.

The U.S. State Department expressed concern over the military deployment.

Spokesman Ned Price said it was "closely monitoring the deployment of troops, something that is of concern to us."

The prime minister's departure has created an administrative vacuum with no Cabinet, which dissolved automatically with his resignation.

Navy commander Nishantha Ulugetenne said the former prime minister, Mahinda Rajapaksa, is being protected at a naval base in Trincomalee on the northeastern coast.

After Mahinda Rajapaksa resigned, he and his family were evacuated from his official residence through thousands of protesters trying to break into the heavily guarded colonial-era building.

The Indian Embassy denied social media speculation that "certain political persons and their families have fled to India," and also rejected speculation that India was sending troops to Sri Lanka.

India's Ministry of External Affairs affirmed its support for Sri Lanka on Tuesday, saying it had extended \$3.5 billion to help overcome the economic crisis and had sent essential items such as food and medicine.

On Monday, supporters gathered at the prime minister's official residence to urge Mahinda Rajapaksa to stay in office. After the meeting, mobs backing the government beat peaceful protesters who had camped out near the prime minister's residence and president's office demanding their resignations, as police watched and did little to stop them. Across the country, angry citizens responded by attacking government supporters and ruling party politicians.

Eight people including a ruling party lawmaker and two police officers were killed and 219 were injured in the violence, the defense ministry said. In addition, 104 buildings and 60 vehicles were burned.

Pro-government mobs were chased, beaten and stripped. As word spread of where buses were taking the government supporters, people smashed them and set them on fire. Homes of government supporters were attacked and some businesses were set on fire.

The European Union called on the authorities to initiate an investigation into the events and hold accountable those who instigated and carried out the violence.

Sri Lanka is nearing bankruptcy and has suspended payments on \$7 billion in foreign loans due this year out of \$25 billion due by 2026. Its total foreign debt is \$51 billion.

The shortage of foreign currency has led to falling imports and acute shortages of essentials including food, cooking gas, fuel and medicine. For months, people have been forced to stand in long lines for hours to buy the limited stocks, with many returning with nothing.

Protesters blame the Rajapaksa brothers' alleged corruption and style of administration for the economic

crisis.

Sri Lanka has started talks with the International Monetary Fund on a rescue plan and is beginning negotiations on a debt restructuring with creditors.

The Central Bank on Wednesday urged the president and Parliament to quickly restore political stability, warning the economy faces a threat of further collapse within days.

"Even for us to make progress on debt restructuring, we need a stable kind of a government. A Cabinet, a Parliament, a prime minister, a finance minister are all needed," Central Bank Governor Nandalal Weerasinghe said.

"Without that kind of an administration, it is very difficult for us make any progress."

Democrats' bill would make Roe v. Wade law and expand it

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer says Democrats' abortion legislation is "very simple," as it would enshrine into federal law the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion nationwide.

Senate Democrats are moving quickly to try to codify the 50-year-old ruling after a draft U.S. Supreme Court opinion suggesting the court is poised to overturn the case was leaked last week. But they don't have enough votes, and Republicans are expected to block the bill in a test vote Wednesday.

But if the Democratic legislation were to become law, it would do more than just preserve the status quo.

The bill would also expand protections, invalidating many state laws that Democrats and abortion rights advocates say have infringed on the original 1973 ruling. Two Republican senators who support abortion rights have indicated they won't vote for it, instead favoring their own, narrower legislation.

A look at the legislation the Senate is voting on Wednesday:

CODIFYING ROE V. WADE

Broadly, the main objective of the legislation is to codify Roe v. Wade into federal law, meaning it would be much harder for the Supreme Court to overturn. In the five decades the ruling has been court precedent, abortion rights supporters have not been able to pass federal legislation to legalize abortion. And because the Supreme Court decided on that right, it can also take it away — however rare that move may be.

In codifying Roe, the legislation would establish that health care providers have rights to provide abortion services and that patients have a right to receive abortions.

BANNING CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS

The Democrats' bill would also end certain state laws that they say have chipped away at the original Roe v. Wade decision, banning what they say are medically unnecessary restrictions that block access to safe and accessible abortions. The court has allowed states to regulate but not ban abortion before the point of viability, around 24 weeks, resulting in a variety of state laws and restrictions that abortion-rights supporters oppose.

The bill would end bans earlier than 24 weeks, in addition to any restrictions that do not make exceptions for the patient's health or life. It would also stop states from requiring providers share "medically inaccurate" information, or from requiring additional tests or waiting periods, aimed at dissuading a patient from having an abortion.

REPUBLICAN ALTERNATIVE

Republican Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska support abortion rights but have opposed the Democratic legislation, saying it is too expansive and could threaten some religious liberties that states have sought to protect.

They have introduced legislation that would hew closer to what the court currently allows, more generally prohibiting states from imposing an "undue burden" on the ability of a woman to choose whether to have an abortion prior to fetal viability. It is not expected to get a vote.

NEXT STEPS

Without the votes to pass their bill, Democrats have few options to block the eventual court ruling, if it

overturns Roe v. Wade.

Democratic leaders have signaled that they instead intend to take the fight to voters ahead of this year's midterms.

"We've got to win elections," Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., said Tuesday.

Wartime birth amid the air raid sirens in Ukraine hospital

By RENATA BRITO and CARA ANNA Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — It's easy to tell the delivery room from the rest of the main maternity hospital in Ukraine's western city of Lviv, even from the outside. Its exterior wall is piled high with sandbags.

In the dim basement, where heavily pregnant women must bend low to avoid the water pipes, there is a delivery table in case the baby comes amid the air raid sirens.

Stress is part of childbirth, but it's not meant to be like this.

At least 49 attacks have targeted medical facilities in Ukraine since the Feb. 24 Russian invasion, including a maternity hospital bombed in March in Mariupol, where Associated Press images of a wounded pregnant woman being rushed from the rubble on a stretcher were seen around the world, personifying the horror of the attack on civilians. The woman and her baby later died.

About 200 pregnant women displaced by Russia's invasion have come to the hospital in Lviv since the war began. More than 100 have given birth, said Maria Malachynska, director of the Lviv state regional perinatal center. They come from some of the communities the world now knows by name: Mariupol, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Kyiv.

"This stress which women have, in times of war, it influences a lot and we see a lot of complications," Malachynska said.

Lilia Myronovich, who heads the natal department at another hospital, Lviv municipal maternity, said she also has seen more premature births than normal. "The women are stressed," she said. "Especially ladies who come from other districts."

One woman from Mariupol at the Lviv state perinatal center cries all the time, traumatized after making it out of the besieged city. "They were starving," Malachynska said. "We are even helping them with clothes, with prams, because they don't have anything to give to their children."

Outside the director's window, a new shelter was being dug. It will be large enough to hold the incubators needed for babies born prematurely.

Upstairs, expectant mother Kateryna Galmalova fled Mykolaiv, a city now occupied by Russian forces, with her husband as tanks were approaching and after three nights sleeping in the hallway amid explosions.

"I had high blood pressure the first few days from this news" of the war, she said. "Because you don't understand what to do next, where to go, where and how to give birth."

She fled Mykolaiv with just her documents, spare underwear and the clothes she wore. She was overwhelmed by the kindness she found in Lviv, where she has no family, she said, and which quickly became a haven for hundreds of thousands of people displaced from more threatened parts of Ukraine.

Suddenly a siren sounded, sending patients and staff to the basement until the alert was lifted half an hour later.

"I do not want children to be born in war," Galmalova said as she waited underground scrolling through social media on her phone, where she learned of a woman forced to give birth in a bunker. "And I don't want to give birth in a basement or a bunker. I do not want any child to be born in such a place."

Another expectant mother, Yana Tananakina, fled from the capital, Kyiv, and wants to return. "Life goes on," said her husband, Oleksander. "Every war ends. And this one will end, too." He was so pleasantly surprised by the Lviv maternity hospital that the couple is now considering having their next child there, too.

In a bright and quiet room, Natalya Suhotsha beamed at her newborn twins, Zlata and Sophia. She fled Hostomel, on the outskirts of Kyiv, in the early days of the war when the Russians began to bombard a nearby airport. Her husband gave her five minutes to gather things and go.

She grabbed the baby clothes and little else before escaping to Lviv, where she was born and where

her family has a home.

Now, looking at her baby girls makes her forget about the war. She wishes the same happy distraction for every woman.

"We just talk about pretty babies," the 24-year-old said of her conversations with other displaced new mothers at the hospital. "We don't talk about the war. Every time you talk about the war, you stress."

Her mother, a nurse, had promised to be there for the twins' birth. But she remained in Hostomel as the others fled. Natalya said she hopes to return to her mother soon. Her work in real estate is also waiting.

"My work was about the future," she said. "It was for new families. And it's all crushed."

Now it's time to rebuild, she said.

Group of Ukrainian athletes train in Albania, miss home

By LLAZAR SEMINI Associated Press

ELBASAN, Albania (AP) — After fleeing from a war zone, a group of young Ukrainian track and field athletes have made their way to safety in Albania. Their minds are still between the two countries.

"I miss my mother's food and grandmother's advice," said 17-year-old Maria Lariva, who throws the shot put. "I miss my coach and the stadium, my city, home, my country, everything."

Lariva and seven other teenage athletes were evacuated from Bakhmut, a city in the Donetsk region that is part of Ukraine's industrial heartland — where Russia has focused its fighting after its early failure to sweep across the country and overrun the capital.

Their families have stayed behind.

"I talk with my family every day. Many times a day," said 17-year-old Valentyn Loboda, a pole vaulter who has been training in the long jump since the group arrived in Elbasan on March 31. "We speak about how is going on in Ukraine, how's going on in Albania."

The eight athletes are training at the Sport Club Elbasani with help from the Albanian Olympic committee and the city itself, which is located about 45 kilometers (30 miles) south of the capital Tirana.

Leaving home was hard, and the train ride was dangerous.

"(Everybody) lied down, closed doors and windows for about 30 minutes fearing the aircrafts flying quite close," Lariva said, describing the journey from Kramatorsk to Dubno.

The group then made their way to Lutsk before entering Poland and taking a flight to Albania.

The athletes compete in various sports in track and field. Some of them are aiming to reach the required standards to take part in the World Athletics U20 Championship in Cali, Colombia, in early August.

Lariva, playing a video sent to her from her mother showing a giant whole near her home created by a bomb, said she breaks down in tears when her mother doesn't respond to phone calls.

"During shelling there is no internet," she said.

Pavlo Zadorozhiy, a 71-year-old coach, is worried that this experience will affect the potential career of his athletes. But he said he is "more concerned of the people dying in my country, the children, and seeing horrible views every day, broken houses."

Artin Kovaci, the head of the Elbasani sports club, said the hosts try to fulfil "any request they have," adding that a club official accompanies the athletes almost all day long.

There was even a pleasant surprise when Albanian long jumper Izmir Smajlaj came to Elbasan to meet with Loboda. Smajlaj won the gold medal at the 2017 European indoor championships in Belgrade, Serbia, and is the country's record holder in the event.

"We were friends in Facebook," Loboda said. "It was great that Izmir, the great athlete, came to meet me."

Loboda said he hopes to have a successful sports career and one day return home to Ukraine to teach English.

"I want to go back because I miss my family," Loboda said. "Albania is a good country, but we are Ukrainian. We want to (go to) our home, to our parents."

Ukrainians stop Russian gas at one hub, make gains in east

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By ELENA BECATOROS and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press
ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine stopped the flow of Russian natural gas on Wednesday through a hub that feeds European homes and stoves, while Kyiv's military claimed it made some gains in grinding battles near a key northeastern city.

In 11 weeks, the war has played out on battlefields in Ukrainian towns and cities but also in energy and financial markets, as Ukraine's allies in the West have sought to deprive Russia of money needed to fund the war with sanctions and energy embargoes.

The practical impact of Wednesday's gas cutoff for European households was not immediately clear: Ukraine's pipeline operator said it would switch supply to another hub, and an analyst said transit should not be affected.

But Russia's state-owned giant Gazprom indicated some falloff: It said it was sending gas supplies to Europe through Ukraine in the amount of 72 million cubic meters, apparently down 25% from the day before.

Preliminary flow data suggested higher rates moving through a second station in Ukrainian-controlled territory. Russian gas flows to Europe through other pipelines as well.

It was also not clear if Russia would take any immediate hit, since it has long-term contracts and other ways of transporting gas.

But the move could hold symbolic significance as the first time Ukraine has disrupted the flow westward. It comes as the European Union has sought to reduce its dependence on Russian energy, phasing out its use of coal and considering doing the same for oil. Gas presents a more complicated problem, given both how much Europe uses and the technical difficulties in sourcing it elsewhere.

On the battlefield, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukraine's military had pushed Russian forces out of four villages near Kharkiv — the country's second largest city, and a key to Russia's offensive in the eastern Donbas.

After his forces failed to overrun the capital in the early days of the war, Russian President Vladimir Putin switched his focus to the region, which is Ukraine's industrial heartland and has also been the site of fighting between Moscow-backed separatists and Ukrainian troops for years.

Zelenskyy suggested the military was gradually pushing Russian troops away from Kharkiv. As his forces appear to gather steam in a nascent counteroffensive, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba voiced what appeared to be increasing confidence — and expanded goals — on Tuesday. He suggested to the Financial Times newspaper that Ukraine could go beyond just forcing Russia back to areas it held before the invasion began 11 weeks ago.

Kuleba's statement seemed to reflect political ambitions more than battlefield realities: Russian forces have made advances in the Donbas and control more of it than they did before the war began. But it highlights how Ukraine has stymied a larger, better-armed Russian military, surprising many who had anticipated a much quicker end to the conflict.

Meanwhile, the British Defense Ministry said Ukraine was targeting Russian forces on Snake Island in the northwestern Black Sea, in an effort to disrupt Moscow's attempts to expand its influence.

Russia has sought to reinforce its garrison on Snake Island, while "Ukraine has successfully struck Russian air defenses and resupply vessels with Bayraktar drones," the ministry said on Twitter. It said Russian resupply vessels had minimum protection after the Russian Navy retreated to Crimea after losing the flagship of its Black Sea fleet.

Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press show fighting there.

But the statement warned: "If Russia consolidates its position on (Snake) Island with strategic air defense and coastal defense cruise missiles, they could dominate the northwestern Black Sea."

Ukraine's natural gas pipeline operator said it would stop Russian shipments through a hub in a part of eastern Ukraine controlled by Moscow-backed separatists because of interference from "occupying forces," including the apparent siphoning of gas. It also complained about interference along the route last month.

Benchmark European gas futures seesawed Tuesday and Wednesday on the news, meaning consumers may face higher energy bills — at a time of already rising prices.

Higher prices would benefit Russia, though it has massive foreign reserves now given the rapid rise in

crude oil prices in recent months as global travel and business resumed in the wake of mass coronavirus pandemic lockdowns.

The hub in question handles about a third of Russian gas passing through Ukraine to Western Europe. Russia's state-owned natural gas giant Gazprom put the figure at about a quarter.

The move came as Western powers have been looking to ratchet up economic pressure on Moscow and bolster Ukraine's defenders. The U.S. House of Representatives approved a \$40 billion Ukraine aid package Tuesday.

On Wednesday, Ukrainian officials said a Russian rocket attack targeted an area around Zaporizhzhia, destroying unspecified infrastructure. There were no immediate reports of casualties. The southeastern city has been a refuge for many civilians who have fled a Russian siege in the devastated port city of Mariupol.

With much of the fighting focused in the east, some analysts suggested Russia may be trying to spread Kyiv's forces thin, by striking the southern port of Odesa, a major gateway for grain that feeds the world as well as a key transit point for Western weapons. Russia targeted the city with several missile strikes this week, the Ukrainians said Tuesday.

To protect Odesa, Kyiv might need to shift forces to the southwest, drawing them away from the eastern front in the Donbas, where they are fighting near Kharkiv to push the Russians back across the border.

Russian aircraft twice launched unguided missiles Tuesday at the Sumy area northeast of Kharkiv, according to the Ukrainian border guard service. The region's governor said the missiles hit several residential buildings, but no one was killed. Russian mortars hit the Chernihiv region, along the Ukrainian border with Belarus, but there was no word on casualties.

Al Jazeera reporter killed during Israeli raid in West Bank

By JOSEPH KRAUSS and FARES AKRAM Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A female journalist for Al Jazeera was shot and killed while covering an Israeli raid in the occupied West Bank town of Jenin early Wednesday. The broadcaster and a reporter who was wounded in the incident blamed Israeli forces, while Israel claimed there was evidence the two were hit by Palestinian gunfire.

Shireen Abu Akleh, a well-known Palestinian reporter for the broadcaster's Arabic language channel who is also a U.S. citizen, was shot and died soon afterward. Ali Samoudi, another Palestinian journalist, was hospitalized in stable condition after being shot in the back.

The Qatar-based network interrupted its broadcast to announce her death. In a statement flashed on its channel, it called on the international community to "condemn and hold the Israeli occupation forces accountable for deliberately targeting and killing our colleague."

"We pledge to prosecute the perpetrators legally, no matter how hard they try to cover up their crime, and bring them to justice," Al Jazeera said.

The Israeli military said its forces came under attack with heavy gunfire and explosives while operating in Jenin, and that they fired back. The military said it was investigating "and looking into the possibility that the journalists were hit by the Palestinian gunmen."

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said that based on the information they had already gathered, "there is a considerable chance that armed Palestinians, who fired wildly, were the ones who brought about the journalist's unfortunate death."

Israeli officials pointed to video footage in which Palestinian gunmen can be seen racing through a narrow street, one of them shouting that a soldier has been wounded. The officials say no Israelis were hurt in the incident, indicating the gunmen shot a journalist instead.

A separate video aired by Al Jazeera shows Abu Akleh lying motionless on the side of a road next to a wall as another journalist crouches nearby and a man screams for an ambulance. Gunfire rings out in the background. Both reporters were wearing blue flak jackets clearly marked with the word "PRESS."

It was unclear if the two videos were shot at the same location, and neither one showed the source of

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the gunfire.

Israel said it had proposed a joint investigation and autopsy with the Palestinian Authority, which refused the offer.

The Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the occupied West Bank and cooperates with Israel on security matters, condemned what it said was a "shocking crime" committed by Israeli forces.

Abu Akleh, 51, was born in Jerusalem. She began working for Al Jazeera in 1997 and regularly reported from across the Palestinian territories.

Samoudi, who was working as her producer, told The Associated Press they were among a group of seven reporters who went to cover the raid early Wednesday. He said they were all wearing protective gear that clearly marked them as reporters, and they passed by Israeli troops so the soldiers would know that they were there.

He said a first shot missed them, then a second struck him, and a third killed Abu Akleh. He said there were no militants or other civilians in the area — only the reporters and the army. He said the military's suggestion that they were shot by militants was a "complete lie."

Shaza Hanaysheh, another Palestinian journalist among the reporters, similar account in an interview with Al Jazeera's Arabic channel, saying there were no clashes or shooting in the immediate area.

She said that when the shots rang out she and Abu Akleh ran toward a tree to take shelter.

"I reached the tree before Shireen. She fell on the ground," Hanaysheh said. "Every time I extended my hand toward Shireen, the soldiers fired at us."

Brig. Gen. Ran Kochav, the Israeli military's chief spokesman, told army radio that the two journalists were "armed with cameras" and standing near Palestinian gunmen. He said the militants were "unprofessional people, terrorists, who were shooting at our troops" and likely hit the reporters instead.

Israel has carried out near-daily raids in the occupied West Bank in recent weeks amid a series of deadly attacks inside Israel, many of them carried out by Palestinians from Jenin. The town, and particularly its refugee camp, has long been known as a militant bastion.

Hundreds of Palestinians, including several masked gunmen, marched through Jenin in a funeral procession, carrying Abu Akleh's body draped with a Palestinian flag and a blue press vest. Her body was to be taken to Ramallah, the seat of the Palestinian government, before burial in Jerusalem.

Condolences poured in from across the Arab world, where the veteran journalist was well-known for her coverage of the Palestinians.

Qatar, which funds Al Jazeera, condemned the killing "in the strongest terms," calling it a "flagrant violation of international humanitarian law" and a "blatant attack on media freedom."

The U.S. ambassador to Israel, Tom Nides, tweeted that he was "very sad" to learn of Abu Akleh's death and called for a "thorough investigation." He also confirmed she was an American citizen.

Jordan's foreign minister, Ayman Safadi, called the shooting "a heinous crime, and a flagrant attack on press freedom whose perpetrators must be held accountable."

In a separate incident on Wednesday, the Palestinian Health Ministry said an 18-year-old, identified as Thair al-Yazouri, was shot and killed by Israeli forces near Ramallah. The military said Palestinians were hurling rocks at an army post near a West Bank settlement and that soldiers had responded with rubber bullets. The bullets are meant to be nonlethal but can be deadly.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war, and the Palestinians want the territory to form the main part of their future state. Nearly 3 million Palestinians live in the territory under Israeli military rule. Israel has built more than 130 settlements across the West Bank that are home to nearly 500,000 Jewish settlers, who have full Israeli citizenship.

Israelis have long been critical of Al Jazeera's coverage, but authorities generally allow its journalists to operate freely. Another Al Jazeera reporter, Givara Budeiri, was briefly detained last year during a protest in Jerusalem and treated for a broken hand, which her employer blamed on rough treatment by police.

Relations between Israeli forces and the media, especially Palestinian journalists, are strained. A number of Palestinian reporters have been wounded by rubber-coated bullets or tear gas while covering demonstrations in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. Two Palestinian journalists were shot and killed by Israeli

forces while filming violent protests along the Gaza frontier in 2018.

In November of that year, AP cameraman Rashed Rashid was covering a protest near the Gaza frontier when he was shot in the left ankle, apparently by Israeli fire. He was wearing protective gear that clearly identified him as a journalist, and was standing with other journalists some 600 meters (660 yards) away from the Israeli border when he was hit. The military has never acknowledged the shooting.

During last year's war between Israel and Gaza's militant Hamas rulers, an Israeli airstrike destroyed the building in Gaza City housing the offices of The Associated Press and Al Jazeera. Residents were warned to evacuate and no one was hurt in the strike. Israel said Hamas was using the building as a command center but has provided no evidence.

US inflation might have dipped last month from 40-year high

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — After a year of soaring prices for gas, food and other necessities, inflation may have eased slightly in April from a 40-year high, the first slowdown after seven consecutive months of worsening price increases.

The government is expected to report Wednesday that consumer prices jumped 8.1% last month compared with a year earlier, according to a survey of economists by data provider FactSet. That would be down from the 8.5% year-over-year surge in March, the highest since 1981.

The forecasted drop in annual inflation, if it occurs, would add to other signs that consumer inflation may finally be peaking. Month-to-month price increases are also easing, along with some other inflation gauges.

Yet the April rate would still mark the second-highest inflation in four decades and an ongoing burden for families, especially lower-income Americans. And it would be only a modest step in a likely long and arduous road back to the mild 2% inflation that the Fed has set as its target level. Many economists expect annual price increases to settle into a 5% to 6% range by year's end, a historically high level that will probably exceed average wage gains.

"It's too early to declare victory," said Jose Torres, senior economist at Interactive Brokers. "It's not going to get any worse, but it's still at an uncomfortably high level."

Beyond the financial strain for households, inflation is posing a serious political problem for President Joe Biden and congressional Democrats in the midterm election season, with Republicans arguing that Biden's \$1.9 trillion financial support package last March overheated the economy by flooding it with stimulus checks, enhanced unemployment aid and child tax credit payments.

Biden sought to take the initiative Tuesday and declared inflation "the No. 1 problem facing families today" and "my top domestic priority."

Biden blamed chronic supply chain snarls related to the swift economic rebound from the pandemic, as well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, for igniting inflation. He said his administration will help ease price increases by shrinking the government's budget deficit and by fostering competition in industries, like meatpacking, that are dominated by a few industry giants.

Still, new disruptions overseas or other unforeseen problems could always send U.S. inflation back up to new highs. If the European Union decides, for example, to cut off Russian oil, gas prices in the United States would likely accelerate. China's COVID lockdowns are worsening supply problems and hurting growth in the world's second-biggest economy.

Earlier signs that U.S. inflation might be peaking didn't last. Price increases decelerated last August and September, suggesting at the time that higher inflation might be temporary, as many economists — and officials at the Federal Reserve — had suggested. But prices shot up again in October, prompting Fed Chair Jerome Powell to start shifting policy toward higher rates.

This time, though, several factors are pointing to an inflation peak. Gas costs, which soared in March after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, fell on average in April and likely slowed inflation. Used car prices are also expected to have dropped last month. Automakers' supply chains have unraveled a bit, and new car sales have risen.

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Another factor will be how sharp price increases from a year ago affect the new inflation calculations. The prices of many goods spiked last spring as the economy reopened and a surge in demand overwhelmed supplies. But this year, monthly price increases for many goods have been slowing. That may have effect of easing the year-over-year inflation rate.

Furniture costs, for example, had jumped 1.8% just in March 2021 and 2.1% the next month. Yet this March, furniture rose only 0.6%, potentially lowering year-over-year inflation.

Excluding the especially volatile food and energy categories, economists have forecast that so-called core prices jumped 6% in the 12 months ending in April, down from 6.4% in March. That would be the first such slowdown since August. Overall inflation is also expected to have slowed from March to April.

While food and energy have endured some the worst price spikes of the past year, analysts often monitor the core figure to get a sense of underlying inflation. Core inflation also typically rises more slowly than the overall price increases but can also take longer to decline. Rents, for example, are rising at a historically fast pace, and there is little sign of that trend reversing anytime soon.

The unexpected persistence of high inflation has caused the Fed to embark on what may become its fastest series of interest rate increases in 33 years. Last week, the Fed raised its benchmark short-term rate by a half-point, its steepest increase in two decades. And Powell signaled that more such sharp rate hikes are coming.

The Powell Fed is seeking to pull off the notoriously difficult — and risky — task of cooling the economy enough to slow inflation without causing a recession. Economists say such an outcome is possible but unlikely with inflation this high.

In the meantime, by some measures Americans' wages are rising at the fastest pace in 20 years. Their higher pay enables more people to at least partly keep up with higher prices. But employers typically respond by charging customers more to cover their higher labor costs, which, in turn, heightens inflationary pressures.

Last Friday's jobs report for April included data on hourly pay that suggested that wage gains were slowing, which, if it continues, could help ease inflation this year.

China labels WHO remarks on 'zero-COVID' 'irresponsible'

BEIJING (AP) — China on Wednesday defended sticking to its strict "zero-COVID" approach, calling critical remarks from the head of the World Health Organization "irresponsible."

The response from the Foreign Ministry came after WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he had been discussing with Chinese experts the need for a different approach in light of new knowledge about the virus.

"When we talk about the 'zero-COVID,' we don't think that it's sustainable, considering the behavior of the virus now and what we anticipate in the future," Tedros said.

Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a daily briefing Wednesday, "We hope that relevant people can view China's policy of epidemic prevention and control objectively and rationally, get more knowledge about the facts and refrain from making irresponsible remarks."

"The Chinese government's policy of epidemic prevention and control can stand the test of history, and our prevention and control measures are scientific and effective," Zhao said. "China is one of the most successful countries in epidemic prevention and control in the world, which is obvious to all of the international community."

Earlier Wednesday, deputy director of Shanghai's Center for Disease Control Wu Huanyu reaffirmed the approach's importance in eliminating a waning outbreak. He told reporters that while progress has been made, relaxing prevention and control measures could allow the virus to rebound.

"At the same time, now is also the most difficult and critical moment for our city to achieve zero-COVID," Wu said at a daily briefing.

Wu gave no indication he was aware of the comments by Tedros.

Tedros was joined by Mike Ryan, the WHO's emergencies chief, who said all pandemic control actions

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should "show due respect to individual and human rights."

Countries need to "balance the control measures, the impact on society, the impact on the economy. That is not always an easy calibration to make," Ryan said.

The incident marked a rare public show of friction between China and the WHO, which has been accused of succumbing to Chinese pressure to avoid criticism and awkward questions about the origins of the virus that was first detected in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019.

China's ruling Communist Party has strictly controlled all discussion about its controversial approach, which aims to totally stamp out outbreaks, and said it would tolerate no criticism, questioning or distortion of the strategy. The entirely state-controlled media did not report on the comments by Tedros and Ryan and references to them on the Chinese internet appeared to have been removed by censors.

The ruthless and often chaotic implementation of zero-COVID has stirred considerable resentment in Shanghai, where some residents have been under lockdown for more than a month. As of Wednesday, more than 2 million people in the city remained confined to their residential compounds, while restrictions had been slightly relaxed for most of the other 23 million.

However, the easing appears to now be on hold, even as the number of new cases falls in the city that is home to China's busiest port, main stock market and thousands of Chinese and foreign firms. People in some areas have been ordered to stay home again after having been let out for limited shopping in recent weeks. On Tuesday, service was suspended on the last two subway lines that were still operating.

Complaints have centered on shortages of food and other daily necessities and the forced removal of thousands of people to quarantine centers after having tested positive or having been in contact with an infected person, standard procedure in China's zero-COVID approach.

Along with the human cost, the adherence to "zero-COVID" as many other countries loosen restrictions and try to live with the virus is exacting a growing economic toll.

However, the party under leader Xi Jinping shows no sign of backing off amid efforts to ensure stability and shore up its authority ahead of a major party congress this fall.

Chinese experts such as Wu have been careful to toe the party line, saying the strategy has been effective in limiting the official death toll in mainland China and that any let-up risks sparking a major new surge.

The daily number of new cases in Shanghai reported on Wednesday had fallen to less than 1,500, down from a peak of 26,000 in mid-April. Seven more COVID-19-related deaths were reported, raising the toll from the outbreak to 560.

While China says more than 88% of its population is fully vaccinated, the rate is considerably lower among the vulnerable elderly. Questions have also been raised about the efficacy of Chinese-produced vaccines compared to those from Europe and the United States.

In the capital Beijing, residents have been ordered to undergo mass testing in a bid to prevent a major outbreak like that in Shanghai. The city, which reported 37 new cases on Wednesday, has locked down individual buildings and residential compounds, shut about 60 subway stations and banned dining at restaurants, allowing only takeout and delivery.

The vast Forbidden City museum complex, the ancient home of China's former emperors, will also be closing from Thursday to "reduce the danger of virus transmission in society posed by the circulation of people," it said in a statement.

Most Great Barrier Reef coral studied this year was bleached

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — More than 90% of Great Barrier Reef coral surveyed this year was bleached in the fourth such mass event in seven years in the world's largest coral reef ecosystem, Australian government scientists said.

Bleaching is caused by global warming, but this is the reef's first bleaching event during a La Niña weather pattern, which is associated with cooler Pacific Ocean temperatures, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Authority said in its annual report released late Tuesday that found 91% of the areas surveyed were affected.

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Bleaching in 2016, 2017 and 2020 damaged two-thirds of the coral in the famed reef off Australia's eastern coast.

Coral bleaches as a heat stress response and scientists hope most of the coral will recover from the current event, said David Wachenfeld, chief scientist at the authority, which manages the reef ecosystem.

"The early indications are that the mortality won't be very high," Wachenfeld said on Wednesday.

"We are hoping that we will see most of the coral that is bleached recover and we will end up with an event rather more like 2020 when, yes, there was mass bleaching, but there was low mortality," Wachenfeld added.

The bleaching events in 2016 and 2017 led to "quite high levels of coral mortality," Wachenfeld said.

Simon Bradshaw, a researcher at the Climate Council, an Australia-based group that tracks climate change, said the report demonstrated the reef's survival depended on steep global emission cuts within the decade.

"This is heartbreaking. This is deeply troubling," Bradshaw said. "It shows that our Barrier Reef really is in very serious trouble indeed."

Last December, the first month of the Southern Hemisphere summer, was the hottest December the reef had experienced since 1900. A "marine heatwave" had set in by late February, the report said.

A United Nations delegation visited the reef in March to assess whether the reef's World Heritage listing should be downgraded due to the ravages of climate change.

In July last year, Australia garnered enough international support to defer an attempt by UNESCO, the United Nations' cultural organization, to downgrade the reef's World Heritage status to "in danger" because of damage caused by climate change.

But the question will be back on the World Heritage Committee's agenda at its annual meeting next month.

The Great Barrier Reef accounts for around 10% of the world's coral reef ecosystems and was named because of the extensive hazards it posed to 18th century seafarers. The network of more than 2,500 reefs covers 348,000 square kilometers (134,000 square miles).

Coral is made up of tiny animals called polyps that are fed by microscopic algae that live inside the reefs and are sensitive to changes in water temperatures.

The algae provide the reefs with their kaleidoscope of colors and produce sugars through photosynthesis that provide the coral with most of its nutrients.

Rising ocean temperatures turn the chemicals that the algae produce into toxins. The coral turns white as it effectively spits the poisonous algae out.

Heat stress beyond a few weeks can lead the coral to die of starvation.

The latest bleaching is an unwelcome reminder of the differences in climate change policy among Australian politicians.

The conservative government seeking reelection on May 21 has less ambitious emission reduction targets than the center-left opposition is promising.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison's Liberal Party aims to reduce Australia's emissions by 26% to 28% below 2005 levels by 2030.

The opposition Labor Party has promised to reduce emissions by 43% by the end of the decade.

Morrison was widely criticized at the U.N. climate conference last November for failing to set a more ambitious target.

The environmental group Greenpeace Australia Pacific said in a statement the extent of the latest bleaching was "another damning indictment of the Morrison government which has failed to protect the reef and exacerbated the problem through its support of fossil fuels."

US, Western Europe fret over uncertain Ukraine war endgame

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — An interminable and unwinnable war in Europe? That's what NATO leaders fear and are bracing for as Russia's war in Ukraine grinds into its third month with little sign of a decisive military victory for either side and no resolution in sight.

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The possibility of a stalemate is fueling concerns that Ukraine may remain a deadly European battlefield and a source of continental and global instability for months, or even years, to come.

Energy and food security are the most immediate worries, but massive Western support for Ukraine while the world is still emerging from coronavirus pandemic and struggling to deal with the effects of climate change could deepen the toll on the global economy. And should Russia choose to escalate, the risk of a broader conflict rises.

The U.S. and its allies are pumping a steady stream of lethal weaponry into Ukraine to keep it in the fight. While most analysts say Kyiv is holding its own at the least, those infusions must continue if they are to support President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's vow to win, or at least continue to match or beat back, Moscow's advances.

Just as Russian President Vladimir Putin has not signaled a willingness to intensify the invasion with either a general mobilization of troops or the use of unconventional arms, neither has he shown any sign of backing down. Nor has Zelenskyy, who is now asserting that Ukraine will not only beat back the current Russian invasion but regain control of Crimea and other areas that Russia has occupied or otherwise controlled since 2014.

"It's very difficult to see how you could get a negotiated solution at this point," said Ian Kelly, a retired veteran diplomat who served as U.S. ambassador to Georgia, another former Soviet republic on which Russia has territorial designs.

"There's no way that Ukraine is going to step back," Kelly said. "They think they're gonna win."

At the same time, Kelly said that no matter how many miscalculations Putin has made about the strength and will of Ukraine to resist or the unity and resolve of the NATO allies, Putin cannot accept defeat or anything short of a scenario that he can claim has achieved success.

"It would be political suicide for Putin to withdraw," Kelly said. "It's very difficult to see how you could get a negotiated solution at this point. Neither side is willing to stop fighting and probably the likeliest outcome is a war that lasts a couple of years. Ukraine would be a festering sore in the middle of Europe."

U.S. officials, starting with President Joe Biden, seem to agree, even after Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin raised eyebrows by saying after a visit to Kyiv last month that Washington's goal is not only to help Ukraine defend itself but to "weaken" Russia to the point where it does not pose a threat.

Putin "doesn't have a way out right now, and I'm trying to figure out what we do about that," Biden said on Monday even after he signed legislation designed to reboot the World War II-era "lend-lease" program and appealed to Congress to approve a \$40 billion package of military and humanitarian aid for Ukraine.

So what to do? French President Emmanuel Macron has placed a premium on a negotiated settlement that saves face for both Russia and Ukraine.

"We will have a peace to build tomorrow, let us never forget that," Macron said on Monday. "We will have to do this with Ukraine and Russia around the table. The end of the discussion and the negotiation will be set by Ukraine and Russia. But it will not be done in denial, nor in exclusion of each other, nor even in humiliation."

U.S. officials aren't so sure, although they allow that the endgame is up to Ukraine.

"Our strategy is to see to it that Ukraine emerges from this victorious," State Department spokesman Ned Price said this week. "Ukraine will do so at the negotiating table. Our goal is to strengthen Ukraine's position at that negotiating table as we continue to place mounting costs on the Russian Federation."

But, the high-stakes uncertainty over what constitutes a "victorious" Ukraine has alarmed officials in some European capitals, notably those in the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which are NATO members bordering Russia and especially worried about Moscow's possible future intentions.

For Baltic nations and other countries on NATO's eastern flank, the threat is real and memories of Soviet occupation and rule remain fresh. Concessions to Russia in Ukraine will only embolden Putin to push further west, they say.

"To be honest, we are still not talking about the endgame," Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis lamented to the The Associated Press in an interview on Monday. He said any territorial conces-

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sions in Ukraine would usher in a world where the “rules-based order” has been replaced by a “jungle rules-based order.”

Landsbergis suggested that Western nations issue public statements about what success would be. “Where we would consider what we would take for victory, actual victory? What would be the scenario that we would like?”

Landsbergis has been outspoken in calls for Putin to be ousted as Russia’s leader, going well beyond the U.S. position and that of other NATO leaders. He says regime change in Moscow is the only way to protect European and Western security in the long term.

“Coming from me it’s much easier to say we need regime change in Russia, so we’ve been quite blunt and open about it,” he said. “Maybe for United States it’s much more much more difficult to be open about it, but still, at some point we have to talk about this because it’s so important.”

Trump-backed US Rep. Alex Mooney wins W.Va. GOP primary

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — In an early victory for a Donald Trump-endorsed candidate at the start of midterm season, Rep. Alex Mooney on Tuesday beat fellow incumbent Rep. David McKinley in West Virginia’s 2nd Congressional District Republican primary.

“Donald Trump loves West Virginia, and West Virginia loves Donald Trump,” Mooney said in his victory speech.

McKinley was sharply criticized by the former president when he broke with his party as one of 13 Republicans to vote with the Democrats to support President Joe Biden’s \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill. Trump called McKinley a RINO, or “Republican in Name Only” and endorsed Mooney the day Biden signed the infrastructure law.

The two incumbents, who have taken dramatically different approaches to their time in office, were pitted against each other in the state’s 2nd Congressional District after population losses cost West Virginia a U.S. House seat.

McKinley, who has represented the state in the House since 2011, said in a statement Tuesday night that serving the people of West Virginia had been the honor of his life — and made a subtle reference to the infrastructure vote.

“I’m proud that I have always stood up for what’s right for West Virginia — even when it hurt me politically,” he said. “The groundwork we have laid over the last twelve years has paved the way for a more prosperous and diverse West Virginia economy.”

Mooney, who has served in West Virginia’s House delegation since 2015, gave his victory speech surrounded by supporters at a hotel watch party in Charles Town in West Virginia’s eastern panhandle, where he lives. McKinley was watching the results come in at home with his family.

West Virginia’s election was the first of five primaries in which two incumbent U.S. House members will compete against each other. It will be followed by similar contests in Georgia and Michigan and in two Illinois districts.

The race was one of the most-watched of the day. In Nebraska, another Trump-backed candidate, Charles Herbster, was in a crowded field of GOP contenders for governor. The contests came 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.

Earlier Tuesday night, Trump-endorsed incumbent U.S. Rep. Carol Miller breezed to the Republican nomination in West Virginia’s 1st District, defeating four little-known candidates and setting herself on a clear path to reelection.

Miller will vie for her third term in the House in the fall against Democrat Lacy Watson, who was unopposed in the Democratic primary. Watson, of Bluefield, lost in the 2020 Democratic primary in the former 3rd District.

In Nebraska’s 2nd Congressional District, in the Omaha area, three-term Republican Rep. Don Bacon

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won the primary over long-shot candidate 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.”

Sen. Mike Flood, a former speaker of the Nebraska Legislature, won in the state’s 1st Congressional District over five other Republican candidates. Flood wants to fill the seat abandoned by 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 still appeared on the ballot for the 1st Congressional District because he withdrew after a deadline to certify the ballot.

In the rural, geographically vast 3rd Congressional District, Republican U.S. Rep. Adrian Smith easily won his party’s nomination. Two Democrats were vying for their party’s nomination within the district, which is overwhelmingly Republican.

In West Virginia’s 2nd Congressional District, McKinley’s decision to support the infrastructure bill was on voters’ minds.

Susan Smith, a small-business owner in Valley Grove, voted for Mooney at a local elementary school Tuesday morning. She lives in McKinley’s former district and said she always voted for him in the past. But not in this election.

“When Mr. McKinley started voting with the Democrats and the current administration, that’s when things changed,” said Smith, who cited McKinley’s vote for Biden’s infrastructure bill and the Jan. 6 commission. “I’m sorry to be losing a congressman, but we cannot have a Republican congressman voting with the Democrats. West Virginia did not need the money from this un-infrastructure bill.”

In the general election, Mooney will face openly gay former Morgantown city councilor Barry Wendell, who bested security operations manager Angela Dwyer during Tuesday’s Democratic primary.

Mooney enters the general election as a heavy favorite to win. West Virginia hasn’t elected a Democrat to the House since 2008.

Russia pummels port of Odesa in attempt to disrupt supplies

By ELENA BECATOROS and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — Russia pummeled the vital port of Odesa, Ukrainian officials said Tuesday, in an apparent effort to disrupt supply lines and Western weapons shipments as Ukraine’s foreign minister appeared to suggest the country could expand its war aims.

With the war now in its 11th week and Kyiv bogging down Russian forces and even staging a counter-offensive, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba seemed to indicate that the country could go beyond merely pushing Russia back to areas it or its allies held on the day of the Feb. 24 invasion.

The idea reflected Ukraine’s ability to stymie a larger, better-armed Russian military, which has surprised many who had anticipated a much quicker end to the conflict.

One of the most dramatic examples of Ukraine’s ability to prevent easy victories is in Mariupol, where Ukrainian fighters remained holed up at a steel plant, denying Russia’s full control of the city. The regiment defending the plant said Russian warplanes continued bombarding it, striking 34 times in 24 hours.

In recent days, the United Nations and the Red Cross organized a rescue of what some officials said were the last civilians trapped at the plant. But two officials said Tuesday that about 100 were believed to still be in the complex’s underground tunnels. Donetsk regional Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said those who remain are people “that the Russians have not selected” for evacuation.

Kyrylenko and Petro Andryushchenko, an adviser to Mariupol’s mayor, did not say how they knew civilians were still in the complex — a warren of tunnels and bunkers spread over 11 square kilometers (4 square

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miles). Others said their statements were impossible to confirm.

Fighters with the Azov regiment released photos of their wounded comrades inside the plant, including some with amputated limbs. They said the wounded were living in unsanitary conditions "with open wounds bandaged with non-sterile remnants of bandages, without the necessary medication and even food."

In its statement on Telegram, the regiment appealed to the U.N and Red Cross to evacuate the wounded servicemen to Ukrainian-controlled territories.

The photos could not be independently verified.

In another example of the grisly toll of the war, Ukrainian officials said they found the bodies of 44 civilians in the rubble of a building destroyed weeks ago in the northeastern city of Izyum.

New U.N. figures, meanwhile, said that 14 million Ukrainians were forced from their homes by the end of April, including more than 5.9 million who have left the country.

In Washington, a top U.S. intelligence official testified Tuesday that eight to 10 Russian generals have been killed in the war. Lt. Gen. Scott Berrier, who leads the Defense Intelligence Agency, told a Senate committee that because Russia lacks a noncommissioned officer corps, its generals have to go into combat zones and end up in dangerous positions.

Ukraine said Tuesday that Russian forces fired seven missiles at Odesa a day earlier, hitting a shopping center and a warehouse in the country's largest port. One person was killed and five wounded, the military said.

Images showed a burning building and debris — including a tennis shoe — in a heap of destruction in the city on the Black Sea. Mayor Gennady Trukhanov later visited the warehouse and said it "had nothing in common with military infrastructure or military objects."

Ukraine alleged at least some of the munitions used dated to the Soviet era, making them unreliable in targeting. Ukrainian, British and U.S. officials say Russia is rapidly using up its stock of precision weapons, raising the risk of more imprecise rockets being used as the conflict grinds on.

Since President Vladimir Putin's forces failed to take Kyiv early in the war, his focus has shifted to the eastern industrial heartland of the Donbas — but one general has suggested Moscow's aims also include cutting Ukraine's maritime access to both the Black and Azov seas.

That would also give it a swath of territory linking Russia to both the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized in 2014, and Transnistria, a pro-Moscow region of Moldova.

Even if Russia falls short of severing Ukraine from the coast — and it appears to lack the forces to do so — the continuing missile strikes on Odesa reflect the city's strategic importance. The Russian military has repeatedly targeted its airport and claimed it destroyed several batches of Western weapons.

Odesa is also a major gateway for grain shipments, and its blockade by Russia already threatens global food supplies. Beyond that, the city is a cultural jewel, dear to Ukrainians and Russians alike, and targeting it carries symbolic significance.

Russian forces have made slow advances in the Donbas, but there have been multiple setbacks. Military analysts suggest that hitting Odesa might serve to stoke concern about southwestern Ukraine, thus forcing Kyiv to put more forces there. That would pull them away from the eastern front as Ukraine's military stages counteroffensives near the northeastern city of Kharkiv.

Kharkiv and the surrounding area has been under sustained Russian attack since the early in the war. In recent weeks, grisly pictures testified to the horrors of those battles, with charred and mangled bodies strewn in one street.

Russian aircraft twice launched unguided missiles Tuesday at the Sumy area northeast of Kharkiv, according to the Ukrainian border guard service. The region's governor said the missiles hit several residential buildings, but no one was killed. The Chernihiv region, along the Ukrainian border with Belarus, was hit by mortars fired from Russian territory. There was no word on casualties.

But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday that the military was gradually pushing Russian troops away from Kharkiv. The Ukrainian military's general staff said its forces drove the Russians out of four villages to the northeast of Kharkiv as it tries to push them back toward the Russian border.

Kuleba, the Ukrainian foreign minister, meanwhile, appeared to voice increasing confidence — and ex-

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panded goals — amid Russia's stalled offensive. He told the Financial Times that Ukraine initially believed victory would be the withdrawal of Russian troops to positions they occupied before the Feb. 24 invasion.

"Now if we are strong enough on the military front, and we win the battle for Donbas, which will be crucial for the following dynamics of the war, of course the victory for us in this war will be the liberation of the rest of our territories."

The comments seemed to reflect political ambitions more than battlefield realities: Many analysts acknowledge that although Russia isn't capable of making quick gains, the Ukrainian military isn't strong enough to drive the Russians back.

Zelenskyy used his nightly address to pay tribute to Leonid Kravchuk, the first president of an independent Ukraine, who died Tuesday at 88. Zelenskyy said Kravchuk showed courage and knew how to get the country to listen to him.

That was particularly important in "crisis moments, when the future of the whole country may depend on the courage of one man," said Zelenskyy, whose own communication skills and decision to remain in Kyiv when it came under Russian attack have helped make him a strong wartime leader.

In the U.S., President Joe Biden signed a bipartisan measure Monday to reboot the World War II-era "lend-lease" program, which helped defeat Nazi Germany, to bolster Kyiv and its allies. On Tuesday, the U.S. House approved a new \$40 billion Ukraine aid package for defense and humanitarian programs in Ukraine.

Political reality: Congress can't save — or end — abortion

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — After fighting for decades over abortion policy, Congress is about to run into the stark political limits of its ability to save — or end — the Roe v. Wade protections.

President Joe Biden has called on Democrats to enshrine the nearly 50-year-old Supreme Court ruling into law after the disclosure of a draft opinion that would overturn the landmark decision that declared a constitutional right to abortion services.

But passing bills is easier said than done in the narrowly split Congress — reflective of a deeply divided nation.

A test vote Wednesday in the Senate on a Democratic bill to protect access to abortions is expected to fail, blocked by a Republican-led filibuster.

At the same time, Republicans led by Sen. Mitch McConnell face similar political problems trying to ban abortions nationwide, even if they wrest control of the chamber in next fall's midterm elections.

Instead, whatever the Supreme Court decides on Roe v. Wade in its final opinion this summer almost guarantees a new era of political fighting in Congress over abortion policy, filibuster rules and the most basic rights to health care, privacy and protecting the unborn.

"All of us will have to answer for this vote for the rest of our time in public office," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer ahead of Wednesday's action.

In recent years, abortion access debates in many ways have come to a standstill in Congress, a political draw, as lawmakers faced the limits of trying to move public policy beyond the historic Roe v. Wade court decision. Bills would routinely come up for votes — to expand or limit abortion services — only to fall along typically party line votes or be stripped out of broader legislative packages.

But the Supreme Court's conservative 6-3 majority, solidified during the Trump era, has ignited an urgent shift to the forefront in Congress.

McConnell stunned Washington when he said "it's possible" to see a national abortion ban.

The Republican leader has been a key architect of the Supreme Court's solid conservative majority, engineering rapid-fire confirmation of three of Donald Trump's nominees in just four years and changing Senate filibuster rules to push past Democratic objections.

In an interview with USA Today, McConnell recently said, "If the leaked opinion became the final opinion, legislative bodies — not only at the state level but at the federal level — certainly could legislate in that area."

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But on Tuesday McConnell acknowledged that if Republicans become the majority in the Senate they still are unlikely to have enough votes to ban abortion outright.

"The widespread sentiment in my conference is this issue will be dealt with at the state level," McConnell said. He said Republicans won't have the 60 votes needed to overcome a filibuster.

Likewise, Democrat Brian Schatz of Hawaii said for the other side, "I think we have to be explicit and tell the truth, which is, we don't currently have the votes." Still, he said hopefully that if voters elect more senators who favor abortion rights, "we will put this into federal law."

Both parties face enormous pressure to convince voters they are doing all they can — the Democrats working to preserve abortion access and the Republicans to end it — as they race toward fall when control of Congress is at stake in the elections.

The congressional campaign committees are fundraising off the abortion issue, and working furiously to energize voters who are already primed to engage when such a long-running and important issue for millions of Americans is at stake.

The two Republican senators who support abortion access — Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, who faces her own reelection in November, and Susan Collins of Maine — have proposed a separate bill that would counter the Supreme Court's action.

But both senators, who voted to confirm most of Trump's justices, are expected to stick with the Republican Party this week and block the Democratic bill as too broad.

At the same time, Democrats have largely panned the Collins-Murkowski effort as insufficient, leaving no hopes, for now, of any compromise.

And rank-and-file Republicans distanced themselves from McConnell's initial remarks, saying an all-out national ban on abortions is not something they can deliver.

"The reality is is that you would never get that done here," said Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D.

Democrats are unconvinced that Republicans, who have fought for years to deny abortion services, would give that fight up now and let the states decide.

Democrats believe Republicans are "running scared," Schumer said, afraid of what they have unleashed, with polls showing most Americans want to preserve some access to abortion.

It was McConnell who blocked Barack Obama's choice of Merrick Garland to fill a Supreme Court vacancy at the start of the 2016 presidential campaign, leaving the seat open for Trump to fill after he won the White House.

And even though McConnell insisted Tuesday there is "zero" interest among Republicans to change Senate filibuster rules to make it easier to pass an abortion ban, it was the GOP leader who orchestrated the Senate rules change to allow 51-vote threshold to confirm Supreme Court nominees.

"Republicans have worked day in and day out for decades on end to overturn Roe v. Wade," said Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash.

More likely is that both parties will try to chip away at the issue — Republicans tightening access to abortion at the national level, while Democrats work to shore up the availability of medicinal abortions and other related services.

"There are multiple fronts we can move on," said Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.

In the House, where Democrats have the majority, lawmakers approved the Women's Health Protection Act last year on a largely party-line vote once the Supreme Court first signaled it was considering the issue by allowing a Texas law's ban on abortions to take effect.

But the bill has languished in the Senate, evenly split 50-50 with Democratic control because of Vice President Kamala Harris' ability to cast a tie-breaking vote. Unable to mount the 60 votes needed to overcome a filibuster, a test vote failed in February, with one Democrat, Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, joining Republicans to block the bill's consideration.

A similar outcome is expected Wednesday when the Senate tries again to pass the legislation, which would put the guaranteed right to abortion into law.

It's the first of what Schumer promises will be repeated efforts to show voters where the parties stand.

"This is no longer just a abstract exercise: Now we know women's rights are at stake," Schumer said. "So this vote is the first step. We are going to keep fighting."

3 years on, Ronald Greene's family still waiting for justice

By JIM MUSTIAN and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

MONROE, La. (AP) — Three years ago, when a beaten and bloody Ronald Greene drew his final breath on a rural roadside, his death in Louisiana State Police custody seemed destined for obscurity.

Family members were told — falsely — that he died in a car crash after a high-speed chase. Body camera footage of white troopers stunning, punching and dragging the Black motorist remained so secret it was even withheld from his initial autopsy.

The story state police stubbornly pushed for months about Greene's death didn't hold up, unraveled by graphic footage, published last year by The Associated Press, that contradicted police reports and fueled claims of a cover-up.

Now, even as Greene's May 10, 2019, death has engulfed Louisiana's premier law enforcement agency in controversy, it remains an open wound for a grieving family still seeking justice. Despite long-running state and federal criminal investigations, no charges have been filed in the case.

"How do you turn your back on a killing?" Greene's mother, Mona Hardin, said Tuesday before meeting with the local district attorney. "It's an ugly, lurking evil."

For months, particularly after AP published the body-camera video last spring, the question had not been whether the Justice Department would file charges but how many troopers would be indicted. The scope of the investigation expanded to include whether state police brass obstructed justice to protect the troopers.

But after months of interviews, grand jury testimony and a recommissioned autopsy, federal prosecutors are increasingly skeptical they can bring a successful civil rights case against any of the troopers caught on camera abusing Greene, according to people familiar with the investigation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing case.

A key sticking point has been whether federal authorities can prove troopers acted "willfully" — a key component of the federal civil rights charges authorities are considering. To do that, the sources said, investigators were trying to show that Greene was also pepper-sprayed after he was already in custody.

Even after the FBI enhanced the body-camera video, however, federal authorities have questioned whether the footage proves Greene was pepper-sprayed.

The delays have been compounded by the fact that federal prosecutors had asked the local district attorney, John Belton, to hold off on bringing state charges until the federal investigation runs its course.

But last month, federal prosecutors reversed course and said they would not object to a state prosecution. Belton has said a state grand jury is expected to begin hearing evidence soon.

Separately, a state legislative committee investigating a possible cover-up in the Greene case is squaring up for a showdown over a subpoena to the former head of the Louisiana State Police.

Wednesday, the bipartisan committee is set to hold an initial vote on holding former Col. Kevin Reeves in contempt for refusing to turn over the full three volumes of a diary he kept while leading the agency. Reeves' lawyer delivered 11 hand-written pages to the committee last week but contends the remainder is not related to Greene and need not be turned over.

Reeves' journal entries within days of Greene's death showed an awareness of the potential fallout. "Realize there is a problem -- must address immediately," Reeves wrote in one section that listed a series of possible steps, including suspending troopers or putting them on leave and opening up an internal probe into the case.

But 462 days would pass before state police began an internal investigation into the troopers involved, including one who was recorded boasting he "beat the ever-living f--- out of" Greene. Reeves, who described Greene's death as "awful but lawful," stepped down in late 2020 amid criticism.

If the committee votes to proceed with a contempt case against Reeves, the matter would then move

to another committee and then the full state House, where a vote for contempt would allow lawmakers to launch the legal process to force Reeves to comply with the subpoena.

The committee was formed in response to an AP report that found Reeves informed Gov. John Bel Edwards within hours that troopers arresting Greene had engaged in a "violent, lengthy struggle." Yet the Democrat stayed mostly silent on the case for two years as state troopers continued to raise the car crash theory.

Lawmakers have said they intend to investigate what Edwards knew about the case and when he knew it, but no one on his staff has yet been called to testify.

Family members gathered Tuesday for a candlelight vigil in a quiet community near Monroe where Greene died, releasing balloons and praying that their long wait for justice will finally come to an end.

Hardin was surrounded by two-dozen supporters wearing T-shirts emblazoned with Greene's image and phrases including, "I'm your brother" — the words Greene spoke as the troopers began stunning him in his vehicle.

They were joined by former Louisiana State Police Trooper Carl Cavalier, who was fired after speaking out about Greene's death, and Albert Paxton, the now-retired detective who has said supervisors pressured him not to bring state charges in the case.

"I'm sorry you've had to go through this," Paxton told Hardin, embracing her just feet from the spot where her son died. "You don't hide from the truth."

In drought-ravaged California, water use is up dramatically

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California's water use jumped dramatically in March, state officials said Tuesday, as one of the driest stretches on record prompted a wave of homeowners to start watering their lawns earlier than usual in defiance of Gov. Gavin Newsom's pleas for conservation amid a severe drought.

Newsom last summer asked residents to voluntarily cut water use by 15% compared to 2020 as climate change intensified a drought that threatened to drain the state's reservoirs to dangerously low levels. Water conservation increased gradually through December, aided by some intense fall and early winter storms that reduced water demand.

But the first three months of 2022 have been the driest on record. Californians averaged 77 gallons (291.48 liters) per person per day in March, an 18.9% increase from March 2020. It's the most water Californians have used in March since the middle of the previous drought in 2015. Statewide, water consumption is up just 3.7% since July compared to 2020, woefully short of Newsom's 15% goal

Newsom responded on Tuesday by pledging to spend \$100 million on a statewide advertising campaign to encourage water conservation. The campaign will include traditional radio and television spots while also paying people with large followings on social media to urge others to save water. He also promised to spend an \$211 million to conserve more water in state government buildings by replacing plumbing fixtures and irrigation controls.

"Conservation actions are most impactful when they account for the diversity of conditions and supply needs around the state," Newsom's office said in a statement. "We are hopeful these actions will significantly contribute to the state's overall water reduction goals as outdoor watering is one of the biggest single users of water."

In Los Angeles — the second most populous city in the U.S. — Mayor Eric Garcetti said residents and businesses would have to reduce outdoor landscape watering from three days per week to two. Irrigation makes up 35% of the city's water use.

Urban water use accounts for a relatively small percentage of California's overall water use when compared to agriculture. But the state's farmers have been suffering, too, as state and federal officials have reduced water allocations to zero in some places.

Demand for non-agriculture water is typically low in March, which comes near the end of the state's rainy season. It can sometimes rain so much in March that it makes up for the rest of the year, a phenomenon

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officials have dubbed the "March miracle."

But California got just 1 inch (2.54 centimeters) of precipitation in March while the temperatures were 3 degrees warmer than usual, further increasing water demand.

A series of April storms have improved things slightly since March. Still, most of the state's reservoirs are well below their historic averages. The reservoirs depend on melted snow from the Sierra Nevada to replenish them for the dry summer months. But the statewide snowpack was at just 27% of its historic average as of April 1.

"This is what we have. This is what we're going to get. We can't expect anything significant past this date," said Jeanine Jones, manager for interstate resources with the California Department of Water Resources.

State officials said 20% of the wells they monitor are reporting all-time low water levels, while nearly half of them have less than 10% of their historic averages. In some cases, the state is helping to haul water to small communities that don't have access to it. State officials said they were assisting 687 households through a small community drought relief program.

Some larger communities were also in danger. Lindsay, a city of about 13,000 people in California's Central Valley, was projected to run out of water on July 1. Federal officials approved an additional allocation for the city, which they now say will have enough water to last through February — provided they continue to conserve.

Leonid Kravchuk, independent Ukraine's 1st president, dies

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Leonid Kravchuk, who led Ukraine to independence during the collapse of the Soviet Union and served as its first president, died Tuesday, Ukrainian officials said. He was 88.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy paid tribute to Kravchuk, calling him not just a historical figure but "a man who knew how to find wise words and to say them so that all Ukrainians would hear them."

Zelenskyy said Kravchuk died Tuesday but gave no details of the circumstances. He had been in poor health and underwent a heart operation last year.

Kravchuk led Ukraine as its Communist Party boss in the waning years of the Soviet Union, and played a pivotal role in the demise of the USSR before holding the Ukrainian presidency from 1991 through 1994.

He was a driving force in Ukraine's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and later that year joined with the leaders of Russia and Belarus to sign an agreement on Dec. 8, 1991, which formally declared that the Soviet Union ceased to exist.

As president, Kravchuk agreed to transfer remaining Soviet nuclear weapons on Ukrainian territory to Russian control, in a deal backed by the United States.

He lost the 1994 presidential election to former Prime Minister Leonid Kuchma. In 2020 he returned to politics to try to negotiate a settlement as part of a "contact group" for the conflict in eastern Ukraine, where Russia-backed separatists had fought Ukrainian forces since 2014.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov wrote on Twitter that with Kravchuk's signature to the December 1991 agreement disbanding the Soviet Union "the Evil Empire disintegrated."

"Thank you for the peaceful renewal of our Independence. We're defending it now with weapons in our hands," Reznikov wrote Tuesday.

Kravchuk's death comes a week after that of the first president of post-Soviet Belarus, Stanislav Shushkevich, who died aged 87 following treatment for COVID-19, according to his wife.

Since Shushkevich's death, Kravchuk was the last survivor of the three leaders who signed the 1991 deal. Russian President Boris Yeltsin died in 2007 aged 76.

Since Russia seized Crimea from Ukraine and threw its weight behind the 2014 separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin has sought to cast doubt on Ukraine's statehood and falsely portray the country as an artificial construct of Communist rule — rhetoric that paved the way for the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In a televised address Feb. 21, three days before the invasion, Putin blamed "historic, strategic mistakes" by Communist leaders for having led to the collapse of the Soviet state. Ukraine "turned to us for financial

support many times from the very moment they declared independence," Putin said in an apparent reference to Kravchuk's time in office.

Some participants in the historic Dec. 8 meeting at a hunting lodge in the Belovezha forest, in what is now Belarus, pointed to Kravchuk as having played the main role in the demise of the Soviet Union.

Ukraine had declared its sovereignty after an August coup by hardline Communist Party members weakened Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's authority. A week before the Belovezha agreement, Kravchuk was elected president of Ukraine in a vote that also overwhelmingly approved its independence from Moscow.

Participants in the Belovezha talks said Kravchuk rejected any efforts to keep the Soviet Union going with reforms.

"Kravchuk was focused on Ukraine's independence," Belarusian leader Shushkevich, who took part in the talks and signed the deal, told The Associated Press in an interview last year. "He was proud that Ukraine declared its independence in a referendum and he was elected president on Dec. 1, 1991."

Zelenskyy said Kravchuk's ability to speak to Ukrainians was particularly important in "difficult, crisis moments, when the future of the whole country may depend on the courage of one man."

Zelenskyy's own communication skills and decision to remain in Kyiv when it came under Russian attack have helped make him a strong wartime leader.

Noting that Kravchuk had lived through World War II and the occupation, Zelenskyy said he knew the price of freedom and with all his heart wanted peace for Ukraine. "I am sure that we will accomplish this. We will achieve our victory and our peace."

Biden pushes 'ultra-MAGA' label on GOP as he defends record

By ZEKE MILLER, CHRIS MEGERIAN and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Tuesday warned voters unhappy with soaring inflation and his stalled domestic agenda against turning power over to "ultra-MAGA" Republicans in the midterm elections as he increasingly tries to cast former President Donald Trump and his adherents as a political foil.

Speaking at the White House less than six months before the elections, Biden acknowledged that he could "taste" the country's dissatisfaction with Washington, particularly over rising prices, but he sought to channel the anger against the GOP.

"Look, I know you've got to be frustrated," he said. "I know, I can taste it. Frustrated by high prices, by gridlock in Congress, by the time it takes to get anything done.

"The MAGA Republicans are counting on you to be as frustrated by the pace of progress, which they've done everything they can to slow down, that you will hand power over to them ... so they can enact their extreme agenda," Biden said.

Biden's branding of his opposition as "ultra-MAGA Republicans" — a reference to Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan — has emerged as a White House trope in recent weeks as the White House hopes for a pre-midterms reset for Democrats, who face stiff headwinds heading into the November elections. White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Tuesday that "it's the president's phrase."

It is a message seemingly aimed directly at the listless and divided base of Biden's own party, as Democrats struggle to keep their voters motivated, as well as at some moderate voters who still recoil at the memory of Trump's tumultuous tenure in office.

"Look, I think Biden needs to motivate his base ahead of the midterms. And nothing motivates Democrats like voting against Trump," said GOP strategist Alex Conant. "Trump's not on the ballot this fall. But Biden is going to try to convince voters that he is."

Biden, Conant argued, has little choice.

"They're not going to run on his record. They're not going to make big, bold policy promises," he said, so that leaves villainizing the opponent "and the best way to do that is to tie him to Trump."

For Democrats, who have unified control of Washington, running against the minority party is risky, as even Biden acknowledged that voters tend to blame those in control for the nation's state of affairs.

But the White House believes Republicans have thrown them a lifeline, in the form of GOP Sen. Rick Scott's 11-point plan, released in late February, that would impose a modest tax increase on many of the

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lowest-paid Americans, while opening the door for cutting Social Security and Medicare.

The plan, meant as a draft governing agenda for when the GOP retakes power, has been rejected by many Republicans, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. But that is not stopping Biden and Democrats from trying to tie Republicans to it more broadly. Scott, R-Fla., is the chairman of the Senate Republicans' campaign arm and a member of Senate GOP leadership.

"That's a plan in writing and he's in the leadership," Biden said.

Biden argued that the potential tax hikes would make it even harder for families struggling with inflation to afford food, housing and transportation, as prices rise at the fastest pace in four decades.

"I want every American to know that I'm taking inflation very seriously, and it's my top domestic priority," Biden said.

Scott fired back in comments Tuesday, calling on Biden to resign, and deeming him "unfit" for the job.

"I have a plan. I mean, it's real simple," he told reporters. "I put out my ideas and how we need to rescue this country. He doesn't have a plan. And you didn't hear any ideas today. I mean, he says he was going to come up with his ideas and fix inflation."

In recent days, the White House has extended the "ultra-MAGA" label to broader criticism of Republicans on other matters, including the push to overturn the constitutional right to an abortion established in the Roe v. Wade decision of the Supreme Court.

Biden believes most general election voters haven't yet tuned in to the midterms and are missing what it views as "extreme" positions taken by GOP candidates and lawmakers, particularly in primaries, according to two people familiar with the White House's thinking who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. They said the president's new branding for Republicans is meant to spotlight candidates and policies that may energize the GOP's grassroots but that he believes are out of step with the majority of voters, sharpening the choice facing voters this November.

Speaking Monday night at a Democratic fundraiser, Biden tested out the "ultra-MAGA" messaging with donors, referencing Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' moves to restrict some textbooks from being used in the classroom and Scott's plan to require regular congressional reauthorization of social safety net programs.

"This is not your father's Republican Party," Biden said. This is a MAGA party. This is the MAGA party. And the head of their Republican campaign committee, Senator Rick Scott, the Ultra-MAGA agenda he put forward, he raises taxes on 70 million people who make well less than \$100,000."

On Capitol Hill, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., was echoing Biden's line as he pushed for Congress to enshrine abortion rights into law.

"Now the MAGA Republicans have taken over," he said. "If MAGA Republicans get their way, pregnant women can lose their lives because there will be no exception if the life of the mother is at risk."

John Anzalone, a Democratic pollster who has worked for Biden, said it's important to draw sharp contrasts with political opponents."

"Whether you're in a governor's race in Michigan or you're in a Senate race in New Hampshire, those contrasts become really important, because it's good for voters to know what each side stands for," he said. "You're talking to swing voters, without a doubt, because at the end of the day, independents, swing voters, moderates can make or break a cycle for Democrats and Republicans."

Speaking Tuesday, Biden, who ran for office aiming to heal the nation's divisions, said, "I never expected the ultra-MAGA Republicans who seem to control the Republican Party now to have been able to control the Republican Party. I never anticipated that happening."

Parents hunting for baby formula as shortage spans US

By MATTHEW PERRONE and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Parents across the U.S. are scrambling to find baby formula because supply disruptions and a massive safety recall have swept many leading brands off store shelves.

Months of spot shortages at pharmacies and supermarkets have been exacerbated by the recall at Abbott, which was forced to shutter its largest U.S. formula manufacturing plant in February due to contamination concerns.

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On Monday, White House press secretary Jenn Psaki said the Food and Drug Administration was “working around the clock to address any possible shortages.”

On Tuesday, the FDA said it was working with U.S. manufacturers to increase their output and streamlining paperwork to allow more imports.

For now, pediatricians and health workers are urging parents who can't find formula to contact food banks or doctor's offices. They warn against watering down formula to stretch supplies or using online DIY recipes.

“For babies who are not being breastfed, this is the only thing they eat,” said Dr. Steven Abrams, of the University of Texas, Austin. “So it has to have all of their nutrition and, furthermore, it needs to be properly prepared so that it's safe for the smallest infants.”

Laura Stewart, a 52-year-old mother of three who lives just north of Springfield, Missouri, has been struggling for several weeks to find formula for her 10-month-old daughter, Riley.

Riley normally gets a brand of Abbott's Similac designed for children with sensitive stomachs. Last month, she instead used four different brands.

“She spits up more. She's just more cranky. She is typically a very happy girl,” Stewart said. “When she has the right formula, she doesn't spit up. She's perfectly fine.”

A small can costs \$17 to \$18 and lasts three to five days, Stewart said.

Like many Americans, Stewart relies on WIC — a federal program similar to food stamps that serves mothers and children — to afford formula for her daughter. Abbott's recall wiped out many WIC-covered brands, though the program is now allowing substitutions.

Trying to keep formula in stock, retailers including CVS and Walgreens have begun limiting purchases to three containers per customer.

Nationwide about 40% of large retail stores are out of stock, up from 31% in mid-April, according to Datasembly, a data analytics firm. More than half of U.S. states are seeing out-of-stock rates between 40% and 50%, according to the firm, which collects data from 11,000 locations.

Baby formula is particularly vulnerable to disruptions because just a handful of companies account for almost the entire U.S. supply.

Industry executives say the constraints began last year as the COVID-19 pandemic led to disruptions in ingredients, labor and transportation. Supplies were further squeezed by parents stockpiling during lockdowns.

Then in February, Abbott recalled several major brands and shut down its Sturgis, Michigan, factory when federal officials concluded four babies suffered bacterial infections after consuming formula from the facility. Two of the infants died.

When FDA inspectors visited the plant in March they found lax safety protocols and traces of the bacteria on several surfaces. None of the bacterial strains matched those collected from the infants, however, and the FDA hasn't offered an explanation for how the contamination occurred.

For its part, Abbott says its formula “is not likely the source of infection,” though the FDA says its investigation continues.

Chicago-based Abbott said it is increasing production at its other facilities to fill the gap, including airshipping formula from a plant in Ireland.

The shortages are especially dangerous for infants who require specialty formulas due to food allergies, digestive problems and other conditions.

“Unfortunately, many of those very specialized formulas are only made in the United States at the factory that had the recall, and that's caused a huge problem for a relatively small number of infants,” Abrams said.

After hearing concerns from parents, the FDA said last month that Abbott could begin releasing some specialty formulas not affected by the recalls “on a case-by-case basis.” The company is providing them free of charge, in coordination with physicians and hospitals.

Food safety advocates say the FDA made the right call in releasing the formula, but that parents should talk to their pediatricians before using it.

"There's still some risk from the formula because we know there are problems at the plant and FDA hasn't identified a root cause," said Sarah Sorscher of the Center for Science in the Public Interest. "But it's worth releasing because these infants might die without it."

It's unclear when the Abbott plant might reopen.

The FDA said the company is still working "to rectify findings related to the processes, procedures and conditions." Other infant formula makers are "meeting or exceeding capacity levels to meet current demand," the agency said.

Among other steps, the FDA said it was waiving enforcement of minor product labeling issues to increase availability of both U.S. and imported products.

EA Sports and FIFA end partnership, both eye new video games

ZURICH (AP) — Electronic Arts will stop making its hugely successful FIFA video game in its current name, marking a split in one of soccer's most successful and lucrative partnerships after the sides failed to strike a new licensing deal.

Instead, the California company said Tuesday that EA Sports FC will be introduced from 2023 after it creates the final game in partnership with FIFA later this year.

Licensing rights for the game earn FIFA about \$150 million annually — the single biggest commercial earner in its expected \$7 billion total revenue from 2019-2022 — though FIFA struck a defiant tone in a statement published hours after the announcement of losing that income.

FIFA promised a "number of new non-simulation games (that) are already under production" and will launch ahead of the 2022 World Cup that kicks off in Qatar in November.

FIFA said it plans to create a "new gaming model" and cited the recent launch of its streaming service FIFA+.

"I can assure you that the only authentic, real game that has the FIFA name will be the best one available for gamers and football fans," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said in the statement.

EA has been producing a FIFA game for nearly 30 years and its fond association with tens of millions of gamers worldwide helped the Zurich-based organization's brand when it was tarnished amid a wave of arrests of soccer officials in 2015.

For generations of young people, FIFA has meant a video game rather than a sports institution.

Though EA Sports FC will be unable to include FIFA content including the World Cup, it retains licensing deals with prime soccer competitions including the English Premier League and the UEFA-organized Champions League.

The EA announcement showed the strength of those partnerships with warm comments from executives from the Premier League, UEFA and Spain's La Liga while a coordinated release of tweets posted by dozens of soccer clubs used the slogan "We're In The Club" to align with the EA Sports FC brand.

"We're thankful for our many years of great partnership with FIFA," EA CEO Andrew Wilson said. "The future of global football is very bright, and fandom around the world has never been stronger."

Wilson promised "even more innovative and authentic experiences to the growing football audience" while its soon-to-be rival FIFA spoke of creating "new, interactive experiences to fans across the globe."

"The interactive gaming and e-sports sector is on a path of unrivaled growth and diversification," Infantino said. "FIFA's strategy is to ensure we can make the most of all future options and ensure a wide range of products and opportunities for gamers, fans, member associations and partners."

Drivers bemoan high gasoline prices with no relief in sight

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ, JULIE WALKER and JOSHUA BOAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Just as Americans gear up for summer road trips, the price of oil remains stubbornly high, pushing prices at the gas pump to painful heights.

Drivers were paying \$4.37 for a gallon of regular Tuesday, on average, according to AAA. That's 25 cents higher than a month ago, and \$1.40 more than a year ago.

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"The price of gas is ridiculous," said Joel Baxter, a nurse, who was filling up his car at a BP station in Brooklyn, New York, so that he could commute 26 miles (42 kilometers) to work. "The money, your salary, is practically the same, and everything is going up, so they should do something about it."

The high price of oil is the main cause of the biting gasoline prices. A barrel of U.S. benchmark crude was selling for around \$100 a barrel Tuesday, a price tag that has been climbing throughout the year. The high price of oil is largely because many buyers are refusing to purchase Russian oil because of its invasion of Ukraine. The European Union is considering an embargo on oil from Russia, which is a major supplier. Those pressures leave less oil to go around.

Drivers such as Baxter say they wish the government could step in to help, although few can say what solution that would bring lasting relief.

"There are very few things that a president can do to help lower the cost of oil, and this administration tried to do pretty much everything that it can," said Andrew Gross, spokesman for AAA.

President Joe Biden released oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in November and March, hoping to reduce prices. That helped temporarily, but prices shot back up and stayed stubbornly high.

Biden in remarks Tuesday stressed that fighting inflation is his top priority, a sign of both the economic challenges caused by prices rising at the fastest pace in four decades and the political drag for Democrats that has resulted.

"I believe that inflation is our top economic challenge right now," Biden said.

He said that switching away from fossil fuels and greater energy efficiency will ultimately protect Americans from higher gasoline and heating and cooling costs.

The president noted that Americans are finding ways to limit how many fill-ups they need because of higher prices. "They're doing everything in their power to figure out how to not show up at the gas pump," he said.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said a suspension of the federal gas tax is "an option on the table." The suspension could in theory reduce gas prices by as much as 18 cents a gallon.

Republican lawmakers say the key is to lease more federal land for oil and gas drilling and send a positive message to energy producers by greenlighting the Keystone XL pipeline that Biden nixed last year.

As the war Russia is waging on Ukraine continues and demand for gasoline continues to grow, experts are not expecting relief at the pump any time soon.

"We will see this trend continue probably throughout summer, mainly because of demand," Gross said. "The weather's getting warmer. The days are getting nicer. People are hitting the road."

That's particularly hard on people who drive for a living, or those who must drive to get to work.

"It's expensive," said Peter Lector, 28, who spent \$60 Tuesday to fill up his tank in Brooklyn. "I'm doing Uber, so it's costing me a lot of money every morning."

If the price of gasoline keeps going up, he feels like he might have to find another job, he said.

Still others have accepted that high gasoline prices may be here to stay.

"It is what it is," said David Stephen, who was also buying gasoline in Brooklyn. "Everything goes up, never comes down You can't do anything about it."

Watery graves recall early Las Vegas' organized crime days

By KEN RITTER Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Stories about long-departed Las Vegas organized crime figures are surfacing after a second set of unidentified human remains were revealed as the water level falls on drought-stricken Lake Mead.

The reservoir on the Colorado River is about a 30-minute drive from the mob-founded Las Vegas 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 was a defense attorney who represented Mafia figures including ill-fated Anthony "Tony the Ant" Spilotro before serving three terms as a martini-toting mayor who made public appearances with a

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showgirl on each arm.

He declined to speculate 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, referring to the former labor boss who disappeared in 1975. 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 as a result 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," said Michael Green, a University of Nevada, Las Vegas history professor whose father dealt blackjack for decades at casinos including the Stardust and 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 casino in 1946 on what became 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.

Last month, the dropping lake level exposed Las Vegas' uppermost drinking water intake, 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 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 the Las Vegas suburb of Henderson were paddle boarding on the lake near a former marina resort and noticed bones on a newly surfaced sand bar more than 9 miles (14.5 kilometers) from the 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.

Geoff Schumacher, vice president of The Mob Museum, said he expects "a lot" of whatever bodies lie beneath the lake's surface will turn out to be drowning victims. But he said it's clear whoever was in the barrel was a target.

Stuffing a body in a barrel has a "signature of a mob hit," said Schumacher, whose museum is in a renovated historic downtown Las Vegas post office and federal building. It opened in 2012 as The National Museum of Organized Crime & Law Enforcement.

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 later his body was found in a 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.

Green said the discoveries have people talking not only about mob hits, but about bringing relief and closure to grieving families.

"They're going to think we're going to solve every mob murder. In fact, we may see some," he said. "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."

Whatever story emerges about the body in the barrel, Goodman predicted it will add to the lore of a city that needed the creation of Lake Mead to sprout from the creosote bush-covered desert to become a marquee gambling mecca with a metro area home to about 2.25 million people.

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

Spilotro, Goodman's one-time client, represented the Chicago mob in Las Vegas in the 1970s. He headed a crew dubbed the "Hole in the Wall" gang for drilling through walls to gain entry to homes and businesses. Spilotro's body and the body of his brother, Michael Spilotro, were found in June 1986 by a farmer plowing a cornfield in northwest Indiana.

Tony the Ant served as the model for the character Nicky Santoro, portrayed by actor Joe Pesci, in Martin Scorsese's 1995 movie "Casino." Goodman played himself in the film.

"We have a very interesting background," Goodman told The Associated Press. "It certainly adds to the mystique of Las Vegas."

Queen delegates opening of Parliament for 1st time

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Queen Elizabeth II delegated one of her most important public duties to Prince Charles on Tuesday, underscoring the increasingly central role the heir to the crown is taking as his mother prepares to celebrate 70 years on the throne.

Charles presided over the state opening of Parliament and delivered the Queen's Speech laying out the government's legislative program. The event is a symbol of the monarch's constitutional role as head of state and is accompanied by centuries of tradition designed to demonstrate the strength of Britain's political institutions.

The queen's decision to delegate her role to Charles is likely to be seen by the public as evidence that a transition is underway, with the 96-year-old monarch remaining on the throne but turning over more responsibilities to her eldest son.

The choreography of the day emphasized a queen who was absent and yet still present. Her throne had been removed, but in its place the Imperial State Crown sat propped on a pillow. Charles, wearing the uniform of an admiral of the fleet, glittered in gold braid rather than sweeping ermine robes.

He was flanked by his wife, the Duchess of Cornwall, and his son, Prince William. It was, in essence, all about the dynasty.

"I think the emphasis here was clearly on continuity, a symbolic presence of Elizabeth II, if not a physical presence, and also what the future will likely look like," said Ed Owens, a royal historian and author of "The Family Firm: Monarchy, Mass Media and the British Public 1932-1953."

WHAT IS THE QUEEN'S SPEECH?

The speech is delivered during the formal opening of each session of Parliament and lays out the government's legislative program.

It is written by the elected government, currently led by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and is read out to a joint meeting of the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

The monarch traditionally arrives for the event in a horse-drawn carriage, sits on the Sovereign's Throne in the House of Lords and wears the Imperial State Crown.

But Charles, 73, arrived by car and sat not on the sovereign's throne, which had been removed, but on

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the consort's throne, which had been used by his late father, Prince Philip. In the place where the queen's throne normally is placed, the Imperial State Crown was placed on a velvet cushion.

Charles delivered the speech in the third person, referring to "Her Majesty's Government."

WHY DID ELIZABETH DECIDE TO SKIP THE SPEECH?

Buckingham Palace didn't elaborate on what it called "episodic mobility problems," but the queen has had difficulty moving around in recent months. She has been seen using a cane on some occasions and Prince Andrew last month escorted her into Westminster Abbey for the memorial service for Prince Philip.

The event involves more than just reading the speech. There is a long walk to the House of Lords, stairs to the throne, and in past years the need to climb in and out of the carriage. All of these obstacles might offer challenges for the sovereign.

Elizabeth, who only recently recovered from a bout of COVID-19, is also preparing for four days of festivities celebrating her Platinum Jubilee that are scheduled for June 2-5.

HAS THE QUEEN EVER MISSED THE SPEECH BEFORE?

Yes. In 1959, when she was in the late stages of pregnancy with Prince Andrew, and again in 1963 before the birth of Prince Edward.

On both of those occasions, Parliament was opened by a royal commission, with the speech delivered by the presiding member.

SO WHAT'S DIFFERENT THIS TIME?

This year the queen formally asked Prince Charles to deliver the speech under rules that allow her to delegate some of her duties to senior members of the royal family who are considered "counselors of state." Counselors of state are required to act in pairs, so Charles was accompanied by his eldest son, Prince William.

Because the duties had been delegated to Charles, there was less disruption of the ceremonial aspects of the day.

The public should be able to take comfort from the continuity that Charles' appearance represents, said Robert Hazell, a professor of government and the constitution at University College London.

"Yes, we are, in effect, preparing for a transition," he told The Associated Press. "The queen is in her mid-90s. She won't live forever. We are nearing the last years of her reign, and during those last years, if she is no longer capable of putting in public appearances, Prince Charles can deputize on her behalf."

'ManningCast' comes to golf as PGA gets alternate telecast

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

Joe Buck is back in golf at another major, this time the PGA Championship with ESPN. He'll be sharing his space with the likes of Fred Couples and Charles Barkley, and Peyton and Eli Manning will be sure to drop in.

Buck is leading what amounts to a "ManningCast" next week at Southern Hills.

ESPN, which has the weekday rights to the PGA Championship with extended coverage on ESPN+, says the alternate telecast will be produced in collaboration with Peyton Manning's Omaha Productions.

Buck, who previously led U.S. Open coverage when it was on Fox Sports from 2015 through 2019, will host the show with Michael Collins of ESPN. The Mannings will be guests at some point during the tournament, and other guests include Couples and Barkley, Troy Aikman, Josh Allen and actor Jon Hamm.

The ManningCast got strong reviews during "Monday Night Football" last year.

"We loved doing 'Monday Night Football' with ESPN and the entire Omaha team has been looking forward to producing alternate telecasts that celebrate other sports," Peyton Manning said. "As one of golf's majors, the PGA Championship is a perfect place to do our first one for golf and we look forward to working with Joe, Michael and everyone in ESPN's golf team."

The alternate telecast will be shown for four hours a day during all four rounds. It will air from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. EDT on Thursday and Friday during the final hour of live coverage on ESPN+ and then move to ESPN2 for the last three hours (as coverage moves to ESPN). On the weekend, Buck & Co. will be on

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from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. on ESPN (live coverage is on ESPN+) and then switch to ESPN+ as live coverage shifts to ESPN until 1 p.m.

CBS Sports has the final six hours of the weekend telecast.

The ManningCast earlier this year extended its deal with "Monday Night Football" to add a fourth year through 2024. ESPN is in the third year of an 11-year agreement to televise the PGA Championship.

MAY DAY

The Wells Fargo Championship had its weakest field since the tournament began in 2003, with Max Homa getting 44 points for winning, down from 60 a year ago.

Was it the one-time move to the TPC Potomac at Avenel Farm because the traditional site, Quail Hollow Club in Charlotte, North Carolina, is hosting the Presidents Cup later this year?

Or are players still trying to figure out a schedule with the PGA Championship now in its third year of being played in May?

Until this year, the fewest ranking points awarded the Wells Fargo winner was 50 on three occasions: 2014 (one year after the greens were a weather-related wreck); 2017 (held at Eagle Point because the PGA was at Quail Hollow) and 2019 (the first year of the PGA Championship moving to May).

The Wells Fargo winner received 60 points last year, and perhaps that was about location — the PGA Championship was at Kiawah Island, about 225 miles from Quail.

Next year the PGA Championship is at Oak Hill in Rochester, New York.

The last two weeks on the PGA Tour featured only one player from the top 15 — Jon Rahm in the Mexico Open (he won) and Rory McIlroy at Wells Fargo (fifth place). Both will have played only once between majors.

The PGA Championship is next week, and the AT&T Byron Nelson has four of the top 10 players and six of the top 15, starting with world No. 1 and Masters champion Scottie Scheffler (who is from Dallas).

Meanwhile, none of the top 15 players in the world will have played more than two times during the five weeks between majors. Brooks Koepka and Hideki Matsuyama are playing the AT&T Byron Nelson this week, their first competition since the Masters.

It will be telling to see what kind of field Wells Fargo attracts next year at Quail Hollow, and whether the less-than-stellar field was more about TPC Potomac or more about May.

US OPEN UPDATE

Now that the PGA Championship field is set, exemptions for the U.S. Open are closing in. Any player among the top 60 in the world ranking after the PGA Championship will not have to go through qualifying.

That made for a small consolation prize for Keegan Bradley after his runner-up finish in the Wells Fargo Championship. Bradley moved up 20 spots to No. 44 and is a lock to stay in the top 60 and avoid qualifying.

Among those outside the top 60 and running out of time are Lee Westwood (No. 64) and Bubba Watson (No. 66). Watson has played in every U.S. Open since 2011.

The top 60 from the June 6 world ranking — Monday of U.S. Open week — also are exempt.

PATH TO LPGGA

The LPGGA Tour no longer will allow college players to retain their amateur status and compete in the final stage of tour qualifying.

The LPGGA in 2018 allowed college players to compete in Q-Series — eight rounds over two weeks — and if they earned LPGGA cards, to wait until July to take up membership. That allowed them to finish college or the spring semester. Jennifer Kupcho and Maria Fassi were two examples of that.

Starting this year, college players can still go through the early stages of Q-school, but they would have to turn pro if they make it to the Q-Series and try to earn a card.

Ricki Lasky, the chief tour business and operations officer for the LPGGA, said it was all about a level playing field. The LPGGA reached its decision after input from LPGGA players and the college community.

Players who already have turned pro don't have another semester of college to fall back on if they don't make it, a freedom that college players might have.

Key to the decision is allowing college players in the early stages. Anyone making it to the final stage

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(Q-Series) is assured of Epson Tour status. That would allow them to compete on the developmental circuit and start earning money toward an LPGA card.

"Ensuring all competitors have made the same choice to be a professional player elevates the Q-Series competition and creates the most appropriate options for athletes at different stages of their careers," Lasky said.

DIVOTS

Kevin Kisner and his wife, Brittany, have received the Augusta University President's Award for philanthropic support to the Children's Hospital of Georgia. They pledged \$5.3 million to help establish a center for pediatric development, behavioral health and wellness. ... S.H. Kim has earned enough Korn Ferry Tour points to assure the 23-year-old South Korean will have a PGA Tour card next season. Carl Yuan of China is the only other player to have reached that level this year. ... The Constellation Furyk & Friends tournament made its PGA Tour Champions debut by raising \$1.7 million for local charities. ... Wells Fargo Championship winner Max Homa is the first player to win a regular PGA Tour event twice on different courses since Brandt Snedeker in the Wyndham Championship in 2007 at Forest Oaks and in 2018 at Sedgefield. Homa won at Quail Hollow in 2019 and TPC Potomac this year. ... Ludvig Aberg of Texas Tech, Sam Bennett of Texas A&M and Eugenio Chacarra of Oklahoma State are the three finalists for the Ben Hogan Award that goes to the nation's top college golfer. The winner will be announced May 23 and receive an exemption the following year to the Charles Schwab Challenge at Colonial.

STAT OF THE WEEK

The last five major champions at Southern Hills are in the World Golf Hall of Fame.

FINAL WORD

"I just feel if I keep putting myself in these positions, hopefully I'll convert one of them." — Keegan Bradley, who has failed to convert his last four 54-hole leads on the PGA Tour.

Yellen trip to Capitol detours into tense abortion debate

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's appearance before a Senate committee took an unexpected and tense detour into the abortion debate Tuesday when senators questioned her about the potential impact of an abortion ban on the American economy.

"I believe that eliminating the right of women to make decisions about when and whether to have children would have very damaging effects on the economy and would set women back decades," Yellen said in response to a question from Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J. He had introduced the topic with a question on how an abortion ban could financially harm women.

Yellen's answer drew a sharp response from Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., who asked her, "Did you say that ending the life of a child is good for the labor force participation rate?"

"I think people can disagree on the issue of being 'pro-life' or 'pro-abortion' — but framing it in the labor force participation rate feels callous to me," he said, adding that the conversation "to me seems harsh."

Yellen responded: "This is not harsh, this is the truth."

She continued by saying an abortion ban "deprives them of the ability to continue their education," and those impacted are most commonly young Black women.

The line of questioning at the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee came after a Supreme Court draft opinion leaked last week that suggests the court is poised to throw out the landmark Roe v. Wade abortion rights ruling that has stood for a half-century.

The hearing also touched on inflation, sanctions imposed on Russia and rising energy costs. Yellen said the U.S. "is focused on everything we can do to bring inflation down."

The abortion issue came up multiple times. Sen. Steve Daines, R-Mont., said he disagreed with Yellen's perspective, and offered his own economic analysis.

"I look at low birth rates and an aging population," he said, arguing that there are negative economic impacts from abortion.

A number of economic analyses indicate that limitations on access to abortion can negatively impact people financially and in other ways.

Sarah Miller, a researcher at the University of Michigan, authored a paper with two others on the impact of abortion restrictions. The trio evaluated data on women who sought abortions at 30 clinics in 21 states but were turned away because they were past the clinics' gestation limit. Two-thirds ended up giving birth.

"As we show in our paper," Miller said, an abortion ban "will have pretty severe economic consequences for women to keep their head above water," adding that "there could also be physical and mental health consequences."

Committee chair Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, ended by saying that if Roe v. Wade were overturned, every woman's decision to determine her reproductive future and health would be "handed over to politicians."

"It shouldn't be handed over to me, it shouldn't be handed over to Secretary Yellen, and it shouldn't be handed over to Mitch McConnell," he said, referring to the Senate Republican leader.

Peloton headwinds stiffen as people break pandemic routines

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writers

Peloton's uphill ride to get more sales is getting rougher as more people return to gyms and other pre-pandemic exercise routines and embrace cheaper options.

The maker of high-end exercise bikes and treadmills, once highflying in the early days of the pandemic, on Tuesday reported mounting losses and slowing sale. It also offered a bleak sales outlook for the current quarter and said it had signed a commitment to borrow hundreds of millions of dollars, raising questions for some investors about the chances of a turnaround.

"Peloton has a lot of work to do to convince investors that the business model still works," said Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData Retail. "It's coming off a high. People were at home and wanted to stay fit. But now people are starting to go back to the gyms. They want the social aspect."

The maker of high-end exercise bikes and treadmills thrived during COVID-19 outbreaks and sales growth for the New York City company doubled in 2020 and surged 120% in its last fiscal year.

The arrival of effective vaccines and easing COVID-19 restrictions, however, have opened up more options for Americans seeking exercise and Peloton has suffered. In February the company announced a major restructuring and abandoned plans to open its first U.S. factory, which would have employed 2,000 workers in Ohio. Co-founder John Foley stepped down as CEO and the company said it would cut nearly 3,000 jobs.

Peloton ramped up fast during the pandemic, increasing its subscriber base from 700,000 to 3 million, but that growth has slowed, and company misjudged the slowing demand and continued to churn out expensive hardware, creating a sizeable inventory of unsold stationary bikes.

Peloton's initial success also created competition, with companies peeling away customers by selling cheaper connected stationary bicycles and exercise equipment. High-end gyms also jumped into the game, offering virtual classes that once were Peloton's biggest draws.

The data released Tuesday raised more questions about how the company will move forward.

The company signed binding commitment letter with JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs to borrow \$750 million. New CEO Barry McCarthy said in a letter to shareholders that Peloton ended the quarter with \$879 million in cash, "which leaves us thinly capitalized for a business of our scale."

McCarthy said the company has to rethink its capital structure at the same time that it pushes to expand its subscriber base to 100 million.

McCarthy's letter to shareholders emphasized again the company's push to focus more on the digital app and less on sales of bikes and treadmills.

Among other strategies: rolling out a test where customers pay a flat rate to rent Peloton's stationary bikes and get access to on-demand workout classes. It also wants to broad its distribution by selling Peloton produced through other retailers.

"Turnarounds are hard work," McCarthy said in a letter to shareholders. "It's intellectually challenging,

emotionally draining, physically exhausting, and all consuming. It's a full contact sport."

That, according to UBS analyst Arpiné Kocharyan, would mean paying more to land customers compared with focusing on selling stationary bikes. After a cash flow burn of \$747 million in the most recent quarter, Kocharyan believes that will lead to heightened concern about the cash Peloton has to work with.

Saunders said that Peloton faces a tough battle in reworking its business, especially in the app area. He pointed to companies like Apple, which is investing extensively in its own fitness solutions. And he also said big brands like Lululemon are pivoting more toward classes and services.

Peloton Interactive Inc. lost \$757.1 million, or \$2.27 per share, for the three months ended March 31. Stripping out nonrecurring items, it lost 98 cents per share, outpacing projections of a per-share loss of 85 cents, according to a survey by Zacks Investment Research.

The loss was far greater than last year when Peloton was \$8.6 million in the red.

Revenue slid 15% to \$964.3 million, which was also short of analyst projections.

Peloton said it's looking at revenue this quarter to come in between \$675 million and \$700 million. That too soured investors in early trading. Industry analysts had been projecting fourth-quarter revenue of \$820.3 million, according to FactSet.

Shares, which have already fallen more than 60% this year, fell \$1.57 to \$12.56. At their peak, shares of Peloton cost as much as \$171.

Pandemic gets tougher to track as COVID testing plunges

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

Testing for COVID-19 has plummeted across the globe, making it much tougher for scientists to track the course of the pandemic and spot new, worrisome viral mutants as they emerge and spread.

Experts say testing has dropped by 70 to 90% worldwide from the first to the second quarter of this year — the opposite of what they say should be happening with new omicron variants on the rise in places such as the United States and South Africa.

"We're not testing anywhere near where we might need to," said Dr. Krishna Udayakumar, who directs the Duke Global Health Innovation Center at Duke University. "We need the ability to ramp up testing as we're seeing the emergence of new waves or surges to track what's happening" and respond.

Reported daily cases in the U.S., for example, are averaging 73,633, up more than 40% over the past two weeks, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. But that is a vast undercount because of the testing downturn and the fact tests are being taken at home and not reported to health departments. An influential modeling group at the University of Washington in Seattle estimates that only 13% of cases are being reported to health authorities in the U.S. — which would mean more than a half million new infections every day.

The drop in testing is global but the overall rates are especially inadequate in the developing world, Udayakumar said. The number of tests per 1,000 people in high income countries is around 96 times higher than it is in low income countries, according to the Geneva-based public health nonprofit FIND.

What's driving the drop? Experts point to COVID fatigue, a lull in cases after the first omicron wave and a sense among some residents of low-income countries that there's no reason to test because they lack access to antiviral medications.

At a recent press briefing by the World Health Organization, FIND CEO Dr. Bill Rodriguez called testing "the first casualty of a global decision to let down our guard" and said "we're becoming blind to what is happening with the virus."

Testing, genomic sequencing and delving into case spikes can lead to the discovery of new variants. New York state health officials found the super contagious BA.2.12.1 variant after investigating higher-than-average case rates in the central part of the state.

Going forward, "we're just not going to see the new variants emerge the way we saw previous variants emerge," Rodriguez told The Associated Press.

Testing increases as infections rise and people develop symptoms — and it falls along with lulls in new

cases. Testing is rising again in the U.S. along with the recent surge.

But experts are concerned about the size of the drop after the first omicron surge, the low overall levels of testing globally, and the inability to track cases reliably. While home tests are convenient, only tests sent to labs can be used to detect variants. If fewer tests are being done, and fewer of those tests are processed in labs, fewer positive samples are available for sequencing.

Also, home test results are largely invisible to tracking systems.

Mara Aspinall, managing director of an Arizona-based consulting company that tracks COVID-19 testing trends, said there's at least four times more home testing than PCR testing, and "we are getting essentially zero data from the testing that's happening at home."

That's because there's no uniform mechanism for people to report results to understaffed local health departments. The CDC strongly encourages people to tell their doctors, who in most places must report COVID-19 diagnoses to public health authorities.

Generally, though, results from home tests fall under the radar.

Reva Seville, a 36-year-old Los Angeles parent, tested herself at home this week after she began feeling symptoms such as a scratchy throat, coughing and congestion. After the results came back positive, she tested twice more just to be sure. But her symptoms were mild, so she didn't plan to go to the doctor or report her results to anyone.

Beth Barton of Washington, Missouri, who works in construction, said she's taken about 10 home tests, either before visiting her parents or when she's had symptoms she thought might be COVID-19. All came back negative. She shared the results with the people around her but didn't know how to report them.

"There should be a whole system for that," said Barton, 42. "We as a society don't know how to gauge where we're at."

Aspinall said one potential solution would be to use technology like scanning a QR code to report home test results confidentially.

Another way to keep better track of the pandemic, experts said, is to bolster other types of surveillance, such as wastewater monitoring and collecting hospitalization data. But those have their own drawbacks. Wastewater surveillance remains a patchwork that doesn't cover all areas, and hospitalization trends lag behind cases.

Udayakumar said scientists across the world must use all the tracking methods at their disposal to keep up with the virus, and will need to do so for months or even years.

At the same time, he said, steps must be taken to boost testing in lower-income countries. Demand for tests would rise if access to antivirals were improved in these places, he said. And one of the best ways to increase testing is to integrate it into existing health services, said Wadzanayi Muchenje, who leads health and strategic partnerships in Africa for The Rockefeller Foundation.

Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association, said there will come a point when the world stops widespread testing for COVID-19 – but that day isn't here yet.

With the pandemic lingering and virus still unpredictable, "it's not acceptable for us to only be concerned about individual health," he said. "We have to worry about the population."

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

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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 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

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Kamana was in his late 60s; she, a single mother in her late 20s. She said she was drawn to his youthful 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.

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

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."

Tom Brady to join Fox Sports when playing career ends

NEW YORK (AP) — Seven-time Super Bowl champion Tom Brady will join Fox Sports as its lead football analyst once his playing career ends, the network said Tuesday.

When that actually happens is unclear, because Brady recently changed his mind about retiring and said he plans to continue playing for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for his 23rd NFL season.

Fox Corp. CEO Lachlan Murdoch made the announcement during a corporate investor call on Tuesday. "Over the course of this long-term agreement, Tom will not only call our our biggest NFL games with Kevin Burkhardt, he will also serve as an ambassador for us, particularly with respect to client and promotional initiatives," Murdoch said.

Murdoch said it's "entirely up to" Brady when he decides to retire from football and join Fox. Brady led the Buccaneers to a Super Bowl title following the 2020 season and NFC South championship last season. He teamed with coach Bill Belichick to win six Super Bowls during 20 seasons with the New England Patriots.

Fox recently lost its top football announcers, Joe Buck and Troy Aikman, to ESPN. It replaced Buck with

Burkhardt.

Murdoch offered no other details on the deal.

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.

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.

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 about leaving their keys with a community volunteer when they are taken to quarantine — a new requirement so disinfectant workers can get in.

In some areas, people have been ordered to stay in their homes again for a "quiet period" after being let out for limited shopping in recent weeks.

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

Fengxian district, a suburban area in southern Shanghai, entered a "quiet period" on Monday, with permits for residents to leave their compounds suspended and shops and supermarkets closed except for delivery, the Shanghai Media Group reported.

Workers at one supermarket filled bags with celery, cooking oil and other groceries in a designated area, where delivery persons picked them up. Xie Yu, the manager, said the store is also trying to restock goods in high demand. "When offline sales are resumed, customers will be able to buy what they need immediately," he said.

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 frustrations over 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.

Meanwhile, 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 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

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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.

Today in History: May 11, Adolf Eichmann captured

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, May 11, the 131st day of 2022. There are 234 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 11, 2010, Conservative leader David Cameron, at age 43, became Britain's youngest prime minister in almost 200 years after Gordon Brown stepped down and ended 13 years of Labour government.

On this date:

In 1647, Peter Stuyvesant (STY'-veh-sunt) arrived in New Amsterdam to become governor of New Netherland.

In 1858, Minnesota became the 32nd state of the Union.

In 1927, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was founded during a banquet at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles.

In 1935, the Rural Electrification Administration was created as one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs.

In 1946, the first CARE packages, sent by a consortium of American charities to provide relief to the hungry of postwar Europe, arrived at Le Havre, France.

In 1953, a tornado devastated Waco, Texas, claiming 114 lives.

In 1960, Israeli agents captured Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In 1973, the espionage trial of Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo in the "Pentagon Papers" case came to an end as Judge William M. Byrne dismissed all charges, citing government misconduct.

In 1981, legendary reggae artist Bob Marley died in a Miami hospital at age 36.

In 1996, an Atlanta-bound ValuJet DC-9 caught fire shortly after takeoff from Miami and crashed into the Florida Everglades, killing all 110 people on board.

In 1998, India set off three underground atomic blasts, its first nuclear tests in 24 years. A French mint produced the first coins of Europe's single currency, the euro.

In 2020, Twitter announced that it would add a warning label to tweets containing disputed or misleading information about the coronavirus. Jerry Stiller, best known for his role as George Costanza's father in "Seinfeld" and earlier as part of a comedy duo with wife Anne Meara, died at 92.

Ten years ago: A Chicago jury convicted Oscar-winner Jennifer Hudson's former brother-in-law, William Balfour, of murdering her mother, brother and 7-year-old nephew. (Balfour was sentenced to life in prison.)

Five years ago: President Donald Trump signed an executive order launching a commission to review alleged voter fraud and voter suppression, building upon his unsubstantiated claims that millions of people voted illegally in the 2016 election. (Trump disbanded the commission in January 2018 amid infighting and refusals by numerous states to cooperate.)

One year ago: The confrontation between Israel and Hamas, sparked by weeks of tensions in Jerusalem,

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escalated; Israel unleashed new airstrikes on Gaza while the Israeli city of Tel Aviv came under fire from a barrage of rockets launched from the Gaza Strip. The Interstate 40 bridge over the Mississippi River was closed after authorities said they found a crack in the span linking Arkansas and Tennessee. (The bridge remained closed for nearly three months.) More than 1,000 gas stations in the Southeast reported running out of fuel, primarily because of what analysts said was unwarranted panic-buying among drivers, as the shutdown of a major pipeline by hackers entered its fifth day. Stage and screen actor Norman Lloyd, known for his role as a kindly doctor on TV's "St. Elsewhere," died at his Los Angeles home at the age of 106; his career had earlier put him in the company of Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, Charlie Chaplin and other greats.

Today's Birthdays: Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan is 89. Jazz keyboardist Carla Bley is 86. Rock singer Eric Burdon (The Animals; War) is 81. Actor Pam Ferris is 74. Former White House chief of staff John F. Kelly is 72. Actor Shohreh Aghdashloo (SHOH'-reh ahg-DAHSH'-loo) is 70. Actor Frances Fisher is 70. Sports columnist Mike Lupica is 70. Actor Boyd Gaines is 69. Actor Martha Quinn is 63. Actor Tim Blake Nelson is 58. Actor Jeffrey Donovan is 54. Actor Nicky Katt is 52. Actor Coby Bell is 47. Cellist Perttu Kivilaakso (PER'-tuh KEE'-wee-lahk-soh) is 44. Actor Austin O'Brien is 41. Actor-singer Jonathan Jackson is 40. Rapper Ace Hood is 34. Latin singer Prince Royce is 33. Actor Annabelle Attanasio (TV: "Bull") is 29. Musician Howard Lawrence (Disclosure) is 28.