

# Groton Daily Independent

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June 22

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

5:30 p.m.: Jr. Teeners at Britton, DH

10 a.m.: Little Free Library reading time (south Methodist Church)

5:30 p.m.: U10 hosts Hannigan, DH (R/W)

5:30 p.m.: U8 hosts Hannigan, DH (B/W)

June 23

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

10 a.m.: Reading Time at Wage Memorial Library

5:00 p.m.: Legion hosts Lake Norden, 1 game

7 p.m.: Jr. Legion hosts Lake Norden, 1 game

5:30 p.m.: Jr. Teeners at Warner, DH

7:30 p.m.: U12 at Doland, 1 game

6:30 p.m.: U10 at Doland, 1 game (R/W)

5:30 p.m.: U8 at Doland, 1 game (R/B)

6 p.m.: U8 SB hosts Claremont, 1 game

7 p.m.: U10 SB hosts Claremont, 1 game

June 24

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

6 p.m.: U8 SB hosts Clark, DH

6 p.m.: T-Ball Scrimmage

**Groton Daily Independent**

**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**

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



June 25

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

U10 Tourney in Groton

June 26

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

U12 Tourney in Groton

U8 Tourney in Milbank

10:15 a.m.: Groton vs. Watertown Yellow  
Finals begin at 12:45

June 27

Senior Menu: Chicken Alfredo, broccoli, spinach salad, Mandarin oranges, bread stick.

Noon.: Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, potluck dinner

5:30 p.m.: Jr. Teeners host Britton, DH

5:30 p.m.: U10 at Webster, DH (R/B)

6 p.m.: U8 at Webster, DH (R/W)

**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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## Milbank Jr. Teener Tourney

### **Groton Jr. Teeners 14U Clinches Lead in Fifth Inning for Victory Over Webster**

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U ran off with the lead late in the game in a 3-2 victory over Webster on Saturday. The game was tied at one with Webster batting in the top of the fifth when Gage Baumgarn singled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one run.

The pitching was strong on both sides. Gavin Englund struck out ten, while Webster pitchers sat down 13. Englund earned the victory on the hill for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. The pitcher lasted six innings, allowing seven hits and two runs while striking out ten and walking one.

Baumgarn took the loss for Webster. The bulldog went two-thirds of an inning, allowing one run on two hits and walking one.

Matthew Mount started the game for Webster. Mount lasted five innings, allowing two hits and two runs while striking out 13

Nick Groeblichhoff, Englund, Jarrett Erdmann, and Karsten Flihs each managed one hit to lead Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. Groton Jr. Teeners 14U was sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Flihs made the most plays with ten. Groton Jr. Teeners 14U stole ten bases during the game as two players stole more than one. Erdmann led the way with four.

Webster racked up seven hits on the day. Baumgarn, Mount, and Dylan Carlson all collected multiple hits for Webster. Webster didn't commit a single error in the field. Sheldon Schmeig had 12 chances in the field, the most on the team.

### **Groton Jr. Teeners 14U Clings to Victory as Britton Nearly Erases 6-Run Deficit**

Despite seeing its six-run lead whittled down by the end, Groton Jr. Teeners 14U still held off Britton for a 6-4 victory on Saturday. Britton scored three runs in the failed comeback on a double by #1, a groundout by Jace, and a single by #20.

Britton scored four runs in the fifth inning, but Groton Jr. Teeners 14U still managed to pull out the victory. Britton big bats were led by #1, Jace, and #20, who all drove in runs.

Nicholas Morris took the win for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. Morris allowed five hits and four runs over four and two-thirds innings, striking out nine. Nick Groeblichhoff threw one-third of an inning in relief out of the bullpen.

#9 took the loss for Britton. The pitcher surrendered six runs on nine hits over four innings, striking out two.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U racked up nine hits. Kellen Antonsen, Gavin Englund, and Groeblichhoff each racked up multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. Antonsen went 3-for-3 at the plate to lead Groton Jr. Teeners 14U in hits. Groton Jr. Teeners 14U tore up the base paths, as three players stole at least two bases. Jarrett Erdmann led the way with three.

Bridger led Britton with two hits in two at bats. Bridger led Britton with two stolen bases, as they ran wild on the base paths with nine stolen bases. Britton didn't commit a single error in the field. #9 had seven chances in the field, the most on the team.

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## Groton Jr. Teeners 14U Takes the Win Over Milbank, wins tourney

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U was victorious over Milbank 14U, 5-2

Kellen Antonsen was credited with the victory for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. The pitcher allowed nine hits and two runs over five innings, striking out six and walking one.

Mac Koplein took the loss for Milbank 14U. The bulldog lasted five innings, allowing ten hits and five runs while striking out two and walking one.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U tallied ten hits in the game. Karsten Fliehs, Gavin Englund, and Antonsen all managed multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. Antonsen, Englund, and Fliehs each managed two hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. Groton Jr. Teeners 14U was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Fliehs had the most chances in the field with six.

Milbank 14U collected nine hits on the day. Tyler Heinje, Jaxson Wiese, and Lance Engebretson all managed multiple hits for Milbank 14U.

## Groton Jr. Teeners 14U 5 - 2 Milbank 14U

📍 Away 📅 Saturday June 18, 2022

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	4	0	1	5	10	0
MLBN	0	0	0	0	2	2	9	1

### BATTING

Groton Jr. Teeners	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
T McGannon (CF)	3	1	1	1	0	1
K Antonsen (P)	3	1	2	1	0	0
K Fliehs (C)	3	0	2	2	0	0
J Erdmann (LF)	3	0	0	0	0	0
N Morris (3B)	3	1	1	0	0	0
G Englund (1B)	3	0	2	0	0	0
R Jangula (RF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
G Kroll (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	0
N Groeblichhoff (...)	1	1	1	0	1	0
L Krause (2B)	2	1	1	0	0	0
CR: K Moody	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

**2B:** N Morris, **TB:** K Antonsen 2, K Fliehs 2, N Groeblichhoff, T McGannon, N Morris 2, G Englund 2, L Krause, **SB:** N Groeblichhoff, T McGannon, L Krause, **LOB:** 5

### PITCHING

Groton Jr. Te	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Antonsen	5.0	9	2	2	1	6	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>

**W:** K Antonsen, **P-S:** K Antonsen 83-56, **BF:** K Antonsen 24

Milbank 14U	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
J Wiese (SS)	3	1	2	1	0	0
J Scoular (1B)	3	0	0	0	0	1
M Koplein (P)	3	0	1	0	0	0
T Heinje (C)	3	0	2	1	0	0
M Allen (2B)	3	0	1	0	0	1
L Heller (RF)	3	0	1	0	0	1
A Kelly (3B)	2	0	0	0	0	2
D Anderson (3B)	0	0	0	0	0	0
B Berry (LF)	1	0	0	0	1	1
J German (LF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
L Engebretson (CF)	2	1	2	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>

**TB:** T Heinje 2, L Heller, L Engebretson 2, M Koplein, J Wiese 2, M Allen, **SB:** T Heinje, L Heller, L Engebretson, M Koplein, J Wiese, M Allen, **LOB:** 7

Milbank 14U	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
M Koplein	5.0	10	5	4	1	2	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

**L:** M Koplein, **P-S:** M Koplein 74-49, **BF:** M Koplein 25

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Webster Jr. Teener 2 - 3 Groton Jr. Teeners 14U

📍 Home 📅 Saturday June 18, 2022

	1	2	3	4	5	6	R	H	E
Webster	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	7	0
GRTN	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	4	0

## BATTING

Webster	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
G Baumgarn (CF, P)	3	0	2	2	0	1
D Snaza (3B)	3	0	1	0	0	1
S Schmeig (C)	3	0	0	0	0	1
M Mount (P, 1B)	3	0	2	0	0	0
C Edwards (SS)	3	0	0	0	0	3
T Santebo (2B)	3	0	0	0	0	2
D Carlson (LF)	2	2	2	0	0	0
J Ponce (RF)	1	0	0	0	1	1
E Schlotte (1B, CF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>

**2B:** M Mount, **TB:** M Mount 3, D Snaza, G Baumgarn 2, D Carlson 2, **SB:** M Mount, G Baumgarn, D Carlson 3, **LOB:** 4

## PITCHING

TBD- 06/18/2	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
M Mount	5.0	2	2	1	2	13	0
<b>G Baumgarn</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
Totals	5.2	4	3	2	3	13	0

**L:** G Baumgarn, **P-S:** M Mount 89-52, G Baumgarn 16-8, **HBP:** M Mount 2, **BF:** M Mount 21, G Baumgarn 5

Groton Jr. Teeners	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
T McGannon (CF)	2	0	0	0	1	2
K Antonsen (2B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
K Flihs (C)	3	0	1	1	0	1
J Erdmann (LF)	3	2	1	0	0	2
N Morris (3B)	3	0	0	0	0	2
G Englund (P)	3	0	1	1	0	1
K Moody (1B)	2	0	0	0	1	2
N Groeblichhoff (...)	2	1	1	0	1	0
L Krause (RF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>

**TB:** N Groeblichhoff, K Flihs, J Erdmann, G Englund, **HBP:** K Antonsen 2, **SB:** K Antonsen, T McGannon, N Groeblichhoff 3, J Erdmann 4, G Englund, **LOB:** 4

Groton Jr. Te	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
G Englund	6.0	7	2	2	1	10	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>

**W:** G Englund, **P-S:** G Englund 86-53, **BF:** G Englund 24

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## Britton Jr. Teener 4 - 6 Groton Jr. Teeners 14U

📍 Home 📅 Saturday June 18, 2022

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
Britton	0	0	0	0	4	4	5	0
GRTN	0	3	2	1	X	6	9	1

### BATTING

Britton	B	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
#1 (3B)	3	1	1	1	0	2
Jace (1B)	3	0	1	1	0	0
#9 (P)	2	0	0	0	1	2
#20 (SS)	2	1	1	1	0	1
#5 (C)	1	0	0	0	2	0
#4 (CF)	3	0	0	0	0	3
#8 (LF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
#32 (RF)	1	0	0	0	1	0
Bridger	2	1	2	0	0	0
Landon (2B)	1	1	0	0	1	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>

**2B:** #1, **TB:** Jace, Bridger 2, #20, #1 2, **HBP:** #20, **SB:** #9, Jace, Bridger 2, #20 2, #5 2, Landon, **LOB:** 7

### PITCHING

TBD- 06/18/2	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
#9	4.0	9	6	6	2	2	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

**L:** #9, **P-S:** #9 70-45, **WP:** #9, **BF:** #9 23

Groton Jr. Teeners	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
T McGannon (CF)	3	0	0	1	0	0
K Antonsen (2B)	3	1	3	0	0	0
K Fliehs (C)	3	0	0	0	0	0
R Jangula (LF)	0	0	0	0	0	0
J Erdmann (LF, C)	2	1	1	1	1	0
N Morris (P, SS)	2	1	0	0	1	0
G Englund (3B)	2	1	2	1	0	0
K Moody (1B)	2	1	1	0	0	1
N Groeblinghoff (...)	2	1	2	1	0	0
L Krause (RF)	2	0	0	1	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

**2B:** G Englund, K Antonsen, **TB:** K Moody, N Groeblinghoff 2, G Englund 3, J Erdmann, K Antonsen 4, **SB:** K Moody 2, J Erdmann 3, K Antonsen, N Morris 2, **LOB:** 5

Groton Jr. Te	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
N Morris	4.2	5	4	4	4	9	0
N Groebling...	0.1	0	0	0	1	1	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>

**W:** N Morris, **P-S:** N Groeblinghoff 10-5, N Morris 98-57, **HBP:** N Morris, **BF:** N Groeblinghoff 2, N Morris 24

## Locke Electric Can't Catch Up To Aberdeen Circus Sports Bar

Locke Electric fell behind early and couldn't come back in a 13-0 loss to Aberdeen Circus Sports Bar on Wednesday. Aberdeen Circus Sports Bar scored on a home run by Karson Hesser in the first inning, a single by Ryan Ellingson in the first inning, a single by Tyler Newman in the first inning, a single by Hesser in the second inning, and a single by Kelly Coates in the second inning.

The Locke Electric struggled to contain the high-powered offense of Aberdeen Circus Sports Bar, giving up 13 runs.

Aberdeen Circus Sports Bar opened up scoring in the first inning, when Hesser homered on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring two runs.

A single by Dylan Frey in the first inning was a positive for Locke Electric.

Otto led the Aberdeen Circus Sports Bar to victory on the pitcher's mound. The pitcher surrendered zero runs on four hits over seven innings, striking out 16 and walking zero.

Aaron Severson took the loss for Locke Electric. The pitcher allowed 18 hits and 13 runs over seven innings, striking out four.

Heath Giedt, Frey, Spencer Locke, and Wilson Bonet all had one hit to lead Locke Electric.

Aberdeen Circus Sports Bar had 18 hits in the game. Hesser, Tyler Oliver, Michael Babcock, and Dalton Cox all managed multiple hits for Aberdeen Circus Sports Bar. Hesser went 5-for-5 at the plate to lead Aberdeen Circus Sports Bar in hits. Aberdeen Circus Sports Bar didn't commit a single error in the field. Coates had 16 chances in the field, the most on the team.

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## Aberdeen Circus Sports Bar **13 - 0** Locke Electric

📍 Home 📅 Tuesday June 21, 2022

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
ABRD	4	4	1	0	1	0	3	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>
LCKL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

### BATTING

Aberdeen Circus S	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
J Wollman (CF)	3	3	1	0	1	1
M Babcock (SS)	4	3	3	1	1	0
K Hesser (LF)	5	4	5	5	0	0
T Oliver (1B)	4	1	3	1	1	0
D Cox (3B)	5	1	2	2	0	0
K Coates (C)	5	1	1	1	0	0
R Ellingson (2B)	3	0	1	1	1	1
T Newman (RF)	4	0	1	2	0	1
J Beuster (DH)	2	0	0	0	0	1
B Kusler	0	0	0	0	0	0
#24 (DH)	2	0	1	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>

**2B:** K Hesser, J Wollman, M Babcock, **HR:** K Hesser, **TB:** K Hesser 9, J Wollman 2, D Cox 2, K Coates, T Newman, T Oliver 3, #24, M Babcock 4, R Ellingson, **HBP:** J Wollman, **LOB:** 8

### PITCHING

Aberdeen Cir	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
Otto	7.0	4	0	0	0	16	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>

**W:** Otto, **P-S:** Otto 87-66, **BF:** Otto 24

Locke Electric	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
C Frey (CF)	3	0	0	0	0	3
D Frey (SS)	2	0	1	0	0	1
B Peterson (1B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
W Bonet (C)	3	0	1	0	0	0
H Giedt (1B, 2B)	3	0	1	0	0	1
J Israel (DH, RF)	3	0	0	0	0	2
C Camacho (2B, S...	3	0	0	0	0	3
G Knebel (3B)	2	0	0	0	0	2
S Locke (LF)	2	0	1	0	0	1
E Erickson (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
A Severson (P)	1	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>16</b>

**2B:** H Giedt, **TB:** H Giedt 2, S Locke, D Frey, W Bonet, **LOB:** 3

Locke Electri	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
A Severson	7.0	18	13	13	4	4	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>

**L:** A Severson, **P-S:** A Severson 130-74, **WP:** A Severson, **HBP:** A Severson, **BF:** A Severson 42

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## City Hall Air Conditioner in emergency replacement mode

The air conditioner unit at Groton City Hall has recently died and is in emergency replacement mode. Allied Climate Professionals got temporary units to help keep the facility cooled in the interim. Trying to find a 20 ton replacement unit has been challenging, but Kevin Nehls said that he does happen to have a 20 ton unit that could be used as a replacement. He said the unit was installed at another site, but the heating part of the unit did not work. The company sent a replacement unit so Kevin said he has this unit which will work perfectly for the cooling situation at City Hall. Even though it is over the \$20,000 threshold for a councilman to do work for the city, the lack of availability for anyone else to get a unit in a timely matter and by the council declaring it an emergency will allow Allied Climate Professionals to get the job done in a few weeks. The entire replacement project will cost around \$30,000.

There was discussion on one of the surcharges appearing on the city bills. Former Councilman David Blackmun had said before he left the council that he would like to see the surcharge removed once the loan is paid off. It was brought up during the May financial report which shows one of the loans being paid off in July with another one in October. The current water project set for this summer will have most of it paid for with state and federal funds.

The council agreed to keep the temporary raise for April Abeln, Deputy Finance Officer, until August 14th when the six month probationary period for Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich expires.

The first meeting in July will be Wednesday, July 6, at 7 p.m.

### May 2022

Dacotah Bank Checking Acct	\$ 4,198,328.23
General Cash	\$ 300.00
SD FIT Acct	\$ 1,554,881.31
Dacotah Bank Water CD	\$ 85,379.54
Cemetery Perp Care CD	\$ 32,876.69
Total	\$ 5,871,765.77

Invested In		
Cash	\$ 300.00	0.01%
Dacotah Bank	\$ 4,316,584.46	73.51%
SD Fit	\$ 1,554,881.31	26.48%
Total	\$ 5,871,765.77	100.00%

	Beginning	Revenue	Expenses	Transfers	Ending
	Cash Balance				Cash Balance
General	\$ 1,144,996.94	\$ 342,108.57	\$ 120,171.87		\$ 1,366,933.64
Bed, Board, Booze Tax	\$ 130,326.02	\$ 2,010.33			\$ 132,336.35
Baseball Uniforms	\$ 1,710.20				\$ 1,710.20
Airport	\$ 24,542.82				\$ 24,542.82
**Debt Service	\$ (55,420.93)	\$ 11,656.67			\$ (43,764.26)
Cemetery Perpetual Care	\$ 34,756.69				\$ 34,756.69
Water Tower	\$ 180,000.00				\$ 180,000.00
Water	\$ 518,776.04	\$ 39,839.65	\$ 35,805.99		\$ 522,809.70
Electric	\$ 2,850,928.83	\$ 136,810.49	\$ 88,215.31		\$ 2,899,524.01
Wastewater	\$ 501,757.59	\$ 17,484.73	\$ 1,790.94		\$ 517,451.38
Solid Waste	\$ 43,537.88	\$ 13,338.39	\$ 8,469.29		\$ 48,406.98
Family Crisis	\$ 11,033.15	\$ 551.48	\$ 540.09		\$ 11,044.54
Sales Tax	\$ 10,730.71	\$ 10,624.36	\$ 9,699.03		\$ 11,656.04
Employment	\$ (3,851.60)		\$ 487.02		\$ (3,364.58)
Utility Prepayments	\$ 74,576.28	\$ (297.35)			\$ 74,278.93
Utility Deposits	\$ 90,993.01	\$ 750.00	\$ 550.00		\$ 91,193.01
Other	\$ 524.10	\$ 1,876.22	\$ 150.00		\$ 2,250.32
Totals	\$ 5,559,917.73	\$ 576,753.54	\$ 265,879.54	\$ -	\$ 5,871,765.77

**Debt to be Paid	
**2015 Refinance	\$ 1,972,637.49 by 12/1/2035
**West Sewer	\$ 34,223.03 by 10/15/2022
**RR Sewer Crossing	\$ 16,681.61 by 7/15/22
Total Debt	\$ 2,023,542.13

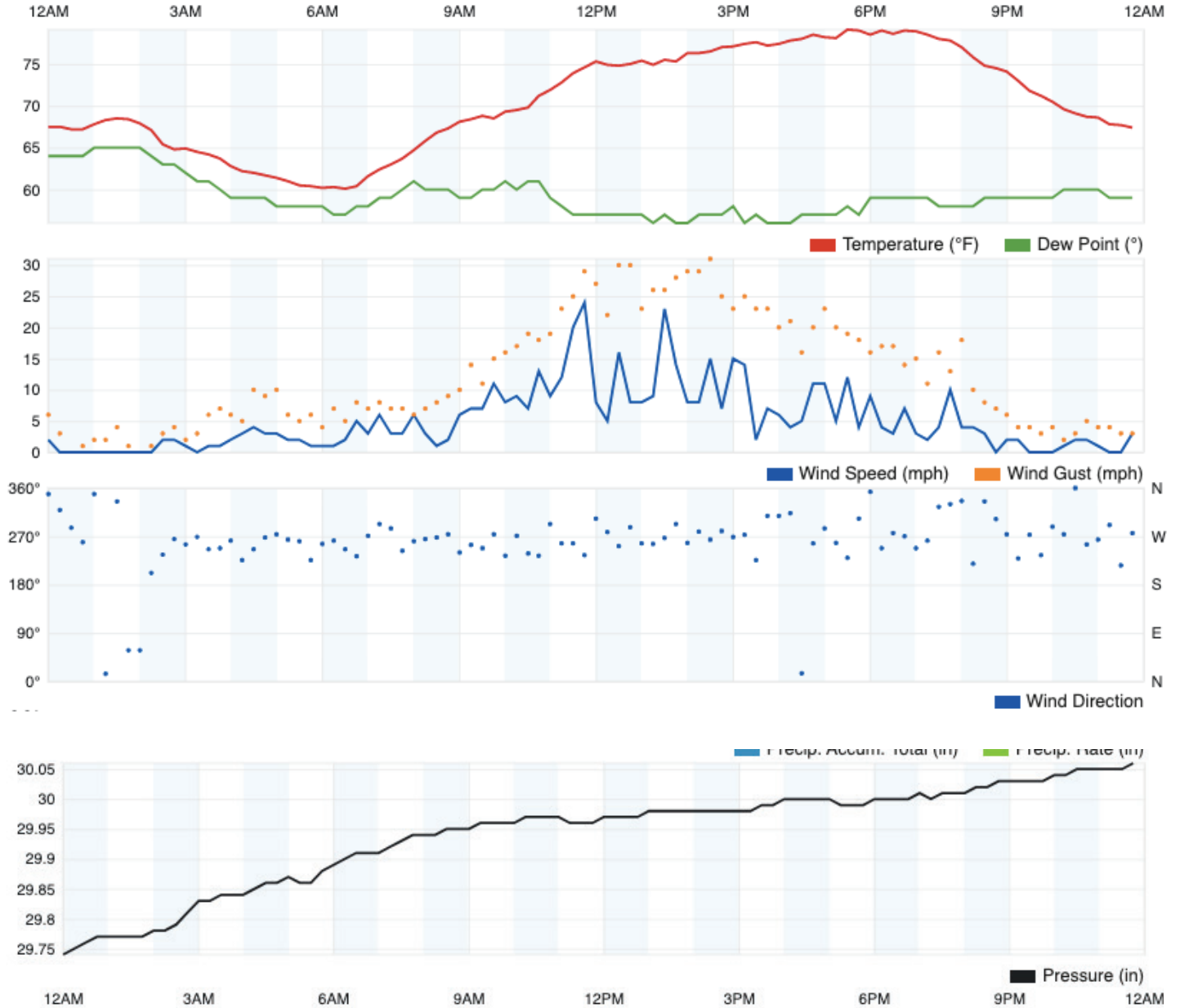
\$131,884.64 ARPA GRANT (Received to General)  
 \$89,223.86 Water tower loan payment



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Thursday



Sunny then  
Slight Chance  
T-storms

Thursday  
Night



Chance  
T-storms

Friday



Sunny then  
Chance  
T-storms

High: 86 °F

Low: 65 °F

High: 95 °F

Low: 68 °F

High: 90 °F



Dry Today, Chance of Storms & Warmer On  
Thursday

Today



Highs: 81 to 88

Tonight



Lows: 60 to 71

Thursday



Highs: 90 to 95

Photo Credit: Kathy Andersen



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

High pressure system over the area will bring sunny and quiet weather for today with highs ranging in the 80s. Warmer air moves into the area Thursday with chances of showers and thunderstorms starting in the afternoon. Some of those could be on the strong side, mainly in northeastern SD/western MN. Temperatures will warm back into the 90s as well.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 79 °F at 5:41 PM**

**Low Temp: 60 °F at 5:59 AM**

**Wind: 31 mph at 2:28 PM**

**Precip: 0.00**

Day length: 15 hours, 44 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 102 in 1922

Record Low: 39 in 1905

Average High: 82°F

Average Low: 57°F

Average Precip in June.: 2.69

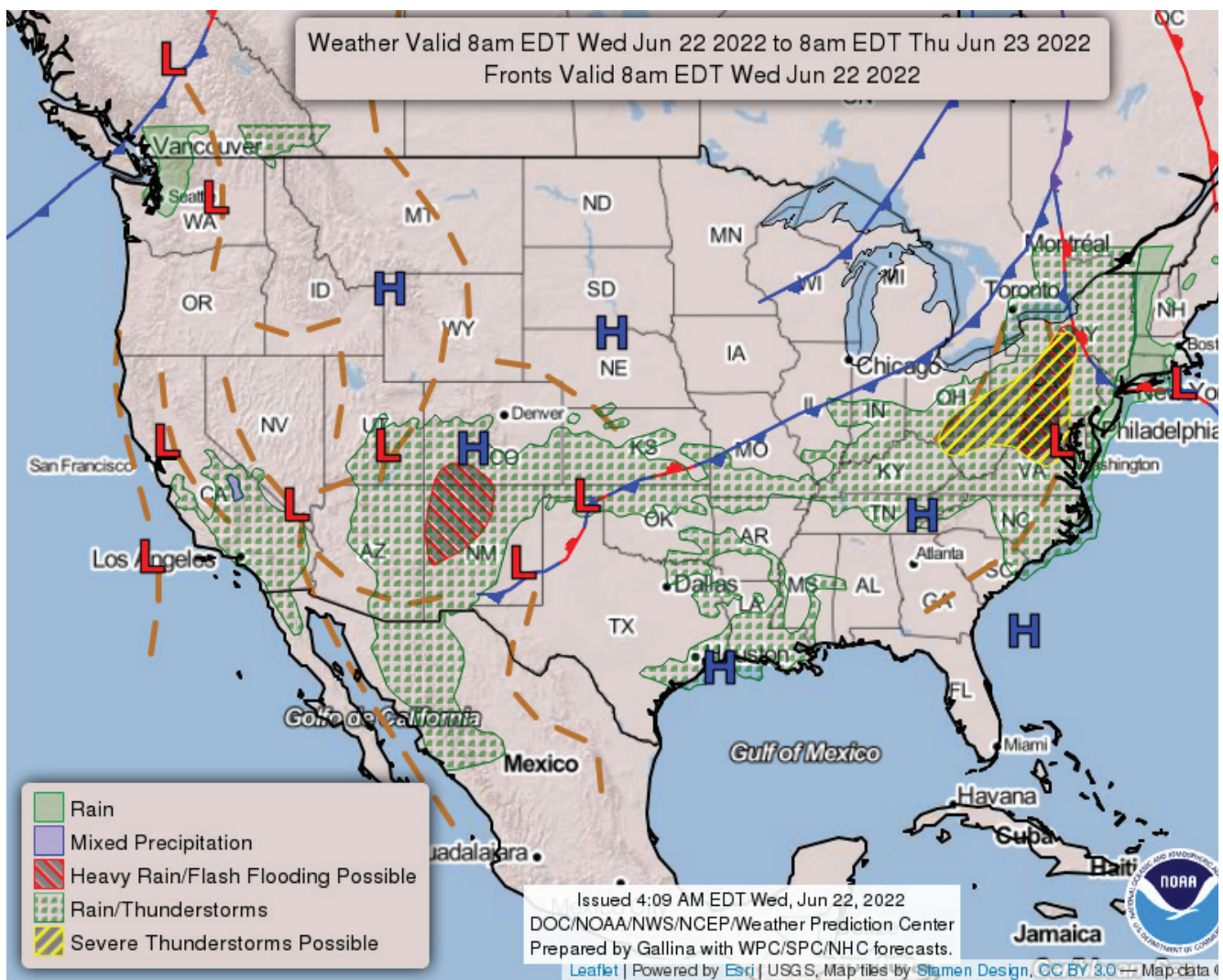
Precip to date in June.: 0.22

Average Precip to date: 9.94

Precip Year to Date: 11.38

Sunset Tonight: 9:26:35 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:42:39 AM



## Today in Weather History

June 22, 1916: An estimated F2 tornado moved northeast from 4 miles east of Willow Lakes to east of Vienna, in Clark County. A farmhouse was picked up and thrown into a granary. A boy was smothered to death by grains as a barn collapsed on him, one mile south of Vienna.

June 22, 1919: The second deadliest tornado in Minnesota's history occurred on this day. 59 people were killed as an estimated F5 tornado ripped through the town of Fergus Falls, Minnesota. 400 buildings were destroyed. A blank check was found over 60 miles away, and lumber was carried 10 miles. Of the 59 victims, 35 were guests of the Grand Hotel.

June 22, 1996: From the morning through the late afternoon hours, several supercell thunderstorms moved southeast along a strong warm front from eastern Corson County to southwest Deuel County. These storms produced several tornados, large hail, very heavy rains, and damaging winds. Hail up to the size of baseballs and winds gusting to 70 mph damaged and destroyed thousands of acres of crops, broke windows in homes, buildings, and vehicles. Many roofs were damaged, and trees were downed from near Mobridge to Redfield to Toronto. The most extensive crop, building, and tree damage occurred around the areas of Redfield, Vienna, Naples, Hazel, Bryant, Henry, Lake Norden, Castlewood, Estelline, and Toronto all south of Highway 212. The hail swaths of destruction were as much as 10 miles wide in places. Some farmers said you could not tell what was planted because the crops were destroyed. Hail piles of one to two feet were reported in some areas. Also, most of the area from Redfield to Toronto received one to three inches of rain which caused some flooding problems.

1928: A farmer near Greensburg, KS looked up into the heart of a tornado. He described its walls as "rotating clouds lit with constant flashes of lightning and a strong gassy odor with a screaming, hissing sound."

1947 - Twelve inches of rain fell in forty-two minutes at Holt, MO, establishing a world rainfall record. That record was tied on January 24-25, 1956, at the Kilauea Sugar Plantation in Hawaii, as their state record was established with 38 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1972 - Hurricane Agnes deluged Pennsylvania and New York State with torrential rains resulting in the most costly flood in U.S. history. In the Middle Susquehanna Valley of Pennsylvania, 24 hour rainfall amounts were generally 8 to 12 inches, with up to 19 inches in extreme southwestern Schuylkill County. At Wilkes-Barre, PA, the dike was breached destroying much of the town. Flooding resulted in 117 deaths and 3.1 billion dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1981 - A young woman from Lubbock, TX, was struck by lightning. The bolt of lightning struck just above her right shoulder near her neck, and passed right to left through her body, tearing her warm-ups, causing her tennis shoes to explode, and lifting her two feet into the air. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in southern Texas produced wind gusts to 116 mph near Quemado. Thunderstorms in New York State produced 5.01 inches of rain in 24 hours at Buffalo, an all-time record for that location, and produced an inch of rain at Bath, PA. The temperature at Fairbanks AK soared to 92 degrees, establishing a record for the date. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003: A hailstone measuring 7.0 inches in diameter with a circumference of 18.75 inches and weighing 1.33 pounds falls in Aurora, Nebraska. The National Weather Service reports this is the second largest hailstone ever documented in the U.S. by weight, and the largest by size at that time. The world's largest hailstone NOW was produced from storms in South Dakota; 8" in diameter and 1.9375 lbs. on July 23, 2010.

2007: The first officially documented F5 tornado in Canada struck the town of Elie, Manitoba population 500 people. Video of the storm showed a heavy van being whirled through the air. The storm also tossed an almost entire house several hundred yards through the air before it disintegrated. The tornado traveled across the landscape for about 35 minutes covering 3.4 miles and leaving a damage path 984 feet wide. Wind speeds in the tornado were later estimated at 260-316 mph. Fortunately, no fatalities or serious injuries were reported.

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## Where Did The Proverbs Come From?

No one has ever asked me to answer a question that had no limits. Sometimes, I have been asked questions that have encouraged me to "think big" or to "go beyond what I have thought of in the past," or to "think into the future for what could be." Those questions have been very challenging. However, no one has ever approached me and said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you, and I will!" At least, no one who had the power to give me a "whatever."

But that happened to Solomon. And, the one who asked him that question was not his father who he would replace as king. It was One who was much more powerful than his father, and One who, indeed, could grant Solomon the "whatever" he wished for. It was God Himself!

He realized and admitted to God that he was not qualified to be a king. He saw himself as "a little child." So, he asked God to "give Your child a discerning heart" – (not mind) – "to govern Your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of Yours?" Then, the very next verse begins with, "The Lord was pleased that Solomon asked for this!" And, God responded: "I will give you what you asked for and what you have not asked for: wealth and honor, and in your lifetime you will have no equal!"

What an interesting question: "Ask for whatever you want" - and what a humble answer: "Nothing for myself. My only desire is to have a discerning heart."

God granted his request and through him gave us His inspired, infallible, inerrant Proverbs as "life guides."

Prayer: Father, in Your wisdom, You gave Your servant wisdom to offer to Your children so they could "live well!" In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Bible Verse: So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours? 1 Kings 3:9

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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  
-6/20/2022 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  
10/01/2022 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm  
10/07/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am  
10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)  
10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/12/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course  
Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm  
01/29/2023 Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)

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## News from the Associated Press

### **South Dakota AG convicted on 2 impeachment charges, removed**

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Senate on Tuesday convicted Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg of two impeachment charges stemming from a 2020 fatal crash, removing and barring him from future office in a stinging rebuke that showed most senators didn't believe his account of the crash.

Ravnsborg, a first-term Republican who only recently announced he wouldn't seek reelection, showed little emotion as senators convicted him first of committing a crime that caused someone's death. They then delivered another guilty verdict on a malfeasance charge that alleged he misled investigators and misused his office.

Ravnsborg told a 911 dispatcher the night of the crash that he might have struck a deer or other large animal and has said he didn't know he struck a man — 55-year-old Joseph Boever — until he returned to the scene the next morning. Criminal investigators said they didn't believe some of Ravnsborg's statements, and several senators made clear they didn't either.

"There's no question that was a lie," said Sen. Lee Schoenbeck, the chamber's top-ranking Republican. "This person ran down an innocent South Dakotan."

Schoenbeck also criticized Ravnsborg for declining to testify in his own defense, saying Ravnsborg should have shared "what the hell he was doing" the night of the crash.

"There's a mic right there, and that's a damn short walk," Schoenbeck said.

The convictions required a two-thirds majority in the Senate, controlled 32-3 by Republicans. Senators mustered the bare minimum 24 votes to convict Ravnsborg on the first charge, with some senators saying the two misdemeanors he pleaded guilty to weren't serious enough crimes to warrant impeachment. The malfeasance charge — Ravnsborg also asked investigators what data could be found on his cellphone, among other things — sailed through with 31 votes.

Votes to bar Ravnsborg from future office, taken on both counts, were unanimous.

Ravnsborg's face showed little emotion throughout the votes, holding his hand over his mouth as he had for much of the trial, then writing on a notepad in his lap. He did not answer questions from reporters as he exited the Capitol.

Ravnsborg in September agreed to an undisclosed settlement with Boever's widow.

Nick Nemecek, Boever's cousin who has been a constant advocate for a severe punishment for Ravnsborg, said the votes were "vindication."

"It's just a relief. It's been nearly two years that this has drug on and it just feels like a weight off my shoulders," he said.

Ravnsborg is the first official to be impeached and convicted in South Dakota history.

Gov. Kristi Noem, who will pick Ravnsborg's replacement until the candidate elected to replace him in November is sworn in, called for her fellow Republican to resign soon after the crash and later pressed lawmakers to pursue impeachment. As the saga dragged on, Noem publicly endorsed Ravnsborg's predecessor, Republican Marty Jackley, for election as his replacement.

The governor celebrated the impeachment conviction on Twitter, saying it had lifted "the dark cloud over the Attorney General's office."

"It is now time to move on and begin to restore confidence in the office," she said, but gave no indication as to who she will pick for the interim position.

Ravnsborg has argued that the governor, who has positioned herself for a possible 2024 White House bid, pushed for his removal in part because he had investigated ethics complaints against Noem.

As the impeachment trial opened Tuesday, prosecutors drove at a question that has hung over developments since the September 2020 collision: Did Ravnsborg know he killed a man the night of the crash?

"He absolutely saw the man that he struck in the moments after," said Alexis Tracy, the Clay County



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state's attorney who led the prosecution.

Prosecutors also told senators that Ravensborg had used his title "to set the tone and gain influence" in the aftermath of the crash, even as he allegedly made "misstatements and outright lies" to the crash investigators. The prosecution played a montage of audio clips of Ravensborg referring to himself as the attorney general.

Prosecuting attorneys probed Ravensborg's alleged misstatements during the aftermath of the crash, including that he never drove excessively over the speed limit, that he had reached out to Boever's family to offer his condolence, and that he had not been browsing his phone during his drive home.

The prosecution played a series of video clips during their closing arguments that showed Ravensborg's shifting account of his phone use during interviews with criminal investigators. The attorney general at first outright denied he had been using his phone while driving, but then acknowledged he had been looking at his phone minutes before the crash. When it was time for senators to speak, several noted an accident reconstruction that found Ravensborg's car had veered entirely out of its lane, in contrast to his initial statement that he was in the middle of the road at the time of impact.

Ravnsborg resolved the criminal case last year by pleading no contest to a pair of traffic misdemeanors, including making an illegal lane change and using a phone while driving, and was fined by a judge.

The attorney general's defense asked senators to consider the implications of impeachment on the function of state government. Ross Garber, a legal analyst and law professor at Tulane University who specializes in impeachment proceedings, told senators to impeach would be "undoing the will of the voters."

Ravnsborg was driving home from a political fundraiser after dark on Sept. 12, 2020, on a state highway in central South Dakota when his car struck "something," according to a transcript of his 911 call afterward. He told the dispatcher it might have been a deer or other animal.

Investigators identified what they thought were slips in Ravensborg's statements, such as when he said he turned around at the accident scene and "saw him" before quickly correcting himself and saying: "I didn't see him." And they contended that Boever's face had come through Ravensborg's windshield because his glasses were found in the car.

"We've heard better lies from 5-year-olds," Pennington County State's Attorney Mark Vargo, acting as an impeachment prosecutor, said of Ravensborg's statement.

Investigators had determined the attorney general walked right past Boever's body and the flashlight Boever had been carrying — still illuminated the next morning — as he looked around the scene the night of the crash.

Ravnsborg said neither he nor the county sheriff who came to the scene knew that Boever's body was lying just feet from the pavement on the highway shoulder.

"There isn't any way you can go by without seeing that," Arnie Rummel, an agent with the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation who led the criminal probe, said in testimony Tuesday.

Prosecutors also raised an exchange that Ravensborg had with one of his staff members three days following the crash, after he had submitted his phones to crash investigators. Ravensborg questioned an agent in the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation about what would turn up during forensic exams of his cellphones, even though the agency was supposed to have no part in the investigation to avoid conflicts of interest.

"We were not supposed to be involved," the now-retired agent, Brent Gromer, said as he described why the exchange made him uncomfortable.

Ravnsborg's defense attorney contended that the attorney general had done nothing nefarious. His defense attorney, Mike Butler, described any discrepancies in Ravensborg's memory of that night as owing to human error, and disparaged testimony from Rummel, the crash investigator, as "opinion" that would not hold up in a court of law.

During closing arguments, Butler stated that the criminal prosecution found "no criminal culpability" for Boever's death and urged senators to refrain from rehashing that case.

"No amount of fire and brimstone changes that given fact," he said.

Sen. Arthur Rusch, a retired judge who said he had gotten to know Ravensborg when he was a young

attorney practicing in Rusch's court, was among senators who didn't support impeachment on the first charge, but did on the second. He said he was bothered by Ravensborg's actions in questioning Division of Criminal Investigation agents on aspects of the case and for issuing a press release on attorney general stationery.

## SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

08-13-18-32-42, Mega Ball: 20, Megaplier: 3

(eight, thirteen, eighteen, thirty-two, forty-two; Mega Ball: twenty; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$312,000,000

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: 312,000,000

## Minnesota's Parker Fox suffers another offseason knee injury

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesota forward Parker Fox has suffered another serious knee injury, putting the status of a potential starter in question for the upcoming season.

Fox was hurt Monday during a summer practice, coach Ben Johnson said Tuesday. The 6-foot-8 Fox tore the ACL in his left knee during the offseason in 2021 and redshirted his first year with the Gophers. The latest injury was to his right knee. The Gophers were in the process of evaluating the extent of the injury and had no timetable yet for his return, Johnson said.

Fox transferred from Northern State University in South Dakota, where he was an NCAA Division II All-American in his third and final season there. He's a native of Mahtomedi, Minnesota.

## Biden to name 1st Native American US treasurer to head Mint

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Native American is being appointed U.S. treasurer, a historic first.

The White House on Tuesday announced President Joe Biden's intent to appoint Marilynn "Lynn" Malerba as his administration establishes an Office of Tribal and Native Affairs at the Treasury Department, which will be overseen by the U.S. treasurer.

The treasurer's duties include oversight of the U.S. Mint, serving as a liaison with the Federal Reserve and overseeing Treasury's Office of Consumer Policy. The treasurer's signature appears on U.S. currency.

"It is especially important that our Native voices are respected," Malerba said in a statement. "This appointment underscores this Administration's commitment to doing just that. I am excited to serve our communities as Treasurer and for the work ahead."

Malerba, who is the lifetime chief of the Mohegan Indian Tribe, previously worked as a registered nurse, according to the tribe's website, and has served in various tribal government roles. The tribe's reservation is located on the Thames River in Uncasville, Connecticut.

"For the first time in history, a Tribal leader and Native woman's name will be the signature on our currency," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in remarks prepared ahead of the announcement.

"Chief Malerba will expand our unique relationship with Tribal nations, continuing our joint efforts to support the development of Tribal economies and economic opportunities for Tribal citizens," Yellen said.

Yellen was set to visit the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota on Tuesday, the first time a Treasury secretary has visited a tribal nation. She is expected to focus on how the American Rescue Plan has affected tribal communities.

The relief package allotted more than \$30 billion to Tribal governments, some of which oversee the poorest communities in the nation.

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For instance, 59% of Rosebud Sioux Tribal households live in poverty, according to U.S. government estimates. Native communities have also suffered the brunt of waves of COVID-19-related deaths and drug overdoses.

This makes the need for representation at the federal level all the more important, says Carl Tobias, a law professor at University of Richmond who specializes in federal appointments.

With Malerba at Treasury, the agency "can work with individual indigenous tribes to work on economic issues which are critical to Native people," he said.

He added that "I think it's true in certain western states that Native Americans are an important voting group."

There are about 9.7 million people in the U.S. who identify as American Indian and Alaska Native, according to the Census Bureau. And while roughly eight million Native Americans are eligible to cast a ballot, Census surveys estimate that large portions of the population are not registered to vote.

A March 2022 White House report on Native American Voting Rights states that "Native voters are less attached to political parties and are more concerned with what candidates can do to support Native communities."

Biden, a Democrat, has taken several steps to demonstrate his commitment to tribal nations, including naming Deb Haaland as the first Native American to lead the Interior Department. Biden also has appointed at least three Native American judges — Lauren J. King, Sunshine Suzanne Sykes and Lydia Griggsby — to the federal court system.

Biden issued the first presidential proclamation of Indigenous Peoples' Day, with the intent of refocusing the federal holiday previously dedicated to explorer Christopher Columbus toward an appreciation of Native people.

The administration led by Haaland is leading a reckoning with the U.S. government's role in Native American boarding schools, which stripped children of their cultures and identities. On Wednesday, the Senate Indian Affairs Committee will hold a hearing on the Interior Department's report on its investigation into the federal government's past oversight of Native American boarding schools.

## Owner flees after pit bulls maul woman in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A woman required stitches after she was mauled by four pit bulls in a southeastern South Dakota town and police believe the dogs' owner fled with the animals to escape punishment.

Authorities say the 55-year-old victim suffered 17 bite wounds when the dogs attacked her Monday morning as she walked in Freeman, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) west of Sioux Falls. She was treated at a hospital for serious injuries that required nine stitches, police said.

The dogs were inside the owner's house when police arrived. The man refused to "surrender the animals," said Jay Slevin, a Freeman police officer.

Slevin said that while he was waiting for backup, the owner escaped out the back door with the dogs. Police believe he took them to a friend's house in Sioux Falls.

The Freeman police have had previous issues with the animals but "nothing like this," Slevin said. Police believe the dogs initially escaped by pushing out the back door.

The owner is facing four counts of keeping and maintaining of vicious animals, letting dogs run at large, and disturbing the peace.

## Climate change a factor in 'unprecedented' South Asia floods

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL and AL-EMRUN GARJON Associated Press

SYLHET, Bangladesh (AP) — Scientists say climate change is a factor behind the erratic and early rains that triggered unprecedented floods in Bangladesh and northeastern India, killing scores and making lives miserable for millions of others.

Although the region is no stranger to flooding, it typically takes place later in the year when monsoon rains are well underway.

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This year's torrential rainfall lashed the area as early as March. It may take much longer to determine the extent to which climate change played a role in the floods, but scientists say that it has made the monsoon — a seasonable change in weather usually associated with strong rains — more variable over the past decades. This means that much of the rain expected to fall in a year is arriving in a space of weeks.

The northeastern Indian state of Meghalaya received nearly three times its average June rainfall in just the first three weeks of the month, and neighboring Assam received twice its monthly average in the same period. Several rivers, including one of Asia's largest, flow downstream from the two states into the Bay of Bengal in low-lying Bangladesh, a densely populated delta nation.

With more rainfall predicted over the next five days, Bangladesh's Flood Forecast and Warning Centre warned Tuesday that water levels would remain dangerously high in the country's northern regions.

The pattern of monsoons, vital for the agrarian economies of India and Bangladesh, has been shifting since the 1950s, with longer dry spells interspersed with heavy rain, said Roxy Matthew Koll, a climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology in Pune, adding that extreme rainfall events were also projected to increase.

Until now, floods in northeastern Bangladesh were rare while Assam state, famed for its tea cultivation, usually coped with floods later in the year during the usual monsoon season. The sheer volume of early rain this year that lashed the region in just a few weeks makes the current floods an "unprecedented" situation, said Anjal Prakash, a research director at India's Bharti Institute of Public Policy, who has contributed to U.N.-sponsored study on global warming.

"This is something that we have never heard of and never seen," he said.

Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave a similarly grim assessment Wednesday.

"We haven't faced a crisis like this for a long time. Infrastructure must be constructed to cope with such disasters," she told a news conference in Dhaka. "The water coming from Meghalaya and Assam has affected the Sylhet region" in northeastern Bangladesh, she said, adding that there is no quick respite for the country.

Hasina said that floodwaters would recede soon from the northeast, but they would likely hit the country's southern region soon on the way to the Bay of Bengal.

"We should prepare to face it," she said. "We live in a region where flooding happens quite often, which we have to bear in mind. We must prepare for that."

A total of 42 people have died in Bangladesh since May 17 while Indian authorities reported that flood deaths have risen to 78 in Assam state, with 17 others killed in landslides.

Hundreds of thousands are displaced and millions in the region have been forced to scramble to make-shift evacuation centers.

Some, like Mohammad Rashed Ahamed, a shop owner in the hardest-hit city of Sylhet, have worriedly returned home with their families to see what can be salvaged. Wading through knee-deep water, he said that he was worried about floodwaters rising again. "The weather is changing .. there can be another disaster, at any time."

He is one of about 3.5 million Bangladeshis who face the same predicament each year when rivers flood, according to a 2015 analysis by the World Bank Institute.

The country of 160 million is considered one of the most vulnerable to climate change and the poor are disproportionately impacted.

Mohammad Arfanuzzaman, a climate change expert at the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, said that catastrophic floods like the one this year could have wide-ranging impacts, from farmers losing their crops and being trapped in a cycle of debt to children not being able to go to school and at increased risk to disease.

"Poor people are suffering a lot from the ongoing flooding," he said.

## **Sri Lanka PM says economy 'has collapsed,' unable to buy oil**

By KRISHAN FRANCIS Associated Press

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COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lanka's debt-laden economy has "collapsed" after months of shortages of food, fuel and electricity, its prime minister told lawmakers Wednesday, in comments underscoring the country's dire situation as it seeks help from international lenders.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe told Parliament the South Asian country is "facing a far more serious situation beyond the mere shortages of fuel, gas, electricity and food. Our economy has completely collapsed."

While Sri Lanka's crisis is considered its worst in recent memory, Wickremesinghe's assertion that the economy has collapsed did not cite any specific new developments. It appeared intended to emphasize to his critics and opposition lawmakers that he has inherited a difficult task that can't be fixed quickly, as the economy founders under the weight of heavy debts, lost tourism revenue and other impacts from the pandemic, as well as surging costs for commodities.

Lawmakers of the country's two main opposition parties are boycotting Parliament this week to protest against Wickremesinghe, who became prime minister just over a month ago and is also finance minister, for not having delivered on his pledges to turn the economy around.

Wickremesinghe said Sri Lanka is unable to purchase imported fuel, even for cash, due to heavy debts owed by its petroleum corporation.

"Currently, the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation is \$700 million in debt," he told lawmakers. "As a result, no country or organization in the world is willing to provide fuel to us. They are even reluctant to provide fuel for cash," he said.

Wickremesinghe took office in May after days of violent protests over the country's economic crisis forced his predecessor to step down. In his comments Wednesday, he blamed the previous government for failing to act in time to turn the situation around, as Sri Lanka's foreign reserves dwindled.

The foreign currency crisis has crimped imports, creating severe shortages of food, fuel, electricity and other essentials like medicines, forcing people to stand in long lines to fulfill basic needs.

"If steps had at least been taken to slow down the collapse of the economy at the beginning, we would not be facing this difficult situation today. But we lost out on this opportunity. We are now seeing signs of a possible fall to rock bottom," he said.

Sri Lanka has been muddling through mainly supported by \$4 billion in credit lines from neighboring India. But Wickremesinghe said India would not be able to keep Sri Lanka afloat for too long.

It also has gotten pledges of \$300 million-\$600 million from the World Bank to buy medicine and other essential items.

Sri Lanka has already announced that it is suspending repayment of \$7 billion in foreign debt due for repayment this year, pending the outcome of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund on a rescue package. It must pay \$5 billion on average annually until 2026.

Officials from International Monetary Fund are now visiting Sri Lanka to discuss a rescue package. Wickremesinghe said that a staff-level agreement is likely to be reached by the end of July.

## **Press group: Ukraine journalist, soldier 'coldly executed'**

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Ukrainian photojournalist and a soldier accompanying him appear to have been "coldly executed" during the first weeks of the war in Ukraine as they searched in Russian-occupied woods for the photographer's missing camera drone, Reporters Without Borders said Wednesday.

The press freedom group said it sent investigators back to the woods north of the capital, Kyiv, where the bodies of Maks Levin and serviceman Oleksiy Chernyshov were found April 1. The group said its team counted 14 bullet holes in the burned hulk of the pair's car, which remained at the spot.

Citing the findings from its investigation into the deaths, the group said disused Russian positions, one of them still booby-trapped, were found close by. Also found were the remains of food rations, cigarette packs and other litter seemingly left by Russian soldiers.

Some of Levin and Chernyshov's belongings, including the soldier's ID papers and parts of his bulletproof

vest and the photographer's helmet, were also recovered, Reporters Without Borders said.

A Ukrainian team with metal detectors also located a bullet buried in the soil where Levin's body had been, it said. The group said that finding suggests "he was probably killed with one, perhaps two bullets fired at close range when he was already on the ground."

A jerrycan for gasoline was also found close to where Chernyshov's burned body was found, it added.

Reporters Without Borders said its findings "show that the two men were doubtless coldly executed."

Levin and Chernyshov were last heard from on March 13. A GPS tracker in their vehicle gave their last position, in woods north of Kyiv, the group said.

The group speculated that Levin may have been hunting for his drone when he and Chernyshov were killed.

It said Levin lost his drone in the area on March 10 and had been unable to recover it because he'd come under Russian fire. Drones have become a common tool for photojournalists to get aerial photos and video.

Reporters Without Borders said Levin had on occasion shared information gleaned from his drone, including about Russian positions, with Ukrainian forces.

"But the use of his drone was first and foremost a journalistic endeavor, confirmed by his entourage and shown by the images sold to the media since the start of the Russian invasion," it said.

The group said it turned over the evidence it collected and dozens of photos to Ukrainian investigators.

The group said it was unable to confirm whether autopsies were performed on the men's bodies, a step it called essential for the investigation into their deaths.

It also appealed for Ukrainian defense and intelligence agencies to provide investigators with whatever information they have about Russian units that occupied the area during Moscow's failed assault on Kyiv.

Separately, Russian officials said a drone strike caused a fire at an oil processing plant in southwestern Russia on Wednesday.

The blaze engulfed a piece of machinery at the Novoshakhtinsk plant in the Rostov-on-Don region. Authorities said that dozens of firefighters quickly contained the fire and no one was hurt.

The plant said in a statement that the fire was caused by a strike carried out by two drones, describing it as a "terrorist" act. It didn't give details, but state news agency Tass reported that two Ukrainian drones flew over the plant and one of them slammed into a heat exchanger, triggering the fire.

The regional governor, Vasily Golubev, said that fragments of two drones were found on the territory of the plant.

Ukrainian authorities have not confirmed the strike.

## Top Texas cop: Uvalde police response was 'abject failure'

By JIM VERTUNO and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The head of the Texas state police pronounced the law enforcement response to the Uvalde school shooting an "abject failure," telling lawmakers that there were enough officers and firepower on the scene to have stopped the gunman three minutes after he entered the building.

Col. Steve McCraw also said officers would have found the door to the classroom where the assailant was holed up unlocked if they had bothered to check it.

Instead, police with rifles stood in a hallway for over an hour, waiting in part for more weapons and gear, before they finally stormed the classroom and killed the gunman, putting an end to the May 24 attack that left 19 children and two teachers dead.

"I don't care if you have on flip-flops and Bermuda shorts, you go in," McCraw, director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, said Tuesday in blistering testimony at a state Senate hearing.

The classroom door, it turned out, could not be locked from the inside by design, according to McCraw, who also said a teacher reported before the shooting that the lock was broken. Yet there is no indication officers tried to open it during the standoff, McCraw said. He said police instead waited for keys.

"I have great reasons to believe it was never secured," McCraw said of the door. "How about trying the door and seeing if it's locked?"

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Delays in the law enforcement response at Robb Elementary School have become the focus of federal, state and local investigations. Testimony was scheduled to resume Wednesday.

McCraw lit into Pete Arredondo, the Uvalde school district police chief who McCraw said was in charge, saying: "The only thing stopping a hallway of dedicated officers from entering Room 111 and 112 was the on-scene commander who decided to place the lives of officers before the lives of children."

Arredondo made "terrible decisions," said McCraw, who lamented that the police response "set our profession back a decade."

Arredondo has said he didn't consider himself the person in charge and assumed someone else had taken control of the law enforcement response. He has declined repeated requests for comment from The Associated Press.

The police chief testified for about five hours Tuesday at a closed-door hearing of a Texas House committee also investigating the tragedy, according to the panel chair.

Senate members hearing the latest details reacted with fury, some decrying Arredondo as incompetent and saying the delay cost lives. Others pressed McCraw on why state troopers on the scene didn't take charge. McCraw said the troopers did not have legal authority to do so.

The public safety chief presented a timeline that said three officers with two rifles entered the building less than three minutes behind the gunman, an 18-year-old with an AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle. Several more officers entered minutes after that. Two of the officers who went into the hallway early on were grazed by gunfire.

The decision by police to hold back went against much of what law enforcement has learned in the two decades since the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado in which 13 people were killed in 1999, McCraw said.

"You don't wait for a SWAT team. You have one officer, that's enough," he said. He also said officers did not need to wait for shields to enter the classroom. The first shield arrived less than 20 minutes after the shooter entered, according to McCraw.

Eight minutes after the shooter entered, an officer reported that police had a heavy-duty crowbar that they could use to break down the classroom door, McCraw said.

The public safety chief spent nearly five hours offering the clearest picture yet of the massacre, outlining a series of other missed opportunities, communication breakdowns and errors based on an investigation that has included roughly 700 interviews. Among the missteps:

- Arredondo did not have a radio with him.
- Police and sheriff's radios did not work inside the school. Only the radios of Border Patrol agents on the scene did, and they did not work perfectly.
- Some school diagrams that police used to coordinate their response were wrong.

State police initially said the gunman, Salvador Ramos, entered the school through an exterior door that had been propped open by a teacher. However, McCraw said the teacher had closed the door, but unbeknownst to her, it could be locked only from the outside. The gunman "walked straight through," McCraw said.

The gunman knew the building well, having attended the fourth grade in the same classrooms where he carried out the attack, McCraw said. Ramos never communicated with police that day, the public safety chief said.

Sen. Paul Bettencourt said the entire premise of lockdown and shooter training is worthless if school doors can't be locked. "We have a culture where we think we've trained an entire school for lockdown ... but we set up a condition to failure," he said.

Bettencourt challenged Arredondo to testify in public and said he should have removed himself from the job immediately. He angrily pointed out that shots were heard while police waited.

"There are at least six shots fired during this time," he said. "Why is this person shooting? He's killing somebody. Yet this incident commander finds every reason to do nothing."

Uvalde Mayor Don McLaughlin said Tuesday that the city has "specific legal reasons" that it's not answering questions publicly or releasing records. "There is no cover-up," he said in a statement.

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Later in the day, the Uvalde City Council voted unanimously against giving Arredondo, who is a council member, a leave of absence from appearing at public meetings. Relatives of the shooting victims had pleaded with city leaders to instead fire him.

"Please, please, we're begging you, get this man out of our lives," said Berlinda Arreola, the grandmother of Amerie Jo Garza.

After the meeting, the mayor pushed back on McCraw's testimony casting blame on Arredondo, saying that the Department of Public Safety has repeatedly put out false information about the shooting and glossed over the role of its own officers.

He called the Senate hearing a "clown show" and said he heard nothing from McCraw about state troopers' involvement, even though McLaughlin said their number in the school hallway at points during the slaughter surpassed that of any other law enforcement agency.

Questions about the law enforcement response began days after the massacre. McCraw said three days afterward that Arredondo made "the wrong decision" when he chose not to storm the classroom for more than 70 minutes, even as trapped fourth graders inside two classrooms were desperately calling 911 for help and anguished parents outside the school begged officers to go inside.

An hour after the shooter first crashed his truck outside the school, Arredondo said, according to McCraw's timeline: "People are going to ask why we're taking so long. We're trying to preserve the rest of the life."

But McCraw said Tuesday that the amount of time that elapsed before officers entered the classroom was "intolerable."

Police haven't found any red flags in Ramos' school disciplinary files but learned through interviews that he engaged in cruelty to animals. "He walked around with a bag of dead cats," McCraw said.

In the days and weeks after the shooting, authorities gave conflicting and incorrect accounts of what happened. But McCraw assured lawmakers: "Everything I've testified today is corroborated."

McCraw said if he could make just one recommendation, it would be for more training. He also said every state patrol car in Texas should have shields and door-breaching tools.

"I want every trooper to know how to breach and have the tools to do it," he said.

## Director Haggis appears in Italy court amid assault probe

BRINDISI, Italy (AP) — Film director Paul Haggis appeared in court in southern Italy on Wednesday amid a police investigation into a woman's allegations he had sex with her without her consent over the course of two days.

Haggis, 69, made no comment as he arrived with Italian attorney Michele Laforgia at the courthouse in Brindisi, a port town in Puglia, the region that forms the "heel" of southeastern Italy. There was no sign that members of his family who were in Italy at the time joined him.

Prosecutors announced Sunday that police had detained the Canadian-born director, screenwriter and producer for investigation of alleged aggravated sexual violence and aggravated personal injuries.

State TV and other Italian media said the alleged victim is a 30-year-old Englishwoman who had known Haggis before he came to the tourist town of Ostuni to participate in an arts festival.

Haggis co-wrote, directed and produced "Crash," which won the 2006 Academy Awards for best picture and best screenplay. He also wrote the screenplay for "Million Dollar Baby," another Oscar winner.

He has had legal problems in recent years stemming from sexual misconduct accusations by four women in the United States.

In Italy, a judge, after hearing arguments from both prosecutors and defense lawyers, is expected to rule Wednesday on whether Haggis should be freed from custody pending possible additional investigation.

The judge could also decide to order him kept jailed or under house arrest.

Haggis' U.S.-based attorney, Priya Chaudhry, told The Associated Press on Sunday that although she could not discuss the evidence under Italian law, "I am confident that all allegations will be dismissed against Mr. Haggis. He is totally innocent, and willing to fully cooperate with the authorities so the truth



comes out quickly.”

## Europe wildfire risk heightened by early heat waves, drought

By CIARÁN GILES and DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Extended drought conditions in several Mediterranean countries, a heat wave last week that reached northern Germany and high fuel costs for aircraft needed to fight wildfires have heightened concerns across Europe this summer.

And it's only June.

“Much of the continent is in drought,” said Cathelijne Stoof, an environmental science professor at the Netherlands' Wageningen University, who called the wildfire outlook “very challenging across Europe.”

Fires last summer blackened more than 11,000 square kilometers (4,250 square miles) of land — an area more than four times the size of Luxembourg. About half of the damage was in the European Union.

And, experts say, Europe's wildfires aren't just a problem for the southern, hotter countries.

“What scientists are warning us is that (fires) are obviously going north and in countries such as the U.K., in countries such as Germany as well as in Scandinavian countries, in the future, we need to expect wildfires to happen more often,” said Catherine Gamper, a climate change adaptation specialist at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Wildfires across Spain have destroyed tens of thousands of acres of wooded land, though a recent sharp drop in temperatures is helping firefighters contain them.

Spain's problems began with the arrival in spring of the earliest heat wave in two decades. Temperatures as high as those normally recorded in August rose above 40 C (104 F) in many Spanish cities.

Neighboring Portugal also saw its warmest May in nine decades, and in France the month was the hottest on record.

“As a result of climate change, heat waves are starting earlier and are becoming more frequent and more severe because of record concentrations of heat-trapping greenhouse gases,” the World Meteorological Organization said last week.

“What we are witnessing today is a foretaste of the future.”

Despite the extensive planning, early-warning surveillance, and prediction models, preparing for wildfires remains a huge challenge. The EU is expanding a shared pool of planes and helicopters on standby this summer to provide cross-border support and is expected to partner with more nations outside the bloc.

“It's very difficult to predict wildfires,” said Marta Arbinolo, an OECD policy analyst and climate adaptation and resilience specialist.

“We do know that summer (of) 2022 is predicted by weather forecasts to be particularly warm and dry, possibly even more than 2020 or '21, which was the driest and warmest summer in Europe,” she said. “We can expect that the risk of wildfires in Europe for the summer might be very high.”

In Greece, which suffered some of Europe's most devastating fires last August, authorities say higher fuel costs have added to challenges facing the fire service, which relies heavily on water-dropping planes to battle blazes in the mountainous country.

Greece will begin using fire retardant chemicals in water drops this year, while the EU is sending more than 200 firefighters and equipment from France, Germany and four other countries to Greece to remain throughout the summer.

Wildfire seasons are also getting longer.

“The concept of a fire season is losing its meaning right now. We have the fire season all year-round,” said Victor Resco de Dios, professor of forest engineering at Lleida University, in Spain's northeastern Catalonia region, which has been hit hard by summer fires.

“The main changes we are seeing with climate change is a longer duration of fire seasons.”

Laura Vilagra, a senior Catalonia government official, told a regional conference that fire prevention measures this season could include park closures.

“The weather every year is more adverse, and the drought is very evident this year,” she said. “We're

expecting a very complicated summer.”

Resco foresees a bleak future in Spain, arguing that areas currently affected by fires “probably will not experience many fires by the turn of the century. Why? Because forests would be very scarce. There would be nothing left to burn.”

Other experts aren’t as grim.

The OECD’s Gamper and Arbinolo point out that some of the worst fires have actually brought positive developments such as the EU’s Civil Protection Mechanism that facilitates rapid cooperation between countries in emergencies. European countries, they argue, are also opening up to incorporate risk reduction in their planning, rather than simply boosting their firefighting resources.

“The core is the need for integrated fire management, attention to fires all year round rather than just when it is dry, and investment in landscape management,” Stoof said.

Gamper appealed for two things she said would have a major impact. First, reconsider urban planning by not building near forests of extreme risk.

“I think our first sort of appeal to countries is really to think about where you continue to settle,” Gamper said.

“Second of all, enforce your regulations. Countries know what to do.”

## **South China floods force tens of thousands to evacuate**

BEIJING (AP) — Major flooding has forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people in southern China, with more rain expected.

Parts of the manufacturing hub of Guangdong suspended classes, office work and public transport amid rising waters and the threat of landslides.

In the neighboring province of Jiangxi, almost 500,000 people have seen damage to their homes and their lives uprooted.

Roughly the same number have been affected in Guangdong, largely in the cities of Shaoguan, Heyuan and Meizhou.

The heavy rainfall has collapsed roads in some parts of cities and swept away houses, cars and crops, and more rain is forecasted for coming days. Chinese authorities on Sunday issued the year’s first red alert, the most severe warning, for possible mountain torrents.

In Zhejiang province north of Guangdong, rescue crews in inflatable boats brought out residents trapped in their homes in inundated villages.

Further north, storm warnings were issued for much of the eastern provinces, including the capital Beijing, while reservoirs in the central province of Henan were at flood level and were releasing torrents of water downstream.

China regularly experiences flooding during the summer months, most frequently in central and southern areas that tend to receive the most rainfall. This year’s flooding is the worst in decades in some areas and comes on top of strict COVID-19 regulations that have strangled travel, employment and ordinary life in much of the country.

China’s worst floods in recent years were in 1998, when more than 2,000 people died and almost 3 million homes were destroyed, mostly along the Yangtze, China’s mightiest river.

The government has invested heavily in flood control and hydroelectric projects such as the massive Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze.

Globally, more intense tropical storms are on the rise as a result of climate change, leading to increased flooding that threatens lives, crops and groundwater.

## **South Sudan fights child marriage where girls sold for cows**

By DENG MACHOL Associated Press

JUBA, South Sudan (AP) — Some young girls are still auctioned off into marriage for cows in South Sudan

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— one of the social challenges that activists had hoped to highlight during Pope Francis' now-postponed visit.

The price of a daughter, determined in negotiations between her father and would-be husband, is typically 50 to 100 cows, each worth up to \$1,000. A girl viewed as beautiful, fertile and of high social rank can bring as many as 200 cows. One girl in a well-publicized case a few years ago was auctioned off for 520 cows, plus cars.

"The younger the girl marries, the more the family gets cattle in return," said Jackline Nasiwa, executive director of the Center of Inclusive Governance, Peace and Justice in South Sudan's capital, Juba. "They sell their daughters so that they get something to survive."

Though South Sudanese law limits marriage to those age 18 and over, it's rarely enforced, particularly in rural areas.

South Sudan's independence from Sudan in 2011 brought widespread hope for prosperity and peace for the country's 12 million people, but little of that has materialized.

The new country quickly plunged into five years of civil war that ended with a fragile peace deal in 2018, but deadly intercommunal violence continues, and most people remain trapped in poverty. Climate shocks like flooding, along with rising food prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have deepened widespread hunger.

South Sudan has the world's fifth-highest prevalence of child marriage, according to the U.N., which says the practice is a violation of human rights, a serious impediment to literacy and a major cause of persistent poverty. About a third of girls in the country are pregnant before turning 15, according to UNICEF.

Against the odds, some South Sudanese girls have fought back.

"I refused," said 21-year-old Nyanachiek Madit, when her father said she would be married to a man about 50 years old because her family couldn't afford to send her to school. She was 17 at the time.

"I didn't accept to get married because I am disabled and my education will be my 'leg' later on," said Nyanachiek, who was born with a congenital disorder. Convinced that schooling would give her a better life, she stood up to her family and dared them to beat or even kill her. Her family didn't force her to marry, but refused to pay her school fees as punishment.

Nyanachiek's plight came to the attention of ChildBride Solidarity, which offers scholarships to girls whose parents abandon them after they oppose early marriage. With the group's assistance, Nyanachiek now studies in South Sudan's capital.

"I am now happy," she told The Associated Press.

Early marriage can be deadly. The United Nations Population Fund has said South Sudan is one of the riskiest places to be a mother. Mothers die in 1,150 out of 100,000 live births, one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.

"You cannot have a healthy mother, you cannot have a happy mother, if you are marrying off your children and making them mothers," Chris Oyeyipo with the U.N. Population Fund said during an event marking Mother's Day in Juba.

The U.N. wants child marriage eliminated worldwide by 2030. But poor families in South Sudan see laws against child marriage as barring them from profiting from their daughters and threatening their very survival.

Only about 10% of South Sudan's girls finish primary school because of factors including conflict and cultural beliefs, according to UNICEF and Plan International.

Experts say some families worry that sending girls to school exposes them to dangers such as sexual assault that could lower their value when it comes time to look for marriage offers. And yet the experts say early marriage exposes girls to domestic abuse, including rape.

Authorities have a long way to go to change such attitudes, said Aya Benjamin, South Sudan's minister of gender, child and social welfare, who as a girl watched some of her friends be married off.

"It is our collective responsibility to make sure that our girls are allowed to enjoy their childhood," she told the AP. "We are not discouraging marriage."

"We just say allow girls to be children. Allow them to be themselves. Let them grow up and let them go to school and allow them to decide what they want to be in life, and in that way we can have a healthy society."

## Yellowstone park reopening after changes wrought by flood

By MATTHEW BROWN and AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

WAPITI, Wyo. (AP) — Visitors will return to a changed landscape in Yellowstone National Park on Wednesday as it partially reopens following record floods that reshaped the park's rivers and canyons, wiped out numerous roads and left some areas famous for their wildlife viewing inaccessible, possibly for months to come.

Park managers are raising the gates at 8 a.m. Wednesday at three of Yellowstone's five entrances for the first time since June 13, when 10,000 visitors were ordered out after rivers across northern Wyoming and southern Montana surged over their banks following a torrent of rainfall that accelerated the spring snowmelt.

Some of the premier attractions at America's first national park will again be viewable, including Old Faithful — the legendary geyser that shoots towering bursts of steaming water almost like clockwork more than a dozen times a day.

But the bears, wolves and bison that roam the wild Lamar Valley and the thermal features around Mammoth Hot Springs will remain out of reach. The wildlife-rich northern half of the park will be shuttered until at least early July, and key routes into the park remain severed near the Montana tourist towns of Gardiner, Red Lodge and Cooke City.

It's unknown how many visitors will show up in the flooding's immediate aftermath. Park managers had been bracing for throngs as the park celebrated its 150th anniversary a year after it tallied a record 4.9 million visits.

"We get a million people a month in Yellowstone in July and August," Yellowstone Superintendent Cam Sholly said. "You can't get a full visitation in half the park."

To keep visitor numbers down while repairs continue, park managers will use a system that only allows cars with even-numbered last digits on their license plates to enter on even days, while vehicles with odd-numbered last numbers can come on odd days.

Groups of visitors traveling together in different cars are exempt from the license plate system as well as people with reservations at campgrounds and hotels in the park.

If traffic along the park's 400 miles (644 kilometers) of roads becomes unmanageable, Sholly said officials will impose a reservation system to enter the park.

The reopening comes as officials in Yellowstone are still tallying the scope of the damage. Based on other national park disasters, it could take years and carry a steep price tag to rebuild. It's an environmentally sensitive landscape with a huge underground plumbing system that feeds into the park's geysers, hot springs and other thermal features. Construction season only runs from the spring thaw until the first snowfall, a narrow window that means some roads could receive only temporary fixes this year.

That's turned some Montana communities into dead ends instead of being gateways to Yellowstone, a blow to their tourism-dependent economies. They're also still struggling to clean up damage to several hundred homes and businesses that were swamped by flooding on the Yellowstone, Stillwater and Clarks Fork rivers.

In Red Lodge, one of those gateway towns cut off from the park, most businesses are open even as flood cleanup continues. The Montana Department of Transportation is beginning repairs to the road between Red Lodge and the scenic Beartooth Highway and the National Park Service is working to restore access to some areas in the northern part of the park.

"We have to remain optimistic, but we also have to remain realistic that there's a lot of things going on and a lot of moving pieces to make it happen," said Tim Weamer, who does marketing for the Red Lodge Chamber of Commerce.

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"We're optimistic that we'll survive," he said. "We're not going to have the summer we were hoping for."

For others the rebound may come faster. Yellowstone tour guide Derek Draimin said he's fully booked up Wednesday with four groups that will be headed into the park.

"I think there will be cars stacked up trying to get in, to be the first people to enter the park after the thousand-year flood," he said.

Draimin lost about 25 tours because of the flood and says fewer visitors might come thinking that the park is badly damaged. But with most of the park expected to be accessible within weeks, Draimin said it's also possible business could get a bump as tourists who can't get in through the park's northern entrances get funneled through West Yellowstone, where his company, Yellowstone Adventure Tours, is based.

"I have no idea what to expect," he said. "I could see both things happening."

## Labor shortage compounds federal firefighters' staffing woes

By SAM METZ Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Firefighter groups are applauding the Biden administration's steps to raise pay but warn that the temporary wage hikes won't be enough to combat staffing problems, as federal agencies compete with local fire departments and big box stores in a tight labor market.

"It's an effort and an attempt to try to keep people at their jobs," Jonathon Golden, a former federal firefighter from Park City, Utah, said of the move to raise federal firefighter pay. "But it still falls woefully short of the pay in municipal departments and other state agencies."

Wildfire season is raging throughout the western U.S. and fierce competition for workers is exacerbating challenges facing the land management agencies that employ firefighters. For years, firefighters and their advocates have decried stagnant pay and increased costs of living, arguing both are making recruitment difficult and attrition inevitable.

The Biden administration announced Tuesday that infrastructure bill funds would go to backpay and giving all federal firefighters a raise for two years — either a 50% bump from their base salary or \$20,000, whichever is less.

The move follows an executive order President Joe Biden signed last year to raise federal firefighter minimum wage to \$15 an hour. And it implements provisions of last year's infrastructure bill designed to help recruit and retain firefighters, including \$600 million in one-time funding to raise pay.

Biden said funding for long-term pay raises remained a priority as climate change makes the U.S. West hotter, drier and more prone to wildfires.

"I will do everything in my power, including working with Congress to secure long-term funding, to make sure these heroes keep earning the paychecks — and dignity — they deserve," he said in a statement.

Though officials say it's an imperfect metric, the number of unfilled staffing requests on large wildfires — or "unable to fill orders," indicates growing problems: In 2019, there were 92 times where the National Interagency Fire Center couldn't mobilize crews to wildfires upon request. In 2020, there were 339 crew mobilization orders that couldn't be filled. And last year, 1,858 crew mobilization orders couldn't be filled.

Ken Schmid, operations specialist at the National Interagency Fire Center, said "unable to fill" orders reflect staffing needs but also may depend on geography or time of year, particularly in months when agencies dedicate staff to training or other high priority work.

"What it comes down to is we've got more big fires out there and incident management teams with needs to try and corral them than we have folks available," said Grant Beebe, a former smokejumper and the Bureau of Land Management's assistant director for fire and aviation.

Members of the advocacy group Grassroots Wildland Firefighters believe raises were long overdue. However, they warn that without permanent increases, some of the nation's most skilled firefighters — including hotshots, smokejumpers and helitack crews — may go work elsewhere.

"You can go to a Whole Foods and start off at \$16 an hour with \$1,000 signing bonus. It's just a tight labor market now," Golden, the former firefighter, said.

In addition to facing competition from retail employers, federal agencies also compete with state and

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local departments that can pay more, offer more full-time positions and better benefits.

Mid-career federal firefighters currently earn roughly half the pay of third-year firefighters employed by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, according to analysis from Grassroots Wildland Firefighters. Incident commanders working for federal agencies can make as little as one-quarter of the pay of entry-level municipal firefighters working the same fire.

Pay bumps and the creation of a new job classification that will allow more firefighters to be hired for year-round positions will narrow the gap between federal firefighters' pay and benefits and their state and local counterparts, federal officials say.

In a fact-sheet released this week, they say they expect the changes announced Tuesday to help firefighting agencies recruit more workers and create career advancement opportunities for those already employed. Both, officials say, should lower attrition rates for skilled firefighters who have left for other departments or industries.

Land management agencies, mainly the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, hope to employ more than 30,000 firefighters during peak season this summer and have worked to recruit new employees throughout the spring.

But the Forest Service said last month that staffing levels were 90% overall, but as low as 50% in some fire-prone regions, including California, Oregon and Washington.

Randy Erwin, president of the union representing a majority of federal wildland firefighters, said recruitment and retention had been particularly difficult this year, amid a worse-than-normal fire season. He expects the pay bump to help agencies fill their firefighting ranks.

"Firefighters simply could not make ends meet on the hopelessly low salaries offered at federal agencies, so jobs were becoming very difficult to fill," he said in a statement.

Brad Hershbein, senior economist at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, said there were few signs of competition for workers decreasing or hiring slowing down. Though the labor market remains tight, he said private sector employers have recovered to pre-pandemic levels more than public sector employers such as the federal agencies who employ firefighters.

Firefighting may be an attractive profession for young people craving adventure and a sense of purpose, but Hershbein said the allure would likely not insulate federal agencies from broader trends in the labor market and the many factors that prospective employees weigh when considering jobs.

"Based on my read of everything going on in the labor market, unless they are going to be doing other things to attract people — like bonuses and other incentives — it's going to be really hard," he said.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, who last month in a letter called looming staffing shortages an "urgent threat to natural resources, public safety, and taxpayer dollars," applauded Biden's announcement. But he said more needed to be done for firefighters, particularly as blazes grow more severe.

"They deserve the basic decency of good pay and good benefits that fully recognize their sacrifice and essential work, and allows them to support their families," he said.

"Summer is here, there are firefighter shortages in Oregon and across the West, and there is no time to waste in getting these changes implemented on the ground."

## 'Heightened alert': Abortion providers brace for ruling

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

In her first week on the job at a Philadelphia abortion clinic, Amanda Kifferly was taught how to search for bombs. About a year later, protesters blocked the entrances and exits of the The Women's Centers, at one point pulling Kifferly into something resembling a mosh pit, where they surrounded her and shoved her around.

And on the night of last winter's arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court in a case that could end the nationwide right to abortion, people gathered outside a clinic in New Jersey with lawn chairs, a cooler and a flaming torch — a sight that brought to mind lynchings and other horrors of the country's racist past, says Kifferly, who now serves as vice president for abortion access.

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Such scenes have become familiar for providers and patients across the country over the decades since the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling legalizing abortion. At times the violence has been far more severe, including bombings, arson and murders — from the 1993 killing of Dr. David Gunn outside a Florida abortion clinic to the 2015 fatal shooting of three people inside a Colorado Planned Parenthood.

Now providers and some in law enforcement worry what will come next. They're preparing for an increase in violence once the Supreme Court rules, saying there has historically been a spike when the issue of abortion gets widespread public attention, such as after a state approves new restrictions. If the decision ends Roe v. Wade — as a leaked draft opinion indicates may happen — they also anticipate protests, harassment and other violence to be more concentrated and intensify in states where abortion remains legal.

"We know from experience, it's not like the people protesting clinics in banned states just pack up and go home," said Melissa Fowler, chief program officer for the National Abortion Federation.

The group and the hundreds of abortion clinics it represents have been on "heightened alert" since the opinion leaked, Fowler said. The organization has staff who specialize in security on call around the clock. They go out to clinics to do drills with employees and volunteers on scenarios such as bomb threats or active shooters and advise them on things like where to position security cameras. They also conduct safety assessments at the homes of physicians, monitor online threats and consult with local law enforcement.

In some places, local police are working with clinics to try to tamp down potential for violence. In Jacksonville, Florida, the sheriff's office said last month they would station an officer outside the clinic, and police in Little Rock, Arkansas, installed a camera atop a crane near an abortion clinic that has been the site of protests, hoping to deter bad actors.

Immediately following the leak and for days afterward, police in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, initiated extra patrols around The Women's Center location, Kifferly said.

But the relationship between clinics and local police isn't always a positive one, and clinics must weigh whether having a heavy police presence will frighten patients, Fowler said. In Kifferly's experience, how well clinics and police departments work together varies by city and state. She recalled asking an officer for help as she was assaulted outside the Philadelphia clinic, and the officer responding that she should "call 911."

NAF, which collects monthly data from its over 500 members on harassment and violence, reported a spike in incidents in 2020, the most recent year for which the group has published data. The number of death threats or threats of harm and of assault and battery both increased by more than double, and providers reported more than 24,000 incidents of hate email or internet harassment.

Abortion providers reported an uptick after Donald Trump became president, and "extremists felt like it was OK for them not to be in the shadows," Fowler said. The coronavirus pandemic seemed to exacerbate things, Kifferly said, and in all four states where The Women's Centers operates — New Jersey, Connecticut, Georgia and Pennsylvania — "we were besieged by protesters" angry that abortion clinics were open while their churches or businesses were closed.

Abortion opponents also have been targets of violence, and say they've also seen an increase in incidents since the draft opinion leaked, though the FBI in a 2020 memo described the incidents as historically "rare."

Shortly after the draft opinion became public, the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis said the draft had made extremist violence — by people on either side of the issue — more likely.

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America said those were among more than 40 incidents of violence, intimidation and vandalism at pregnancy centers and churches in recent weeks.

In early June, a man with a gun, knife, zip ties and other items was arrested near Justice Brett Kavanaugh's home in the middle of the night. He told police he wanted to kill the justice because he was upset about the draft opinion as well as the fatal mass shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

The court is expected to issue its ruling in the coming days or weeks.

As for what might occur next for abortion providers, much focus has been on how to provide care to people seeking it, should abortion be banned in more states. But Fowler said another concern is also front

of mind: "We also need to focus on safety."

## **Britt wins tumultuous Alabama Senate race scrambled by Trump**

By JILL COLVIN and KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Katie Britt won the Republican nomination for Senate in Alabama Tuesday, defeating six-term Rep. Mo Brooks in a primary runoff after former President Donald Trump took the unusual step of rescinding his initial Brooks endorsement.

The loss ends a turbulent campaign that pit Brooks, a conservative firebrand who has spent more than a decade in Congress, against someone who has never held elected office. Brooks ran under the banner "MAGA Mo" and fully embraced Trump's election lies. But that wasn't enough for the former president, who initially backed Brooks in the race to replace Britt's former boss, retiring Sen. Richard Shelby, but then pulled his support as Brooks languished in the polls.

The race was among a handful of contests held Tuesday at the midpoint of a primary season that has been shaped by Trump's effort to influence the GOP.

By the time Trump backed her earlier this month, Britt was already considered the favorite in the race. She emerged as the top vote-getter in the state's May 24 primary, but just missed the threshold that triggered a runoff. Still, Tuesday's result gives Trump a win at a time when his influence over the GOP has come under scrutiny.

The former president has had a mixed record of success in backing candidates this election season, helping lift Senate contenders in Pennsylvania and Ohio while floundering elsewhere, particularly in Georgia. Voters in the onetime Republican stronghold rejected his efforts to unseat the state's GOP governor and secretary of state, both of whom rebuffed his extraordinary pressure to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. And his trouble in the crucial swing state deepened Tuesday as two of his endorsed congressional candidates faltered in their GOP run-off elections.

In the 6th District in Atlanta's northern suburbs, emergency room physician Rich McCormick beat Trump-backed lawyer Jake Evans. And in the 10th District east of Atlanta, trucking company owner Mike Collins bested Democrat-turned-Republican Vernon Jones.

Trump persuaded Jones to run for the seat and drop his long-shot bid for governor to clear the field for his chosen candidate, former Sen. David Perdue. Perdue lost to Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, who endorsed Collins. The seat is being vacated by Republican Rep. Jody Hice, who also lost his bid to unseat Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, another top Trump target.

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser won the Democratic nomination to serve another term, fending off a pair of challengers amid concerns over rising crime and homelessness.

But the Alabama Senate runoff had drawn particular attention because of the drama surrounding Trump's endorsement and because the winner, who will face Democrat Will Boyd in November, is considered the overwhelmingly favorite in the Republican state.

Britt, 40, cast herself as part of a new generation of conservative leaders while disparaging Brooks, 68, as a career politician. If victorious in November, Britt will be the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate from Alabama and one of its youngest members. The state's previous female senators had been appointed.

"Alabama has spoken. We want new blood. We want fresh blood," she said at her victory party. "We want someone who will fight for Christian conservative values, who will fight for the freedoms and liberties this nation was founded on and will fight for the American dream for the next generation and the next generation."

That argument seemed to resonate with some voters Tuesday.

"She's young. She's smart," said 86-year-old Carolyn Bowman. "That's what we need in Congress."

Brooks, who is known for his bombastic oratory style, described the race as a battle for the soul of Republican Party, pitting the "true conservative" wing against establishment members of the GOP. He disparaged Britt, 40, as a RINO — the GOP pejorative meaning "Republican in name only" — and maintained he was the only one with a proven conservative record.



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The founding member of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, Brooks has a history of bucking party leadership and made his opposition to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell a pillar of his campaign, embarking on a "Fire McConnell Tour" of town halls.

In his concession speech Tuesday night, Brooks told supporters he respected the race's outcome. But in a sign of the contentious race, he accused voters of having been seduced by false advertising and congratulated high-dollar donors and "special interest groups" for funding Britt's campaign.

"We are sending to Washington, D.C., the exact opposite of what we need in the United States Senate. But the voters have spoken. They might not have spoken wisely," he groused.

Brooks was initially considered the frontrunner when he announced his Senate candidacy, and Trump quickly offered his support, rewarding an ally who had been an ardent supporter of Trump's false claims of election fraud. Brooks voted against certifying Democrat Joe Biden's presidential election victory and delivered a fiery speech at the "Stop the Steal" rally that preceded the U.S. Capitol insurrection, telling the crowd, "Today is the day that American patriots start taking down names and kicking ass."

But their relationship soured as Brooks struggled to gain traction. Trump eventually pulled his support in March, accusing Brooks — one of the most conservative members in Congress — of going "woke" for saying at a rally that it was time to move on from litigating the 2020 presidential election.

Brooks clawed his way into a second-place finish in the May primary and tried once again to get Trump to back him. But Trump instead threw his support to Britt 11 days before the runoff she was widely expected to win.

Elsewhere, in Virginia, Republicans chose a pair of Trump-aligned congressional candidates to take on two of the most vulnerable Democrats in the fall.

In the coastal 2nd District, state Sen. Jen Kiggans won the Republican race to try to unseat Democrat Elaine Luria, a retired Naval commander and member of the Jan. 6 committee, in the general election. And in central Virginia's 7th District, Yesli Vega emerged from a competitive six-candidate field to face Democratic Rep. Abigail Spanberger.

At the polls Tuesday in Virginia Beach, Nanci Eves, 70, said she voted for Kiggans in part because she believes the candidate is best positioned to win in November.

"We need someone who can beat Elaine Luria," said Eves, a retired nurse who lives in Virginia Beach and who thinks Democrats have made "a mess" of the country while in power.

## Westminster dog show gets 4 finalists, and one has NFL ties

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

TARRYTOWN, N.Y. (AP) — Will the hound be trumpeting a victory, or is its tiny cousin toying with a win? What about the French bulldog with an owner in the NFL? Or has the German shepherd got the flow to take the top prize?

Trumpet the bloodhound, Hollywood the Maltese, Winston the French bulldog and River the German shepherd were chosen Tuesday to advance to the final round of the Westminster Kennel Club dog show. Three more finalists will be selected Wednesday night, when all seven will face off for the coveted best in show prize.

One of Winston's owners is defensive lineman Morgan Fox, who was signed last month by the Los Angeles Chargers after six seasons with the Los Angeles Rams and Carolina Panthers.

"If this is how my parents felt watching my games all these years I apologize," Fox tweeted after Winston's win.

Athletes have found their way to Westminster in the past.

New York Yankees great Lou Gehrig brought his German shepherd to the competition in the 1930s and fellow Hall of Famer Mike Mussina had an Irish setter that competed. Big league catcher Ryan Hanigan owned a breed-winning Australian shepherd during his playing days and former Florida State linebacker Keith Carter showed a Rottweiler.

Trumpet, a bloodhound from a storied bloodline, loves for the crowds and energy of the big show, his

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handlers say. River took the ring in stride, but handler Lenny Brown said they're taking the competition "one step at a time."

And Hollywood has, well, star quality.

"She loves being in the ring. And she loves outside the ring, too," handler Tim Lehman told the crowd in an in-ring interview.

Among Hollywood's pint-sized opponents in the toy group was Porsche, the first-ever semifinalist from her breed, the Russian toy. It just became eligible for the Westminster show this year. Not quite a year and a half old, Porsche took a spirited turn under the lights Tuesday night.

"Small dog, but big personality," owner and handler Jolanta Terrell of North Palm Beach, Florida, said before the competition.

Also new was the mudi, a Hungarian herding dog. A mudi named Guava took the breed's first Westminster award.

On the other end of the spectrum, American Staffordshire terrier winner Louie goes into the semifinals Wednesday to try for his final best in show.

After winning the top prize at dozens of other shows, the 8 1/2-year-old Louie is retiring after Westminster, where he's made the semifinals multiple times.

Whatever happens Wednesday night, all he had to do was look at his competitors to see his legacy. Two of his daughters and one of his sons won ribbons alongside him in their breed competition Tuesday.

And to owner Kim Rudzik of Westfield, Massachusetts, Louie has a bigger title than best in the show.

"The coolest dog ever," she said.

## Takeaways: Trump's conditional loyalty, new warning for left

By BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Republican who was backed by Donald Trump at the last minute prevailed on Tuesday in an Alabama Senate runoff. But in neighboring Georgia, the former president's losing streak deepened.

Meanwhile, moderate Washington, D.C., Mayor Muriel Bowser won her Democratic primary, offering a fresh warning to progressives.

Takeaways from the latest round of midterm primary elections:

### LOYALTY RUNS ONE WAY

Throughout his life in business, entertainment and, eventually, politics, Trump demanded loyalty from those around him. And over the decades, he's repeatedly shown that he's less eager to return the favor.

Rep. Mo Brooks, one of the former president's most ardent defenders in Congress, felt the sting of that reminder on Tuesday when he lost a runoff for the GOP nomination for a U.S. Senate seat from Alabama. Trump initially backed Brooks, but rescinded that endorsement after the campaign got off to a lackluster start. Then, less than two weeks before the runoff, Trump backed Katie Britt, a candidate more oriented toward the GOP establishment but someone whose victory seemed more assured.

Britt is now the prohibitive favorite in the deep-red state to succeed retiring Sen. Richard Shelby, for whom she formerly worked.

Her victory allows Trump to take credit for the win — even if he waited until the last minute to back her. And it reinforces that with Trump, loyalty often flows in one direction.

On paper, Brooks checked all of the boxes that Trump looks for. He implored election deniers at a Washington rally before the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol attack to "start taking down names and kicking ass." He voted in Congress against certifying President Joe Biden's victory. And he's remained a denier of the outcome of the 2020 election.

But Brooks also landed in Trump's bad graces after he said last August that it was time to move on from the 2020 presidential race and focus on upcoming elections. Trump pointed to those comments to accuse Brooks of being "woke," a dangerous label in conservative circles.

In focusing on adding to his roster of wins, Trump ultimately aligned himself with a candidate who,

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while deeply conservative, is backed by the GOP establishment the former president has railed against for years. The irony was not lost on Brooks, someone so dedicated to Trump's agenda that he has called himself "MAGA Mo."

"We are sending to Washington, D.C., the exact opposite of what we need in the United States Senate. But the voters have spoken," he said in a concession speech. "They might not have spoken wisely."

## TRUMP WENT DOWN IN GEORGIA

Trump extended his losing streak in Georgia on Tuesday, after two U.S. House candidates he endorsed were blown out in runoff primary elections that represented a continuation of the drubbing he received in the state last month.

Vernon Jones, a former liberal Democrat turned MAGA warrior, was crushed by trucking company owner Mike Collins, while Jake Evans also lost in dramatic fashion to emergency room physician Rich McCormick.

Georgia has been a fixation of Trump's ever since he lost the 2020 election and mounted a pressure campaign to get Republican leaders in the state to overturn results. When they rejected his efforts, Trump's interests shifted to retribution. He recruited candidates to challenge Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, as well as GOP Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, Georgia's top elections official. Both incumbents prevailed.

Trump's meddling even went so far as to ask Jones, who initially ran for governor, to step aside for his handpicked candidate, former Sen. David Perdue, while offering his endorsement to Jones if he ran for an open House seat instead.

Jones, the former executive of DeKalb County, took him up on that offer and declared himself the "Black Donald Trump!" while challenging his opponents to "Bring it on, liars!"

But Jones' baggage, including accusations that he raped a woman in 2004, became a liability in the campaign. The woman dropped charges against Jones, but she never recanted. Jones said the sexual encounter was consensual. But Collins, whose late father represented Georgia in the U.S. House in the 1990s, handed out rape whistles to keep the allegation fresh.

Meanwhile, in the other Atlanta area runoff, McCormick, the doctor, easily beat Trump-backed Jake Evans. McCormick's name was already well known to many in the district after narrowly losing a high-profile 2020 House race to Democrat Carolyn Bourdeaux. He was backed by the influential conservative group Club For Growth.

## WARNING FOR PROGRESSIVES

In Washington, Bowser fended off a progressive rival in the city's Democratic primary, overcoming a tough primary campaign that focused on rising crime.

Her victory virtually guarantees that she will win a third consecutive term as mayor in the heavily Democratic city. The results could also be interpreted as the latest warning to progressives that voters in the party's own base are wary of their criminal justice policies at a time of rising anxiety about public safety.

Bowser defeated At-large Councilmember Robert White, who harshly criticized her response to spiraling violent crime rates, and Councilmember Trayon White, who represents Ward 8, the poorest and most crime-ridden area in the district.

The primary unfolded as many progressive cities are struggling with how to address crime.

For citizens of the nation's capital, much of it has happened on Bowser's watch. Homicides have risen for four years. The 2021 murder count of 227 was the highest mark since 2003. And in January, a candidate for the D.C. Council, Nate Fleming, was carjacked at gunpoint.

But Bowser, a moderate, adopted a pragmatic approach that may have helped her on Tuesday.

She largely stood by her police department at a time when activists called to defund the police, fighting public battles with the D.C. Council over the police budget. She quietly replaced an older white police chief with a younger Black successor. She also pushed for funding to hire hundreds more police officers over the next decade.

## Texas top cop: Uvalde police could've ended rampage early on

By JIM VERTUNO and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

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AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Police had enough officers and firepower on the scene of the Uvalde school massacre to have stopped the gunman three minutes after he entered the building, and they would have found the door to the classroom where he was holed up unlocked if they had bothered to check it, the head of the Texas state police testified Tuesday, pronouncing the law enforcement response an “abject failure.”

Officers with rifles instead stood in a hallway for over an hour, waiting in part for more weapons and gear, before they finally stormed the classroom and killed the gunman, putting an end to the May 24 attack that left 19 children and two teachers dead.

“I don’t care if you have on flip-flops and Bermuda shorts, you go in,” Col. Steve McCraw, director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, said in blistering testimony at a state Senate hearing.

The classroom door, it turned out, could not be locked from the inside by design, according to McCraw, who also said a teacher reported before the shooting that the lock was broken. Yet there is no indication officers tried to open it during the standoff, McCraw said. He said police instead waited for keys.

“I have great reasons to believe it was never secured,” McCraw said of the door. “How about trying the door and seeing if it’s locked?”

Delays in the law enforcement response at Robb Elementary School have become the focus of federal, state and local investigations.

McCraw lit into Pete Arredondo, the Uvalde school district police chief who McCraw said was in charge, saying: “The only thing stopping a hallway of dedicated officers from entering Room 111 and 112 was the on-scene commander who decided to place the lives of officers before the lives of children.”

Arredondo made “terrible decisions,” said McCraw, who lamented that the police response “set our profession back a decade.”

Arredondo has said he didn’t consider himself the person in charge and assumed someone else had taken control of the law enforcement response. He has declined repeated requests for comment from The Associated Press, and his lawyer did not immediately respond Tuesday.

The police chief testified for about five hours Tuesday at a closed-door hearing of a Texas House committee also investigating the tragedy, according to the panel chair.

Senate members hearing the latest details reacted with fury, some decrying Arredondo as incompetent and saying the delay cost lives. Others pressed McCraw on why state troopers on the scene didn’t take charge. McCraw said the troopers did not have legal authority to do so.

The public safety chief presented a timeline that said three officers with two rifles entered the building less than three minutes behind the gunman, an 18-year-old with an AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle. Several more officers entered minutes after that. Two of the officers who went into the hallway early on were grazed by gunfire.

The decision by police to hold back went against much of what law enforcement has learned in the two decades since the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado in which 13 people were killed in 1999, McCraw said.

“You don’t wait for a SWAT team. You have one officer, that’s enough,” he said. He also said officers did not need to wait for shields to enter the classroom. The first shield arrived less than 20 minutes after the shooter entered, according to McCraw.

Eight minutes after the shooter entered, an officer reported that police had a heavy-duty crowbar that they could use to break down the classroom door, McCraw said.

The public safety chief spent nearly five hours offering the clearest picture yet of the massacre, outlining a series of other missed opportunities, communication breakdowns and errors based on an investigation that has included roughly 700 interviews. Among the missteps:

- Arredondo did not have a radio with him.
- Police and sheriff’s radios did not work inside the school. Only the radios of Border Patrol agents on the scene did, and they did not work perfectly.
- Some school diagrams that police used to coordinate their response were wrong.

Public leaders, including Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, initially praised the police response in Uvalde. Abbott said officers reacted quickly and ran toward the gunfire with “amazing courage” to take out the killer,

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thereby saving lives. He later said he was misled.

State police initially said the gunman, Salvador Ramos, entered the school through an exterior door that had been propped open by a teacher. However, McCraw said the teacher had closed the door, but unbeknownst to her, it could be locked only from the outside. The gunman "walked straight through," McCraw said.

The gunman knew the building well, having attended the fourth grade in the same classrooms where he carried out the attack, McCraw said. Ramos never communicated with police that day, the public safety chief said.

Sen. Paul Bettencourt said the entire premise of lockdown and shooter training is worthless if school doors can't be locked. "We have a culture where we think we've trained an entire school for lockdown ... but we set up a condition to failure," he said.

Bettencourt challenged Arredondo to testify in public and said he should have removed himself from the job immediately. He angrily pointed out that shots were heard while police waited.

"There are at least six shots fired during this time," he said. "Why is this person shooting? He's killing somebody. Yet this incident commander finds every reason to do nothing."

Uvalde Mayor Don McLaughlin said Tuesday that the city has "specific legal reasons" that it's not answering questions publicly or releasing records. "There is no cover-up," he said in a statement.

Later in the day, the Uvalde City Council voted unanimously against giving Arredondo, who is a council member, a leave of absence from appearing at public meetings. Relatives of the shooting victims had pleaded with city leaders to instead fire him.

"Please, please, we're begging you, get this man out of our lives," said Berlinda Arreola, the grandmother of Amerie Jo Garza.

After the meeting, the mayor pushed back on McCraw's testimony casting blame on Arredondo, saying that the Department of Public Safety has repeatedly put out false information about the shooting and glossed over the role of its own officers.

He called the Senate hearing a "clown show" and said he heard nothing from McCraw about state troopers' involvement, even though McLaughlin said their number in the school hallway at points during the slaughter surpassed that of any other law enforcement agency.

Questions about the law enforcement response began days after the massacre. McCraw said three days afterward that Arredondo made "the wrong decision" when he chose not to storm the classroom for more than 70 minutes, even as trapped fourth graders inside two classrooms were desperately calling 911 for help and anguished parents outside the school begged officers to go inside.

An hour after the shooter first crashed his truck outside the school, Arredondo said, according to McCraw's timeline: "People are going to ask why we're taking so long. We're trying to preserve the rest of the life."

But McCraw said Tuesday that the amount of time that elapsed before officers entered the classroom was "intolerable."

Police haven't found any red flags in Ramos' school disciplinary files but learned through interviews that he engaged in cruelty to animals. "He walked around with a bag of dead cats," McCraw said.

In the days and weeks after the shooting, authorities gave conflicting and incorrect accounts of what happened. But McCraw assured lawmakers: "Everything I've testified today is corroborated."

McCraw said if he could make just one recommendation, it would be for more training. He also said every state patrol car in Texas should have shields and door-breaching tools.

"I want every trooper to know how to breach and have the tools to do it," he said.

## Biden visits clinic, celebrates COVID shots for kids under 5

By ZEKE MILLER and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden visited a vaccination clinic Tuesday to celebrate that virtually all Americans can now get a COVID-19 shot Tuesday after the authorization of vaccines for kids under 5 over the weekend.

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Biden visited a vaccination clinic in Washington, where some of the first shots were given to young children in the last major age group ineligible for vaccines, hailing it as an important pandemic milestone that will support the country's recovery. While anyone aged six months and up is now eligible for vaccines, the administration is cautioning that it expects the pace of shots for the youngest kids to be slower than older ones, as parents are more likely to rely on their children's pediatricians to administer them.

"The United States is now the first country in the world to offer safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines for children as young as six months old," Biden said at the White House.

Addressing parents, Biden said, "I encourage you to talk to the doctor after you make a plan to get your child vaccinated."

Biden also delivered a thinly veiled criticism of Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who blocked his health department from ordering and delivering pediatric vaccines in his state, a move the White House said delayed the availability of shots for kids under 5.

"Let's be clear: Elected officials shouldn't get in the way and can make it more difficult for parents who want their children to be vaccinated and want to protect them and those around them," he said. "This is no time for politics. It's about parents being able to do everything they can to keep the children safe."

Earlier Tuesday, he and first lady Jill Biden met with newly vaccinated kids and their parents at Church of the Holy Communion in southeast Washington. As he handed out hugs to kids, Biden spoke of his youngest grandson, Beau, aged two, being newly eligible for vaccination.

"Everybody knows I like kids better than people," he joked.

In a Friday interview with The Associated Press, White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha predicted that universal eligibility for vaccines would be a "huge psychological milestone" for the country as it seeks to emerge from two years of pandemic disruption.

"When the President came into office, he was very clear, he said over and over again, that he wanted to make sure that every American had the access and availability of these life protecting vaccines," he said. "We are now at the point where that vision, that expectation that mission can now be fulfilled."

## Unlocked doors were 'first line of defense' at Uvalde school

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

The Uvalde massacre began after the 18-year-old gunman entered the school through a door that could only be locked from the outside and then got inside a classroom that had a busted lock, experts testified Tuesday.

Securing doors has long been a focus of school safety drills, and the inability to do so during the May 24 attack that left 19 children and two teachers dead runs counter to best practices, experts said.

When doors are not secure, "your first step, your first line of defense has now been eliminated, has been taken away from you really," said Ken Trump, the president of the National School Safety and Security Services.

Questions about how the shooter entered Robb Elementary and what happened at multiple doors have been a big part of the changing information about the attack.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE GUNMAN REACHED THE OUTSIDE DOOR?

State police initially said the gunman entered the school through an exterior door that had been propped open by a teacher.

Days later, state police retracted that statement to make it clear that the teacher closed the door. But somehow it didn't lock.

Nearly a month after the rampage, Col. Steve McCraw, director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, further amended what his agency's investigation shows: The teacher did close the door, but unbeknownst to her, it could be locked only from the outside.

The gunman "walked straight through," McCraw said Tuesday in blistering testimony at a state Senate hearing in Austin.

Ronald Stephens, executive director of the National School Safety Center, said he was "astonished" that

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the exterior door could only be locked from the outside.

"I'm trying to think if I've even ever seen that. It's so rare that that would be the case. Why wouldn't there be an opportunity to lock it from the inside?"

He likened it to a house that could only be locked from the outside.

"Shouldn't the security of the school be as safe as the security of your home?" he asked. "To only be able to lock from the outside is just totally unacceptable in my view."

Experts did not explain during the hearing why the school's exterior door locked from outside. Robb Elementary is an older building, constructed in 1955.

**WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE GUNMAN REACHED THE CLASSROOM DOOR?**

Once inside the school, the shooter then entered a classroom with a door could not be locked from the inside by design, according to McCraw, who also said a teacher reported before the shooting that the lock was broken.

The fact that it wasn't working was a maintenance issue, Stephens and Trump said.

"That's about how you manage and maintain school property in a responsible way," Stephens said.

McCraw also disclosed Tuesday that despite the fact that the door was unlocked, there is no indication officers tried to open it during the standoff. He said police instead waited around for a key.

Stephens said the way the situation played out spoke to the broader need of having a crisis plan in place.

"To me, there's just a whole cascade of apparent failures that took place in this particular situation," he said. "It's a wake-up call to everyone across America."

**HAVE THERE BEEN PROBLEMS BEFORE?**

At Sandy Hook Elementary School, the doors of the two classrooms where all 20 children were killed in the 2012 massacre, along with their teachers, could only be locked from the hallway with a key.

Some victims' families have said lives could have been saved if teachers were able to lock classroom doors from the inside, and they questioned whether two teachers who were killed in the shooting, Victoria Soto and Lauren Rousseau, even had access to keys.

Another teacher who could not get a classroom door locked told investigators that she looked into the hallways, saw a janitor who yelled at the gunman to leave and motioned to the janitor to lock her door.

Sandy Hook Elementary was also built in 1955.

**WHAT STEPS ARE RECOMMENDED?**

State and federal panels charged with reviewing individual mass shootings have repeatedly advised schools to limit access by locking exterior doors, as well as forcing visitors to enter through a secure door and requiring teachers to lock classrooms while classes are in session.

Teachers and students drill for how to respond.

"Lock the door, turn off the light. Get the kids and staff into a hard corner, meaning not in the direct line of sight of the window where somebody can shoot through, and be quiet," Trump said.

He said those actions can "absolutely" save lives.

Exterior doors "keep the threat out of the building. Your next layer inside are your locked doors to your classrooms, offices and work areas. All of these layers are intended to buy time," he said.

He said shooters' adrenaline is going and they know that — in most cases — their time is limited.

"They're not going to spend a ton of time trying to get in a locked door where they may or may not know if somebody's inside, if the kids are quiet and out of sight. They're going to continue to move on to where they have a more accessible target."

## 'Nowhere I feel safe': Election officials recount threats

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Wandrea "Shaye" Moss testified Tuesday to lawmakers about how her life was upended when former President Donald Trump and his allies falsely accused her and her mother of pulling fraudulent ballots from a suitcase in Georgia.

The former Georgia elections worker recounted in a wrenching appearance before the House Jan. 6 committee how the defeated president latched onto surveillance footage from November 2020 to accuse

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her and her mother, Ruby Freeman, of committing voter fraud — allegations that were quickly debunked, yet spread widely across conservative media.

Moss, who is Black, said she received messages “wishing death upon me. Telling me that I’ll be in jail with my mother. And saying things like, ‘Be glad it’s 2020 and not 1920.’”

“A lot of them were racist,” Moss said. “A lot of them were just hateful.”

The committee also played testimony from Freeman, who sat behind Moss in the hearing room, showing support for her daughter and at one point passing over a box of tissues as lawmakers heard about their shattering ordeal.

“There is nowhere I feel safe. Nowhere,” Freeman told the committee in the prerecorded video. “Do you know how it feels to have the president of the United States target you? The president of the United States is supposed to represent every American, not to target one.”

“But he targeted me,” she added.

The emotional testimony from mother and daughter was just the latest attempt by the Jan. 6 panel to show how lies perpetrated by Trump and his allies about a stolen election turned into real-life violence and intimidation against the caretakers of American democracy: state and local election officials and workers.

Several of the people who bought into the election lies even showed up at the home of Moss’ grandmother to make a citizen’s arrest.

“I’ve never ever heard her or see her cry, ever in my life,” Moss testified. “She called me screaming at the top of her lungs ... saying people are at her home.”

“I just felt so helpless,” she added.

The barrage of threats against the two county workers mounted after Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani played surveillance footage of them counting ballots in a Georgia Senate committee hearing on Dec. 10, 2021. Giuliani said the footage showed the women “surreptitiously passing around USB ports as if they are vials of heroine or cocaine.” What they were actually passing, Moss told the committee, was a ginger mint.

Giuliani and Trump allies kept repeating the false conspiracy theory that Moss and Freeman, along with other election workers in key battleground states, were packing ballots into suitcases. The claim was disproven by several Georgia election officials, who investigated and found the footage showed regular ballot containers used in Fulton County.

But it was too late. Conservative networks like One America News Network seized on the false claim and it began to spread with the help of Trump himself. Moss and Freeman eventually filed a defamation lawsuit against the network and Giuliani last December. The case against OAN has since been dismissed with a settlement.

Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., who led Thursday’s hearing, noted that Trump mentioned Freeman’s name 18 times in a call with Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger. At one point Trump called Freeman a “professional vote scammer and hustler.”

“This has affected my life in a major way. In every way. All because of lies. All for me doing my job. The same thing I’ve been doing forever,” said Moss, who had been an election official for 10 years.

With so many threats swirling, the FBI urged Freeman to leave her house ahead of Jan. 6 for safety reasons. She testified that she wasn’t able to return for two months and felt homeless.

“The point is this: Donald Trump didn’t care about the threats of violence,” Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., the vice chair of the committee, said in her opening remarks Tuesday. “He did not condemn them, he made no effort to stop them; he went forward with his fake allegations anyway.”

Raffensperger, Georgia’s top election official, and his deputy, Gabe Sterling, also testified about the relentless attacks they and their colleagues faced as Trump falsely claimed widespread voter fraud in Georgia.

Raffensperger and his wife were victims of organized harassment — commonly known as doxxing. His wife, he said, received “disgusting” text messages that were sexual in nature, and supporters of the president’s election claims broke into the home of Raffensperger’s daughter-in-law, where she was staying with her children.

Sterling recalled the moment in December of 2020 that pushed him to speak out. It was a tweet about a staffer for Dominion voting machines — the focal point of other Trump-promoted conspiracies about



voter fraud — that said “you committed treason. May god have mercy on your soul.” It included a slowly twisting GIF of a noose.

“And for lack of a better word, I lost it,” Sterling told the committee. “I just got irate.”

That day Sterling gave an impassioned plea at a press conference pleading with Trump to condemn the threats against election workers. “This has to stop,” he said.

## Jan. 6 takeaways: Trump’s state playbook; ‘hateful’ threats

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House select committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection is turning to former President Donald Trump’s pressure campaign on state and local officials to overturn his 2020 election loss.

In its fourth hearing this month, the panel examined how Trump focused on a few swing states, directly urging officials to decertify President Joe Biden’s victory or find additional votes for himself. It was part of a larger scheme that also involved dozens of lawsuits, pressure on Department of Justice officials and, eventually, lobbying Vice President Mike Pence to reject Biden’s win at the congressional electoral count on Jan. 6.

“Pressuring public servants into betraying their oaths was a fundamental part of the playbook,” the committee’s chairman, Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, said of Trump and his allies. “And a handful of election officials in several key states stood between Donald Trump and the upending of American democracy.”

### ‘THEY DID THEIR JOBS’

The panel is keeping to a tight narrative as it makes its case to the American public that Trump’s efforts to overturn his defeat directly led to the violence at the Capitol on Jan. 6, when hundreds of his supporters broke into the Capitol and interrupted the certification of Biden’s victory.

The witnesses at Tuesday’s hearing were all public officials who were directly lobbied by Trump or who received threats for doing their jobs after Trump persuaded millions of his followers — with no evidence — that he had actually won, not lost, the election.

Arizona’s Republican state House Speaker Rusty Bowers, who testified in person, spoke about phone calls from Trump and his allies asking him to decertify Arizona’s legitimate electors and replace them. Bowers said he repeatedly asked Trump’s attorneys to show evidence of widespread fraud, but they never provided any.

“You are asking me to do something against my oath, and I will not break my oath,” Bowers said he told them. He recalled John Eastman, a chief architect of Trump’s plan to create slates of fake electors, telling him to “just do it and let the courts sort it out.”

Bowers also responded to Trump’s comments, released in a statement before the hearing, claiming he had told the president that the Arizona election was rigged. “I did have a conversation with the president,” Bowers said. “That certainly isn’t it.”

Other state officials told similar stories in videotaped testimony. Pennsylvania House Speaker Bryan Cutler said he got repeated calls from Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani and other Trump aides, but he refused to answer them. The calls continued even after Cutler asked them to stop.

### FOCUS ON GEORGIA

Trump’s pressure was most intense in Georgia, where Biden narrowly won after years of GOP presidential victories in the state. Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and his deputy, Gabe Sterling, testified about becoming two of the president’s top targets as he floated conspiracy theories and as they refused to back down to his pressure.

The committee played audio of the call where Trump asked the officials there to “find 11,780” votes that could flip the state to prevent Biden’s election victory.

“There were not votes to find,” Raffensperger said.

Raffensperger said he and his team went through “every single allegation” and down every “rabbit hole” that Trump and his allies presented to state election officials. But Trump wouldn’t accept it. He told

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Raffensperger that it could only be dishonesty or incompetence that they couldn't find the necessary amount of votes.

Competing against Trump's false statements was like a "shovel trying to empty the ocean," said Sterling, who spoke out publicly against Trump's pressure in the weeks after the election. Sterling said he couldn't convince even some of his own family members that the election outcome was valid.

## THREATS TO PUBLIC OFFICIALS

The hearing also examined how Trump's threats put state officials in danger.

Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson talked about how her "stomach sunk" when she heard the sounds of protesters outside her home one night after the election when she was putting her child to bed. She wondered if they had guns or were going to attack her house. "That was the scariest moment," not knowing what's going to happen, Benson said.

Another Michigan official, Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey, told the committee about receiving 4,000 text messages after Trump published his phone number online. Cutler, the Pennsylvania House speaker, said his information was also revealed online, prompting protesters to show up at his house when his 15-year-old son was home alone.

Arizona's Bowers told stories of people outside his house on loudspeakers and one man with a gun who verbally threatened his neighbor. He teared up as he spoke of his daughter, who he said was "gravely ill," and his wife becoming upset as people swarmed outside.

## 'HATEFUL' MESSAGES AND LIVES UPENDED

Some of the day's most emotional testimony came from two former election workers in Georgia who have seen their lives turned upside down after Trump and Giuliani spread false conspiracy theories that they were engaging in ballot fraud.

The Justice Department has debunked claims that Wandrea "Shaye" Moss and her mother, Ruby Freeman, introduced suitcases of illegal ballots and committed other acts of election fraud to try to alter the outcome.

Through tears, Moss said she no longer leaves her house after she was targeted by Trump, who mentioned them by name in the call with Raffensperger.

Moss, who is Black, told of receiving "hateful," racist and violent threats. She recalled that one of them said, "Be glad it's 2020 and not 1920." At one point protesters showed up at her grandmother's house.

"It has affected my life in a major way, in every way, all because of lies," Moss said.

The committee played videotaped testimony with Freeman, who also sat in the hearing room behind her daughter. Freeman told the panel that she used to own shirts in every color with her name on it — Lady Ruby, as she's known in her community — advertising her small business. But she no longer wears them.

"I've lost my name, and I've lost my reputation. I've lost my sense of security," Freeman said.

## INVOLVEMENT OF GOP LAWMAKERS

While the committee has had a hard time getting GOP lawmakers to do interviews — five House Republicans have so far defied the panel's subpoenas — the committee revealed some additional detail about what Trump's allies in Congress were doing at the time of the insurrection.

The committee revealed a text from an aide to Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., to an aide for then-Vice President Mike Pence the morning of Jan. 6 saying that the senator wanted to personally hand Pence an "alternate slate of electors for MI and WI."

"Do not give that to him," Pence aide Chris Hodgson replied. The vice president released a statement around the same time making it clear that he would do his ceremonial duty and declare Biden the next president.

Johnson's spokeswoman Alexa Henning responded Tuesday: "The vice president's office said not to give it to him and we did not. There was no further action taken. End of story."

Bowers also revealed that Arizona Rep. Andy Biggs, one of the lawmakers subpoenaed by the panel, asked him the morning of Jan. 6 to sign on to a letter saying he would support the certification of fake electors.

"I said I would not," Bowers said.

## Yellowstone flooding rebuild could take years, cost billions

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

Created in 1872 as the United States was recovering from the Civil War, Yellowstone was the first of the national parks that came to be referred to as America's best idea. Now, the home to gushing geysers, thundering waterfalls and some of the country's most plentiful and diverse wildlife is facing its biggest challenge in decades.

Floodwaters this week wiped out numerous bridges, washed out miles of roads and closed the park as it approached peak tourist season during its 150th anniversary celebration. Nearby communities were swamped and hundreds of homes flooded as the Yellowstone River and its tributaries raged.

The scope of the damage is still being tallied by Yellowstone officials, but based on other national park disasters, it could take years and cost upwards of \$1 billion to rebuild in an environmentally sensitive landscape where construction season only runs from the spring thaw until the first snowfall.

Based on what park officials have revealed and Associated Press images and video taken from a helicopter, the greatest damage seemed to be to roads, particularly on the highway connecting the park's north entrance in Gardiner, Montana, to the park's offices in Mammoth Hot Springs. Large sections of the road were undercut and washed away as the Gardner River jumped its banks. Perhaps hundreds of footbridges on trails may have been damaged or destroyed.

"This is not going to be an easy rebuild," Superintendent Cam Sholly said early in the week as he highlighted photos of massive gaps of roadway in the steep canyon. "I don't think it's going to be smart to invest potentially, you know, tens of millions of dollars, or however much it is, into repairing a road that may be subject to seeing a similar flooding event in the future."

Re-establishing a human imprint in a national park is always a delicate operation, especially as a changing climate makes natural disasters more likely. Increasingly intense wildfires are occurring, including one last year that destroyed bridges, cabins and other infrastructure in Lassen Volcanic National Park in Northern California.

Flooding has already done extensive damage in other parks and is a threat to virtually all the more-than 400 national parks, a report by The Rocky Mountain Climate Organization found in 2009.

Mount Rainier National Park in Washington state closed for six months after the worst flooding in its history in 2006. Damage to roads, trails, campgrounds and buildings was estimated at \$36 million.

Yosemite Valley in California's Yosemite National Park has flooded several times, but suffered its worst damage 25 years ago when heavy downpours on top of a large snowpack — a scenario similar to the Yellowstone flood — submerged campgrounds, flooded hotel rooms, washed out bridges and sections of road, and knocked out power and sewer lines. The park was closed for more than two months.

Congress allocated \$178 million in emergency funds — a massive sum for park infrastructure at the time — and additional funding eventually surpassed \$250 million, according to a 2013 report.

But the rebuilding effort once estimated to last four to five years dragged out for 15, due in part to environmental lawsuits over a protected river corridor and a long bureaucratic planning and review process.

It's not clear if Yellowstone would face the same obstacles, though reconstructing the road that runs near Mammoth Hot Springs, where steaming water bubbles up over an otherworldly series of stone terraces, presents a challenge.

It's created by a unique natural formation of underground tubes and vents that push the hot water to the surface, and would be just one of many natural wonders crews would have to be careful not to disturb, said Brett Hartl, government affairs director at the Center for Biological Diversity.

Along with the formation itself, there are also microbes and insects that thrive in the environment found almost nowhere else. And the park will need to avoid damaging any archaeological or cultural artifacts in the area with a rich Native American history.

"They'll have to look at all the resources the park is designed to protect, and try to do this project as carefully as possible, but they're also going to try to go fairly quickly," Hartl said.

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Having to reroute the roadway that hugged the Gardner River could be an opportunity to better protect the waterway and the fish and other species that thrive there from oil and other microscopic pollution that comes from passing vehicles, Hartl said.

"The river will be healthier for it," he said.

The Yosemite flood was seen by the park as an opportunity to rethink its planning and not necessarily rebuild in the same places, said Frank Dean, president and chief executive of the Yosemite Conservancy and a former park ranger.

Some facilities were relocated outside the flood plain and some campgrounds that had been submerged in the flood were never restored. At Yosemite Lodge, cabins that had been slated for removal in the 1980s were swamped and had to be removed.

"The flood took them all out like a precision strike," Dean said. "I'm not going to say it's a good thing, but providence came in and made the decision for them."

Yellowstone's recovery comes as a rapidly growing number of people line up to visit the country's national parks, even as a backlog of deferred maintenance budget grows into tens of billions of dollars. The park was already due for funding from the Great American Outdoors Act, a 2020 law passed by Congress that authorizes nearly \$3 billion for maintenance and other projects on public lands. National parks and other public lands will receive a similar amount yearly for five years.

Now it will need another infusion of money for more pressing repairs that Emily Douce, director of operations and park funding at National Parks Conservation Association, estimated could hit at least \$1 billion.

The southern half of the park is expected to reopen next week, allowing visitors to flock to Old Faithful, the rainbow colored Grand Prismatic Spring, and the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and its majestic waterfall.

But the flood-damaged northern end may not reopen this year, depriving visitors from seeing Tower Fall and Lamar Valley, one of the best places in the world to see wolves and grizzly bears. Some days during the high season, an animal sighting can lead to thousands of people parked on the side of the road hoping to catch a glimpse.

Whether some of these areas are reopened will depend on how quickly washed-out roads can be repaired, downed trees can be removed and mudslides cleared.

Maintaining the approximately 466 miles (750 kilometers) of roadway throughout the park is a major job. Much of the roadway originally was designed for stagecoaches, said Kristen Brengel, senior vice-president of public affairs for the National Parks Conservation Association.

"Part of the effort of the last couple of decades has been to stabilize the road to make it safe for heavier vehicles to travel on it," she said.

Located at a high elevation where snow and cold weather is not uncommon eight months of the year and there are many tiny earthquakes, road surfaces don't last as long and road crews have a short window to complete projects. One recently completed road job created closures for about two years.

"I think it'll probably be several years before the park is totally back to normal," Hartl said.

## Romanchuk wins medal in pool while father fights in Ukraine

By CIARÁN FAHEY AP Sports Writer

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Elite swimmer Mykhailo Romanchuk doesn't know if his father was able to see him winning a medal for Ukraine at the swimming world championships.

Romanchuk's father is fighting in the east of Ukraine, where pockets of resistance are still denying Russia full military control of the region almost four months after it unleashed its invasion.

"He's in a hot spot and it's a hard time," Romanchuk said after taking bronze in the men's 800-meter freestyle race on Tuesday.

Romanchuk doesn't dare talk to his dad out of fear his father's location could be tracked through the call.

"It's not possible for them to join the network because the Russians can search everything," Romanchuk said. "But every morning he sends me (a message) that he is OK."

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The 25-year-old Romanchuk – who still intends to race the men’s 1500, then the 10K and 5K races in open water at the worlds – almost never made it to Budapest.

“My mind was to go to the war to defend my home,” said Romanchuk, who spent 10 days agonizing with his wife and family over the best course of action after Russia invaded his country on Feb. 24.

“We decided that I cannot do anything with the gun. For me, it’s better to continue training, to do everything that I do best,” said Romanchuk, who won bronze in the 800 and silver in the 1500 at the Tokyo Olympics last year. “With my swimming, I can tell all the world about the situation in Ukraine.”

As training facilities were destroyed by the war, Romanchuk was invited by German swimmer Florian Wellbrock – who finished second behind American Bobby Finke in the 800 – to come join him in Germany to train.

Romanchuk and Wellbrock embraced after finishing 1-2 in qualifying for Tuesday’s race. But Finke’s strong finish prevented a repeat in the final. Romanchuk finished 0.69 seconds behind Finke. The top three all set national records.

Romanchuk said he was both “proud and disappointed” of his third place. He said his medal proves “that Ukrainians will fight to the end, it doesn’t matter what the situation.”

Swimmers from Russia and its ally Belarus have been excluded from the championships. Romanchuk said he doesn’t know how he would have reacted if they hadn’t been.

“My reaction could be maybe aggressive, I don’t know,” said Romanchuk, who referred to Olympic backstroke champion Evgeny Rylov appearing at a pro-war rally in Moscow. “Inside of me, I was ready to go and to kill him,” he said of Rylov. “But before he was a good friend. Before. But everything changed.”

Romanchuk spoke of the destruction Russia has caused in his country, the people killed, the lives shattered.

It makes it hard for him to focus on swimming.

“Especially in the beginning when I moved to Germany to join the group. It was hard because mentally you are in the war and you are sleeping just three or four hours because you are always reading the news,” Romanchuk said. “It was so hard in the beginning, but then you understand that all you can do is to swim, to train, to represent your country.”

For the freshly minted medalist, it’s a time to feel proud.

“I’m so proud of all the people in Ukraine. This is all I can say. I’m proud of the people, of the government, the president. I’m so proud of them,” Romanchuk said. “And I’m really happy to be Ukrainian.”

## Deshaun Watson settles 20 civil suits, faces NFL suspension

By JUAN A. LOZANO and ROB MAADDI Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson’s decision to settle 20 of 24 civil lawsuits for sexual misconduct may not dissuade the NFL from giving him a lengthy suspension, a person familiar with the league’s investigation told the Associated Press on Tuesday.

Watson has been accused by massage therapists of harassing, assaulting or touching them during appointments when he played for the Houston Texans.

Houston attorney Tony Buzbee, who represents all 24 women, said Tuesday in a statement that once the paperwork is finished on the 20 settlements, “those particular cases will be dismissed.” He added that the terms of the settlements are “confidential” and that his legal team “won’t comment further on the settlements or those cases.”

Watson still faces discipline from the league, which conducted its own investigation into the 26-year-old’s behavior and is expected to make a decision before the Browns open training camp on July 27.

Following Buzbee’s announcement, NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said the agreements have “no impact on the collectively bargained disciplinary process.”

Another league official told the AP “settling doesn’t give someone a pass” and indicated a lengthy suspension remains in order. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the investigation hasn’t concluded.

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NFL investigators interviewed Watson in Houston over several days last month. They've spoken with 11 of Watson's accusers, according to a person familiar with the investigation, who said Buzbee declined to make more women available for interviews.

The league will present their findings to disciplinary officer Sue L. Robinson, a former federal judge who will decide Watson's punishment. This is the first case for Robinson, who was jointly appointed by the league and NFL Players Association.

The Browns, who signed the three-time Pro Bowler to a fully guaranteed, five-year, \$230 million contract in March, had no immediate comment on the settlements.

Watson has denied any wrongdoing and vowed to clear his name. Rusty Hardin, Watson's lead attorney, did not immediately return an email or a text seeking comment.

In March, two separate Texas grand juries declined to indict him on criminal complaints stemming from the allegations. After that, the Browns and several other teams pursued Watson, with Cleveland convincing him to waive his no-trade clause and join a team with a solid roster.

The first 22 lawsuits against Watson were filed in March and April 2021. The last two lawsuits were filed after HBO's "Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel" aired an interview last month with two of the women who detailed their encounters with Watson.

The settlements also come after The New York Times reported earlier this month that Watson had booked massage appointments with at least 66 different women over 17 months while he played for the Texans. The report said that a Texans representative had provided Watson with a nondisclosure agreement that he gave to some of the women to sign.

Last week, Watson reiterated his innocence and sidestepped any questions about whether he would settle with any of the women.

"I never assaulted anyone," Watson said June 14 in his first public comments since being introduced by the Browns in March. "I never harassed anyone or I never disrespected anyone. I never forced anyone to do anything."

Buzbee said he plans on taking the four unsettled lawsuits to trial, including the first one that was filed by Ashley Solis, who has previously made her name public. In an interview with HBO's "Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel," Solis said she felt threatened by Watson after their massage session when he told her that she had a career to protect and "I know you don't want anyone messing with it just like I don't want anyone messing with mine."

Buzbee said that without Solis, "the conduct experienced by these women would likely have continued unfettered."

"The truth is, without her courage and willingness to come forward, the NFL wouldn't currently be contemplating discipline; there would be no examination of how teams might knowingly or unknowingly enable certain behavior," Buzbee said.

Cleveland, which has spent nearly two decades searching for a franchise quarterback, pursued and signed Watson despite his complex legal situation.

Owners Dee and Jimmy Haslam knew the Browns would face heavy criticism for the move, but they were comfortable with the decision after conducting their own investigation and meeting privately with Watson.

Now, the team is eager to know how long they might be without Watson. The Browns signed veteran backup Jacoby Brissett, who will move into the starting job if Watson is suspended.

## Supreme Court: Religious schools must get Maine tuition aid

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court ruled Tuesday that Maine can't exclude religious schools from a program that offers tuition aid for private education, a decision that could ease religious organizations' access to taxpayer money.

The 6-3 outcome could fuel a renewed push for school choice programs in some of the 18 states that have so far not directed taxpayer money to private, religious education. The most immediate effect of the

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court's ruling beyond Maine probably will be in nearby Vermont, which has a similar program.

The decision is the latest in a line of rulings from the Supreme Court that have favored religion-based discrimination claims. The court is separately weighing the case of a football coach who says he has a First Amendment right to pray at midfield immediately after games.

Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for a conservative majority that the Maine program violates the Constitution's protections for religious freedoms.

"Maine's 'nonsectarian' requirement for its otherwise generally available tuition assistance payments violates the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. Regardless of how the benefit and restriction are described, the program operates to identify and exclude otherwise eligible schools on the basis of their religious exercise," Roberts wrote.

The court's three liberal justices dissented. "This Court continues to dismantle the wall of separation between church and state that the Framers fought to build," Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote.

Justice Stephen Breyer noted in a separate dissent that Maine "wishes to provide children within the State with a secular, public education. This wish embodies, in significant part, the constitutional need to avoid spending public money to support what is essentially the teaching and practice of religion."

But Roberts wrote that states are not obligated to subsidize private education. Once they do, however, they can't cut out religious schools, he wrote, echoing his opinion in a similar case from two years ago. "Maine chose to allow some parents to direct state tuition payments to private schools; that decision was not 'forced upon' it," Roberts wrote, quoting from Sotomayor's dissent.

Maine Attorney General Aaron Frey said during a Tuesday radio appearance that he was not surprised by the court's decision, but he felt it was not consistent with his reading of the Constitution.

Frey also said the court's ruling will require a reevaluation of how it applies to state law.

Until now, Maine's exclusion of religious schools has been upheld, Frey said during the appearance on Maine Public. "Frankly, it is concerning, even though we saw it coming."

The ideological split in Tuesday's decision also was evident during arguments in December, when the conservative justices seemed largely unpersuaded by Maine's position that the state is willing to pay for the rough equivalent of a public education, but not religious inculcation.

In largely rural Maine, the state allows families who live in towns that don't have public schools to receive public tuition dollars to send their children to the public or private school of their choosing. The program has excluded religious schools.

Students who live in a district with public schools or in a district that contracts with another public system are ineligible for the tuition program.

Parents who challenged the program argued that the exclusion of religious schools violates their religious rights under the Constitution. Teacher unions and school boards said states can impose limits on public money for private education without running afoul of religious freedoms.

Michael Bindas, a lawyer for the libertarian Institute for Justice who argued for the parents at the high court, said the court made clear Tuesday that "there is no basis for this notion that the government is able to single out and exclude religious options."

Rachel Laser, president and CEO of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, sharply criticized the court for "forcing taxpayers to fund religious education" and cloaking "this assault on our Constitution in the language of non-discrimination."

In the Maine case, parents sued in federal court to be able to use state aid to send their children to Christian schools in Bangor and Waterville. The schools in question, Bangor Christian School and Temple Academy, are uncertain whether they would accept public funds, according to court filings.

The Bangor school said it would not hire teachers or admit students who are transgender. Both schools said they do not hire gay or lesbian teachers, according to court records.

In 2020, the high court ruled 5-4 that states must give religious schools the same access to public funding that other private schools receive, preserving a Montana scholarship program that had largely benefited students at religious institutions.

In that case, the court said states don't have to allow public money to be used in private education. But they can't keep religious schools out of such programs, once created.

But even after that ruling, the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the Maine program, holding that the state was not violating anyone's constitutional rights by refusing to allow taxpayer money to be used for religious instruction. The three-judge panel included retired Justice David Souter, who occasionally hears cases in the appeals court.

Tuesday's decision reversed that appeals court ruling and made clear that religious schools must be part of the mix when states devote public money to private school choice programs.

"This ruling affirms that parents should be able to choose a school that is compatible with their values or that honors and respects their values. By shutting out parents with certain values, that's discrimination run rampant," Leslie Hiner, vice president of legal affairs for the school choice group EdChoice.

Most of the justices attended religious schools, and several send or have sent their children to them.

## Lapid, set to be Israel's next premier, faces critical test

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — In a 10-year political career, Israel's Yair Lapid has transformed himself from an upstart political novice to a feisty opposition leader to the savvy operator who toppled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Next week, he is expected to assume his biggest role yet — as the new prime minister.

Following the government's decision to dissolve parliament, Lapid, now foreign minister, is set to take office as caretaker prime minister until elections in the fall. It will be a critical test for Lapid, 58, who will try to convince Israelis he is worthy of the top office as he takes on a resurgent Netanyahu.

"A year ago, we started the process of rebuilding, and now: we're carrying it on, and carrying it on together," Lapid declared late Monday as he stood alongside his main coalition partner, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

Officially, the two men were announcing the end of their year-old government — an alliance of eight diverse parties that was severely weakened by months of infighting and rebellion. But in many ways, Lapid sounded like he was beginning his next campaign.

"Even if we are going to elections in a few months, the challenges we face will not wait," he said, pointing to Israel's high cost of living and security challenges in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran.

In a swipe at Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption charges, he vowed to "stand against the forces threatening to turn Israel into a nondemocratic country." Netanyahu, believing he is the victim of a political witch hunt, has made clear he intends to take on the country's legal and law-enforcement establishment if he returns to power.

A former author, columnist, news anchor, bank pitchman and amateur boxer, Lapid left a successful career as a media personality to enter politics in 2012 as head of a new centrist party popular with middle-class Israelis.

He promised economic relief, an end to controversial draft exemptions for seminary students and a more moderate approach to the Palestinians.

Unlike the right-wing parties that dominate Israel's political system, Lapid favors peace talks leading to an eventual two-state solution with the Palestinians, although it's unclear if he will ever have the kind of mandate needed to engage in such a process.

In 2013, he led his new Yesh Atid party to a surprisingly strong showing in parliamentary elections. Yesh Atid finished as the second-largest party, with 19 seats in the 120-member parliament.

Lapid became finance minister, a difficult and often thankless task. While marking some successes, his key promises of lowering the cost of living and bringing down housing prices failed to materialize. Netanyahu eventually fired him for insubordination.

Yesh Atid dropped to 11 seats in the 2015 elections. Lapid found himself in the opposition and appeared to be on the way to becoming the latest in a long line of centrist politicians to flame out after early success.



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But Lapid managed to reinvent himself. He formed an alliance with former military chief Benny Gantz that came close to toppling Likud in three consecutive elections.

Those elections, focused on Netanyahu's divisive personality and fitness to rule, all ended inconclusively. Moving to end the deadlock, Gantz briefly joined forces with Netanyahu in 2020 — leaving Lapid as opposition leader and a vocal government critic.

When the country went back to the polls in early 2021, Yesh Atid once again surged and emerged as the second-largest party in parliament. In a stroke of creative diplomacy and political savvy, Lapid cobbled together a new coalition that pushed Netanyahu into the opposition for the first time in 12 years.

Although Lapid was the mastermind of the alliance, he cemented the deal by agreeing to rotate the job of prime minister with Bennett — a move that was seen by many as selfless and statesmanlike. Lapid took on the post of foreign minister.

The coalition members spanned the Israeli political spectrum, with little binding them together beyond opposition to Netanyahu. The government made history by being the first to include an Arab party.

The coalition got off to a strong start — passing the first national budget in several years, navigating a pair of coronavirus waves and improving relations with the U.S. and Arab allies.

Ultimately, ideological differences caused it to unravel. Parliament is expected to dissolve itself in a series of votes over the coming days. Once that happens, Lapid takes over as caretaker prime minister until elections in October or November.

The coming months present great risk — and great opportunity. Once again, Netanyahu's Likud party appears to be the front-runner. And once again, Netanyahu's leadership style and legal woes are likely to be high on voters' minds.

While Lapid is sure to face relentless attacks from Netanyahu, who has tried to portray him as a light-weight who betrayed Israel's security by allying with an Arab faction, he will do so from the perch of the prime minister's office.

After serving as foreign minister for the past year, he will have even more opportunities to strengthen his international standing. He is set to host President Joe Biden on a visit next month and will have the opportunity to speak at the United Nations General Assembly in September.

Lapid spoke to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday to prepare for Biden's visit, the Foreign Ministry said.

"The visit will have significant implications for the region and the fight against Iran, as well as immense potential to significantly improve regional stability and security," it said.

As caretaker prime minister, he is unlikely to launch any major military operations or bold peace initiatives with the Palestinians. If Lapid can keep things quiet and avoid controversy, he could be well-positioned for the next election.

"Lapid has to work now at looking prime ministerial," wrote Anshel Pfeffer, a columnist at the Haaretz daily. "His new post, from next week on, as interim prime minister is his greatest asset going into the election."

## Supreme Court limits reach of federal gun crime law

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Tuesday limited the reach of a federal statute that requires stiff penalties for crimes involving a gun.

The 7-2 decision united both conservative and liberal justices, though one dissenting justice compared the result to "Alice in Wonderland." The justices said the law can't be used to lengthen the sentences of criminals convicted of a specific attempted robbery offense.

The case before the justices involved Justin Taylor, who in the early 2000s was a marijuana dealer in the area of Richmond, Virginia. The government has said he sold large quantities of marijuana to other dealers who distributed it. In 2003 he and another man planned to steal money from a buyer, and during the robbery the accomplice fatally shot the man.

Taylor was charged with "attempted Hobbs Act robbery," a federal crime punishable by up to 20 years

in prison. He was also charged under a federal statute that outlines mandatory minimum sentences for using a firearm in connection with a "crime of violence." Taylor pleaded guilty to both and was given a 30-year sentence, 10 years longer than he could have received for just the robbery charge.

A majority of the court, however, ruled that attempted Hobbs Act robbery does not qualify as a crime of violence and therefore that Taylor was not eligible for the longer sentence.

"Simply put, no element of attempted Hobbs Act robbery requires proof that the defendant used, attempted to use, or threatened to use force," Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote for a majority of the court.

The justices upheld a federal appeals court ruling that Taylor should be re-sentenced just on the attempted Hobbs Act robbery charge.

In a dissent, Justice Clarence Thomas cited Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass." He said the decision is an example of how the court's approach to deciding these kinds of cases has led lower courts on a "journey Through the Looking Glass" during which the justices have found many "strange things." He said that like Alice, the court has strayed far "down the rabbit hole."

"I would hold Taylor accountable for what he actually did and uphold his conviction," he wrote.

Justice Samuel Alito also dissented, agreeing that the court's cases in this area of the law have "veered off into fantasy land."

Frances Pratt, one of Taylor's attorneys, said in an email that his attorneys are "gratified to know that the Supreme Court ruled for our client" and hope the decision will also help others. Taylor's prosecution came at a time when officials in Virginia were attempting to reduce Richmond's high homicide rate in part by taking a hard line on gun crimes, bringing those cases in federal as opposed to state court. The effort was called "Project Exile."

## Texas GOP's swing to far right cemented with party platform

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ten years ago, the Texas Republican Party used its platform to oppose teaching critical thinking in schools. In 2014, it declared homosexuality a chosen behavior contrary to God and endorsed "reparative therapy" to reverse it. By 2020, the party was ready to remind the world that "Texas retains the right to secede from the United States."

But now the GOP platform in the country's largest red state — long an ideological wish list that even the most conservative Texans knew was mostly filled with pipe dreams that would never become policy — has broken new ground in its push to the far right.

Approved by 5,000-plus party delegates last weekend in Houston during the party's biennial convention, the new platform brands President Joe Biden an "acting" commander-in-chief who was never "legitimately elected."

It may not matter who the president is, though, since the platform takes previous language about secession much farther — urging the Republican-controlled legislature to put the question of leaving the United States to voters next year.

The platform also says homosexuality is "an abnormal lifestyle choice" and rejects bipartisan legislation in Congress seeking to raise the minimum age to buy assault weapons from 18 to 21, saying Texans under 21 are "most likely to be victims of violent crime and thus most likely to need to defend themselves."

Though non-binding, the platform illustrates just how far Texas Republicans have moved to the right in the past decade — from championing tea party ideals in 2012 to endorsing former President Donald Trump's continued lies about nonexistent widespread fraud costing him an election he actually lost by more than 7 million votes.

"The platform reflects the direction that party activists believe the party should take," said Matt Mackowiak, a Republican strategist based in the Texas capital of Austin. He said that, rather than deciding elections or dictating legislative action, the platform is more relevant as a signal of "where primary voters are and what they care about."

Mackowiak said items like considering succession won't be taken seriously, but "Trump's policy agenda

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is here to stay." He said that, as the former president continues to question 2020 election results, he will continue to find a receptive audience in the Texas GOP.

"Are people really in doubt that Republicans have concerns about how the election was conducted?" Mackowiak asked.

Matt Rinaldi, a former state lawmaker who now chairs the Texas GOP, said state Republicans "rightly have no faith in the 2020 election results and we don't care how many times the elites tell us we have to."

"We refuse to let Democrats rig the elections in 2022 or 2024," Rinaldi said in a statement.

Democrats haven't rigged anything. An Associated Press review of every potential case of voter fraud in the six battleground states disputed by Trump has found fewer than 475 — a number that would have made no difference in the 2020 presidential election.

Meanwhile, Texas' 2020 election was a romp even by the standards of Republicans who have dominated the state for decades. The party's candidates topped Democrats in key congressional and statehouse races as Trump easily carried its electoral votes.

But that didn't stop the former president from praising the party's 2022 platform, posting Tuesday: "Look at the "Great State of Texas and their powerful Republican Party Platform on the 2020 Presidential Election Fraud."

"Such courage," he wrote, "but that's why Texas is Texas."

Trump was cheering language declaring, "We reject the certified results of the 2020 presidential election, and we hold that acting President Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. was not legitimately elected." That was a departure from as recently as 2014, when the Texas GOP platform questioned Barack Obama's "commitment to citizens' constitutional rights," but at least recognized him as president.

This year's platform also says that "Texas retains the right to secede from the United States, and the Texas Legislature should be called upon to pass a referendum consistent thereto."

Ed Espinoza, executive director of the advocacy organization Progress Texas, said some of the adherence to open discriminatory language might have receded if not for the rise of Trump — who has demonstrated "he could double down on the crazy and not suffer a consequence yet."

"Normally what happens is, when there's crazy in a party, people try to soften it," said Espinoza, former Western States Director of the Democratic National Committee. "In this case, they saw it worked for Trump so they think it'll work for them."

Texas was an independent republic for nearly a decade until 1845. With the coronavirus pandemic raging, the 2020 Texas Republican Party convention was held virtually and degenerated into a leadership struggle. But it also featured platform language declaring, "Texas retains the right to secede from the United States should a future president and congress change our political system from a constitutional republic to another system."

That caveat about governmental system was dropped in the 2022 edition, which seeks a referendum for voters "to determine whether or not" their state "should reassert its status as an independent nation."

Texas' rightward push was clear in ways beyond the party platform. Delegates booed Republican Sen. John Cornyn — who has held his seat for 20 years and got more 2020 votes statewide than Trump did — for working on bipartisan legislation seeking to impose modest limits on guns. Those efforts began following last month's mass shooting in the Texas town of Uvalde, which killed 19 elementary students and two teachers.

Still, such state convention outbursts also aren't new. Republican Gov. Rick Perry was booed in 2012 for praising fellow GOPer and Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, who was then locked in a primary battle for an open Senate seat with Ted Cruz. Some delegates also in the past walked out of a speech by then-Republican Texas House Speaker Joe Straus.

"It shows you how much QAnon may not be an outlier in the Republican Party," Espinoza said. "Some people are very susceptible to conspiracy theory, and that appears to be a higher percentage the deeper you go into the Republican Party of Texas."

## US pools close, go without lifeguards amid labor shortage

By ARLEIGH RODGERS and CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press/Report for America

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Manager Ashley Ford strode the perimeter of one of Indianapolis' five open swimming pools, monitoring kids as they jumped off a diving board or careened into the water from a curved slide. Four lifeguards, whistles at the ready, watched from their tall chairs stationed around the water.

With a dozen of the city's pools shuttered due to a lifeguard shortage, families sometimes line up more than an hour before the one at Frederick Douglass Park opens, Ford said. Many days, it reaches capacity.

A national lifeguard shortage exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted communities such as Indianapolis to cut back on pools and hours. In other spots around the United States, swimming areas go without attendants.

That's left some Americans with fewer or riskier options, even as a significant part of the nation endures a second heat wave in as many weeks. Public health experts say the risk of drowning decreases significantly when lifeguards are present.

"That's my biggest thing, is making everybody safe," Ford said.

The American Lifeguard Association estimates the shortage impacts one-third of U.S. pools. Bernard J. Fisher II, director of health and safety at the association, expects that to grow to half of all pools by August, when many teenage lifeguards return to school.

"It is a disaster," Fisher said.

Summer shortages aren't unusual, but U.S. pools are also dealing with the fallout from earlier in the pandemic, when they closed and lifeguard certification stopped, Fisher said. Starting pay lags behind many other jobs, though some cities are ramping up incentives.

Indy Parks and Recreation has 100 lifeguards on staff this year when normally it would have double that, said Ford, who was worked for the agency for 20 years. Even as lifeguards from closed neighboring pools bulk up the open facilities, pools in Indianapolis must still close for an hourlong lunch and cleaning break each day.

When a local pool is not open, young people may go swimming in places without lifeguards, Fisher said. That can result in more drownings, which disproportionately affect people of color. In the U.S., Black people under 29 are 1.5 times more likely to drown compared with white Americans of the same age, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

About 330,000 people enroll the American Red Cross' lifeguarding course annually. That figure shrank, as many pools shuttered due to the pandemic, but is now rising, Jenelle Eli, senior director of media relations for the American Red Cross said in a statement to The Associated Press.

Indy Parks requires its lifeguards to pass a course in which they swim 100 yards, tread water for a minute without using their hands and retrieve a 10-pound object from the bottom of a pool. Starting pay is \$15 per hour, up from \$13 an hour earlier this year. Those who stay through the season will receive a \$100 retention bonus, Boyd said.

"I've tried to get some of my friends that want to get a summer job and want to have money in their pockets," said second-year lifeguard Donald Harris, 17. "They've just said lifeguarding isn't for them."

At Indiana's state parks, lifeguards are paid \$11 an hour. All of the state's 37 facilities remain open, but some operate on limited hours, said Terry Coleman, director of the Division of Indiana State Parks. Many Indiana state parks additionally have shallow swimming areas without lifeguards, Coleman said.

"We're looking at potential incentives for maybe the 2023 recreation season, but nothing in stone yet," he said.

In Maine, several state parks started the season without lifeguards, and visitors are informed at the park entrance when no lifeguard is on duty, said Jim Britt, spokesperson for the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. The state pays lifeguards about \$16 an hour.

"It's a concern," Britt said. "There's no two ways about it. We want lifeguards to be there and to be on duty."

Chicago, which boasts one of the nation's largest aquatic programs — 77 public pools and 22 beaches that serve a population of nearly 2.75 million — pushed opening day for pools back to July 5 from June 24.

"Chicago families rely on our park programs during the summer, so we are not giving up," Chicago Park

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District Superintendent Rosa Escareño said in a news release.

Escareño attributed the scarcity in part to “mass resignation” — referring to post-pandemic labor shortages.

Chicago Park District pays \$15.88 hourly and is now offering bonuses of \$600, up from \$500 in May, to new hires who stay through the summer. It also relaxed residency requirements, meaning applicants do not have to live in the city.

One cause for applicant hesitation unrelated to the pandemic may be a lifeguard sexual abuse scandal that rocked Chicago Park District last year.

Escareño said the organization has since strengthened its accountability and reporting systems.

“I think right now, the most important thing is to ensure that we open safely, and that we place the greatest priority on safety, not just the safety of our residents, but also the safety of our employees,” she said.

## ‘Elvis’ and Austin Butler feel the temperature rising

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

On the day of Austin Butler’s final screen test for “Elvis,” director Baz Luhrmann threw everything at him. Butler had spent five months building up to that moment, workshopping the role with Luhrmann, doing hair and make-up tests, rehearsing the songs. Against the odds, Butler had emerged as the unlikely favorite to land the role over more established names like Harry Styles, Miles Teller and Ansel Elgort. But it wasn’t official yet.

And during the screen test, Luhrmann flipped the script. Some of the scenes Butler had prepped went out the window. In others, Luhrmann fed him lines from behind the camera. The one minute of “Suspicious Minds” that Butler was to perform in a Presley jumpsuit stretched to six.

“I got home and I really thought: ‘I don’t think I got that. I felt like my hands were tied behind my back,’” Butler said in a recent interview.

A week later in Los Angeles, the 30-year-old actor’s phone rang. Luhrmann was calling from Australia.

“I look at the phone and go, ‘OK, this is the moment,’” says Butler. “I pick up the phone and he was very dramatic and downcast. He goes, ‘Austin, I just wanted to be the first one to call you and say ... Are you ready to fly, Mr. Presley?’”

When “Elvis” opens in theaters Friday, it will resurrect one of the most iconic figures in American music in the biggest, most bedazzled film to ever try to capture the King of Rock ‘n’ Roll. And it will propel Butler, an Orange County, Calif., native best known to this point for playing Tex Watson in Quentin Tarantino’s “Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood,” onto a far bigger stage.

“It all feels sort of like this wonderful dream,” Butler said the morning after the film’s Cannes Film Festival premiere. “I have to take moments to take a deep breath and say, ‘This is real life.’”

What’s real and what’s fake in the exaggerated land of the much-imitated Elvis hasn’t always been easy to discern. “Elvis,” which Luhrmann co-scripted, doesn’t take a standard biopic view of Presley but tells his story through Presley’s infamous manager, Col. Tom Parker (Tom Hanks), a former carnival barker who guided Presley to stardom but exploited and manipulated him until Presley’s death in 1977. Parker narrates the tale, adding a dimension about the nature of show business and performance.

“Baz in the very first meeting said, ‘Look, this is a story about two people. There would have never been an Elvis without a Col. Tom Parker, and, in his own mind, there would have never been a Col. Tom Parker without Elvis,’” says Hanks. “As soon as he said that, I thought, ‘Well, this is going to be new turf, and worthy of the Baz-maximalist-confetti-strewn style of moviemaking.’”

And, like “The Great Gatsby” and “Moulin Rouge,” “Elvis” is indeed an extravagant, maximalist Baz-styled blow-out. As you’d expect, it breezes through pivotal moments in the Mississippi-born Memphis singer’s life and a jukebox of songs. But “Elvis” also offers a more youthful, rebellious portrait of Presley as a product of Black gospel music, a hip-shaking sex symbol in eyeliner and a progressive-minded nonconformist whose closely controlled career reflected cultural battles of then and now. Butler’s is an electric Elvis, not campy nostalgia act, with more Bowie in him than you might expect.

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"I'm not here to tell the world that Elvis is a great person. I'll tell you what he is for me," says Luhrmann. "Everyone has their Elvis."

"My job generally is to take things that are considered either boring or old-fashioned or not relevant and shake off the rust, and recode them" says Luhrmann, maker of the modern-day "Romeo + Juliet." "Not to change them, just to retranslate them so their value is once again present."

Presley's value to contemporary audiences, while still beyond most of his contemporaries, has faded somewhat. To many, he represents the appropriation of Black music. Some relatively recent productions — the 2005 Broadway musical "All Shook Up," Cirque du Soleil's Viva Elvis show in Las Vegas — failed to catch on substantially.

All of which meant that Butler had a lot riding on his shoulders. For him, it was essential to find ways to make Presley more human than superhuman. One resonant connection for the actor was learning that Presley's mother died when he was 23, the same age Butler was when he lost his mom. And like Presley, an initially timid performer, Butler grew up shy.

"I could then go: 'When I feel afraid and I feel like all the pressure's on me and I'm terrified of falling on my face, he felt those things,'" says Butler. "So then I could go: 'It's OK to feel the fear. It's how you channel it.'"

"Elvis" is most moving in its second half, in the Vegas section of the film, when Presley was often reaching artistic highs on stage during his 1969-1976 run at the International Hotel but was increasingly trapped by Parker (who refused to tour Presley internationally) and drug use. Priscilla Presley, who has enthusiastically supported the film, is played by Olivia DeJonge.

"A lot of the characters in this film are larger-than-life, and authentically larger than life," says DeJonge. "With Priscilla, I wanted to make sure she felt grounded and more like Elvis' breath so that whenever he's with her, he's relaxed."

Before "Elvis" began shooting in Memphis, Hanks had dinner with Priscilla Presley, who then described her ex-husband as "an artist as unique as Picasso and as popular as Charlie Chaplin that really only felt truly himself and at home when he was singing."

While a more villainous role represents a rare departure for Hanks — who tested positive for coronavirus during the film's Australia shoot, an indelible early pandemic moment — "Elvis" is also typical for the actor in that it grapples with American history and exists as a standalone drama. "Elvis" will be competing primarily with franchise installments in theaters this summer.

"The concept of franchise now is so much a part of the entertainment industrial complex that for me, I just don't think it's very fun," says Hanks. "Everybody knows that I've been doing this for an awfully long time so I think they're going to have just as much faith that they'll get all three acts out of me, and then they'll decide if it was worth seeing or not."

Reviews have been largely positive for "Elvis," but they've been glowing for Butler. (In the film, he sings some songs while Presley's voice is used in others.) The actor reckons he devoted two years of his life to the film, obsessively researching Presley and gradually transforming into him. Butler went through daily routines wondering how Presley did them. When the movie wrapped, Butler struggled to let go.

"Suddenly it was me brushing my teeth, now it's me doing these mundane things. It was a real existential crisis when I finished," says Butler. "The next morning, I woke up and I couldn't walk. I thought my appendix burst. It was the most excruciating pain in my stomach, so they took me to the emergency room. It's wild how your body can kind of hold on for the duration of doing something."

The first big scene Butler shot, on the second day of production, was Presley taping his momentous comeback special. The scene put a leather-clad Butler isolated on stage, with little to rely on beside his own ability to thrill a crowd. His nerves nearly overwhelmed him.

"But that terror of my whole career feeling like it was riding on this film, that's exactly what Elvis was feeling," says Butler. "His musical career was on the line. It was make or break for him. So I could rest in that. Then I went out there and it was like having an out of body experience."

## Biden to name 1st Native American US treasurer to head Mint

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Native American is being appointed U.S. treasurer, a historic first.

The White House on Tuesday announced President Joe Biden's intent to appoint Marilynn "Lynn" Malerba as his administration establishes an Office of Tribal and Native Affairs at the Treasury Department, which will be overseen by the U.S. treasurer.

The treasurer's duties include oversight of the U.S. Mint, serving as a liaison with the Federal Reserve and overseeing Treasury's Office of Consumer Policy. The treasurer's signature appears on U.S. currency.

"It is especially important that our Native voices are respected," Malerba said in a statement. "This appointment underscores this Administration's commitment to doing just that. I am excited to serve our communities as Treasurer and for the work ahead."

Malerba, who is the lifetime chief of the Mohegan Indian Tribe, previously worked as a registered nurse, according to the tribe's website, and has served in various tribal government roles. The tribe's reservation is located on the Thames River in Uncasville, Connecticut.

"For the first time in history, a Tribal leader and Native woman's name will be the signature on our currency," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in remarks prepared ahead of the announcement.

"Chief Malerba will expand our unique relationship with Tribal nations, continuing our joint efforts to support the development of Tribal economies and economic opportunities for Tribal citizens," Yellen said.

Yellen was set to visit the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota on Tuesday, the first time a Treasury secretary has visited a tribal nation. She is expected to focus on how the American Rescue Plan has affected tribal communities.

The relief package allotted more than \$30 billion to Tribal governments, some of which oversee the poorest communities in the nation.

For instance, 59% of Rosebud Sioux Tribal households live in poverty, according to U.S. government estimates. Native communities have also suffered the brunt of waves of COVID-19-related deaths and drug overdoses.

This makes the need for representation at the federal level all the more important, says Carl Tobias, a law professor at University of Richmond who specializes in federal appointments.

With Malerba at Treasury, the agency "can work with individual indigenous tribes to work on economic issues which are critical to Native people," he said.

He added that "I think it's true in certain western states that Native Americans are an important voting group."

There are about 9.7 million people in the U.S. who identify as American Indian and Alaska Native, according to the Census Bureau. And while roughly eight million Native Americans are eligible to cast a ballot, Census surveys estimate that large portions of the population are not registered to vote.

A March 2022 White House report on Native American Voting Rights states that "Native voters are less attached to political parties and are more concerned with what candidates can do to support Native communities."

Biden, a Democrat, has taken several steps to demonstrate his commitment to tribal nations, including naming Deb Haaland as the first Native American to lead the Interior Department. Biden also has appointed at least three Native American judges — Lauren J. King, Sunshine Suzanne Sykes and Lydia Griggsby — to the federal court system.

Biden issued the first presidential proclamation of Indigenous Peoples' Day, with the intent of refocusing the federal holiday previously dedicated to explorer Christopher Columbus toward an appreciation of Native people.

The administration led by Haaland is leading a reckoning with the U.S. government's role in Native American boarding schools, which stripped children of their cultures and identities. On Wednesday, the Senate Indian Affairs Committee will hold a hearing on the Interior Department's report on its investigation into the federal government's past oversight of Native American boarding schools.

## Thousands flock to Stonehenge to mark summer solstice

LONDON (AP) — Thousands of druids, pagans and New Age revelers greeted the summer solstice at Stonehenge on Tuesday, the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere.

About 6,000 people gathered at the ancient stone circle in southern England to watch the sun rise at 4:49 a.m. on a clear, crisp morning, local police said.

It was the first time revelers have been permitted to gather at the Neolithic monument to celebrate the solstice since 2019. The sunrise was streamed online in 2020 and 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The crowds raised their arms in the air and cheered as the sun rose over the horizon. Some performed pagan rituals and sang songs, and many hugged the ancient stones as part of the ceremony. Plenty others awakened early and made the trip there just to soak up the atmosphere.

Police said the ambience was “convivial” and there were only two arrests — one for assault and one for drug possession.

English Heritage, which looks after Stonehenge among around 400 historic sites, said 170,000 people around the world also watched the solstice online on Tuesday.

“We’re so delighted to have been able to welcome people back this year and also to livestream the occasion to thousands of people right around the world,” said Nichola Tasker, English Heritage’s director of Stonehenge.

Stonehenge was built between 5,000 and 3,500 years ago on a windswept plain in southwest England by a sun-worshipping Neolithic culture. Experts still debate its purpose, but it is aligned so that on summer solstice the sun rises behind the Heel Stone and rays of sunlight are channeled into the center of the circle.

Summer solstices take place as one of the Earth’s poles tilts most closely toward the sun. The Northern Hemisphere’s summer solstice marks the day with the longest daylight hours in the year, and also officially marks the beginning of summer.

## Israeli government fast-tracks bill to dissolve parliament

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel’s outgoing coalition government will fast-track a bill this week to dissolve parliament, setting up the country for its fifth elections in three years, a Cabinet minister said Tuesday.

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett announced on Monday that he would disband his alliance of eight ideologically diverse parties, a year after taking office, and send the country to the polls. A series of defections from his Yamina party had stripped the coalition of its majority in Israel’s parliament, known as the Knesset.

Bennett cited the coalition’s failure earlier this month to extend a law that grants West Bank settlers special legal status as a main impetus for new elections. His key ally, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, will become the caretaker prime minister until a new government is formed in the aftermath of elections, which are expected to be held in October.

Welfare Minister Meir Cohen, a member of Lapid’s Yesh Atid party, told Israeli public broadcaster Kan that the coalition would bring the bill to a preliminary vote on Wednesday.

“We hope that within a week we will complete the process,” Cohen said. “The intention is to finish it as soon as possible and to go to elections.”

A parliamentary committee approved holding a preliminary vote to dissolve parliament on Wednesday, with a final vote expected early next week.

New elections raise the possibility that former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, now opposition leader, will be able to stage a comeback. Netanyahu was ousted by the eight-party alliance after four inconclusive elections that were largely seen as referendums on his fitness to rule. The alliance’s factions range from dovish liberals opposed to Israeli settlements to hawkish ultranationalists who reject Palestinian statehood. It was only their opposition to Netanyahu that brought them together.

Netanyahu is currently on trial for corruption but has denied any wrongdoing, dismissing the charges as



a witch hunt by his political opponents. Israeli law does not explicitly state that a politician under indictment may not become prime minister.

As politicians gear up for fall elections, several coalition members have floated the possibility of passing a law before the Knesset disbands that would bar a lawmaker accused of a crime from serving as prime minister.

Finance Minister Avigdor Lieberman said the aim of his Yisrael Beytenu party in the upcoming elections is "to prevent Benjamin Netanyahu from returning to power." Along with the bill to dissolve parliament, he said he would advance legislation on Wednesday to bar a lawmaker under indictment from assuming the premiership.

"I hope that bill, too, will find a majority," he said at an economic conference hosted by the Israel Democracy Institute.

Justice Minister Gideon Saar, leader of the New Hope party, told Army Radio that his faction had advocated such a bill and would vote in favor if it's brought before parliament.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz, a centrist who formed a short-lived national unity government with Netanyahu after gridlocked elections in 2020, told reporters he wouldn't partner with him again.

"Honestly, in pain and sorrow, I say he has exhausted the political trust that can be given to him," Gantz said.

## Monterrey suffers weeks-long water cutoff amid drought

By MARCOS MARTÍNEZ CHACÓN Associated Press

MONTERREY, Mexico (AP) — The industrial hub of Monterrey has long been one of Mexico's most prosperous cities, so its almost 5 million residents were shocked when they lost the most basic of services: water.

A combination of an intense drought, poor planning and high water use has left residents of Mexico's industrial powerhouse to resort to extreme measures that call up images of isolated, poorer areas: storing water in buckets to use a scoopful at a time.

"We are panicked, because we don't know when the water will come back on," said 60-year-old Monterrey resident María del Carmen Lara. "We finally got them to send us a water truck, but we still don't have running water."

Local authorities began restricting water supplies in March, as the three dams that help supply the city dried up. They currently hold only 45%, 2% and 8% of their capacity, and city authorities say the two lowest dams had only a few days' worth of water left. Earlier this month, they declared water would be available only between 4a.m. and 10a.m, recently extending the service until 11a.m. But authorities haven't even been able to supply that, and in thousands of homes, not a drop has come out of faucets for weeks.

Lara and her husband haven't had running water for three weeks and don't have enough money for holding tanks to store any significant quantity. In a stop-gap measure, some of the city's suburbs have set up giant plastic water tanks in public squares for residents to fill containers with water. So on a recent hot, sunny day, they were busy dragging buckets and bins to a water tank truck to fill them.

Big, expensive and sometimes corruption-laden water management plans have come and gone, but the lack of long-term planning or conservation remain. One project, that would have built an aqueduct to bring water from the Pánuco river, 310 miles (500 kilometers) away, to the city, which authorities at the time claimed would sure up the city's water supplies for 50 years, was dropped in 2016 because of alleged corruption in the granting of contracts by the previous administration.

Experts say it was clear to see the crisis coming: for six years, Monterrey, capital of Nuevo León state, has suffered below-average rainfall or outright drought.

Set on an arid plain against the backdrop of the Sierra Madre Oriental mountain range, water — except for during brief, catastrophic floods — has never been abundant in Monterrey. For decades, the state's water planning essentially came down to waiting for a hurricane in the Gulf to swell local rivers.

Juan Ignacio Barragán, the city's water director, said Monterrey has been hit by a double whammy of drought and higher temperatures, which has dried up the city's reserves. This May, the state reported its

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hottest ever average temperature, hitting highs of 104 degrees (40 C.)

"This is a situation which has forced us to ration water, to be able to distribute it more equitably throughout the city," Barragán said. He accused the previous administration, which governed the state from 2015 to 2021, of allowing water extraction from dams in high levels without considering the impacts that the prolonged drought had already caused to the state's water sources.

For a city accustomed to consuming 4,225 gallons (16,500 liters) per second, it now has only 3,435 gallons (13,000 liters) per second available.

Barragán said the city has begun an effort urging city residents to use less. Historically, average daily consumption in Monterrey has been around 160 to 170 liters (42 to 44 gallons) per day per person, far higher than the World Health Organization's recommendation of around 100 liters (26 gallons) per day.

About 60% of the Monterrey's water comes from dams, with the rest coming from public wells. The state also has private wells, which owners, ranchers and businesses drill with strict limits on how much they can pump. But those limits often appear to have been ignored, and some wells may have been drilled surreptitiously, according to state and federal officials.

And it's not just Monterrey. According to the North American Drought Monitor, a cooperative effort between drought experts in Canada, Mexico and the United States, 56% of Mexico is experiencing some level of drought.

All of Nuevo León is either "abnormally dry" or in drought. The natural weather phenomenon La Niña and climate change may be factors in unseasonably low rainfall, according to officials and experts.

"For those who don't believe in climate change, here are the consequences," said Nuevo León Gov. Samuel García. "This is clearly the result of climate change: a semi-desert area gets drier."

Brenda Sánchez, a former official of the federal ministry of Environment and Natural Resources who now serves as a local legislator in Nuevo León agreed, saying that urgent action was needed to combat the "real-life consequences" of climate change.

For now, the authorities' response to water shortages has been more of the same: dig more wells, reservoirs and dams. A fourth dam is currently under construction in the state's southeast and an aqueduct to carry water from the El Cuchillo dam, the state's largest, is planned. Authorities are also looking to halt illegal water grabs from rivers that feed the dams and have tried to get large corporate water users to share some of their water rights with city residents.

Rosario Álvarez, an activist with the environmental group Pronatura Noreste, said the government's plans are too little, too late.

"The most recent problem is that we haven't planned for a drought like the current one," Alvarez said. "We have had several years with below-average rainfall, we haven't had hurricanes."

"What came together was a lack of significant infrastructure, a lack of understanding of the characteristics of the region where we live and poor administration of what little water we have," she said.

Meanwhile, until the next hurricane streams up the Gulf of Mexico — and there are none in sight — anger is growing among residents and street protest have broken out in Monterrey.

"We are fed up," said 35-year-old Mónica Almaguer, a resident of the suburb of San Nicolas. "They haven't even lived up to the schedule in which they said there would be water. I have gone 35 days without water."

Gabriel Revillas, 47, who has also been without water for several days, filled up a jug at a private purified water supplier.

"The only thing we can do is pray, pray for a miracle," he said.

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## EXPLAINER: What's next after Russia reduced gas to Europe?

By The Associated Press undefined

It's not a summer heat wave that's making European leaders and businesses sweat. It's fear that Russia's manipulation of natural gas supplies will lead to an economic and political crisis next winter. Or, in the worst case, even sooner.

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Here are key things to know about the energy pressure game over the war in Ukraine:

## WHAT'S HAPPENED?

Russia last week reduced gas supplies to five European Union countries, including Germany, the 27-country bloc's biggest economy that heavily depends on Moscow's gas to generate electricity and power industry.

Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom has cut supplies through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline running under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany — Europe's major natural gas pipeline — by 60%. Italy is seeing its supply cut by half. Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia also have seen reductions.

This comes on top of gas shutoffs to Poland, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France and the Netherlands in recent weeks. Those shutoffs were initially seen as less of a problem because Poland, for instance, was already phasing out Russian gas by year's end, while others had alternative supplies.

The latest cutbacks, however, hit countries that are major economies and use lots of Russian natural gas. Germany relies on Russia for 35% of its gas imports; Italy for 40%. Right now, gas supplies are enough for current needs.

## WHY ARE THE REDUCTIONS A CONCERN?

Europe is scrambling to fill its underground gas storage ahead of the winter. Gas utilities operate on a regular rhythm, filling reserves over the summer — when, hopefully, they can buy gas cheaper — and then drawing it down over the winter as heating demand rises. The reductions will make refilling storage more expensive and difficult to accomplish.

The move also has brought closer the specter of a complete Russian gas shutoff that would make it impossible for Europe to get all the fuel it needs for the winter. Natural gas is used by several energy-intensive industries, such as glassmakers and steel manufacturers, that are already facing higher costs and dialing back use, helping to slow the European economy.

For electricity production, gas is the "swing" energy source that kicks in when renewables like wind and sun generate less power due to unpredictable weather and when electricity use spikes during cold or hot weather, like the heat wave last weekend that spurred record highs in Europe.

Right now, Europe's underground storage caverns are 57% full. The European Commission's latest proposal is for each country to reach 80% by Nov. 1, while Germany has set goals of 80% by Oct. 1 and 90% by Nov. 1.

Analysts at the Bruegel think tank in Brussels warn that "Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania will not meet the EU 80% target if they continue at the current speed," while "Germany, Austria and Slovakia will find it very difficult to fill their storage facilities if gas flows from Russia are stopped."

## WHAT'S BEING DONE?

The EU, which before the war got some 40% of its gas from Russia, has outlined plans to cut imports by two-thirds by year's end and phase out Russian gas entirely by 2027. The bloc has already said it will block Russian coal starting in August and most Russian oil in six months.

The goal is to reduce the \$850 million per day Russia has been reaping from oil and gas sales to Europe to prevent funding its war in Ukraine.

European governments and utilities have bought expensive liquefied natural gas, or LNG, from the United States that is delivered by ship, as opposed to gas that comes by pipeline from Russia and is typically cheaper. But the war has spiked energy prices, which are fueling record inflation in Europe and helping keep revenue high for Russia.

There are efforts to get more pipeline gas from Norway and Azerbaijan, while the accelerated rollout of renewable energy and conservation are expected to play smaller roles. Germany, which has no LNG import terminals, is bringing in four floating terminals, two of which should be operating this year.

Despite a focus on renewable energy, the crisis is pushing countries back to fossil fuels. Germany is rushing through legislation to restart coal-fired power plants as a temporary patch despite plans to exit coal entirely by 2030.

Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck said it was "bitter" to turn to coal but that "in this situation, it is sheer necessity." The government plans measures to incentivize industry and utilities to use less natural gas. Habeck also urged Germans to conserve energy.

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"Gas use must be further reduced, so that more gas can go into storage, otherwise in winter it's going to be tight," he said.

The Dutch government says it will allow coal-fired power stations to operate at full capacity again to conserve natural gas that would otherwise be burned to produce electricity.

Europe's gas security is fragile despite all those measures. Liquefied gas export terminals in energy-producing countries like the U.S. and Qatar are running at full speed, meaning Europe is bidding against Asia for finite supplies.

Plus, an explosion and fire at an export terminal in Freeport, Texas, took a fifth of U.S. export capacity offline for months sending another shudder through the gas market. Most of the terminal's exports were going to Europe, Rystad Energy said.

"The situation on the European natural gas market is escalating further," commodities analyst Carsten Fritsch at Commerzbank Research said, pointing to the explosion and a scheduled maintenance shutdown of Nord Stream 1 that will mean no gas flowing through the pipeline July 11-21. "The urgently needed buildup of gas stocks for the winter months could therefore falter" and prices will likely go even higher.

## WHAT'S RUSSIA'S GAME?

Gazprom says it had to cut back the flows to Europe through Nord Stream 1 because Western sanctions stranded a key piece of equipment in Canada, where it had been taken for maintenance. European governments aren't buying it and call the gas reductions political.

Gazprom's steps have sent natural gas prices sharply higher after they had fallen in the wake of the winter heating season. That increases revenue for Russia at a time when it's under pressure from Western economic sanctions and adds to stress on Europe as it gives Ukraine political and military support.

Gazprom's moves also can be seen as pushback against Western sanctions and as a deterrent to imposing further penalties. And bigger gas users have been put on notice that, just like smaller ones, they are not exempt from a possible cutoff.

Germany and Italy saw their supplies cut around the time their leaders joined French President Emmanuel Macron in Kyiv to meet President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and back EU candidate status for Ukraine.

"Cutting Nord Stream 1 flows to Europe seems clearly an effort by Putin to stall Europe's efforts to build gas stocks through the summer, ready presumably for another installment in the European energy wars this winter," said Tim Ash, senior emerging markets sovereign strategist at BlueBay Asset Management.

## WILL EUROPEANS SEE THE LIGHTS GO OUT OR FREEZE THIS WINTER?

That is unlikely because EU law mandates that governments ration gas supplies to industry so that homes, schools and hospitals are spared. Countries that run short of gas also can ask for help from others that may be in better shape, though that depends on adequate pipeline connections.

The downside of rationing would be industrial cutbacks and shutdowns that could cost jobs and growth in an economy already squeezed by high inflation and fears of a global slowdown as central banks raise interest rates.

Meanwhile, a complete cutoff could send gas prices soaring toward their record of 206 euros (\$217) per megawatt hour from March 7, further fueling inflation. At the start of 2021, before Russia massed troops on the border with Ukraine, spot gas cost about 19 euros per megawatt hour.

## Today in History: June 22, Operation Barbarossa begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, June 22, the 173rd day of 2022. There are 192 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 22, 1940, during World War II, Adolf Hitler gained a stunning victory as France was forced to sign an armistice eight days after German forces overran Paris.

On this date:

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte abdicated for a second time as Emperor of the French.

In 1870, the United States Department of Justice was created.

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In 1937, Joe Louis began his reign as world heavyweight boxing champion by knocking out Jim Braddock in the eighth round of their fight in Chicago. (A year later on this date, Louis knocked out Max Schmeling in the first round of their rematch at Yankee Stadium.)

In 1941, Nazi Germany launched Operation Barbarossa, a massive invasion of the Soviet Union.

In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, more popularly known as the "GI Bill of Rights."

In 1945, the World War II battle for Okinawa ended with an Allied victory.

In 1965, movie producer David O. Selznick ("Gone with the Wind") died in Los Angeles at age 63.

In 1970, President Richard Nixon signed an extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that lowered the minimum voting age to 18.

In 1977, John N. Mitchell became the first former U.S. Attorney General to go to prison as he began serving a sentence for his role in the Watergate cover-up. (He was released 19 months later.)

In 1981, Mark David Chapman pleaded guilty to killing rock star John Lennon. Abolhassan Bani-Sadr was deposed as president of Iran.

In 1992, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *R.A.V. v. City of St. Paul*, unanimously ruled that "hate crime" laws that banned cross burning and similar expressions of racial bias violated free-speech rights.

In 1999, in a major upset at Wimbledon, top-ranked Martina Hingis lost 6-2, 6-0 in the opening round to Jelena Dokic (yeh-LAY'-nuh DAH'-kich), a 16-year-old qualifier ranked 129th.

Ten years ago: Ex-Penn State assistant coach Jerry Sandusky was convicted by a jury in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, on 45 counts of sexually assaulting 10 boys over 15 years. (Sandusky is serving a 30- to 60-year state prison sentence.)

Five years ago: An online conspiracy theory dubbed "pizzagate" ended with real-world consequences as a North Carolina man was sentenced to four years in prison for firing an assault rifle inside Comet Ping Pong, a Washington, D.C. pizza restaurant. California officials denied parole for convicted killer Patricia Krenwinkel, a follower of cult leader Charles Manson, for the 1969 slayings of pregnant actor Sharon Tate and four other people. The Philadelphia 76ers selected guard Markelle Fultz with the No. 1 pick in the NBA draft.

One year ago: A government watchdog reported that deaths among Medicare patients in nursing homes had soared by 32% in 2020; it was the most comprehensive look yet at the ravages of COVID-19 among its most vulnerable victims. Kobe Bryant's widow agreed to settle a lawsuit against the pilot and owners of the helicopter that crashed in January 2020, killing the NBA star, their daughter, Gianna, and seven others; terms of the settlement weren't disclosed. After finishing with the second-worst record in the NBA, the Detroit Pistons won the NBA draft lottery, securing the No. 1 pick. (The Pistons would select Oklahoma State guard Cade Cunningham.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Prunella Scales (TV: "Fawlty Towers") is 90. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., is 89. Singer-actor Kris Kristofferson is 86. Actor Michael Lerner is 81. Actor Klaus Maria Brandauer is 79. Fox News analyst Brit Hume is 79. Singer/producer Peter Asher (Peter and Gordon) is 78. Singer Howard "Eddie" Kaylan is 75. Singer-musician Todd Rundgren is 74. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., is 73. Actor Meryl Streep is 73. Actor Lindsay Wagner is 73. Singer Alan Osmond is 73. Actor Graham Greene is 70. Pop singer Cyndi Lauper is 69. Actor Chris Lemmon is 68. Rock musician Derek Forbes is 66. Actor Tim Russ is 66. Rock musician Garry Beers (INXS) is 65. Actor-producer-writer Bruce Campbell is 64. Rock musician Alan Anton (Cowboy Junkies) is 63. Actor Tracy Pollan is 62. Environmental activist Erin Brockovich is 62. Rock singer-musician Jimmy Somerville is 61. Basketball Hall of Famer Clyde Drexler is 60. Actor Amy Brenneman is 58. Author Dan Brown is 58. Rock singer-musician Mike Edwards (Jesus Jones) is 58. Rock singer Steven Page is 52. Actor Michael Trucco is 52. Actor Mary Lynn Rajs kub (RYS'-kub) is 51. TV personality Carson Daly is 49. Rock musician Chris Traynor is 49. Actor Donald Faison (FAY'-zahn) is 48. Actor Alicia Goranson is 48. Actor-comedian Mike O'Brien (TV: "Saturday Night Live") is 46. TV personality/actor Jai Rodriguez is 43. Americana singer-songwriter John Moreland is 37. Pop singer Dinah Jane (Fifth Harmony) (TV: "The X Factor") is 25.