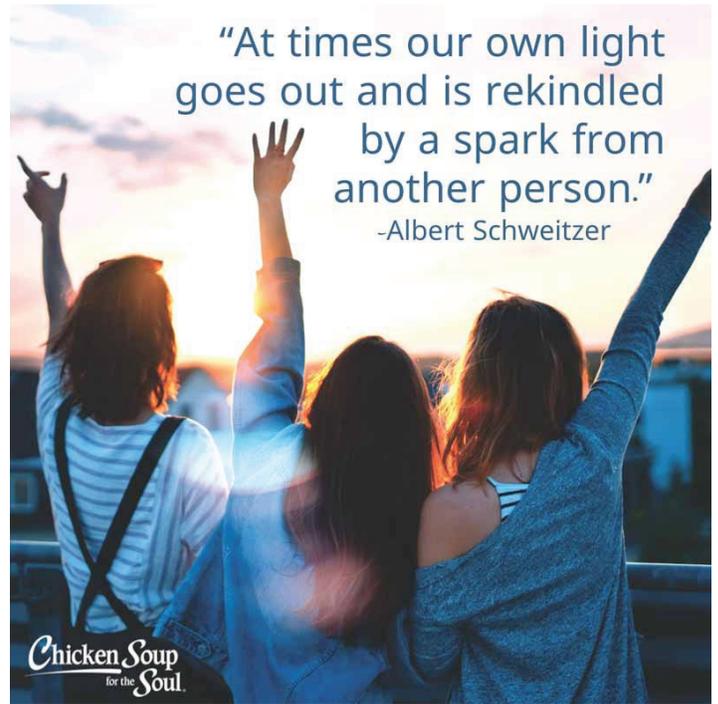


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July 14

- 5:30 p.m.: Legion hosts Webster, DH Jr. Teeners just be completed by this date
- 6 p.m.: U12 SB hosts Faulkton, DH
- 6 p.m.: U8 SB at Claremont, 1 game
- 7 p.m.: U10 SB at Claremont, 1 game

Jul 15-17

U10 State Tourney in Salem

July 18

6 p.m.: Jr. Legion hosts Frederick, DH

July 19-21

Legion Regions at Redfield

July 22-24

Jr. Teeners State Tourney at Hayti

July 23-24

Jr. Legion Region

July 29-Aug. 2

State Legion at Gregory

August 5-7: State Jr. Legion at Clark

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

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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What do you do on a beautiful evening? You do some paragliding! This paraglider was seen hovering over Groton last night. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Groton Legion Post #39 Claims Victory Over Mobridge Post 4 - 2022 in Blow-Out Fashion, 8-2

Groton Legion Post #39 easily dispatched Mobridge Post 4 - 2022 8-2 on Thursday. Groton Legion Post #39 fired up the offense in the first inning. Cole Simon drove in one when Simon singled.

In the bottom of the first inning, Mobridge Post 4 - 2022 tied things up at one when Trace Cerney singled on a 3-1 count, scoring one run.

Groton Legion Post #39 pulled away for good with two runs in the third inning. In the third Dillon Abeln singled on a 1-1 count, scoring one run.

Groton Legion Post #39 tallied three runs in the fourth inning. The offensive onslaught came from a single by Tate Larson and by Bradin Althoff.

Jackson Cogley earned the win for Groton Legion Post #39. Cogley went six innings, allowing two runs on six hits and striking out ten. Simon threw one inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Shane Henderson took the loss for Mobridge Post 4 - 2022. The righty allowed one hit and one run over one and two-thirds innings, striking out one.

Groton Legion Post #39 had ten hits in the game. Larson, Abeln, and Ryan Groeblichhoff all collected multiple hits for Groton Legion Post #39. Groeblichhoff, Abeln, and Larson each managed two hits to lead Groton Legion Post #39. Groton Legion Post #39 stole ten bases during the game as two players stole more than one. Larson led the way with two. Groton Legion Post #39 was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Cade Larson had the most chances in the field with eight.

Simon Fried went 3-for-4 at the plate to lead Mobridge Post 4 - 2022 in hits.

Groton Post 39 Jr Legion Nabs Win Over Mobridge Post 4 - 2022 Despite Early 5-Run Inning

Groton Post 39 Jr Legion weathered a scare by Mobridge Post 4 - 2022 in the seventh inning where Groton Post 39 Jr Legion coughed up five runs, but Groton Post 39 Jr Legion still won 12-8 on Wednesday. The big inning for Mobridge Post 4 - 2022 came thanks to singles by Gavin Farlee and Rocky Good Shield, by Taylon Carmody, and an error on a ball put in play by Matthew Robinson.

The base paths were crowded in this high-scoring game. Groton Post 39 Jr Legion collected seven hits and Mobridge Post 4 - 2022 had seven.

In the first inning, Groton Post 39 Jr Legion got their offense started when Ryan Groeblichhoff was hit by a pitch, driving in a run.

Bradin Althoff led the Groton Post 39 Jr Legion to victory on the mound. The lefthander allowed five hits and three runs over five innings, striking out eight. Braxton Imrie threw two innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Carmody took the loss for Mobridge Post 4 - 2022. The pitcher went five innings, allowing five runs on three hits and striking out seven.

Groton Post 39 Jr Legion racked up seven hits in the game. Imrie and Brevin Flihs all managed multiple hits for Groton Post 39 Jr Legion. Flihs and Imrie each collected two hits to lead Groton Post 39 Jr Legion.

Mobridge Post 4 - 2022 had seven hits in the game. Good Shield and Holden Eisemann all managed multiple hits for Mobridge Post 4 - 2022.

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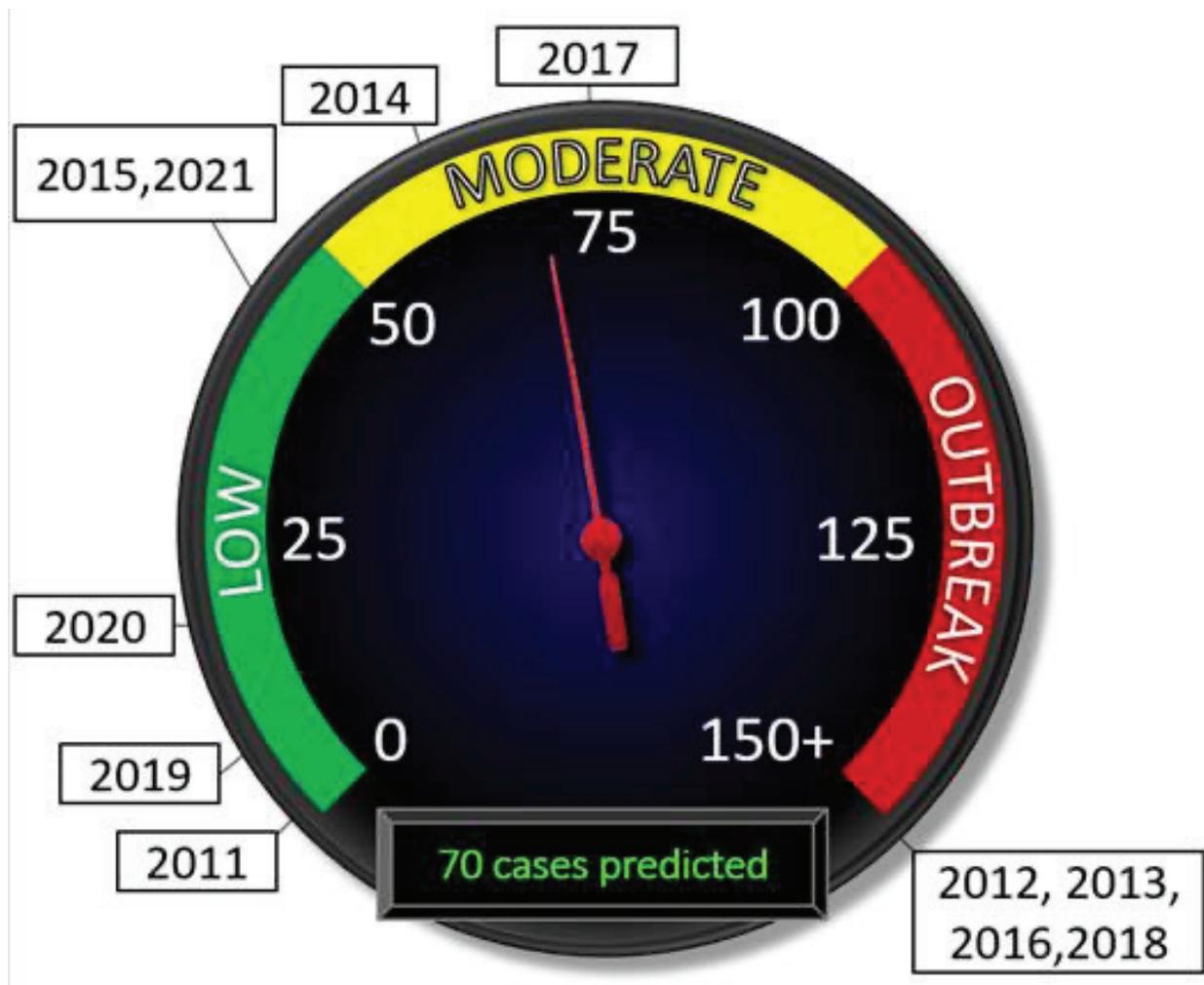
West Nile update – July 13, 2022

No human WNV cases have been reported at this time.

SD WNV (as of July 13): No human cases reported
2 counties with positive mosquito pools (Brown, Minnehaha)

US WNV (as of June 12): 10 cases (AL, AZ, GA, IN, LA, MN, MS, ND, TX) and 1 death

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2022, South Dakota (as of July 13)



Brown County 4-H Fashion Revue Results

The 2022 Brown County 4-H Fashion Revue was held Tuesday July 12th. Aberdeen Regional Extension Office graciously offered their facility for the event. We had three participants this year.

In the early afternoon, Ashley Dunham of Groton and Karelyn Farrand of Aberdeen judged the models. The models were judged on the following criteria: the fit of the garment, the accessories, the individual's modeling ability, the construction of the garment; and the garments cost and care. Each model was given a ribbon placing. All participants are invited to represent Brown County at the South Dakota State Fair.

RESULTS:

Juniors:

Purple Ribbon: Ashlynn Warrington and Kaleb Holsing

Senior:

Purple Ribbon: Shakinah Holsing



Those attending the camp were Ashley Hanson, Britton; Beckett Hutcheson and Connor Hutcheson, Canisota; Danielle Kruger and Garrett Kruger, De Set; Victoria Havermann, Elk Point; Coltyn Raymond and Madi Raymond, Ethan; Chase Melius, Faulkton; Bobbi Eide, Gettysburg; Hailey Monson and Hannah Monson, Groton; Avery McCloud, Holabird; Gabriela Alamo Padilla, Huron; Cadence Konechne, Kimball; Allison Schulz, Lennox; Jayda Walton, Mitchell; LizBeth Crosby, Sean Thompson and Lorelei Ruhnke, Pierre; Garrett Gerlach, Macula Gerlach, Rachel Gerlach, Plankinton; Jamin Guatemala and Philip Stanczyk, Rapid City; Aerial Eitreim and Sydni Eitreim, Sioux Falls; Lauren Dagit, Spearfish; Casey Tolsma and Tate Tolsma, Stickney; Brooke LaMont and Logan LaMont, Union Center; Chase Blotchy and Chaz Blotchy, Valentine; Lane Burkel, Woonsocket; and Billy Kezena, Yankton.

Students Grow in Leadership Through Challenges & Activities During 2022 Farmers Union Camp

By Toby Kane for South Dakota Farmers Union

Leadership isn't necessarily taught. It is something learned over time through challenges, inspiration and discussion. That was part of the message from this year's South Dakota Farmers Union Senior Camp held at Storm Mountain Center.

On June 6-10, students participated in a variety of activities from ropes challenge courses to cooperative-themed games and even an interviewing skills session.

Chandra Calvert, Director of Industry Relations and Grant Management from Western Dakota Technical College, worked with the campers on practice interview exercises.

"We focused on ways students can tell their own stories and how their personal experiences and passions can make for a great interview," said Calvert.

Calvert guided campers through mock interviews to help them gain confidence in their ability to talk about themselves and have pride in their experiences and accomplishments.

"We are often too 'South Dakota humble' and are afraid to brag about ourselves," said Calvert. "However, there is a way to be proud without being arrogant. I hope that lesson came across in our practice interviews. The goal is for students to gain confidence as they go through life."

Elizabeth Schoenfelder, a seventh grade student from Dimock, enjoyed Calvert's presentation. "I really liked how she explained everything. She made the steps of interviewing easy to understand and follow."

Another featured guest at camp was Dan Meers, widely known as the KC Wolf, the official mascot for the Kansas City Chiefs. Meers is not only the Kansas City mascot, but also a humorous and motivational speaker. He spoke to the campers on leading a life of influence.

"All of us are gifted in different ways," said Meers. "You don't have to have a million followers on Twitter or Instagram to walk into a room and make a positive impact. We can all use our skills to be influential every day."

Throughout camp, students and Junior Advisory Council members used their skills too, participating in a mix of activities, entertainment, and education.

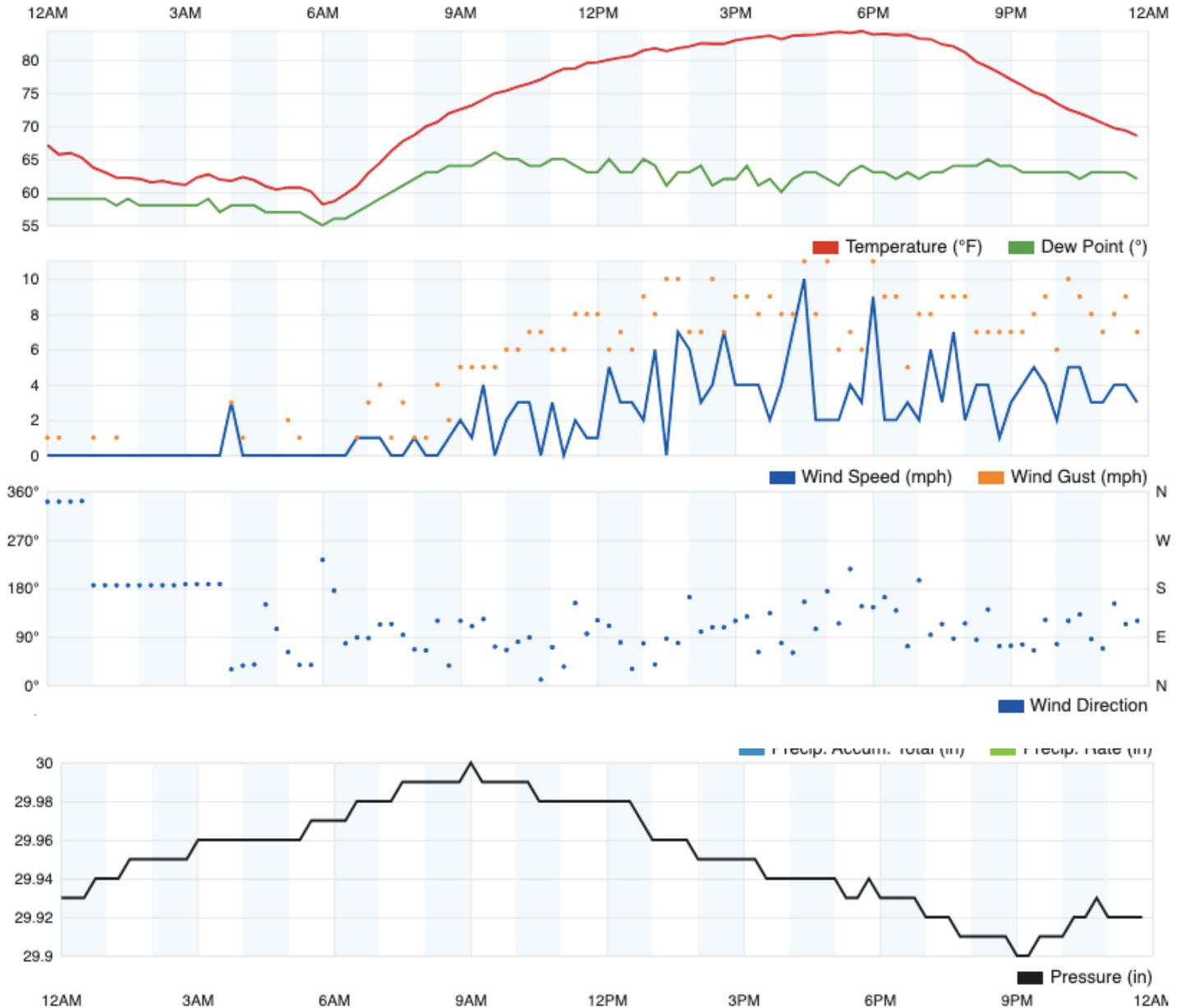
"Our cooperative discussions were very eye opening," said Chaz Blotsky, a recent graduate of Winner High School. "I enjoyed learning how cooperatives support the community and the people in the community."

To learn more about South Dakota Farmers Union educational programming for South Dakota rural youth and families, visit www.sdfu.org.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
				
Hot	Chance T-storms	Hot	Partly Cloudy then Slight Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms
High: 92 °F	Low: 68 °F	High: 91 °F	Low: 69 °F	High: 91 °F

Severe Storms Possible, Mainly Tonight

Hazards

- Wind gusts of 60-70 mph is the main threat
- Large hail up to quarter size is also possible



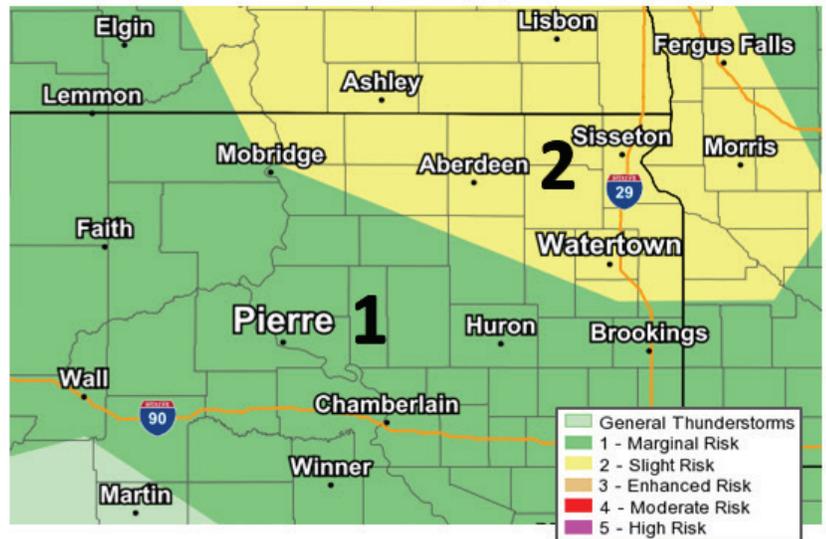
Timing

- While isolated storms are possible across north central and northeastern SD this afternoon (20% chance), the main concern is this evening and tonight. **The highest risk period is from 9pm to 3am** across areas shaded in/near yellow.

Action

- Have a way to receive warning information, even after dark, in case severe storms approach your area.

Severe Thunderstorm Outlook 7/14/2022



 National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

 Updated: 7/14/2022 4:46 AM Central

While today will be hot and dry for most, chances are increasing for strong to severe storms to develop this evening and tonight mainly across portions of northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Damaging wind gusts and large hail are the main threats.

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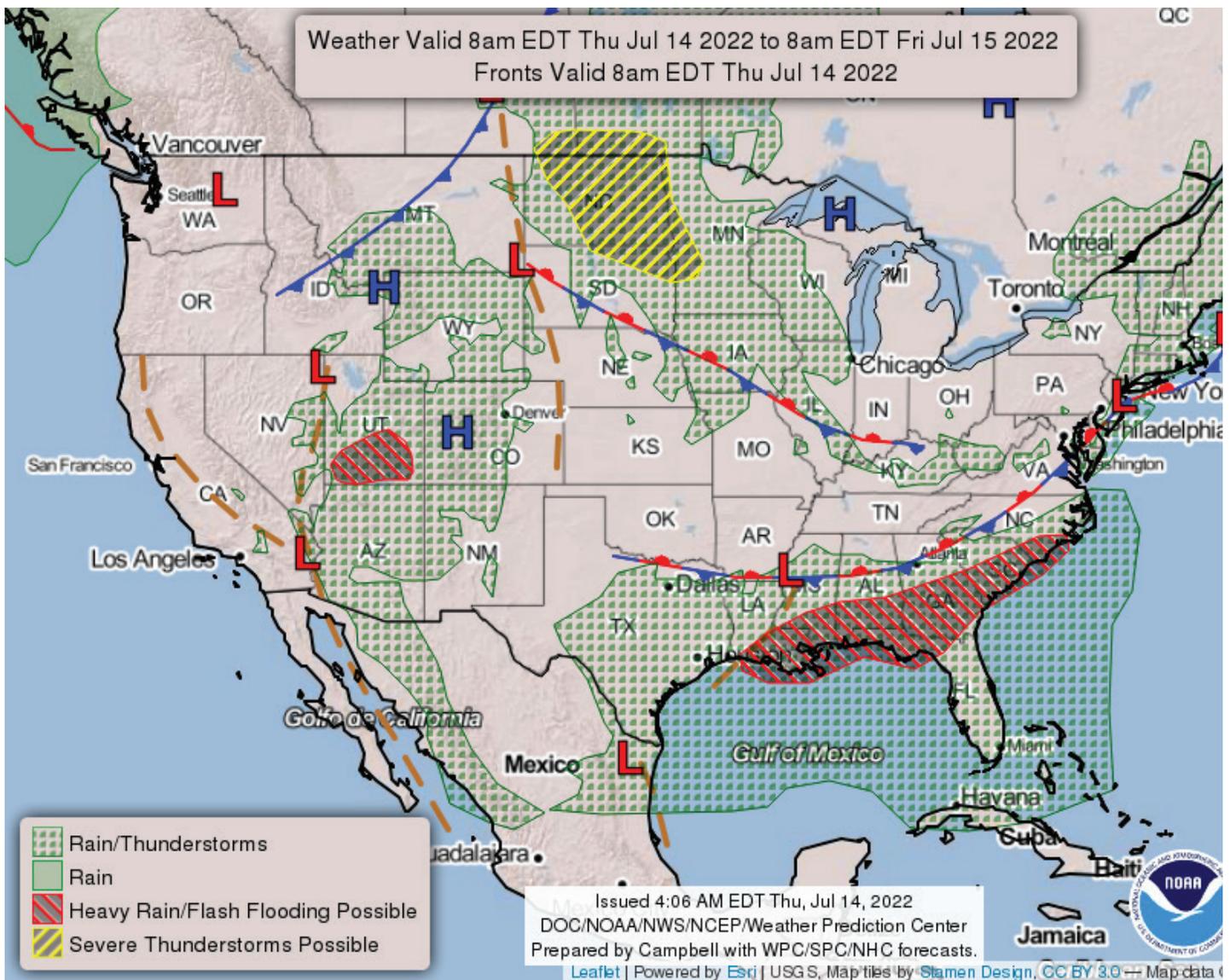
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 84.3 °F at 5:45 PM
Low Temp: 58.2 °F at 6:00 AM
Wind: 11 mph at 6:00 PM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 24 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1931
Record Low: 42 in 1967
Average High: 85°F
Average Low: 60°F
Average Precip in July.: 1.59
Precip to date in July.: 2.25
Average Precip to date: 12.60
Precip Year to Date: 13.83
Sunset Tonight: 9:20:31 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:57:04 AM



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Today in Weather History

July 14, 1970: A line of severe thunderstorms raced across southeast South Dakota into northwest Iowa causing extensive damage. The line of storms produced widespread high winds and large hail. The hail averaged quarter to hen egg size although some areas received stones the size of softballs and winds over 70 mph were not uncommon. The most extensive damage from the storms extended from Mitchell through Parker to near Beresford. Spotty areas reported 100% crop damage. In Lincoln County, the hail caused an estimated \$8 million in crop damage and \$2 million in property damage. In the town of Marion, the hail was so large that it punched holes in some roofs.

July 14, 2009: A line of storms moving across north-central South Dakota during the early morning hours on the 14th became heavy rainfall producing thunderstorms for northeastern South Dakota. Rainfall amounts of 2 to 5 inches caused mainly localized flooding. However in Grant County, a 20 foot wide by a 17-foot deep culvert on 468th Avenue in Twin Brooks was washed away by flash flooding. The Grant County Highway Department said fixing the channel would cost more than \$40,000.

1936 - Extreme heat prevailed across the central U.S. as severe drought raged from Texas to the Dakotas. Record high temperatures were established in sixteen states that summer, including readings as high as 120 degrees in the Great Plains Region. On this particular date, afternoon highs for 113 stations across the state of Iowa averaged 108.7 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1957 - Hail, with some stones up to an inch in diameter, covered the ground to a depth of three inches ruining crops in the Bath area of New Hampshire. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Severe thunderstorms in Iowa produced eight inches of golf ball size hail near Grafton, IA, completely stripping corn stalks in the area. Hail caused more than a million dollars damage to crops in Worth County and Mitchell County, and another million dollars damage in Ada County and Crawford County. Unseasonably cool weather prevailed in the Great Plains Region. Eight cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Duluth, MN, with a reading of 37 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in the Northern Atlantic Coast Region during the afternoon and evening hours. Thunderstorms also spawned a rather strong tornado near Westtown, NY, and drenched Agawam, MA, with four inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern New Mexico to central Nebraska. One hundred soldiers were injured by flying debris and collapsing tents during a thunderstorm near Trinidad, CO. Thunderstorms in Colorado produced wind gusts to 77 mph at La Junta. Early morning thunderstorms produced torrential rains over parts of Louisiana, with 7.50 inches at Carencro, and 5.85 inches at Morgan City. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1995: On the evening of Friday, July 14th, thunderstorms producing severe weather were occurring over Upper Michigan and adjacent portions of Ontario near Sault Saint Marie. By late evening the storms had evolved into a bowing line just northwest of the Mackinac Bridge. At 10:17 PM EDT, the thunderstorm gust front hit the bridge, and a gust to 90 mph was measured. Sustained winds of 80 mph continued on the bridge for ten more minutes. Thus began the intense "Ontario-Adirondacks Derecho" that would cause hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of damage, several deaths, and many injuries as it raced southeast from the northern Great Lakes to the Atlantic coast.

2005 - Death Valley had 7 consecutive days (July 14-20) with high temperatures equal to or above 125 degrees.

2006: Tropical Storm Bilis tracks across northern Taiwan before making landfall in southeastern China's Fujian province with maximum sustained winds near 65 mph. The storm causes at least 575 deaths in Fujian, Guangdong, and Hunan provinces and direct economic losses near \$3.3 billion.

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HOW TO FIND HAPPINESS

"Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" is one of the most familiar phrases in the Constitution of the United States. Although no one is guaranteed that they will find happiness, the right to seek happiness is one of the main declarations found in our Constitution.

Many "things" we read and hear promise us some form of "happiness" at a distance. What if we taste and experience something that we have been promised will bring us a state of happiness, but when we get it, it's empty and vain, worthless and a waste of time? What, then, are we to do?

A Psalmist gave us a "formula" for happiness. He declared with enthusiasm, "Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to Him, you will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours!" Certainly, God's promise for being blessed - or happy - far exceeds whatever promise any man or group of men could guarantee. And they work!

The happiness that God guarantees is for those who fear and follow Him. It is not a fear of being terrorized by a vengeful God - but a fear that results in reverential awe and worship of a God who loves them and wants their best. It is a fear that establishes a trust in Him that "without Him, I can do nothing that is worthwhile." But, with Him, I can do all things well! So, I will rely on Him for everything!"

A fear of forsaking God and not following Him and His ways will create a dependency upon Him for all things in our life. If we do that, we will find His happiness!

Prayer: God, give us the wisdom to see that true happiness is a gift and is found only in Your grace. Then, grant us the willingness to admit it. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in obedience to Him, you will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Psalm 128:1-2

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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
06/20/2022 Ladies Invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration 10am Start
06/25/2022 How can we... "Love Groton"? United Methodist Church 9:30am
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)
07/20/2022 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar 11am-1pm at the Groton Legion
07/21/2022 Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/22/2022 Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20
07/27/2022 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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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

04-26-27-30-33

(four, twenty-six, twenty-seven, thirty, thirty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$112,000

Lotto America

01-18-21-26-39, Star Ball: 8, ASB: 2

(one, eighteen, twenty-one, twenty-six, thirty-nine; Star Ball: eight; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$17,110,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 480,000,000

Powerball

22-23-36-47-63, Powerball: 2, Power Play: 2

(twenty-two, twenty-three, thirty-six, forty-seven, sixty-three; Powerball: two; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$82,000,000

Abortion ruling prompts variety of reactions from states

By The Associated Press undefined

The U.S. Supreme Court on June 24 overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision that had provided a constitutional right to abortion. The ruling was expected to lead to abortion bans in roughly half the states, although the timing of those laws taking effect varies.

Some Republican-led states banned or severely limited abortion immediately, while other restrictions will take effect later. At least one state, Texas, was waiting until after the Supreme Court issues its formal judgment in the case, which is separate from the opinion issued in June and could take about a month. Nevertheless, the Texas Supreme Court has ruled that a long-dormant 1925 abortion ban is now in effect.

In anticipation of the decision, several states led by Democrats took steps to protect abortion access. The decision also set up the potential for legal fights between the states over whether providers and those who help women obtain abortions can be sued or prosecuted.

Here is an overview of abortion legislation and the expected impact of the court's decision in every state.

ALABAMA

Political control: Alabama's Republican-controlled Legislature and Republican governor want to ban or restrict access to abortions.

Background: In 2019, Alabama lawmakers approved what was then the most stringent abortion ban in the country, making it a felony to perform an abortion at any stage of pregnancy with no exceptions for pregnancies resulting from rape or incest. The only exception would be when the woman's health was at serious risk. A federal judge issued an injunction, under the precedent of *Roe v. Wade*, blocking the state from enforcing the law. In 2018, voters agreed to amend the Alabama Constitution to say the state recognizes the "rights of unborn children" and "does not protect the right to an abortion or require the funding of abortion." A 1951 law made it a crime, punishable by up to 12 months in prison, to induce an abortion, unless it is done to preserve the life or health of the mother.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Abortions became almost entirely illegal in Alabama on June 24. A 2019 state abortion ban took effect making it a felony to perform an abortion at any stage of pregnancy, with no exceptions for pregnancies caused by rape or incest. All three clinics stopped providing abortions that

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morning under fear of prosecution under the 1951 state law. U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson hours later granted Alabama's request to lift an injunction and allow the state to enforce the 2019 abortion ban. Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said it is now a felony to provide an abortion in Alabama beyond the one exception allowed in the 2019 law, which is for the sake of the mother's health. Doctors who violate the law could face up to 99 years in prison. Marshall said the state would also move to lift other injunctions that blocked previous abortion restrictions, including a requirement for doctors who perform abortions to have hospital admitting privileges.

What's next: Some Republican lawmakers have said they would like to see the state replace the 2019 ban with a slightly less stringent bill that would allow exceptions in cases of rape or incest. Proponents said the 2019 ban was deliberately strict in the hopes of sparking a court challenge to Roe.

ALASKA

Political control: Republicans currently hold a majority of seats in the Legislature, but the House is controlled by a bipartisan coalition composed largely of Democrats. Fifty-nine of the Legislature's 60 seats are up for election this year. Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy, who believes life begins at conception, is seeking reelection.

Background: The Alaska Supreme Court has interpreted the right to privacy in the state constitution as encompassing abortion rights.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: The decision has not immediately affected abortion rights in Alaska, given the existing precedent in the state.

What's next: Voters in the fall will be asked if they want to hold a constitutional convention, a question that comes up every 10 years. Many conservatives who want to overhaul how judges are selected and do away with the interpretation that the constitution's right to privacy clause allows for abortion rights see an opportunity in pushing for a convention. Recent efforts to advance a constitutional amendment through the Legislature have been unsuccessful.

ARIZONA

Political control: Both legislative chambers are controlled by Republicans. GOP Gov. Doug Ducey is to leave office in January because of term limits.

Background: Arizona law allows abortion through about 22 weeks, but the Legislature passed a 15-week abortion ban in March mirroring the Mississippi law that was contested before the Supreme Court. It takes effect Sept. 24. Current restrictions include bans on abortions because of gender and a 2021 law that makes it a felony for a doctor to terminate a pregnancy because the fetus has a survivable genetic abnormality. Arizona also has a pre-statehood law on the books that would ban all abortions, although it has not been enforced since Roe was decided.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Ducey has said the law he signed in late March takes precedence over the total ban that remains on the books. But that law specifically says it does not overrule the total abortion ban in place for more than 100 years. Abortion providers across the state stopped all procedures because of concerns that the pre-Roe ban could put doctors, nurses and other providers at risk of prosecution. Republican state Attorney General Mark Brnovich said on June 29 that the pre-statehood law could be enforced. Brnovich said he would seek to remove an injunction in place since shortly after the Roe decision. The next day, the U.S. Supreme Court allowed Arizona to enforce a ban on abortions done solely because the fetus has a genetic abnormality. A federal judge blocked that part of that 2021 Arizona law last year, saying it was unconstitutionally vague, but will now have to reconsider that decision. The same federal judge on July 12 blocked another part of that law, which grants all rights to fertilized eggs or fetuses. Abortion rights groups renewed a challenge to it after Roe fell, saying it could be used to charge providers with assault, child abuse or other crimes for providing otherwise-legal abortion services. The judge agreed it was likely unconstitutionally vague.

What's next: Brnovich has said he will ask a court to lift the injunction blocking his office and one county from enforcing the pre-statehood total abortion ban. Abortion-rights supporters in Arizona failed to col-

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lect enough signatures by the July 7 deadline to ask voters to enshrine the right to abortion in the state constitution this November. Their last-minute effort was a longshot because they needed to collect nearly 360,000 valid signatures in just over seven weeks.

ARKANSAS

Political control: Arkansas' Legislature is controlled by Republicans who have supported dozens of abortion bans and restrictions in recent years. Republican Gov. Asa Hutchinson also has supported bans on abortion with some exceptions. He's term-limited and leaves office in January. Republican nominee Sarah Sanders, press secretary to former President Donald Trump, is widely favored in the November election to succeed him.

Background: Arkansas already had a law banning most abortions 20 weeks into a woman's pregnancy, with exceptions for rape, incest and the life of the mother. The state has several other bans that have been struck down or blocked by courts in recent years, including an outright abortion ban enacted last year that doesn't include rape or incest exceptions. That ban has been blocked by a federal judge, and the state has appealed.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Arkansas has a law it enacted in 2019 that bans nearly all abortions now that Roe is overturned. That ban, along with the outright ban that's been blocked by a federal judge, only allows exceptions to protect the life of the mother in a medical emergency. Hutchinson has said he thinks bans should include rape and incest exceptions, but he has not called on the Legislature to add those to either of the bans.

What's next: Hours after the Supreme Court ruling, Attorney General Leslie Rutledge signed certification that Roe had been overturned. That allowed the state's "trigger ban" to take effect immediately. The only exception is to protect the life of the mother in a medical emergency. The Legislature isn't scheduled to meet until January, but Hutchinson is considering calling a special session to take up tax relief proposals. He said he does not plan on asking lawmakers to consider adding rape and incest exceptions to the state's ban.

CALIFORNIA

Political control: Democrats who support access to abortion control all statewide elected offices and have large majorities in the Legislature.

Background: California outlawed abortion in 1850, except when the life of the mother was in danger. The law changed in 1967 to include abortions in the case of rape, incest or if a woman's mental health were in danger. In 1969, the California Supreme Court declared the state's original abortion law to be unconstitutional but left the 1967 law in place. In 1972, California voters added a "right to privacy" to the state constitution. Since then, the state Supreme Court has interpreted that "right to privacy" as a right to access abortion, allow minors to get an abortion without their parents' permission and use public funding for abortions in the state's Medicaid program. California now requires private health insurance plans to cover abortions and does not allow them to charge things such as co-pays or deductibles for the procedure.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Abortion remains legal in California prior to the viability of a fetus. Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom has vowed to make California a sanctuary for women who live in states where abortion is outlawed or severely restricted. The number of women who travel to California for abortions is expected to rise significantly.

What's next: The Legislature is considering 13 bills that would strengthen or expand access to abortion. The bills are based on a report from the Future of Abortion Council, which Newsom formed last year to study reproductive rights in California. They include proposals that would help pay for women from other states to come to California for abortions, ban enforcement of out-of-state civil judgments on California abortion providers and volunteers, and increase the number of people who can offer abortions by authorizing some nurse practitioners to perform the procedure without the supervision of a doctor. Lawmakers also plan to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot in November that would explicitly guarantee the

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right to an abortion and contraceptives.

COLORADO

Political control: The Democrats who control the Colorado Legislature support access to abortion, as does the state's Democratic governor.

Background: A 1967 state law legalized abortion up to 16 weeks of pregnancy. Abortion has been accessible ever since, despite repeated legislative attempts and ballot initiatives to restrict or abolish the procedure. Colorado voters have consistently rejected such initiatives, the latest in 2020 that would have banned abortion during the third trimester of pregnancy. In 2022, Colorado Gov. Jared Polis signed a law placing the right to abortion in state statute. The law guarantees access to reproductive care before and after pregnancy and bans local governments from imposing their own restrictions. It also declares that fertilized eggs, embryos and fetuses have no independent rights. Abortion rights advocates plan a 2024 ballot initiative to add abortion rights to the state constitution and repeal a 1980s constitutional amendment that bans public funding for abortion.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: The decision didn't have any immediate impact on Colorado law -- but providers are preparing for a surge of out-of-state patients. Democratic House Majority Leader Daneya Esgar says lawmakers must consider how to invest in a health care workforce to ensure Colorado has the capacity to meet that anticipated demand. Colorado's health department reports there were 11,580 abortions in the state in 2021; of those, 14% were for non-residents. More than 900 of those non-residents were from Texas, Wyoming and Nebraska.

What's next: It's impossible to predict how many more patients from surrounding states will seek care in Colorado. But the Texas law could induce more people to come. Oklahoma now has an early pregnancy abortion ban; Utah and Wyoming have trigger laws banning abortion; the Kansas Constitution protects abortion rights, but Republican lawmakers placed on an August primary ballot an initiative to overturn it.

CONNECTICUT

Political control: Democrats who control the Connecticut General Assembly support access to abortion, as does the state's Democratic governor.

Background: Connecticut passed a law in 1990 giving women the legal right to abortion. Having passed with strong bipartisan support, it was lauded at the time for being a rare compromise between abortion rights advocates and opponents. It affirmed a woman's unqualified right to an abortion "prior to viability of the fetus," as well as later-term abortions "necessary to preserve the life and health of the pregnant woman." It also repealed state laws predating Roe v. Wade that had made it a felony to have an abortion or to perform one and required that patients under 16 receive counseling about their options. This year, Gov. Ned Lamont signed legislation to protect medical providers and patients from out-of-state legal actions. The same law allows advanced practice registered nurses, nurse-midwives or physician assistants to perform aspiration abortions in the first 12 weeks of a pregnancy.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Connecticut Attorney General William Tong, a Democrat, has vowed to challenge any attempt to nullify Connecticut's abortion rights law. "Let's not mince words. They will come for us," Tong warned abortion rights supporters during a recent news conference. "We will fight that effort tooth-and-nail. Any court, any place, Connecticut will be there and will fight." The state is already involved in major abortion cases across the country. And while Connecticut is surrounded by mostly pro-abortion states, it's still bracing for out-of-state patients seeking abortions now that Roe has been overturned.

What's next: Connecticut's new law protecting abortion providers from other states' bans took effect on July 1. It created a legal cause of action for providers and others sued in another state, enabling them to recover certain legal costs. It also limits the governor's discretion to extradite someone accused of performing an abortion, as well as participation by Connecticut courts and agencies in those lawsuits. There's discussion of possibly amending the state's constitution to enshrine the right to abortion, making it more difficult to overturn, but that would be a multi-year process.

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DELAWARE

Political control: Democrats control the governor's office and the General Assembly and have taken several steps to ensure access to abortion.

Background: In 2017, Delaware became the first state following the election of President Donald Trump to codify the right to an abortion. A bill signed by Gov. John Carney, a Catholic, guarantees the unfettered right to an abortion before a fetus is deemed "viable." The law defines viability as the point in a pregnancy when, in a physician's "good faith medical judgment," there is a reasonable likelihood that the fetus can survive outside the uterus without the application of extraordinary medical measures. The law also allows abortion after fetal viability if, in a doctor's "good faith medical judgment," abortion is necessary for the protection of the woman's life or health, or if there is a reasonable likelihood that the fetus cannot survive without extraordinary medical measures. The law eliminated existing code restrictions on abortions, much of which had already been declared unenforceable by Delaware's attorney general in 1973 following the Supreme Court rulings in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*. In April of this year, Carney signed a bill allowing physician assistants and advanced practice registered nurses to prescribe abortion-inducing medications including mifepristone and misoprostol.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: "In Delaware, the privacy protections of *Roe v. Wade* are codified in state law, guaranteeing residents have access to legal abortion services even if *Roe* were to be undone at the federal level," Democratic lawmakers noted in June while unveiling legislation further broadening access to abortions. The measure, which passed June 30, allows physician assistants, certified nurse practitioners and nurse midwives to perform abortions before viability. It also includes various legal protections for abortion providers and patients, including out-of-state residents receiving abortions in Delaware. Those provisions include protections from civil actions in other states relating to the termination of a pregnancy, and protecting individuals from extradition to other states for criminal charges related to terminating a pregnancy.

What's next: According to state health officials, 2,042 abortions were performed in Delaware in 2019, with 1,765 involving Delaware residents and 277 involving nonresidents. Delaware is not likely to see a huge influx of women traveling from out of state to get abortions if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned, given that neighboring Maryland and New Jersey also have liberal abortion-access laws. In neighboring Pennsylvania, where Republicans control both chambers of the Legislature, future abortion access could hinge on the outcome of this year's gubernatorial contest.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Political control: The local government in the nation's capital is controlled by Democrats, with a Democratic mayor and the D.C. Council split between Democrats and nominal independent politicians, who are all, invariably, Democrats.

Background: Abortion is legal in the District of Columbia at all stages of pregnancy, a status that was upheld in the 1971 Supreme Court case *United States v. Vuitch*. However, Congress has oversight power over D.C. laws and Congress has already banned the city from using local funds to pay for abortions for women on Medicaid.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Elected officials in Washington, D.C., fear Congress could move to restrict abortion access, particularly if Republicans recapture the House of Representatives in midterm elections later this year. President Joe Biden could theoretically veto such a move, but that protection is subject to political calculations and is not guaranteed.

What's next: Local officials have pledged defiance against any sort of Congressional move to restrict local abortion access. The D.C. Council is considering legislation that would declare Washington, D.C., a "sanctuary city" for those coming from states where abortion is banned. According to federal data, most of the women getting abortions in Washington already are coming from out of state. Those numbers could increase, particularly if new Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin moves to restrict abortion access in neighboring Virginia.

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FLORIDA

Political control: Republicans control both chambers of the Florida Legislature and this year passed a ban on abortions after 15 weeks, which was signed into law by the state's Republican governor.

Background: Abortion was legal in Florida until the 24th week of pregnancy, though lawmakers have been tightening access in recent years with bills requiring a one-day waiting period and requiring parents of a pregnant minor to be notified before an abortion can be provided. This year, in anticipation of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that overturned Roe v. Wade, the Legislature passed a ban on abortions after the 15th week, except to save the mother's life, prevent serious injury or if the fetus has a fatal abnormality. It does not allow for exemptions in cases where pregnancies were caused by rape or incest. Gov. Ron DeSantis called the legislation "the most significant protections for life that have been enacted in this state in a generation."

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: The decision places Florida's 15-week ban on firm legal ground, at least under federal law. However, the legislation is being challenged in state court on arguments that it violates a guarantee of the right to privacy under the state constitution.

What's next: Florida's 15-week ban took effect July 1. It was briefly on hold July 5 due to a judge's order in a case brought by reproductive health providers who argued it "violates the privacy provision of the Florida Constitution." But the state's appeal automatically put the restrictions into effect. Although only about 2% of Florida's abortions take place after 15th week, abortion rights advocates have expressed concern over declining access to the procedure not only for Floridians but for residents from nearby Southern states where restrictions are stricter than in Florida.

GEORGIA

Political control: Georgia has a GOP-controlled General Assembly and a Republican governor who support abortion restrictions, but all are up for election this November. Republicans are likely to retain legislative control, but there's a possibility a Democrat could become governor.

Background: Georgia lawmakers in 2019 passed a law by one vote that would ban most abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy, when fetal cardiac activity can be detected. The measure is unlike other so-called heartbeat bills in that it also contains language designating a fetus as a person for certain state-law purposes such as income tax deductions and child support. A federal judge quickly put the law on hold and in 2020 struck it down, saying it was unconstitutional. The state appealed to the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The 11th Circuit said it would wait to rule on the appeal pending a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in the Mississippi case.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: The day the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, Georgia's attorney general asked the 11th Circuit to reverse the lower court's ruling and allow the state's abortion law to take effect. That same day, the 11th Circuit directed the parties to file briefs within three weeks addressing what effect, if any, the Supreme Court decision has on the Georgia appeal. If the law takes effect, it would ban the large majority of abortions that currently take place in Georgia – about 87%, according to providers. The change could happen in the middle of tightly contested races in Georgia for governor and U.S. Senate. Democratic U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock and challenger for governor Stacey Abrams say they want to secure abortion rights. Republican Senate challenger Herschel Walker and incumbent Republican Gov. Brian Kemp support restrictions.

What's next: Some Republican lawmakers and candidates want Georgia to go further and ban abortion entirely, but Kemp is unlikely to call a special session before this November's general election. Lawmakers are likely to consider further action when they return for their annual session in January. The General Assembly or courts will have to sort out whether the provisions designating a fetus as a person are workable.

HAWAII

Political control: Hawaii's governor is a Democrat and Democrats control more than 90% of the seats in the state House and Senate.

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Background: Hawaii legalized abortion in 1970, when it became the first state in the nation to allow the procedure at a woman's request. The state allows abortion until a fetus would be viable outside the womb. After that, it's legal if a patient's life or health is in danger. For many years, only licensed physicians could perform the procedure. Last year, the state enacted a law allowing advanced practice care nurses to carry out in-clinic abortions during the first trimester. This helps women on more rural islands who have been flying to Honolulu to obtain abortions because of doctor shortages in their communities. The law allows the nurses to prescribe medication to end a pregnancy and to perform aspiration abortion, a type of minor surgery during which a vacuum is used to empty a woman's uterus.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Existing Hawaii law allows abortions, but Gary Yamashiroya, a spokesperson for the state attorney general's office, has said the attorney general was carefully considering measures Hawaii might take to protect and strengthen reproductive rights.

What's next: Political support for abortion rights is strong. Anti-abortion bills are rarely heard at the state Legislature. When they have been, they haven't made it out of committee. Gov. David Ige issued a statement supporting abortion rights when the Supreme Court's draft opinion overturning Roe leaked. "No matter what the Supreme Court decides, I will fight to ensure a woman's right to choose in the State of Hawaii," he said. The Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women earlier this month said 72% of the state Senate and 53% of state House members signed a pledge supporting abortion rights.

IDAHO

Political control: Republicans hold supermajorities in the House and Senate and oppose access to abortion, as does the state's Republican governor.

Background: Following the U.S. Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade ruling, Idaho passed a law generally allowing abortions in the first and second trimester up to viability at about 23 to 24 weeks. The law allows abortions after viability only to protect the mother's life or in cases of nonviable fetuses. This year, lawmakers passed a Texas-style ban prohibiting abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy and authorizing family members to sue medical providers for performing an abortion. That law is on hold following a challenge by Planned Parenthood. The Idaho Supreme Court is scheduled to hear arguments in August.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: It triggers a 2020 Idaho law banning all abortions except in cases of reported rape or incest, or to protect the mother's life, to take effect 30 days after the Supreme Court ruling. Under the law, the person performing the abortion could face a felony prosecution punishable by up to five years in prison. In cases of rape or incest, the law requires pregnant women to file a police report and provide a copy of the report to the provider prior to an abortion. If the Idaho Supreme Court upholds the state's Texas-style abortion ban and Roe v. Wade is tossed aside, a medical provider who performs an abortion in Idaho could face a lawsuit and criminal charges.

What's Next: Pregnant women seeking abortions will have to travel out of state; the nearest abortion providers would be in Washington, Oregon, Nevada and Colorado. Planned Parenthood is renting space in the town of Ontario on the Idaho-Oregon border and says it's preparing for an influx of patients seeking abortions. Some Republican lawmakers in Idaho might propose new legislation in January to outlaw abortion pills and emergency contraception.

ILLINOIS

Political control: Illinois is overwhelmingly Democratic with laws providing greater access to abortion than most states. Democrats hold veto-proof supermajorities in the House and Senate, and the Democratic first-term governor seeking reelection this year, J.B. Pritzker, has promoted peaceful street protests to protect the constitutional right to an abortion.

Background: Abortion is legal in Illinois and can only be restricted after the point of viability, when a fetus is considered able to survive outside the womb. Medical science determines viability at 24 to 26 weeks, but the Illinois law does not specify a timeframe, saying a medical professional can determine viability in each case. Abortions are also allowed after viability to protect the patient's life or health.

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Effect of Supreme Court ruling: It did not change access to abortion in Illinois. The Illinois Abortion Act of 1975 legalized abortion but enacted a "trigger law" that would reinstate the ban if Roe were overturned. That trigger law was repealed in 2017 in legislation that also required Medicaid and state employees' group health insurance to cover abortions. The 2019 Reproductive Health Act replaced the 1975 law, large parts of which were never enforced because they were found to be unconstitutional.

What's next: Like other states providing access to abortions, Illinois has seen a steady influx of patients crossing the state line for abortions in recent months and those numbers are expected to increase. Planned Parenthood of Illinois says it expects to handle an additional 20,000 to 30,000 patients in Illinois in the first year following the reversal of Roe.

INDIANA

Political control: Indiana has a Republican-dominated Legislature and a Republican governor in favor of restricting abortion access.

Background: Abortion in Indiana is legal up to about 20 weeks, with some provisions for medical emergencies. Before an abortion, patients must undergo an 18-hour waiting period. Medical providers must tell patients about the risks involved in abortion and must say the fetus can feel pain around 20 weeks, which is disputed. Providers must report complications related to abortion; failure to report can result in a misdemeanor, 180 days in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Federal courts have blocked several restrictions in Indiana, including an attempt to ban a common second-trimester abortion procedure and a law that would have required doctors to tell pregnant women about a disputed treatment to potentially stop a drug-induced abortion.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: A federal judge on July 7 lifted an injunction that had blocked a 2019 law banning a second-trimester abortion procedure that the legislation called "dismemberment abortion," a move that allowed the law to take effect. Indiana's Republican attorney general has also asked federal judges to lift orders blocking a law aimed at prohibiting abortions based on gender, race or disability, and another requiring parents to be notified if a court allows a girl younger than 18 to get abortion without parental consent.

What's next: Republican legislative leaders said they expected lawmakers to act on tightening Indiana's abortion laws during a special legislative session starting July 25 but have given no details about what restrictions would be considered.

IOWA

Political control: Iowa's Legislature is controlled by Republicans who want to ban or restrict abortion access and a Republican governor who agrees and is up for reelection this year.

Background: Iowa allows most abortions until the 20th week of pregnancy, when they're banned except to save a patient's life or prevent a substantial and irreversible physical impairment of a major bodily function. In 2018, the state Supreme Court declared access to abortion a "fundamental" right under the state constitution, granting stronger protections to abortion rights than the U.S. Constitution. The state's high court, now with a conservative majority, overturned that decision June 17, thus allowing a state law requiring a 24-hour waiting period to go into effect immediately. That requirement is being challenged in district court.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Nothing changed immediately in Iowa. The GOP-controlled Legislature has been working to get an amendment on the ballot in 2024 that would declare the state constitution does not grant a right to abortion but, with Roe overturned, Iowa lawmakers can ban abortion without completing that lengthy process.

What's next: Now that the Iowa Supreme Court has struck down its 2018 ruling, the state Legislature can convene a special session this summer and pass abortion restrictions. Republicans could still move to get the constitutional amendment on a public ballot in 2024.

KANSAS

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Political control: Kansas has a Legislature controlled by Republicans who want to ban or restrict access to abortions but a Democratic governor who supports access and is up for reelection this year.

Background: Under current law, Kansas does not ban most abortions until the 22nd week of pregnancy, when they're allowed only to save a patient's life or to prevent "a substantial and irreversible physical impairment of a major bodily function." The state Supreme Court in 2019 declared that access to abortion is a "fundamental" right under the state constitution, granting stronger protections to abortion rights than the U.S. Constitution does currently. State law, however, doesn't allow providers to dispense abortion medications through telemedicine consultations.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Nothing changed immediately in Kansas. The state Supreme Court blocked enforcement of a 2015 legislative ban on a common second-trimester procedure, and abortion opponents fear a host of other rules could fall to legal challenges in the near future. The GOP-controlled Legislature responded by putting a constitutional amendment on the ballot during the Aug. 2 primary, when turnout is expected to be much lower than in a general election and will likely see a higher proportion of Republicans voting. The amendment would declare that the state constitution does not grant a right to abortion. It would allow lawmakers to restrict abortion as much as the federal courts will allow.

What's next: If voters approve the amendment, the Legislature would still have to approve the new restrictions, and lawmakers are out of session until January 2023. They can call themselves in to special session with two-thirds majorities, but they're likely to wait until after voters decide in the November general election whether to give Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly a second term.

KENTUCKY

Political control: Republicans have a supermajority in the Kentucky Legislature and have been restricting abortion rights since the 2016 election over the vetoes of Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear, who supports abortion rights and will seek a second term in 2023.

Background: Kentucky bans abortions after 20 weeks, but all abortion services were temporarily halted in April after the Legislature imposed new restrictions and reporting requirements on the state's two abortion clinics. The clinics, both in Louisville, said they suspended abortions because state officials hadn't written guidelines on how to comply with the new law. Noncompliance could result in stiff fines, felony penalties and revocation of physician and facility licenses. Abortions were allowed to resume after a federal judge on June 30 temporarily blocked key parts of the law, including a provision banning abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Abortion services in Kentucky immediately became illegal under a "trigger law" enacted in 2019, but were then allowed to resume by a judge on June 30. The measure contains a narrow exception allowing abortion to prevent the death or permanent injury of a pregnant woman. Kentuckians will be able to vote this November on a proposed amendment declaring there is no right to an abortion in the state constitution.

What's next: Abortion-rights activists say the suspension of abortion services in April foreshadowed what would happen in Kentucky and other Republican-leaning states if *Roe v. Wade* was overturned. It likely ends several legal challenges pending against other Kentucky abortion laws including a 2018 measure that abortion-rights supporters say would effectively ban a standard abortion method in the second trimester of pregnancy. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in March that Kentucky's Republican attorney general, Daniel Cameron, can defend the measure that was struck down by lower courts.

LOUISIANA

Political control: Louisiana's Legislature is controlled by Republicans who want to ban or restrict abortion access. Its Democratic and Catholic governor also opposes abortions, though he supports exceptions for victims of rape or incest.

Background: Voters approved a constitutional amendment in 2020 stating that "a right to abortion and the funding of abortion shall not be found in the Louisiana Constitution." Of the about 2 million people

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who voted, 62% approved the amendment. Abortion had been legal in Louisiana through the 19th week of pregnancy. After that, it was legal only if the fetus would die anyway or if continuing the pregnancy would threaten the mother's life or health.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Louisiana has a trigger law that immediately outlaws abortions. There is no exception for rape or incest. The only exception is if there is substantial risk of death or impairment to the woman. In June, Gov. John Bel Edwards, a Democrat, signed a bill updating various aspects of the law and subjecting abortion providers to up to 10 years in prison and fines up to \$100,000. Edwards' office said the bill allows the use of emergency contraception "for victims of rape and incest prior to when a pregnancy can be clinically diagnosed."

Edwards signed another bill that would require the doctor to certify that a drug used for abortion was being prescribed for another medical reason. The bill makes it illegal to deliver abortion medication to a state resident "by mail-order, courier, or as a result of a sale made via the internet."

What's next: The latest in a series of court orders frees Louisiana's three abortion clinics — in New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Shreveport — to provide abortions pending a court challenge of the state trigger law. A judge hears arguments on July 18.

MAINE

Political control: Both chambers of the Maine Legislature, which has adjourned, are controlled by Democrats. Democratic Gov. Janet Mills has vowed to protect the right to an abortion, saying she will "fight with everything I have to protect reproductive rights."

Background: A Republican governor in 1993 signed a Maine law affirming the right to abortion before a fetus is viable. After that, abortion is only allowed if the life or health of the mother is at risk, or if the pregnancy is no longer viable. In 2019, lawmakers eliminated a physician-only rule and Mills signed it into law, allowing nurse practitioners, physician assistants and other medical professionals to perform abortions.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Nothing has changed in Maine. Any attempt to restrict abortions when lawmakers reconvene next year would face fierce pushback. Abortion providers, meanwhile, said there could be an influx of patients seeking abortions from states that outlaw the procedure.

What's next: Any major changes are unlikely unless former Gov. Paul LePage, a Republican, unseats Mills and Republicans take control of both chambers of the Legislature in November. LePage, a Catholic who opposes abortion rights, has said it's up to lawmakers to address the abortion issue as they see fit.

MARYLAND

Political control: Maryland's General Assembly is controlled by Democrats who expanded abortion access this year by ending a restriction that only physicians can provide them and requiring most insurance plans to cover abortion care without cost. The legislature overrode Republican Gov. Larry Hogan's veto of the bill in April.

Background: The right to abortion is protected in Maryland law. The state approved legislation in 1991 to protect abortion rights if the Supreme Court should ever restrict access. Voters approved the right in 1992 with 62% of the vote. Maryland law prohibits restrictions on abortion prior to viability. Maryland does not have a gestational limit. After viability, clinicians make the determination, based on clinical standard of care.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Nothing changed immediately in Maryland law.

What's next: Maryland's new law to enable nurse practitioners, nurse midwives and physician assistants to provide abortions with training took effect July 1. However, \$3.5 million in state funding to provide training isn't mandated until fiscal year 2024. Hogan, who is term limited, has indicated he will not approve the money sooner. Some nurse practitioners, nurse midwives and physician assistants already have received training on medication abortion and will be able to provide those services starting next month.

MASSACHUSETTS

Political control: The Democrats who control the Massachusetts Legislature support access to abortion, as does the state's Republican governor, although they differ on specific policies.

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Background: Massachusetts once had a contentious relationship with abortion in part due to the powerful influence of the Catholic Church, which opposes it. In recent years, that influence has waned and Massachusetts has become a strong supporter of abortion rights. In 2018, in anticipation of the conservative tilt on the U.S. Supreme Court, the state removed an 1845 abortion ban from its books that was not enforced. Two years later, Democratic state lawmakers clashed with Republican Gov. Charlie Baker — who says he supports access to abortion — over an effort to codify abortion rights into state law, allow abortions after 24 weeks of pregnancy in cases where the child would not survive after birth, and lower from 18 to 16 the age at which women could seek an abortion without consent from a parent or guardian. Lawmakers passed the bill — dubbed the Roe Act — over Baker's veto.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Baker has vowed to fight to keep abortion legal in Massachusetts, but it is his last year in office. Both Democratic candidates for governor — state Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz and Attorney General Maura Healey — support abortion rights. Republican candidate Geoff Diehl said he believes in "the need to protect human life wherever and whenever possible." Fellow GOP candidate Chris Doughty said he would "not seek any changes to our state's abortion laws."

What's next: There is little chance Massachusetts will restrict abortion rights. Baker signed an executive order June 24 barring state agencies from assisting another state's investigation into people or businesses for receiving or delivering reproductive health services that are legal in Massachusetts. The state also won't cooperate with extradition requests from states pursuing criminal charges against such individuals. The state House of Representatives has approved a bill later that is similar to the governor's executive order. It would add protections into state law for individuals seeking abortions and providers so they would not be subject to actions taken by other states.

MICHIGAN

Political control: Both chambers of Michigan's Legislature are controlled by Republicans who want to ban or restrict abortion access, but the state's Democratic governor supports access.

Background: A dormant 1931 law bans nearly all abortions in Michigan but it hasn't been enforced since Roe v. Wade. The law made it a felony to use an instrument or administer any substance with the intent to abort a fetus unless necessary to preserve the woman's life. It has no exceptions in cases of rape and incest. Anticipating that Roe could be overturned, Planned Parenthood of Michigan filed a lawsuit challenging Michigan's ban. A state judge suspended the law in May, saying it violates the state's constitution. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Attorney General Dana Nessel, both Democrats, hailed the decision.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: The injunction granted in the Planned Parenthood case ensures that abortion does not immediately become illegal. Planned Parenthood of Michigan and other supporters hope the injunction indicates abortion rights in the state will be preserved. But in a statement to The Associated Press, Nessel's office said "given the ongoing lawsuits, we cannot speculate what the state of abortion rights will be in Michigan" after Roe.

What's next: Whitmer also filed suit asking the state's Supreme Court to declare the 91-year-old law unconstitutional. It has not acted yet. Michigan abortion rights supporters hope to put the issue on ballots this fall. Their proposed constitutional amendment would affirm the right to make pregnancy-related decisions without interference, including about abortion and other reproductive services such as birth control. The Reproductive Freedom for All committee needed to collect about 425,000 valid voter signatures and it turned in 753,759 signatures on July 11. The signatures must be validated by the Board of State Canvassers before the proposed amendment can appear on the Nov. 8 ballot. The measure would become law if voters approved it. The issue also is expected to shape legislative and statewide elections this fall, when the ballots will include Whitmer and Nessel's reelection efforts.

MINNESOTA

Political control: The Minnesota Legislature is divided; Anti-abortion Republicans control the Senate and Democrats have the House, but the majorities are slim in both chambers, so control will be up for grabs

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in the November elections. Most legislative Democrats support abortion rights. Democratic Gov. Tim Walz has said "no abortion ban will ever become law" while he's governor. But he faces a challenge this year from Republican Scott Jensen, who opposes abortion rights.

Background: Abortion has generally been regarded as legal in Minnesota up to the point of fetal viability, around the 24th week of pregnancy, although some legal scholars question whether any cutoff could be legally enforced, citing a decades-old federal court ruling. A judge on July 11 lifted most of the state's other existing restrictions, including a 24-hour waiting period with state-mandated counseling, requirements that both parents generally be notified before a minor gets an abortion, that only physicians can perform abortions, and that abortions after the first trimester must be performed in hospitals.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Nothing changed immediately because the state Supreme Court ruled in 1995 that the Minnesota Constitution protects abortion rights. If Republicans take control of both chambers, they could put a constitutional amendment on the ballot as soon as 2024 to reverse that ruling, but it's not clear yet if they would take that path. Minnesota governors can't block constitutional amendments with vetoes. But amendments are hard to enact because they require the backing of most of the citizens voting in that election, not just those voting on the amendment. Leaving the ballot blank counts as a "no."

What's next: Providers are preparing for a surge in women coming from other states to get abortions. Sarah Stoesz, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood North Central States, said before the ruling that her organization was "fortifying" its delivery systems, including telemedicine. Dr. Sarah Traxler, the group's medical director, has said demand in Minnesota is expected to rise by up to 25%.

MISSISSIPPI

Political control: Republican Gov. Tate Reeves and leaders of the Republican-controlled Mississippi Legislature have been working for years to chip away at abortion access.

Background: Mississippi already had a law banning most abortions at 20 weeks, although the state's lone abortion clinic offered the procedure only through 16 weeks. The state tried to enact a law in 2018 to ban most abortions after 15 weeks. That law is the basis for the case that the Supreme Court used to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in a ruling issued June 24. Reeves was lieutenant governor in 2018 when Mississippi tried to enact the 15-week ban, and in 2019 when the state tried to enact a six-week ban. Mississippi law does not allow providers to dispense abortion medications through telemedicine consultations.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Mississippi's only abortion clinic, Jackson Women's Health Organization, stopped doing abortions on July 6. The clinic sued June 27 challenging a law that bans most abortions once *Roe v. Wade* is overturned. A judge rejected the clinic's request to block the law from taking effect. As of July 7, abortions are allowed only if the woman's life is endangered by the pregnancy or if the pregnancy was caused by a rape that was reported to law enforcement. Any person who knowingly performs or attempts to induce an abortion, except the pregnant woman, could be punished by up to 10 years in prison.

What's next: Clinic attorneys filed papers July 7 asking the Mississippi Supreme Court to block the new ban on most abortions. Justices set a July 25 deadline for the state attorney general to respond. The state's only abortion clinic is not seeing patients, and the owner says she will shut down the facility if the new law is allowed to remain in place.

MISSOURI

Political control: Both GOP Gov. Mike Parson and the Republican-led General Assembly support laws against abortion.

Background: Missouri law previously allowed abortions up until 22 weeks of pregnancy. But a 2019 state law banned abortions "except in cases of medical emergency," contingent upon the U.S. Supreme Court overturning its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. Under that Missouri law, performing an illegal abortion is a felony punishable by 5 to 15 years in prison, though women receiving abortions cannot be prosecuted.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: The 2019 law banning most abortions kicked in the day the Supreme Court ruled in June.

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What's next: Some Missouri residents wanting abortions are likely to travel to neighboring states, including Illinois and Kansas. A new Illinois logistics center near St. Louis helps women from out of state find travel, lodging and childcare if they need help getting to the area for an abortion, and it connects them with funding sources. The Kansas Supreme Court in 2019 declared that access to abortion is a "fundamental" right under the state constitution. Even without the ban in Missouri, the number of Missouri patients seeking abortions in Kansas has gone up in recent years, increasing about 8% from 2020 to 2021.

MONTANA

Political control: The Republicans who control the Montana Legislature and Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte want to limit access to abortion.

Background: Abortion used to be legal in Montana up until viability, or about 24 weeks of pregnancy, but the state Legislature passed a bill in 2021 to reduce that to 20 weeks, arguing that is when the fetus can feel pain. That law, along with one that requires chemical abortions to be done with in-person medical supervision, are being challenged in court. A state judge temporarily blocked enforcement in October 2021 while the challenges move through the courts. The state has asked the Montana Supreme Court to vacate that injunction and overturn a 1999 Montana Supreme Court opinion that found the state's constitutional right to privacy guarantees a woman's access to abortion care.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: The effect is unclear because of the unresolved legal challenges to the 2021 state legislation. Montana does not have an abortion ban that was triggered when *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, but the Legislature could seek to further restrict access in the next session.

What's next: The Montana Supreme Court will issue a decision on the preliminary injunction. The Montana Legislature also passed a referendum to ask voters this November whether they support a state law to require abortion providers to give lifesaving treatment to a fetus that is born alive after a botched abortion. Opponents argue federal law already offers those protections.

NEBRASKA

Political control: Nebraska has an officially nonpartisan Legislature with a Republican majority, but not a super-majority that would let the party unilaterally pass an abortion ban. Democrats appear to have enough votes to block such a bill, but just one defector could swing the vote. Nebraska's Republican governor vehemently opposes abortion.

Background: Nebraska allows most abortions until the 22nd week of pregnancy, although a few small towns have voted to outlaw the procedure within their borders. The state requires doctors to be physically present when patients take the first of two drugs that are used in medication abortions. Lawmakers have rejected attempts to allow abortion medications to be administered remotely, which would provide easier abortion access in rural areas.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: A ruling that lets states set their own abortion laws will trigger an immediate push by Nebraska conservatives to ban the procedure, but it's not clear whether they could do it this year. Unlike other conservative states, Nebraska doesn't have a trigger law that automatically outlaws abortion. Gov. Pete Ricketts and other top Republicans have said they'll seek a special legislative session, but it's not clear whether they have enough votes to pass anything.

What's next: If Ricketts calls a special session, attention will likely shift to state Sen. Justin Wayne, an Omaha Democrat who has declined to specify where he stands on abortion. Wayne was notably absent from a vote on the issue this year; his support would give Republicans the super-majority they need to enact a ban. He has struck deals with senators from both parties in the past. If a proposed abortion ban fails during a special session or if no special session is called, the issue will likely become a factor in the November election.

NEVADA

Political control: Nevada's governor and state attorney general are Democrats who are up for reelection

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this year. Democrats control the state Senate and Assembly.

Background: Nevada voters enshrined the right to abortion into state law in 1990. The law says a pregnancy can be terminated during the first 24 weeks, and after that to preserve the life or health of the pregnant person. It would take another statewide vote to change or repeal the law. Most Republican candidates for Congress, governor, state attorney general and other statewide posts say they oppose abortions.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: "Here in Nevada, overturning Roe would not be felt immediately," state Attorney General Aaron Ford said in a position paper released after the draft U.S. Supreme Court opinion became public. Ford noted that a federal ban on abortion would supersede state law and said it would be naive not to recognize that some people want to ban abortions or make them more difficult to obtain. But he said his office will fight "attacks on abortion rights, rights to birth control access and rights for LGBTQ people." Gov. Steve Sisolak on June 28 signed an executive order protecting abortion patients and providers from prosecution by other states. State agencies are barred from assisting other states in investigations of people who come to Nevada from other states for abortions. The order also protects providers from discipline and having their license revoked.

What's next: Anti-abortion advocates are not expected to focus on trying to repeal Nevada's abortion law. But they will seek laws affecting waiting periods, mandatory counseling or requiring parental notification or consent. Melissa Clement, executive director of Nevada Right to Life, said she believes there is strong support for parental involvement.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Political control: New Hampshire has a Republican governor and the GOP controls the 424-member Legislature. All face reelection this fall.

Background: Any abortion restrictions New Hampshire had on the books before Roe v. Wade were not enforced after the landmark 1973 ruling, and they were repealed altogether in 1997. The state had no restrictions until January, when a ban on abortion after 24 weeks of pregnancy was enacted. In June, an exemption was added for cases in which the fetus has been diagnosed with "abnormalities incompatible with life." Anticipating the Supreme Court action, Democrats this year tried unsuccessfully to enshrine abortion rights into state law and the state constitution. Gov. Chris Sununu calls himself pro-choice and says he is committed to upholding Roe v. Wade, but he also has boasted "I've done more on the pro-life issue than anyone."

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Nothing changed immediately in New Hampshire. The Legislature won't return until fall, when there will be a one-day session to take up vetoed bills, and it would take a two-thirds majority vote to introduce new legislation then.

What's next: The majority leader of the New Hampshire House has said the public should not expect Republicans in the Legislature to further tighten state abortion laws. But anti-abortion lawmakers who have filed bills in the past are expected to try again. Democrats are urging Sununu to call a special session of the Legislature to codify abortion rights into state law, but both he and Republican legislative leaders say there is no need.

NEW JERSEY

Political control: Democrats control both houses of the state Legislature and the governorship. Gov. Phil Murphy started his second consecutive term this year.

Background: Murphy ran for reelection on the promise that he would sign legislation to enshrine abortion rights into state law, and he fulfilled that promise in January. The measure also guaranteed the right to contraception and the right to carry a pregnancy to term. It stopped short of requiring insurance coverage for abortions, something advocates had sought. Instead, it authorizes the state Banking and Insurance Department to study the issue and possibly adopt regulations if a need is discovered. Under Murphy's predecessor, Republican Chris Christie, state funds to women's clinics, including Planned Parenthood, were slashed. Murphy restored those and has been a strong supporter of abortion rights. New Jersey doesn't have any significant restrictions on abortion, such as parental consent or a mandatory waiting period.

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Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Officials, including the governor, have said the end of Roe would not lead to any rollback of abortion services in the state. "Instead of hoping for the best, we prepared ourselves for the worst," Murphy said in May, addressing reports of a leaked draft of a Supreme Court ruling.

What's next: A week after the Supreme Court's ruling, Murphy signed two bills aimed at protecting the right to abortion for out-of-state residents and barring extradition of providers and patients to states that have prohibited the procedure. Another bill that would require health insurance companies to cover abortion services and set aside \$20 million for access to the procedure remains pending in the Legislature. The bill would set aside \$5 million for an abortion training program, \$5 million for a "health security" grant and \$10 million for health care facilities.

NEW MEXICO

Political control: The Democrats who control the New Mexico Legislature support access to abortion, as does the state's Democratic governor. Several conservative Democratic state senators who voted against the repeal of the abortion ban in 2019 were ousted from office in 2020 by more socially progressive primary challengers.

Background: In 2021, state lawmakers repealed a dormant 1969 statute that outlawed most abortion procedures as felonies, thus ensuring access to abortion even after the federal court rolled back guarantees. Albuquerque is home to one of only a few independent clinics in the country that perform abortions in the third trimester without conditions. An abortion clinic in Santa Teresa, New Mexico, is just a mile from the state line with Texas and caters to patients from El Paso, western Texas and Arizona.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: There was no immediate change in New Mexico after the high court overturned Roe v. Wade. It is unclear if Democrats, who control the state Legislature, will pursue additional guarantees to abortion access when lawmakers convene in January. Possible avenues of legislative reform include enshrining abortion rights in the state constitution, which requires approval by voters. Abortion rights activists say the state's equal rights amendment could be harnessed to guide more public funding for abortion-related programs. Raúl Torrez, the district attorney in Albuquerque and the Democratic nominee for attorney general, is urging lawmakers to take further steps to protect access to abortions, including protections for women coming from other states. The state Republican Party said it's time to elect more anti-abortion candidates to the Legislature.

What's next: The state can expect to continue to see a steady influx of people seeking abortions from neighboring states with more restrictive abortion laws. It already hosts patients from Texas and Oklahoma where among the strictest abortion bans in the country were introduced this year.

NEW YORK

Political control: The Democrats who control the New York Legislature support access to abortion, as does the state's Democratic governor.

Background: Abortion has been legal in New York state since a 1970 law was passed by the Republican-controlled Legislature and signed by Republican Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller. The law allows abortions within the first 24 weeks of pregnancy or to preserve the mother's life. The 2019 Reproductive Health Act removed abortion from the state's criminal code, codified Roe v. Wade and allowed abortions after 24 weeks if a fetus isn't viable or to protect the mother's life or health. Lawmakers have passed laws extending legal protections for people seeking and providing abortions in New York.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Roe v. Wade protections are enshrined in state law. New York is planning to give abortion providers \$35 million this year to expand services and boost security in anticipation of an influx of out-of-state people seeking abortions once any ruling comes down. It's unclear how many more people from neighboring states could travel to New York to receive abortion care. New York had 252 facilities providing abortions as of 2017, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research organization that supports abortion rights.

What's next: Planned Parenthood and civil liberty groups are urging lawmakers to start the process of

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passing a constitutional amendment protecting access to abortion care in case a future Legislature repeals the state law.

NORTH CAROLINA

Political control: Republicans hold majorities in the state House and Senate, but the party lacks the margins to defeat a veto by Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper, a strong abortion-rights supporter. Since 2017, Cooper has vetoed a "born-alive" abortion measure and a bill prohibiting abortion based on race or a Down syndrome diagnosis. He can't seek reelection in 2024 due to term limits.

Background: A 1973 North Carolina law that banned most abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy is currently unenforceable after federal judges struck it down as unconstitutional in 2019 and 2021. Instead, abortions can be performed until fetal viability. A state law approved in 2015 provides for post-viability abortions only in a "medical emergency," which means the woman would die or face a "serious risk" of substantial and irreversible physical impairment without the procedure.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Now that *Roe v. Wade* has been overturned, the 20-week ban could be restored. Legal experts say formal action would have to be taken to cancel the earlier court rulings striking it down. On the day of the ruling, Republican legislative leaders asked state Attorney General Josh Stein, a Democrat and abortion rights supporter whose agency's lawyers defended the 20-week law, to demand the ban's injunction be lifted. Otherwise, they said they would seek to intervene. Stein hasn't committed to going to court, telling lawmakers on July 1 that a "thorough legal review" of the matter may take weeks to complete. Separately, Cooper signed an executive order on July 6 that shields out-of-state abortion patients from extradition and prohibits agencies under his control from assisting other states' prosecutions of abortion patients who travel to North Carolina for the procedure.

What's next: Republican General Assembly leaders didn't consider additional abortion restrictions in their legislative session that ended July 1. The party will likely intensify its efforts in this year's elections to gain the five additional seats it needs for veto-proof margins. Cooper and other Democrats already are making abortion rights a key campaign issue. Abortion politics also are expected to figure into two state Supreme Court elections in November. Republicans would gain a majority on the court if they win at least one of them.

NORTH DAKOTA

Political control: North Dakota has a Legislative Assembly dominated by Republicans who want to ban abortion, and the GOP governor had hoped to see *Roe v. Wade* wiped off the books in favor of state's rights.

Background: The state has passed some of the nation's strictest abortion laws, including one that would have banned abortions once fetal cardiac activity can be detected, which can happen before a woman knows she is pregnant. The law never took effect because the state's lone abortion clinic successfully challenged it in court. One failed Republican proposal would have charged abortion providers with murder with a maximum sentence of life in prison.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: North Dakota has a trigger law that will shut down the state's sole abortion clinic in Fargo after 30 days, though the state's sole abortion clinic filed a lawsuit in early July seeking to ban the law from taking effect. That 2007 state law makes it a felony to perform an abortion unless necessary to prevent the pregnant woman's death or in cases of rape or incest. Violators could be punished with a five-year prison sentence and a \$10,000 fine. The Red River Women's Clinic argues that the ban violates the rights to life, safety and happiness guaranteed by the state constitution that protect the right to abortion. The suit also questions Attorney General Drew Wrigley's statement that the ban would take effect July 28. The clinic argued that the Supreme Court released its opinion on June 24 but has not yet issued its judgment, which it said is a necessary step to trigger the state ban.

What's next: The owner and operator of the Red River Women's Clinic in Fargo has said she would explore all legal options to ensure abortion services are available in North Dakota. Should that fail, clinic leader Tammi Kromenaker plans to move across the river to Moorhead, Minnesota, where abortion has

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not been outlawed. Planned Parenthood says it can provide abortions in Moorhead until Kromenaker gets up and running.

OHIO

Political control: The Ohio Legislature is controlled by Republicans who support restricting or banning abortions, and the Republican governor backs those efforts. He is up for reelection this year against a former mayor who supports abortion rights.

Background: Before the Supreme Court's ruling, Ohio did not ban most abortions until the 22nd week of pregnancy; after that they're allowed only to save a patient's life or when their health is seriously compromised. But the state imposes a host of other restrictions, including parental consent for minors, a required ultrasound, and in-person counseling followed by a 24-hour waiting period. Abortions are prohibited for the reason of a fetal Down syndrome diagnosis. Ohio also limits the public funding of abortions to cases of rape, incest or endangerment of the patient's life. It limits public employees' abortion-related insurance coverage and coverage through health plans offered in the Affordable Care Act health exchange to those same scenarios. Clinics providing abortions must comply with a host of regulations.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: A ban on most abortions at the first detectable fetal cardiac activity became the law in Ohio hours after the ruling. Enforcement of Ohio's 2019 "heartbeat" ban had been on hold for nearly three years under a federal court injunction. The state attorney general, Republican Dave Yost, asked for that to be dissolved because of the high court's ruling, and U.S. Judge Michael Barrett agreed hours later.

Two trigger bills are on hold in the Legislature, but a key legislative leader has said he anticipates needing to write new legislation after the decision is reversed that more carefully reflects the actual ruling. That all but certainly would not happen until lawmakers return to the capital after the November election.

OKLAHOMA

Political control: Republicans in Oklahoma have a supermajority in both chambers of the Legislature and a Republican governor up for reelection this year who has vowed to sign "every pro-life legislation that came across my desk."

Background: Abortion services were halted in Oklahoma in May after Gov. Kevin Stitt signed a bill that prohibits all abortions with few exceptions. The ban is enforced by civil lawsuits rather than criminal prosecution. Republican lawmakers have been pushing to restrict abortion in the state for decades, passing 81 different restrictions since Roe v. Wade was decided in 1973, according to the Guttmacher Institute.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: It will have little practical effect given that abortions are no longer being provided in Oklahoma. Oklahoma also has a "trigger law" that outlawed abortion as soon as Roe was overturned.

What's next: Given the fierce opposition to abortion from the governor and Legislature, Oklahoma will continue to prohibit the practice if states are given the option to do so. Meanwhile, abortion providers who had been operating in the state are taking steps to help patients seek abortions out of state, including coordinating funding for these women and developing a referral network of therapists to help address complications before or after a woman receives an abortion.

OREGON

Political control: The Democrats who control the Oregon Legislature support access to abortion, as does the state's Democratic governor.

Background: The Oregon Legislature passed a bill legalizing abortion in 1969. In 2017, Gov. Kate Brown signed into law a bill expanding health care coverage for reproductive services, including abortions, to thousands of Oregonians, regardless of income, citizenship status or gender identity. Oregon does not have any major abortion restrictions and it is legal at all stages of pregnancy.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: The Guttmacher Institute has estimated that Oregon will experience a 234% increase in women seeking abortions arriving from out of state, especially from Idaho. In March,

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Oregon lawmakers approved \$15 million to expand abortion availability and pay for abortions and support services such as travel and lodgings for residents and out-of-state patients.

What's next: Brown said after the draft Supreme Court decision was leaked that access to abortion is a fundamental right and that she will fight to ensure access to abortion continues to be protected by state law in Oregon. Democratic state lawmakers recently formed the Reproductive Health and Access to Care Work Group of providers, clinics, community organizations and legislators that will make recommendations for the 2023 legislative session and beyond. Recommendations may include proposals to protect, strengthen, and expand equitable access to all forms of reproductive care.

PENNSYLVANIA

Political control: Republicans who control the Pennsylvania Legislature are hostile to abortion rights, but the state's Democratic governor is a strong supporter and has vetoed three GOP-penned bills in five years that would have added restrictions beyond the state's 24-week limit. The race for governor this year could tilt that balance.

Background: Abortion is legal in Pennsylvania under decades of state law, including a 1989 law that was challenged all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. That produced the landmark Planned Parenthood v. Casey ruling that affirmed the high court's 1973 decision in Roe v. Wade that legalized abortion nationwide, but also allowed states to put certain limits on abortion access.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Gov. Tom Wolf has vowed to protect access to abortion for the remainder of his time in office, through January. Running to replace him is the state's Democratic attorney general, Josh Shapiro, who supports abortion rights, and Republican state Sen. Doug Mastriano, who has said he supports banning abortion altogether, with no exceptions. The Legislature is expected to remain in Republican hands next year. Abortion clinics in some parts of the state already are experiencing fallout from the ruling. Less than a week after it came out, a clinic in Pittsburgh was flooded with patients who suddenly lost appointments in Ohio, the clinic director said. Clinic representatives are warning that Pennsylvanians will have a harder time finding appointments because of rising demand from out-of-state residents.

What's next: Legislation to outlaw abortion after the detection of fetal cardiac activity—which can happen at six weeks, before many women even know they are pregnant—has passed a House committee and is awaiting a floor vote. The state Supreme Court is considering a lawsuit filed by Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers aiming to overturn a 1982 law that bans the use of state dollars for abortion, except in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother. In response, Republican lawmakers are advancing a proposed amendment that would declare there is no constitutional right to an abortion in Pennsylvania or to public funding for an abortion.

RHODE ISLAND

Political control: Democrats who control Rhode Island's General Assembly support access to abortion, as does the Democratic governor.

Background: Rhode Island's governor signed legislation in 2019 to enshrine abortion protections in case the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade. The law says the state will not restrict the right to an abortion prior to fetal viability or after if necessary to protect the health or life of the pregnant woman. It repealed older laws deemed unconstitutional by the courts. The Rhode Island Supreme Court upheld the 2019 law in May, two days after the U.S. Supreme Court draft opinion was leaked suggesting that a majority of the justices were prepared to overturn Roe. Abortion opponents had argued the law violates the state constitution. In 2020, 2,611 abortions were performed in Rhode Island, according to the state health department.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Rhode Island's attorney general believes the 2019 Reproductive Privacy Act will continue to protect access to abortion. Planned Parenthood Votes! Rhode Island also said abortion remains legal because the right was codified in state law.

What's next: Democratic Gov. Daniel McKee signed an executive order July 5 prohibiting state agencies from cooperating with other states' investigations into people who travel to Rhode Island to seek abor-

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tions or health care providers that perform them. Two of McKee's opponents in September's Democratic primary for governor, Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea and Matt Brown, want state lawmakers to return for a special session to add abortion coverage to Rhode Island's Medicaid program and to the insurance coverage for state employees. Legislative leaders said they will address abortion coverage next year.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Political control: South Carolina has a Republican governor, and its General Assembly is dominated by the GOP. However, the party doesn't quite have the two-thirds majority in either chamber needed to overcome procedural hurdles or a veto if a Democrat wins the 2022 gubernatorial election.

Background: In 2021, South Carolina passed the "Fetal Heartbeat and Protection from Abortion Act" that requires doctors to use an ultrasound to try to detect fetal cardiac activity if they think a pregnant woman is at least eight weeks along. If they find cardiac activity, they can only perform an abortion if the woman's life is in danger, or if the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. The law is currently tied up in a federal lawsuit.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: After the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, a federal judge allowed the state to begin enforcing the 2021 law. Planned Parenthood said it would continue to perform abortions in South Carolina under the parameters of the new law. The group has also sued over the new restrictions, arguing they violate state constitutional rights to privacy and equal protection.

What's next: The South Carolina General Assembly's regular session ended in May, but Republican leaders had agreed they could return for a special session to take up more restrictive abortion bills if the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. They have yet to announce a special session. Some Republican lawmakers have opposed a complete abortion ban, especially without exceptions for victims of rape and incest.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Political control: Republicans hold super-majorities in both Statehouse chambers. Republican Gov. Kristi Noem is up for reelection this year and has been an ardent opponent of abortion rights.

Background: South Dakota law bans abortions except if the life of the woman is at risk. The state had only one clinic that regularly provided abortions, a Planned Parenthood facility in Sioux Falls. The Legislature has worked over the years to make it more difficult for women to get abortions, passing mandatory waiting periods and requiring them to review and sign paperwork that discourages them from ending their pregnancies.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: South Dakota's trigger law immediately banned abortions except if the life of the pregnant woman is at risk.

What's next: Noem has called for a special session to craft laws under the new legal landscape now that *Roe v. Wade* is overturned. She hasn't commented on specific legislation, but lawmakers have floated proposals that would make it more difficult for women to seek an abortion out of state. However, South Dakota voters rejected outright bans in 2006 and 2008, and abortion rights advocates are preparing for a similar referendum on abortion access. The ban on abortions could eventually be challenged through a citizen-initiated ballot measure.

TENNESSEE

Political control: Tennessee has a Republican governor who is consistently vocal about his opposition to abortion. The GOP holds a supermajority in the General Assembly and has steadily chipped away at abortion access.

Background: In 2020, Tennessee passed a law banning most abortions when the fetal cardiac activity can be detected at about six weeks, before many women know they're pregnant. The measure has never been enforced because it was promptly blocked by a federal court. On June 28, a federal appeals court let it take effect. Tennessee voters approved an amendment in 2014 declaring that the state's constitution doesn't protect or secure the right to abortion or require the funding of an abortion, and empowering

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state lawmakers to “enact, amend, or repeal statutes regarding abortion.” State law also doesn’t allow providers to dispense abortion medications through telemedicine consultations. There are six abortion providers in Tennessee.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: The state’s attorney general, a Republican, has said a trigger law will go into effect in mid-August that bans all abortions in Tennessee except when necessary to prevent death or “serious risk of substantial and irreversible impairment of a major bodily function.” Doctors could be charged with a felony for providing an abortion under the law.

What’s next: Tennessee’s attorney general has said the trigger law will take precedence over the 2020 law banning most abortions at about six weeks. Meanwhile, Republicans are expected to continue to have supermajority control after this year’s midterm elections. Reproductive rights activists say they will direct patients seeking abortion to clinics in Illinois if Roe v. Wade is overturned, or to Florida, which would ban abortions at 15 weeks. North Carolina and Virginia also could be options for women in eastern Tennessee.

TEXAS

Political control: The GOP has commanding majorities in the Texas Legislature and has controlled every statewide office for nearly 30 years. Republican Gov. Greg Abbott is up for reelection in November and is favored to win a third term.

Background: Texas has given the nation a preview of the landscape of abortion access without the protections enshrined in Roe v. Wade. A new Texas law banning most abortions after about six weeks — before many women know they are pregnant — took effect in September and makes no exceptions in cases of rape or incest. Because of how Republicans wrote the law, which is enforceable only through lawsuits filed by private citizens against doctors or anyone who helps a woman obtain an abortion, Texas has essentially outmaneuvered decades of Supreme Court precedent governing a women’s constitutional right to an abortion. State data shows the number of abortions performed in Texas’ roughly two dozen clinics fell by half in the five months after the law came into effect compared to the same period a year earlier.

Effect of the Supreme Court ruling: The fall of Roe put in motion Texas’ trigger law that will ban virtually all abortions in the coming weeks. Clinics have tried to continue serving patients in the meantime, but a new round of court battles over whether a dormant 1925 abortion ban can be enforced for now has already stopped most doctors from performing abortions. Abortions soon will be allowed in Texas only when a mother’s life is in danger or if she is at risk of “substantial impairment of a major bodily function.”

What’s next: Many Texas women have already traveled out of state for abortions since the law took effect, but they would likely have to travel much farther now that Roe is overturned as more states outlaw abortion. Some Republican lawmakers also want to punish companies that help their Texas-based employees get abortions elsewhere, although it’s unclear how much support that idea will have when the Legislature returns in 2023.

UTAH

Political control: Utah is deeply conservative and the Legislature is controlled by a Republican supermajority.

Background: The state has been restricting abortion for years and, after the Supreme Court ruling, moved to implement two new restrictions — a “trigger law” outlawing nearly all abortions upon Roe v. Wade being overturned and a ban on abortions after 18 weeks that was passed a year earlier.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: The trigger law banning nearly all abortions became enforceable the evening of the Supreme Court ruling, after the legislative general counsel certified the ruling to lawmakers. It does have narrow exceptions for rape and incest if those crimes are reported to law enforcement, and for serious risk to the life or health of the mother, as well as confirmed lethal birth defects. The Planned Parenthood Association of Utah subsequently filed a lawsuit in state court arguing it violated the Utah Constitution. Meanwhile, legal challenges blocking the 18-week law based on Roe v. Wade were dismissed. That law took effect while courts weigh state constitutional challenges to its trigger law.

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What's next: A judge on July 11 put Utah's trigger law banning most abortions on hold until Planned Parenthood's lawsuit is decided. If it takes effect, performing an abortion would be a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. While the law is aimed primarily at providers, lawmakers have acknowledged that a woman who self-administers an abortion, including through medication, could face charges.

VERMONT

Political control: The Vermont Legislature is controlled by Democrats, but Republican Gov. Phil Scott is a firm supporter of abortion rights.

Background: Vermont has a 2019 law guaranteeing the right to an abortion and voters will consider a proposal in November to amend the state constitution to protect abortion rights. Also in 2019, the Vermont Legislature began the process of amending the constitution to protect abortion rights, known as the Reproductive Liberty Amendment or Proposition 5. Vermont's proposed amendment does not contain the word "abortion." Proponents say that's because it's not meant to authorize only abortion but also would guarantee other reproductive rights such as the right to get pregnant or access birth control. Opponents say vague wording could have unintended consequences that could play out for years. Lawmakers approved the proposed amendment in February, leading the way for a statewide vote.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Nothing changed immediately in Vermont.

What's next: Vermont voters will cast ballots in November to decide if the state will amend its constitution to protect abortion rights.

VIRGINIA

Political control: Virginia has a Republican governor who says he would support new state-level restrictions on abortion. Gov. Glenn Youngkin said that he will seek legislation to ban most abortions after 15 weeks. Youngkin told The Washington Post he has asked four antiabortion Republican lawmakers to draft the legislation. He told the Post that a cutoff at 20 weeks might be necessary to build consensus in the divided Virginia General Assembly, where Republicans control the House and Democrats control the Senate. Youngkin generally supports exceptions to abortion restrictions in cases of rape, incest or when the life of the mother is in danger.

Background: In recent years, when Democrats were in full control of state government, lawmakers rolled back abortion restrictions. They ended strict building code requirements on facilities where abortions are performed and did away with requirements that a patient seeking an abortion undergo a 24-hour waiting period and ultrasound. Advocates said the changes would make Virginia a haven for abortion access in the South. Republican victories in the November elections shook up the state's political landscape, but Senate Democrats defeated several measures that would have limited abortion access during the 2022 legislative session.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: There was no immediate change to abortion laws in Virginia now that Roe v. Wade has been overturned. Some abortion providers expect to see an uptick in patients seeking care in Virginia from neighboring states with "trigger laws" that would ban abortion.

What's next: The future of abortion access in Virginia is murky. Senate Democrats say they intend to continue blocking attempts to roll back abortion access, though they control the chamber by the narrowest possible margin and have one caucus member who personally opposes abortion and says he is open to new restrictions. Republicans also have a narrow hold on the House, with several moderate members. Every seat in the General Assembly will be on the ballot in 2023.

WASHINGTON

Political control: The Democrats who control the Washington Legislature support access to abortion, as does the state's Democratic governor.

Background: Abortion has been legal in Washington state since a 1970 statewide ballot referendum. Another ballot measure approved by voters in 1991 declared a woman's right to choose physician-performed abortion prior to fetal viability and further expanded and protected access to abortion in the state if Roe

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v. Wade was overturned. And in 2018, the Legislature passed a measure that would require Washington insurers offering maternity care to also cover elective abortions and contraception. Earlier this year, Gov. Jay Inslee signed a measure that grants specific statutory authorization for physician assistants, advanced registered nurse practitioners and other providers acting within their scope of practice to perform abortions. Supporters say the move is designed to help meet the demand from the potential influx of out-of-state patients. That same measure also prohibits legal action by Washington state against people seeking an abortion and those who aid them.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: The state "will use every available tool to protect and preserve Washingtonians' fundamental right to choose, and protect the rights of anyone who wants to come here to access reproductive health care," said Attorney General Bob Ferguson, a Democrat. Data from the Washington state Department of Health from 2020 shows that of the 16,909 abortions performed in the state that year, 852 involved non-residents. The majority of those people came from neighboring states such as Idaho and Oregon.

What's next: It's impossible to predict how many more non-resident patients will potentially seek care in Washington now that Roe v. Wade has been overturned, but the increase will likely be in the thousands, said Jennifer Allen, CEO of Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates. The state has more than 30 in-person abortion clinics, though the vast majority are in western Washington along the Interstate 5 corridor.

WEST VIRGINIA

Political control: West Virginia's Legislature is controlled by Republicans who want to ban or restrict access to abortions. Gov. Jim Justice, a Republican, opposes abortion access and has signed two anti-abortion laws since taking office in 2017.

Background: Before the Supreme Court ruling, West Virginia law banned abortion after the 20th week of pregnancy unless a patient's life is in danger or they face "substantial and irreversible physical impairment of a major bodily function." The state has several other abortion restrictions that include: requiring patients seeking abortions to wait 24 hours after undergoing legislatively mandated counseling that is designed to discourage a woman from ending a pregnancy; requiring minors to get parental permission; banning the use of telemedicine to administer a medication abortion; and prohibiting abortions on the grounds that the child will be born with a disability.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: West Virginia's only abortion clinic announced after the Supreme Court's ruling that it would immediately halt abortion services out of concern that staff could be prosecuted under a state law banning abortion that dates back to the 1800s. Charleston-based Women's Health Center of West Virginia Executive Director Katie Quinonez said it would be "impossible" for the clinic to continue performing abortions with such a law on the books. Under that law, providers who perform abortions can face felony charges and three to 10 years in prison, unless the abortion is conducted to save a patient's life. The law makes no exceptions for rape or incest. In 2018, West Virginia voters approved a constitutional amendment to declare patients do not have the right to abortion and banning state funding for abortions.

What's next: State officials have not said formally how the 19th century abortion ban will be enforced. Abortion is addressed in numerous statutes in West Virginia state code, including the 20-week ban passed in 2015 that acknowledges the right to abortion access in the state. State Senate President Craig Blair and Speaker of the House Roger Hanshaw, both Republicans, said legislative attorneys are reviewing each statute on the books "to determine how they apply" in light of the high court's decision. No lawmakers have commented on whether they intend to outlaw medication abortion. The governor has said he will not hesitate to call the Legislature into a special session if the state's abortion law needs to be clarified. Quinonez said while her clinic is not currently performing abortions, it will remain open to continue to provide reproductive care, such as birth control and diagnosis, and to treat sexually transmitted diseases. She said the clinic will help women travel to other states for abortions through its abortion fund.

WISCONSIN

Political control: Wisconsin's Legislature is controlled by Republicans who want to ban or restrict access

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to abortions, but the Democratic governor supports access and is up for reelection this year.

Background: Wisconsin has allowed most abortions until the 22nd week of pregnancy to save the health or life of the mother. A woman seeking an abortion must meet with a counselor and doctor before obtaining an abortion and wait at least 24 hours before having it done. Anyone under age 18 must have an adult relative over age 25 with them to obtain an abortion.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: Now that Roe v. Wade has been overturned, it is presumed that a state law passed in 1849 making an abortion a felony offense could go into effect, and doctors have halted procedures. However, Wisconsin's Democratic attorney general argues that the law is so old that it's unenforceable. The language allows a woman to legally destroy her own fetus or embryo and grants immunity if an abortion is needed to save a woman's life and is performed at a hospital. Another state law, passed in 1985, prohibits abortions performed after a fetus reaches viability -- when it could survive outside the womb -- conflicting with the 1849 ban.

What's next: Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul filed a lawsuit June 28 against Republican leaders of the Legislature, arguing that the 1849 abortion ban conflicts with a 1985 law that prohibits abortion either after 20 weeks or at the point of fetal viability. His lawsuit says the 1985 law should take precedence. Republican lawmakers are expected to attempt to clarify the 19th century law during next year's legislative session to ensure a ban is in place, even as that issue is being argued in the courts. Lawmakers' efforts would be stymied if Democratic Gov. Tony Evers wins reelection. Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, a Republican, said he supports a rape exception to an abortion ban, but also said the overturning of Roe could prompt Republican lawmakers to consider other reproductive issues, such as contraception.

WYOMING

Political control: Wyoming has one of the most Republican legislatures in the U.S. and a long tradition of libertarian-type if not always social or religious conservatism. That may be changing. In March, Republican Gov. Mark Gordon signed into law a bill that would ban abortion in nearly all instances should the Supreme Court overturn Roe v. Wade.

Background: Current Wyoming law allows abortions up to when a fetus might be able to survive on its own outside its mother's body. The law does not specify when that happens, but it is generally considered to be at around 23 weeks into pregnancy. Wyoming currently doesn't allow abortions after then except to protect the mother from substantial risk to her life or health. Wyoming Republicans have traditionally taken a hands-off approach to abortion but have proven more willing to limit the practice lately. The number of Democrats in the Legislature has dwindled from 26 in 2010 to just nine out of 90 total seats now. A 2021 law requires physicians to provide lifesaving care to any aborted fetus born alive.

Effect of Supreme Court ruling: The new state law that bans abortion only provides exceptions in cases of rape or incest or to protect the mother's life or health, not including psychological conditions. Though Wyoming has no abortion clinics, abortions still occur. Ninety-eight took place in Wyoming in 2021, according to state officials.

What's next: A planned women's health clinic in Casper that would have been the only one offering abortions in the state was on track to open in mid-June but an arson fire May 25 delayed those plans by around six months. Clinic founder Julie Burkhart that despite the ruling she still plans to open the clinic and will continue to seek legal means to keep abortion legal in Wyoming. Police continue to look for a suspect in the arson investigation, and have offered a \$5,000 reward for information leading to an arrest.

Noem, Smith agree to September gubernatorial debate

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem and state Rep. Jamie Smith, the Democratic lawmaker challenging her in the November election for governor, agreed Wednesday to a September debate in Rapid City.

The Republican governor's campaign said she would participate in just one debate, accepting an invita-

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tion for one co-hosted by Dakota News Now and KOTA/KEVN on Sept. 30.

Smith immediately told The Associated Press he would participate and criticized Noem for not participating in more face-to-face exchanges.

"That's unfortunate that she only wants to get out and talk about the issues that affect South Dakota one time," he said.

Noem is running for reelection after a first term that vaulted her into national prominence among Republicans for her mostly hands-off approach to COVID-19 restrictions. She has become a polarizing figure in the heavily-Republican state and Smith is trying to challenge her for seeming to have political ambitions beyond South Dakota.

Noem also released a letter to Smith, saying, "Voters deserve the opportunity to hear from the two of us on a wide variety of issues, especially those on which we do not see eye-to-eye. I look forward to a spirited, fact-driven conversation, and I trust that you hope for the same."

Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

Yankton Press & Dakotan. July 11, 2022.

Editorial: SD Democrats Drop The Ball On AG Race

Really, South Dakota Democrats?

After the last 18 months filled with controversy concerning a Republican attorney general and his involvement in a fatal car accident in 2020 — resulting in the first impeachment and conviction/removal of a state office holder in South Dakota history — the state's Democrats failed to nominate a candidate for the AG post during their convention last weekend in Fort Pierre.

As a result, former Attorney General Marty Jackley, a Republican, is unopposed in his effort to return to the job he left four years ago to run for governor.

For the record, there is no question that Jackley is a well-known figure — he previously served as AG from 2009-2019 — and would have been the heavy favorite to win this fall. Understandably, few Democratic candidates would have wanted to face that buzzsaw.

However, given all this state has witnessed these many months regarding former Attorney General Jason Ravensborg's automobile accident and his actions thereafter, the state deserves more than to have a new attorney general take over without voters at least being able to weigh in on it.

Specifically, South Dakotans will be denied the wide-ranging discussion that two candidates would have had regarding the recent issues with the AG's office.

The next attorney general will have a lot of outreach and fence-mending to do with the public, as well as with legislators and law enforcement, as the office moves forward from its tumultuous recent past. So far, Jackley appears to understand the task ahead.

But this serious issue would be better highlighted with open campaign-trail dialogue. The Democrats' inability to put up a candidate removes that prospect and basically takes them out of whatever conversation that may have been had this fall about the direction of the attorney general's office.

This also puts an even harsher spotlight on the diminished stature of the party, which holds no statewide offices and has only a handful of lawmakers in the Legislature. Meanwhile, the party has also failed to put up a candidate for the U.S. House race against Dusty Johnson (who nevertheless faces a challenge from libertarian Collin Duprel).

To be fair, the outmanned Democrats know what they are up against, especially in the AG slot. After 2018, when Democratic attorney general candidate Randy Seiler brought decades of experience and a long resume to the race but lost handily to the relatively inexperienced Ravensborg, it was clear that any Democrat running for this post would have a big hill to climb.

Also, this campaign dialogue would have come at a time when there is increasing skepticism about some actions in Pierre which seem detached from public sentiment. The recent issues with Ravensborg seemed to sharpen those perceptions.

South Dakotans have endured too much to let the attorney general's situation slip back into a fog. After

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all this, there is a real need for frank, bilateral, illuminating dialogue regarding the extraordinary recent events with the AG post and the future of that office.

But we will likely be deprived of that.

Aerospace company's test balloons prompt calls of concern

STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Citizens who called the National Weather Service concerned about some "silvery objects" in the sky around Sioux Falls this week prompted the agency to tweet that the objects were not aliens, but rather test balloons launched by a South Dakota aerospace subsidiary.

"Sorry, not aliens," the NWS tweeted in response to the calls it received.

The high altitude balloons were launched by Raven Aerostar, a subsidiary of Raven Industries.

"As a South Dakota company and the world leader in stratospheric balloon technology, our team conducts stratospheric balloon flights throughout the year, and many of them are launched from our dedicated hangar near Baltic, SD," said Aerostar president Jim Nelson. "Two of our Thunderhead Balloon Systems are currently over Sioux Falls."

The balloons, which look like hot air balloons, operate miles above the surface of the earth. Once the balloon reaches the stratosphere, it changes from a teardrop to a pumpkin shape, South Dakota Public Broadcasting reported.

Aerostar said the balloons have a variety of uses, including monitoring wildfires, expanding cellular networks and military reconnaissance. They navigate by autonomously changing altitude to take advantage of wind currents in the atmosphere.

"Research and development flights help us test the accuracy of our wind models, monitor the durability and functionality of the balloon components in the harsh conditions, and improve our ability to navigate to an area and then stay over that area for an extended period of time," Nelson said.

Aerostar provides high-altitude balloons to the U.S. Department of Defense. The company said the balloons are cheaper than satellites and can operate for months at a time.

Kevin Spacey pleads not guilty to UK sexual assault charges

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Oscar-winning actor Kevin Spacey pleaded not guilty on Thursday to charges of sexually assaulting three men a decade or more ago, and was told he would face trial next year.

Spacey, 62, stood in the dock and spoke clearly as he replied "not guilty" to each of the five charges during a hearing at London's Central Criminal Court, commonly known as the Old Bailey.

Judge Mark Wall set a date of June 6, 2023, for the trial to start and said it would last three to four weeks. It is likely to be at the Old Bailey, the venue for Britain's highest-profile criminal trials.

The former "House of Cards" star, who ran London's Old Vic theater between 2004 and 2015, denied four counts of sexual assault and one count of causing a person to engage in penetrative sexual activity without consent.

The incidents allegedly took place in London between March 2005 and August 2008, and one in western England in April 2013. The victims are now in their 30s and 40s.

Spacey's lawyer previously said the actor "strenuously denies" the allegations.

Spacey, who has addresses in London and the U.S., was granted bail and allowed to return to the United States after a preliminary hearing last month. The judge continued the actor's unconditional bail on Thursday, and said another pretrial hearing would be held early in 2023.

Spacey thanked the judge at the end of the 15-minute hearing. He made no comment as he left court and was ushered through a crowd of photographers and camera crews into a chauffeur-driven car.

Spacey won a best supporting actor Academy Award for the 1995 film "The Usual Suspects" and a lead actor Oscar for the 1999 movie "American Beauty."

But his celebrated career came to an abrupt halt in 2017 when actor Anthony Rapp accused the star of assaulting him at a party in the 1980s, when Rapp was a teenager. Spacey denies the allegations.

Spacey faces a separate civil sex-assault lawsuit from Rapp in U.S. federal court in New York.

Japan PM blames police for death of former leader Shinzo Abe

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Thursday blamed inadequate police security for the death of former leader Shinzo Abe, who was shot while giving an outdoor campaign speech.

Abe, one of Japan's most influential politicians, was assassinated last Friday in western Japan, shocking a nation known for its low crime rate. Photos and videos of the shooting show the gunman was able to come close to Abe.

A suspect was arrested at the spot and is being detained for questioning. Police and media reports say he told investigators that a rumored link between Abe and a religious group the suspect hated was the reason he killed the former prime minister.

Protesters abandon seized palace with Sri Lanka in limbo

By KRUTIKA PATHI and KRISHAN FRANCIS Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lankan protesters began to retreat from government buildings they had seized and military troops reinforced security at the Parliament on Thursday, establishing a tenuous calm in a country in both economic meltdown and political limbo.

Embattled President Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled a day earlier under pressure from protesters furious over the island nation's economic collapse. But he failed to resign as promised — and made his almost equally despised prime minister acting leader.

Protesters want both men out and a unity government in to address the economic calamity that has triggered widespread shortages of food, fuel and other necessities. But with a fractured opposition and confusion over who was in charge, a solution seemed no closer following Rajapaksa's departure. Adding to confusion, the president was still on the move, leaving the Maldives for Singapore on Thursday, according to an official who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

Rajapaksa and his wife fled Sri Lanka early Wednesday aboard an air force plane as protesters were taking over government buildings to demand he resign. Rajapaksa promised over the weekend he would do so, but instead he named his prime minister acting president in his absence.

Meanwhile Thursday, the government announced a curfew in the capital Colombo and its suburbs to run until 5 a.m. Friday and protesters were withdrawing from the presidential palace after occupying it during the weekend. Some were seen unrolling a red carpet in the palace as they left.

Anticipating more protests after a group attempted to storm the Parliament's entrance a day earlier, troops in green military uniforms and camouflage vests arrived by armored personnel carriers Thursday to reinforce barricades around the building.

Some protesters had posted videos on social media pleading with others not to storm the Parliament, fearing an escalation of violence.

Protest leader Devinda Kodagode told The Associated Press they were vacating official buildings after the Parliament speaker said he was seeking legal options to consider since Rajapaksa left without submitting his resignation letter as promised.

The protesters accuse the president and his powerful political family of siphoning money from government coffers for years and Rajapaksa's administration of hastening the country's collapse by mismanaging the economy. The family has denied the corruption allegations, but Rajapaksa acknowledged some of his policies contributed to the meltdown.

It was not immediately clear what Rajapaksa's destination would be. A Maldives official initially indicated he planned to travel onward to Saudi Arabia, but later could only confirm his first stop in Singapore. Since Sri Lankan presidents are protected from arrest while in power it's likely Rajapaksa planned his departure while he still had constitutional immunity and access to a military jet.

On Wednesday, protesters undeterred by multiple rounds of tear gas scaled the walls to enter the of-

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office of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe as the crowd outside cheered in support and tossed water bottles to them. Protesters took turns posing at the prime minister's desk or stood on a rooftop terrace waving the Sri Lankan flag.

Amid the mounting chaos, Wickremesinghe's office imposed a state of emergency giving broader powers to the military and police. Defense leaders have called for calm and cooperation with security forces — comments that have rankled some lawmakers who insist civilian leaders would be the ones to find a solution.

The protesters blame the Rajapaksas for leading the country into an economic abyss, but they are also furious with Wickremesinghe. They believe he has protected the president and that his appointment in May alleviated pressure on Rajapaksa to resign.

Wickremesinghe also has said he will resign, but not until a new government is in place. He has urged the speaker of Parliament to find a new prime minister agreeable to both the ruling and opposition parties.

It's unclear when that might happen since the opposition is deeply fractured. But assuming that Rajapaksa resigns as promised, Sri Lankan lawmakers have agreed to elect a new president on July 20 who will serve the remainder of Rajapaksa's term, which ends in 2024. That person could potentially appoint a new prime minister, who would then have to be approved by Parliament.

The political impasse threatens to worsen the bankrupt nation's economic collapse since the absence of an alternative government could delay a hoped-for bailout from the International Monetary Fund. In the meantime, the country is relying on aid from India and China.

The shortages of basic necessities have sown despair among Sri Lanka's 22 million people. The country's rapid decline was all the more shocking because, before the recent crisis, the economy had been expanding, with a growing, comfortable middle class.

"Gotabaya resigning is one problem solved — but there are so many more," said Bhasura Wickremesinghe, a 24-year-old student of maritime electrical engineering, who is not related to the prime minister.

He complained that Sri Lankan politics have been dominated for years by "old politicians" who all need to go. "Politics needs to be treated like a job — you need to have qualifications that get you hired, not because of what your last name is," he said, referring to the Rajapaksa family.

After the president fled to the Maldives the whereabouts of other Rajapaksa family members who had served in the government were unclear.

Villages battle wildfires in Portugal; Europe swelters

By HELENA ALVES and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

BEMPOSTA, Portugal (AP) — More than 3,000 firefighters battled alongside ordinary Portuguese citizens desperate to save their homes from several wildfires that raged across the European country on Thursday, fanned by extreme temperatures and drought conditions linked to climate change.

The central part of the country has been particularly hard hit by a spate of blazes this week. In the village of Bemposta, residents used garden hoses to spray down their lawns and the roofs of their houses in hope that they could save them from the raging wall of red flames that approached through the wooden hills as dusk fell on Wednesday.

"It began spreading towards that way (the right), the wind was blowing that way towards the mountain," said 88-year-old Antonio Carmo Pereira, while pointing to the flames on the outskirts of his village. "I could see the view, but in a few minutes I couldn't see anything, just smoke.

"(It's) dangerous, yes. It's surrounding all the houses," he said. "I am afraid, but where can I go? Jump into a water tank? Let me stay here and look."

More than 800 firefighters still fought on in the Leiria district, where Bemposta is located, on Thursday morning.

Temperatures in the interior of the Atlantic country were forecast to hit 44 C (111 F) during the day as the mass of hot and dry air blown up from Africa continues to linger over the western edge of the Iberian Peninsula. In June, 96% of Portugal was classified as being in either in "extreme" or "severe" drought.

The hot air and parched ground, combined with winds, has created the perfect cocktail of severe fires.

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Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa said Thursday that with temperatures expected to remain unusually high for the coming days his government plans to extend a state of alert for wildfires until Sunday. The week-long alert was originally declared to run until Friday. The government has temporarily barred public access to forests deemed to be at special risk, banned the use of farm machinery and outlawed fireworks.

Costa said that firefighters had to respond to 200 different blazes on Wednesday and pleaded for his fellow citizens to take extra care when in the countryside.

"More than ever, we are the ones who must be extremely careful," Costa said. "From a small act of carelessness a great tragedy can be born."

About 10,000 hectares (24,700 acres) have been scorched this week in Portugal, according to the Civil Protection Agency.

Civil Protection commander André Fernandes said that 135 people, including 70 firefighters, have been injured so far, but that there are no confirmed fatalities from the fires. Portugal has improved its fire safety since wildfires killed more than 100 people.

The European Union has urged member states to prepare for wildfires this summer as the continent faces another extreme weather shift that scientists say is being triggered by climate change.

Neighboring Spain was still combating a fire started by a lightning strike on Monday in the west-central Las Hurdes area that has consumed about 3,500 hectares (8,600 acres).

Temperatures in many parts of Spain have been topping the 40 C (104 F) mark for several days and are expected to continue to do so through to next week.

In France, two fires raged out of control in the region around Bordeaux in southwest France for a third consecutive day, despite the efforts of 1,000 firefighters and water-dumping planes to contain them.

The fires have destroyed more than 3,850 hectares (9,500 acres) of forest and grassland in the region, the regional emergency said. It said firefighters struggled to contain the fire because of high winds and difficulty accessing the heart of the fires.

More than 6,000 people were evacuated from campgrounds and villages in recent days.

Biden, Lapid discuss Iran, integrating Israel in Middle East

By JOSEF FEDERMAN, JOSH BOAK and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid on Thursday discussed Iran's rapidly progressing nuclear program, with the Israeli leader vowing afterward that "there will be no nuclear Iran."

The U.S. president, who is set to travel to Saudi Arabia on Friday, said he also stressed to Lapid the importance of Israel becoming "totally integrated" in the region.

Their one-on-one talks are the centerpiece of a 48-hour visit by Biden aimed at strengthening already tight relations between the U.S and Israel. The leaders are expected to sign a joint declaration later Thursday emphasizing military cooperation and a commitment to preventing Iran, which Israel considers an enemy, from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

"We discussed the Iranian threat," Lapid told reporters afterward. "There will be no nuclear Iran."

Israeli officials have sought to use Biden's first visit to the Middle East as president to underscore that Iran's nuclear program has progressed too far and encourage the Biden administration to scuttle efforts to revive a 2015 agreement with Iran to limit its development.

Resurrecting the deal brokered by Barack Obama's administration and abandoned by Donald Trump in 2018 was a key priority for Biden as he entered office. But administration officials have become increasingly pessimistic about the chances of getting Tehran back into compliance.

Biden, in an interview with Israel's Channel 12 that aired Wednesday, offered strong assurances of his determination to stop Iran from becoming a nuclear power, saying he'd be willing to use force as a "last resort" if necessary.

Iran announced last week that it has enriched uranium to 60% purity, a technical step away from

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weapons-grade quality.

The joint declaration to be announced later Thursday could hold important symbolic importance for Biden's meeting this weekend with Arab leaders in Saudi Arabia as he seeks to strengthen a regionwide alliance against Iran.

"I talked about how important it was ... for Israel to be totally integrated in the region," Biden said after the one-on-one meeting with Lapid.

Thursday's meeting could also provide boost Lapid, who is serving as interim prime minister until elections in November. Lapid's main opponent is the former prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and the joint appearance with Biden could help burnish his credentials as a statesman and leader.

Israel will hold its fifth election in less than four years this fall.

Biden and Lapid are also scheduled to hold a joint news conference Thursday and participate in a virtual summit with India and the United Arab Emirates, a collection of countries known as the I2U2. The United Arab Emirates will help finance a \$2 billion project supporting agriculture in India.

Lapid, 58, is a former journalist and television anchor who entered politics only a decade ago. He served as finance minister under Netanyahu, the country's longest-serving prime minister, before becoming leader of the opposition and cobbling together a diverse, eight-party coalition ending Netanyahu's government.

Naftali Bennett became prime minister, with Lapid as his foreign minister. But the coalition collapsed after months of infighting, and Bennett agreed to step aside for Lapid until the election.

Lapid worked hard to solidify his credentials as a statesman while foreign minister. His aides believe the private face time, public appearances and demonstrations of friendship with Biden — who, at 79, is making his 10th trip to Israel — will strengthen that image and get the electorate more comfortable with the idea of Lapid as their leader.

However, Netanyahu is running for prime minister again, and opinion polls have projected that his conservative Likud party will win the most seats in the next election, well ahead of Lapid's centrist Yesh Atid party.

Neither party is poised to singlehandedly capture the majority of seats needed to form a government, and it is unclear whether either man could cobble together a ruling coalition with smaller parties.

Biden played down the political uncertainty in an interview with Israel's Channel 12 that aired Wednesday. "We're committed to the state, not an individual leader," he said. Biden said Thursday of his meeting with Lapid: "We had a good beginning of a long, god willing, relationship"

Biden is expected to meet only briefly with Netanyahu, with whom he's had a rocky relationship in the past. Most notably, when Netanyahu was prime minister, his government approved a massive settlement project in East Jerusalem while Biden was visiting the country in 2010. Biden, then vice president, was infuriated.

Much like Lapid, Biden also faces a political threat from his predecessor. Trump, an ally of Netanyahu who still enjoys strong support from Republican voters despite his attempt to overturn the last election, may run for another term.

Asked by Channel 12 if he expected a rematch, Biden replied, "I'm not predicting, but I would not be disappointed."

Given the U.S.'s status as Israel's closest and most important ally, Biden is at the center of the country's attention during his visit.

Israel staged an elaborate welcoming ceremony for him at the Tel Aviv airport, including a red carpet and a band that played the national anthem of both countries. Major television channels set up special live coverage of Biden's arrival, and even broadcast a nonstop loop of his motorcade traveling on the highway to Jerusalem.

Biden can also expect to meet numerous politicians eager to have their photo taken with him, or perhaps share an earful about his administration's attempt to rejuvenate the Iran nuclear deal.

Israel was opposed to the original nuclear deal, which was reached under President Obama in 2015, because its limitations on Iran's nuclear enrichment would expire and the agreement didn't address Iran's

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ballistic missile program or military activities in the region.

Instead of the U.S. reentering the deal, which Trump withdrew from in 2018, Israel would prefer strict sanctions in hopes of leading to a more sweeping accord.

Biden also will receive the nation's top civilian honor, the presidential medal of honor, from Israeli President Isaac Herzog on Thursday.

He's also scheduled to meet with U.S. athletes who are participating in the Maccabiah Games. Also known as the "Jewish Olympics," it's the country's largest sporting event that's held every four years for Israeli and Jewish athletes from all over world.

The Latest: Biden seeking to 'integrate' Israel into Mideast

By The Associated Press undefined

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Latest on U.S. President Joe Biden's trip to the Mideast (all times local):

JERUSALEM -- President Joe Biden says he is working to promote Israel's burgeoning ties with Arab partners in the Middle East.

The U.S. president spoke after meeting Israel's interim prime minister, Yair Lapid, in Jerusalem on Thursday.

"I talked about how important it was from my perspective for Israel to be totally integrated in the region," Biden said.

Under the Trump administration, Israel struck diplomatic deals with four Arab countries known as the Abraham Accords.

Biden is hoping to build on those fledgling ties as he heads to Saudi Arabia to meet with Gulf Arab partners this weekend. The ties are largely based on shared concerns about Iran's nuclear program and military activities across the region.

Lapid described Biden's trip to Saudi Arabia as "extremely important to Israel."

Biden also appeared to give a boost to Lapid, who hopes to win a full term in November elections. "We had a good beginning of a long, God willing, relationship," Biden said.

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

Israeli politics a backdrop to Biden's visit to the Mideast

Biden to ping through Israel's iconic spots on Mideast tour

Amid COVID worries, fist bumps for Biden — with exceptions

Six things to watch during Biden's trip to the Middle East

With Biden, Palestinians seeking freedom get permits instead

JERUSALEM — The United Arab Emirates is investing \$2 billion to launch food processing centers across India that will use climate-smart technologies to help reduce waste and conserve fresh water.

The initiative was announced on Thursday ahead of the first virtual leaders' meeting of I2U2 — a new grouping of Israel, India, United States and UAE — that is looking to spur joint investments in water, energy, transportation, food security, and more.

India will provide land for the project. U.S. and Israeli private firms are invited to lend their expertise to the project that the group said will help maximize crop yields. The group has set tackling food insecurity in South and Middle East as a major goal.

President Joe Biden is taking part the video meeting from Israel, where he is in the second day of a whirlwind visit to the Middle East.

JERUSALEM — U.S. President Joe Biden has begun a one-on-one meeting in Jerusalem with Israel's prime minister, Yair Lapid.

Their talks are the centerpiece of a 48-hour visit by the U.S. president aimed at strengthening already tight relations between the two countries.

The leaders are expected to sign a joint declaration emphasizing military cooperation as well as their commitment to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

The commitments to Israel could hold important symbolic importance ahead of Biden's meeting this weekend with Arab leaders in Saudi Arabia as he seeks to strengthen a regionwide alliance against Iran.

Thursday's meeting also provides a boost to Lapid, who is Israel's interim prime minister until elections in November. Lapid's main opponent is the former prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and his joint appearance with Biden could help burnish his credentials as a statesman and leader.

Capitol riot hearings raise questions of presidential power

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House Jan. 6 committee's investigation of the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election and the events leading up to the U.S. Capitol insurrection is raising questions about former President Donald Trump's role and whether he committed crimes.

The various schemes and talking points that witnesses have revealed also highlight what a president has the authority to do.

Government and legal experts say the bigger question is: Can further limits be put on presidential authority to make sure there are no repeats of 2020 in future administrations?

WHAT LAWS FORM THE BASIS FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL POWERS IN QUESTION?

There are two primary ones: the Insurrection Act, first enacted in 1792, and the National Emergencies Act of 1976.

The Insurrection Act is a long-standing presidential power that gives the president wide latitude to use military forces to stop a rebellion or domestic violence. The act allows the use of military forces, which are normally barred by the Posse Comitatus Act from joining in civilian law enforcement actions.

Elizabeth Goitein, senior director of the liberty and national security program at the Brennan Center for Justice, said the insurrection "in my opinion" could have been the catalyst for the president to invoke the act and bring in the military to escort congressional lawmakers out of the proceedings for their safety. "That doesn't mean Donald Trump would have been the president, but it would have thrown a wrench in the works," she said.

Under the NEA, dozens of statutory authorities become available to any president when national emergencies are declared. They include everything from severe weather responses to civil disorder. Congress can vote to terminate the declaration, but if the president vetoes, a two-thirds supermajority is required to overcome the veto.

"The statute itself doesn't say what an emergency is. It leaves it up to the president," said Chris Edelson, assistant professor of government at American University. "That means an unscrupulous president can use it" for ill purposes. It is up to Congress to rein in the president, he said.

WHAT ISSUES WERE RAISED AT THE LAST HEARING?

In the most recent hearing, former White House counsel Pat Cipillone discussed a rancorous meeting in which Trump's outside legal team brought a draft executive order to seize the states' voting machines. In his testimony Cipollone said the plan was a terrible idea. It had been floated before.

"You can't preemptively seize voting machines. If there was a reason to do so, you need a court order," Edelson said.

At the same meeting, there were a range of theories pushed, including invoking martial law. It was an idea Trump adviser Michael Flynn had floated before, along with seizing the voting machines.

WHAT ABOUT MARTIAL LAW?

Under the Insurrection Act the president can call on the military in certain circumstances, but they are intended to support civilian law enforcement. One example was the use of the military during the 1992 Los Angeles riots. Under martial law the military takes over the function of the civilian government.

Martial law, said Goitein, "gives me nightmares" because the law is unsettled. "The whole concept of martial law, there's not even an agreed upon definition of what it is," she said.

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ARE THERE GUARDRAILS TO PREVENT FUTURE PRESIDENTS FROM ABUSING POWER?

The House passed the Protecting Our Democracy bill last year and sent it to the Senate. The legislation would prevent presidents from pardoning themselves, strengthen reporting requirements for campaigns, and clarify and enhance criminal penalties for campaigns that accept foreign information sought or obtained for political advantage.

The Senate has taken no action on the proposal. Without congressional action, the questions over presidential power and its expansiveness remain open. "The Constitution assumes that checks and balances work. If the president goes too far, Congress will rein him in," said Edelman.

In Trump's case, Congress has not shown an appetite for doing that.

Reviled and revered Russian arms dealer is back in spotlight

By JIM HEINTZ and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian arms dealer labeled the "Merchant of Death" who once inspired a Hollywood movie is back in the headlines with speculation around a return to Moscow in a prisoner exchange.

If Viktor Bout, 55, is indeed eventually freed in return for WBNA star Brittney Griner and former U.S. Marine Paul Whelan, as some published reports suggest, it would add to the lore around a charismatic arms dealer the U.S. has imprisoned for over a decade.

Depending on the source, Bout is a swashbuckling businessman unjustly imprisoned after an overly aggressive U.S. sting operation, or a peddler of weapons whose sales fueled some of the world's worst conflicts.

The 2005 Nicolas Cage movie, "Lord of War" was loosely based on Bout, a former Soviet air force officer who gained fame supposedly by supplying weapons for civil wars in South America, the Middle East and Africa. His clients were said to include Liberia's Charles Taylor, longtime Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi and both sides in Angola's civil war.

Shira A. Scheindlin, the former New York City federal judge who sentenced Bout before returning to private law practice, can be counted among those who would not be disappointed by Bout's freedom in a prisoner exchange.

"He's done enough time for what he did in this case," Scheindlin said in an interview, noting that Bout, a vegetarian and classical music fan who is said to speak six languages, has served over 11 years in U.S. prisons.

He was convicted in 2011 on terrorism charges. Prosecutors said he was ready to sell up to \$20 million in weapons, including surface-to-air missiles to shoot down U.S. helicopters. When they made the claim at his 2012 sentencing, Bout shouted: "It's a lie!"

Bout has steadfastly proclaimed his innocence, saying he's a legitimate businessman and didn't sell weapons. He's had plenty of support from high-level Russian officials since he was first arrested. A Russian parliament member testified when Bout was fighting extradition from Thailand to the U.S.

Last year, some of his paintings were displayed in Russia's Civic Chamber, the body that oversees draft legislation and civil rights.

Bout's case fits well into Moscow's narrative that Washington is lying in wait to trap and oppress innocent Russians on flimsy grounds.

"From the resonant Bout case a real 'hunt' by Americans for Russian citizens around the world has unfolded," the government newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta wrote last year.

Increasingly, Russia has cited his case as a human rights issue. His wife and lawyer claimed his health is deteriorating in the harsh prison environment where foreigners are not always eligible for breaks that Americans might receive.

Last month, Russia's human rights commissioner Tatyana Moskalkova said: "We very much hope that our compatriot Viktor Bout will return to his homeland."

Moskalkova said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the General Prosecutor's Office, and the Ministry of Justice were working to see if Bout might qualify for transfer to Russia to serve the rest of his sentence.

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"We are also constantly in dialogue in order to find a compromise in resolving this issue," she said. Now held in a medium-security facility in Marion, Illinois, Bout is scheduled to be released in August 2029. "If you asked me today: 'Do you think 10 years would be a fair sentence,' I would say 'yes,'" Scheindlin said.

"He got a hard deal," the retired judge said, noting the U.S. sting operatives "put words in his mouth" so he'd say he was aware Americans could die from weapons he sold in order to require a terrorism enhancement that would force a long prison sentence, if not a life term.

"The idea of trading him shouldn't be unacceptable to our government. It wouldn't be wrong to release him," Scheindlin said.

Still, she said an even exchange of Griner for Bout would be "troubling." The WNBA star and two-time Olympic gold medalist was arrested in February at a Moscow airport, where police said they found cannabis oil in a vape canister in her luggage. While the U.S. government has classified her as "wrongfully detained," Griner pleaded guilty to drug possession charges on July 7 at her trial in a Russian court. Her trial is scheduled to resume Thursday.

Scheindlin said Griner was arrested for something that "wouldn't be five minutes in jail."

That sentiment is shared by others. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch said in a July 9 editorial that Bout illegally trafficked billions of dollars of weapons "to feed wars around the world" and has "the blood of thousands on his hands," while Griner "made a stupid mistake with a tiny amount of cannabis. She harmed no one."

Griner could face up to 10 years in prison. Her guilty plea was not unanticipated by those who understand that similar moves commonly precede prisoner swaps. Whelan was arrested three years ago on espionage charges that the U.S. has said were trumped up and false.

In April 2012, Scheindlin imposed the mandatory minimum 25-year sentence that Bout now serves, but she said she did so only because it was required.

At the time, his defense lawyer claimed the U.S. targeted Bout vindictively because it was embarrassed that his companies helped deliver goods to American military contractors involved in the war in Iraq.

The deliveries occurred despite United Nations sanctions imposed against Bout since 2001 because of his reputation as a notorious illegal arms dealer.

Prosecutors had urged Scheindlin to impose a life sentence, saying that if Bout was right to call himself nothing more than a businessman, "he was a businessman of the most dangerous order."

Bout was estimated to be worth about \$6 billion in March 2008 when he was arrested in Bangkok, Thailand. U.S. authorities tricked him into leaving Russia for what he thought was a meeting over a business deal to ship what prosecutors described as "a breathtaking arsenal of weapons — including hundreds of surface-to-air missiles, machine guns and sniper rifles — 10 million rounds of ammunition and five tons of plastic explosives."

He was taken into custody at a Bangkok luxury hotel after conversations with the Drug Enforcement Administration sting operation's informants who posed as officials of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, also known as the FARC. The group had been classified by Washington as a narco-terrorist group.

He was brought to the U.S. in November 2010.

The "Merchant of Death" moniker was attached to Bout by a high-ranking minister of Britain's Foreign Office. The nickname was included in the U.S. government's indictment of Bout.

In Ukraine war, a race to acquire smarter, deadlier drones

By OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI and FRANK BAJAK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Drone camera footage defines much of the public's view of the war in Ukraine: grenades quietly dropped on unwitting soldiers, eerie flights over silent, bombed-out cities, armor and outposts exploding into fireballs.

Never in the history of warfare have drones been used as intensively as in Ukraine, where they often play an outsized role in who lives and dies. Russians and Ukrainians alike depend heavily on unmanned aerial vehicles to pinpoint enemy positions and guide their hellish artillery strikes.

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But after months of fighting, the drone fleets of both sides are depleted, and they are racing to build or buy the kind of jamming-resistant, advanced drones that could offer a decisive edge.

The urgency was reflected by the White House's disclosure Monday that it has information that Iran will be rushing "up to several hundred" unmanned aerial vehicles to Moscow's aid. Iranian-supplied drones have effectively penetrated U.S.-supplied Saudi and Emirati air-defense systems in the Middle East.

"The Russian drone force may still be capable, but exhausted. And Russians are looking to capitalize on a proven Iranian track record," said Samuel Bendett, an analyst at the CNA military think tank.

Meanwhile, Ukraine wants the means "to strike at Russian command and control facilities at a significant distance," Bendett said.

The demand for off-the-shelf consumer models remains intense in Ukraine, as do efforts to modify amateur drones to make them more resistant to jamming. Both sides are crowdfunding to replace battlefield losses.

"The number we need is immense," a senior Ukrainian official, Yuri Shchygol, told reporters Wednesday, detailing the first results of a new fundraising campaign called "Army of Drones." He said Ukraine is initially seeking to purchase 200 NATO-grade military drones but requires 10 times more.

Outgunned Ukrainian fighters complain that they simply don't have the military-grade drones needed to defeat Russian jamming and radio-controlled hijacking. The civilian models most Ukrainians rely on are detected and defeated with relative ease. And it's not uncommon for Russian artillery to rain down on their operators within minutes of a drone being detected.

Compared with the war's early months, Bendett now sees less evidence of Russian drones getting shot down. "The Ukrainians are on the ropes," he said.

Adding to the defenders' woes: The Ukrainian hero of the war's early weeks, the Turkish-made Bayraktar TB-2 laser-guided, bomb-dropping drone, has become less effective in the face of denser Russian air and electronic defenses in eastern Ukraine. It was the star of many a patriotic Ukrainian video.

"Russians are in a much better position because they fly long-range drones" designed to evade electronic countermeasures, a Ukrainian air reconnaissance unit leader recently told Associated Press journalists outside Bakhmut near the front lines.

On the ground, Russia's more plentiful electronic warfare units can cut off drone pilots' communications, interrupt live video and drop the vehicle from the sky or, if it has homing technology, force it to retreat.

Hence the need for advanced drones that can survive radio interference and GPS jamming and rely on satellite communications and other technologies for control and navigation.

Ukraine's most urgent need is for drones able to help newly arriving longer-range Western artillery hit distant targets, said Marine Capt.-Lt. Maksym Muzyka, a founder of UA Dynamics, a Ukrainian drone maker.

In mid-June, a top adviser to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy specified in a tweet listing various desired armaments that Ukraine needs 1,000 drones if it is to end the war.

The Russian stock of long-range military drones exceeds Ukraine's, but Kremlin supplies are also diminished. Russian troops also fly a lot of \$2,000 off-the-shelf quadcopters — often supplied by soldiers' relatives and volunteers, according to social media posts tracked by drone researcher Faine Greenwood.

A Russian deputy prime minister who oversees Kremlin arms industries lamented in a TV interview last month that prewar drone development was not more robust. Yuri Borisov also said Russia was stepping up manufacture of a wide range of drones "although it can't be done instantaneously."

Russia has lost about 50 of its most plentiful model of drone, the Orlan-10, but apparently has dozens or scores more, Bendett said.

A new report from Britain's RUSI think tank puts the current lifespan of a Ukrainian drone at roughly a week. Russian electronic warfare units are "imposing significant limitations on Ukrainian reconnaissance in depth" — and Ukraine desperately needs radar-seeking killer drones that can destroy them.

As it stands, Russian forces are "generally able to bring accurate artillery fire down on (Ukrainian) targets three to five minutes" after a reconnaissance drone has identified them.

The war is unlikely to produce more tales of civilian drone operators like the teen whose off-the-shelf surveillance drone helped the Ukrainian military devastate a Russian armored column moving toward the

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capital, Kyiv, in the week after the Feb. 24 invasion. Operating those drones on today's front lines is terribly risky.

A Ukrainian drone operator who goes by the call sign Maverick said his fellow pilots often go deep behind enemy lines. Otherwise their drones lack the range to correct Ukrainian artillery fire. That puts them constantly in the sights of enemy artillery.

The U.S. and other Western allies have shipped hundreds of drones, including an unspecified number of "kamikaze" Switchblade 600s that carry tank-piercing warheads. They can fly at 70 mph and use artificial intelligence to track targets. But their range is limited, and they can only stay aloft about 40 minutes.

Potentially of greater utility for reaching Russian ammunition dumps and command posts are the 121 advanced military drones called Phoenix Ghosts that the U.S. acquired for Ukraine in May.

Their specifications are mostly secret, but they can fly for six hours, destroy armored vehicles and have infrared cameras for night missions, said retired Air Force Lt. Gen. David Deptula, a board member of Aevex Aerospace, the manufacturer.

Other drones similarly suited to reconnaissance and artillery spotting include Ukraine's homegrown Furia, each of which costs \$25,000.

About 70 percent of the roughly 200 Furias that Ukraine purchased after Russia initiated hostilities in 2014 have been downed, said Artem Vyunnyk, CEO of the manufacturer, Athlon Avia. Production is resuming at a new factory, he said, but domestic suppliers alone can't begin to fill Ukraine's drone gap.

The Ukrainian military's General Staff did not respond to questions about the unmanned aerial vehicles it seeks from allies. Pentagon spokeswoman Jessica Maxwell also declined to comment on Ukraine's drone requests.

But Shchygol, the head of Ukraine's state service for special communication, made it clear Wednesday that priorities include "kamikaze" drones and models capable of surviving Russia's thick electronic warfare curtain.

The first missiles fired at an enemy by a U.S. drone came in 2001 against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Since then, drones have become integral to modern warfare, including in the Syrian civil war and the brief but intense 2020 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Their proliferation has spawned an entire industry devoted to countermeasures.

Anti-drone equipment supplied to Ukraine by Western companies include gear that can identify not just a drone's location but its make and model based on the radio frequencies it uses. It then knows how best to disable the drone.

The ever more complex electromagnetic cat-and-mouse game makes Ukraine the world's latest crucible of military technology innovation.

"Everybody now wants drones, special drones, unjammable and whatsoever," said Thorsten Chmielus, CEO of the Germany company Aaronia, which has contributed technology to Ukraine.

The rapid advancement leads to his nightmare: "Everybody will have millions of drones that can't be defeated."

Personal connections show lawyer Alex Murdaugh's downfall

By JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — The shooting deaths of South Carolina lawyer Alex Murdaugh's wife and son started a chain of investigations, strange happenings and legal maneuvers over the past 13 months that his lawyer said will soon lead to murder charges.

But Murdaugh's life was quietly unraveling behind the scenes long before that. Authorities said he was stealing money, addicted to painkillers and desperately trying to avoid an in-depth examination of his finances tied to a wrongful death lawsuit involving his son — all while lying to just about everyone in his life.

Like the whiteboard on a detective show, the spokes of a half-dozen investigations radiated from Murdaugh after the killings of Maggie Murdaugh, 52, and 22-year-old son Paul on June 7, 2021.

Suddenly, a whole cast of people became players in the drama — the family of a teenager killed in a

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boat crash determined to fight for justice, the slain wife who led a quiet life, the Murdaugh client who may have been hired to stage an attempt on the lawyer's life and the housekeeper who died in a fall in the Murdaugh home.

MALLORY BEACH

More than a year before the killings, 19-year-old Mallory Beach died when she was thrown from a Murdaugh family boat after it crashed into a bridge pier. Police said Paul Murdaugh was drunk while driving the boat in February 2019.

Beach's family demanded justice not just criminally, but in civil court too, filing a wrongful death lawsuit that still is awaiting trial.

That lawsuit likely meant a close look at the Murdaugh family's finances. Murdaugh fought the suit at every turn as Beach's attorneys suggested he was fearful they would discover how he was managing to live so far above his current means. Prosecutors said they have learned since that Murdaugh was stealing money from his law firm and clients.

The State Law Enforcement Division is investigating if Murdaugh, his family or his friends tried to obstruct the investigation into the boating crash. Others on the boat said Murdaugh was at the emergency room that night, looking up their rooms and trying to convince them to tell investigators his son wasn't driving.

MAGGIE MURDAUGH

Maggie Murdaugh married the sweetheart she met at the University of South Carolina and moved to tiny Hampton County, where Alex Murdaugh's father, grandfather and great-grandfather had been elected prosecutors.

By all accounts, she led a quiet life, supporting her husband's work and raising two sons. Friends don't remember her working outside a brief time running her own gift shop. They remember a devoted mother who loved her family's coastal home about 60 miles (96 kilometers) away on Edisto Island.

Maggie Murdaugh died near her younger son at the family's Colleton County hunting estate. Both were shot multiple times, the coroner said. Alex Murdaugh called 911 after discovering their bodies. He has said he had just returned home from visiting his mother and ailing father.

Thirteen months later, Murdaugh's lawyer said the rest of the family was told Tuesday that state agents will seek indictments for murder against Murdaugh this week.

CURTIS "EDDIE" SMITH

Curtis "Eddie" Smith met Alex Murdaugh when he sued the tree company he worked for after hurting his back in 2007. Or they might have already known each other. Like many things with Murdaugh, exactly what transpired is murky.

Murdaugh won a settlement for Smith, who said the two became friends. Murdaugh's lawyers said it was more of a business relationship, with Murdaugh buying drugs.

A few days after the century-old Murdaugh family law firm discovered stolen money in September 2021, Murdaugh asked Smith to meet on the side of a lonely Hampton County highway, according to prosecutors. Murdaugh said he asked Smith to kill him so his surviving son could get \$10 million life insurance policy. Smith said Murdaugh threatened to kill himself and the gun fired as Smith tried to wrestle it from his grip.

The shot only grazed Murdaugh's head. Murdaugh's lawyers called Smith a drug dealer.

"With a friend like that, who needs enemies?" Smith told an Associated Press reporter.

Both men were indicted for the roadside shooting — Smith for assisted suicide, conspiracy and other charges; Murdaugh, for insurance fraud and filing a false police report after initially saying he was shot at randomly while changing a tire.

In June, prosecutors suggested a much deeper relationship. They indicted both men again, saying Murdaugh wrote 437 checks worth \$2.4 million that Smith cashed over eight years to try to hide theft and other illegal activity, including a drug ring involving the painkiller oxycodone.

It was the 16th indictment against Murdaugh, who prosecutors said has stolen more than \$8 million from clients and others.

GLORIA SATTERFIELD

Gloria Satterfield was a housekeeper for the Murdaughs for two decades before slipping into a coma

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and dying a few days after Alex Murdaugh said she tripped and fell in their home.

Murdaugh steered Satterfield's family toward a friend to act as their attorney, according to a lawsuit. Murdaugh then strong-armed his insurers to pay more than \$4 million in wrongful death settlements, prosecutors said.

But Satterfield's family never saw a dime until their new attorneys came after him. Eric Bland and Ronnie Richter relentlessly attacked Murdaugh in court and in the media. Murdaugh eventually ended up behind bars on a \$7 million bond.

Bland compared Murdaugh to a bank robber, but using a pen and corrupt friends instead of a gun.

Months later, the lawyer friend and a banker who prosecutors said secretly sent Murdaugh money meant to go into trusts for his clients were indicted.

Bland and Richter have earned well over \$4 million in legal settlements from Murdaugh, whose assets have been frozen, as well as Murdaugh's attorney friend and the bank Murdaugh used.

The investigation into Satterfield's death continues. State agents said in June that they would exhume her body. Coroners in South Carolina are supposed to be notified of any suspicious death, but the Hampton County coroner wasn't told about Satterfield's fall.

Another death investigation was reopened after the shooting deaths. Stephen Smith, 19, died in what investigators said was a hit-and-run, likely struck in the head by the mirror of a semitrailer on a Hampton County two-lane road in 2015. But Smith's mother said there was no broken glass or plastic shards from a mirror on the road where her son's body was found.

State agents haven't said what evidence in the Murdaugh case led them to reopen the Smith case.

Masks could return to Los Angeles as COVID surges nationwide

By CARLA K. JOHNSON and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Nick Barragan is used to wearing a mask because his job in the Los Angeles film industry has long required it, so he won't be fazed if the nation's most populous county reinstates rules requiring face coverings because of another spike in coronavirus cases across the country.

"I feel fine about it because I've worn one pretty much constantly for the last few years. It's become a habit," said Barragan, masked up while out running errands Wednesday.

Los Angeles County, home to 10 million residents, is facing a return to a broad indoor mask mandate later this month if current trends in hospital admissions continue, county health Director Barbara Ferrer said this week.

Nationwide, the latest COVID-19 surge is driven by the highly transmissible BA.5 variant, which now accounts for 65% of cases with its cousin BA.4 contributing another 16%. The variants have shown a remarkable ability to get around the protection offered by vaccination.

With the new omicron variants again pushing hospitalizations and deaths higher in recent weeks, states and cities are rethinking their responses and the White House is stepping up efforts to alert the public.

Some experts said the warnings are too little, too late.

"It's well past the time when the warning could have been put out there," said Dr. Eric Topol, head of the Scripps Research Translational Institute, who has called BA.5 "the worst variant yet."

Global trends for the two mutants have been apparent for weeks, experts said — they quickly out-compete older variants and push cases higher wherever they appear. Yet Americans have tossed off their masks and jumped back into travel and social gatherings. And they have largely ignored booster shots, which protect against COVID-19's worst outcomes. Courts have blocked federal mask and vaccine mandates, tying the hands of U.S. officials.

"We learn a lot from how the virus is acting elsewhere and we should apply the knowledge here," said Ali Mokdad, a professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle.

White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha appeared on morning TV on Wednesday urging booster shots and renewed vigilance. Yet Mokdad said federal health officials need to be push harder on masks indoors, early detection and prompt antiviral treatment.

"They are not doing all that they can," Mokdad said.

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The administration's challenge, in the view of the White House, is not their messaging, but people's willingness to hear it — due to pandemic fatigue and the politicization of the virus response.

For months, the White House has encouraged Americans to make use of free or cheap at-home rapid tests to detect the virus, as well as the free and effective antiviral treatment Paxlovid that protects against serious illness and death. On Tuesday, the White House response team called on all adults 50 and older to urgently get a booster if they haven't yet this year — and dissuaded people from waiting for the next generation of shots expected in the fall when they can roll up their sleeves and get some protection now.

Requiring masks again "helps us to reduce risk," Ferrer told Los Angeles County supervisors. She is expected to discuss details of the potential new county mandate during a public health briefing Thursday afternoon.

"I do recognize that when we return to universal indoor masking to reduce high spread, for many this will feel like a step backwards," Ferrer said Tuesday.

For most of the pandemic, Los Angeles County has required masks in some indoor spaces, including health care facilities, Metro trains and buses, airports, jails and homeless shelters. The new mandate would expand the requirement to all indoor public spaces, including shared offices, manufacturing facilities, warehouses, retail stores, restaurants and bars, theaters and schools.

It's unclear what enforcement might look like. Under past mandates, officials favored educating people over issuing citations and fines.

Sharon Fayette ripped off her mask the moment she stepped out of a Lyft ride in Los Angeles Wednesday and groaned when informed another universal mask requirement might be coming. "Oh man, when will it end?" she wondered about the pandemic.

Fayette said she was exhausted by shifting regulations and dubious another mandate would be followed by most residents. "I just think people are over it, over all the rules," she said.

Barragan said he learned a harsh lesson about the effectiveness of masks when he went without a face covering at a film industry mixer last month in Los Angeles. "I thought it would be fine because we were all outdoors," said Barragan, 35. A few days later he started feeling sick and, sure enough, tested positive.

He'd avoided catching the virus for more than two years because he was religious about masking up. "The one time I took it off, I caught it!" he laughed.

The nation's brief lull in COVID deaths has reversed. Last month, daily deaths were falling, though they never matched last year's low, and deaths are now heading up again.

The seven-day average for daily deaths in the U.S. rose 26% over the past two weeks to 489 on July 12.

The coronavirus is not killing nearly as many as it was last fall and winter, and experts do not expect death to reach those levels again soon. But hundreds of daily deaths for a summertime respiratory illness would normally be jaw-dropping, said Andrew Noymer, a public health professor at the University of California, Irvine. He noted that in Orange County, California, 46 people died of COVID-19 in June.

"That would be all hands on deck," Noymer said. "People would be like, 'There's this crazy new flu that's killing people in June.'"

Instead, simple, proven precautions are not being taken. Vaccinations, including booster shots for those eligible, lower the risk of hospitalization and death — even against the latest variants. But less than half of all eligible U.S. adults have gotten a single booster shot, and only about 1 in 4 Americans age 50 and older who are eligible for a second booster have received one.

"This has been a botched booster campaign," Topol said, noting that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still uses the term "fully vaccinated" for people with two shots of Moderna or Pfizer. "They haven't gotten across that two shots is totally inadequate," he said.

Noymer said if he were in charge of the nation's COVID response he would level with the American people in an effort to get their attention in this third year of the pandemic. He would tell Americans to take it seriously, mask indoors and "until we get better vaccines, there's going to be a new normal of a disease that kills over 100,000 Americans a year and impacts life expectancy."

That message probably wouldn't fly for political reasons, Noymer acknowledged.

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It also might not fly with people who are tired of taking precautions after more than two years of the pandemic. Valerie Walker of New Hope, Pennsylvania, is mindful of the latest surge but is hardly alarmed.

"I was definitely concerned back then," she said of the pandemic's early days, with images of body bags on nightly news broadcasts. "Now there's fatigue, things were getting better and there was a vaccine. So I would say from a scale between one and 10, I'm probably at a four."

Even with two friends now sick with the virus, and her husband recently recovered, Walker says she has bigger problems.

"Sometimes when I think about it I still put a mask on when I go into a store, but honestly, it is not a daily thought for me," she said.

Asian stocks down after US inflation fuels rate hike fears

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Asian stock markets rose Thursday despite a record-setting U.S. inflation report that pointed to more possible interest rate hikes that investors worry will chill economic growth.

U.S. futures edged lower while oil prices advanced.

Wall Street's benchmark S&P 500 index lost 0.4% on Wednesday after data showed U.S. consumer inflation accelerated to 9.1% in June over a year earlier from May's 8.6%. That was despite three rate hikes this year by the Federal Reserve.

Investors worry aggressive action by central banks to cool inflation that is at four-decade highs might derail global economic growth.

"Growth fears are hitting the markets harder than inflation concerns," said Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management in a report.

The Shanghai Composite Index picked up 0.3% to 3,294.50 while Tokyo's Nikkei 225 gained 0.7% to 26,665.09.

Electronics manufacturer Panasonic Holdings' shares rose 1.1% after the company announced plans for a multibillion-dollar mega-factory to produce electric vehicle batteries for Tesla and other carmakers in the U.S. state of Kansas.

The Hang Seng in Hong Kong advanced 0.3% to 20,855.29.

Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 added 0.4% to 6,646.60 after official data showed employment rose more than expected in June.

The Kospi in Seoul edged 0.1% higher to 2,330.74. New Zealand and Jakarta advanced while Singapore declined.

Apart from the Federal Reserve, central banks in Britain, South Korea and some other countries also have hiked rates to cool surging prices. The European Central Bank says it has similar plans.

With inflation still untamed, traders expect another Fed rate hike this month, probably matching last month's 0.75-percentage-point rise, the biggest in 28 years and three times the usual margin.

Fed officials say a recession is possible but not certain. They point to a strong U.S. job market despite higher borrowing costs.

On Wall Street, the S&P fell to 3,801.78. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.7% to 30,772.79, and the Nasdaq composite dropped 0.2% to 11,247.58.

Traders are looking ahead to the latest quarterly results from big U.S. companies in the next few weeks.

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude gained 54 cents to \$96.84 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose 46 cents to \$96.30 on Wednesday. Brent crude, the price basis for international oil trading, advanced 67 cents to \$100.24 per barrel in London. It added 8 cents the previous session to \$99.57 a barrel.

The dollar rose to 138.02 yen from Wednesday's 137.32 yen. The euro declined to \$1.0035 from \$1.0062.

Trump, Hogan fight emerges in Maryland's GOP governor's race

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By BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump and Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan aren't waiting until 2024 to fight over the future of the Republican Party.

Approaching the final months of his second term, Hogan is encouraging GOP voters to rally behind gubernatorial candidate Kelly Schulz, who served as labor secretary and commerce secretary in his administration. Trump, however, is backing Dan Cox, a state legislator who has said President Joe Biden's victory shouldn't have been certified, called former Vice President Mike Pence a "traitor" and sought to impeach Hogan for his pandemic policies.

The dynamics have turned next week's GOP primary for governor into a proxy battle between Trump and Hogan, who are offering vastly different visions of the party's future as they eye presidential runs in 2024. Hogan, who is prevented from seeking reelection because of term limits, is one of Trump's most prominent GOP critics and has urged the party to move on from his divisive brand of politics. Trump, meanwhile, has spent much of his post-presidency lifting candidates who embrace his election lies.

"It's difficult not to see this primary between Hogan-endorsed Kelly Schulz and Trump-endorsed Dan Cox in a broader context of national Republican politics," said Mileah Kromer, an associate professor of political science at Goucher College in Towson, Maryland.

Whoever emerges from the GOP primary will face steep hurdles in a state that represents one of the best opportunities this year for a Democrat to take back a governor's mansion. Democrats outnumber Republicans 2-1 in the state, but Hogan was able to win two terms by pledging to cut taxes, emphasizing bipartisanship and not being afraid to challenge Trump.

A poll last month by the Sarah T. Hughes Center for Politics at Goucher, The Baltimore Banner and WYPR found Schulz and Cox in a close race, with Cox at 25% and Schulz at 22% — within the poll's margin of error of plus or minus 4.8 percentage points. Forty-four percent of Republican voters were undecided.

Two other Republicans are also in the race: Robin Ficker, a former state lawmaker who was a well-known sports heckler, and Joe Werner, an attorney.

The winner will take on the candidate who prevails in a crowded Democratic race that includes former U.S. Labor Secretary Tom Perez, bestselling author Wes Moore, Maryland Comptroller Peter Franchot and former U.S. Education Secretary John King.

The competing visions for the Republican Party were evident as GOP voters cast early ballots in the primary.

Republican Jeff Conley, 68, said he's disappointed with the party's current trajectory and voted for Schulz as a mark of his support for Hogan.

"I have been a Republican all my life, and the Trump people have hijacked the party, and I want it back," Conley said. "Love Larry Hogan. I'd like to see him run and be president and bring a bunch of people with him who are reasonable and can get along."

Christine Cirone, 50, however, said she voted for Cox, citing his opposition to abortion as well as an unsuccessful lawsuit he filed over Hogan's COVID-19 policies. Trump's endorsement, she said, was also an important factor in her vote.

"He's an America First patriot. That's exactly why I voted for him," Cirone said at an early voting center in Annapolis.

Democrats have sought to meddle in the race to boost Cox's standing in the primary, a tactic the party has used in other states this midterm season in the hopes of facing an easier opponent in the general election.

The Democratic Governors Association paid more than \$1 million to broadcast an ad that emphasizes Cox's conservative credentials, calling him "too close to Trump" and asserting that he will protect the Second Amendment "at all costs."

"The math is easy," Schulz said at a news conference with Hogan last month in front of Maryland's Capitol to denounce the ad. "Spend a million now and save \$5 million by not having to face me in the general election."

She said Republican voters were "savvy" enough to recognize that "the best candidate is somebody

that can win in November.”

Cox described the news conference as evidence his opponent is worried.

“It’s proof, I think, that we’re winning,” Cox told reporters. “The people of Maryland want change.”

Hogan has left open the possibility of running for the White House in 2024. He said last weekend on NBC’s “Meet the Press” that he believes voters are tired of the extremes in both parties and that there’s “growing demand for exactly what we’ve done in Maryland over the last eight years.”

Hogan has criticized Cox for organizing buses to Washington for the “Stop the Steal” rally that preceded the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol by a violent mob of Trump supporters. Cox has said he didn’t go to the Capitol and left before the rioting began.

In a tweet he later deleted, Cox called Pence a “traitor” for refusing to go along with Trump’s demands not to certify the 2020 election, though he later expressed regret for using the word.

Trump has offered strong support for Cox while referring to Hogan and Schulz as RINOs, or Republicans In Name Only, a term of derision for those considered insufficiently loyal to the former president.

“More importantly, Dan will end Larry Hogan’s terrible RINO reign by defeating his ‘Never Trump’ successor, another low-energy RINO, Kelly Schulz,” Trump said in a statement Tuesday.

Hogan expressed doubts about whether this year’s gubernatorial primary reflected a proxy battle between himself and the former president.

“It’s about two different candidates and two different philosophies,” Hogan said after casting a ballot for Schulz last week.

Hogan said Schulz was the only Republican candidate able to build on his accomplishments and keep a Democrat out of the governor’s mansion.

“The other candidates in the Republican primary just have no chance whatsoever to run a competitive race,” he said.

Uvalde video raises more calls for police accountability

By ACACIA CORONADO, PAUL J. WEBER and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas (AP) — As video taken inside Robb Elementary School puts in full view the bewildering inaction by law enforcement during the May slaughter of 19 children and two teachers, some in Uvalde are shouting: Will police face consequences?

Only one officer from the scene of the deadliest school shooting in Texas history is known to be on leave. Authorities have still not released names of officers who for more than an hour milled in and out of a hallway near the adjoining fourth-grade classrooms where the gunman was firing. And nearly two months after the massacre, there’s still disagreement about who was in charge.

A nearly 80-minute hallway surveillance video published by the Austin American-Statesman publicly showed for the first time — with disturbing and painful clarity — a hesitant and haphazard tactical response by fully armed officers that the head of Texas’ state police has condemned as a failure and some Uvalde residents have blasted as cowardly.

But it is unclear whether the actions — or inaction — by officers in the school on May 24 will result in more than criticism, even as demands for accountability and anger mount. City and state leaders have urged people to let investigations play out.

There are signs impatience is growing: Hours after the video was published, residents shouted from their seats at a City Council meeting Tuesday, demanding to know whether officers who were at the shooting were still on the force or getting paid. Council members did not respond.

“What about the cops?” one person yelled.

Police are afforded formidable legal protections, set up with the idea that their jobs often require life-and-death judgment calls under great pressure. Even with the officers’ hesitation captured on video, policing experts say it’s difficult to predict how likely they are to face discipline or legal fallout.

“It’s going to come down to what would a reasonable police officer have perceived in that moment,” said Bowling Green State University criminologist Philip Stinson.

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The footage from a hallway camera inside the school shows the gunman entering the building with an AR-15-style rifle and includes 911 tape of a teacher screaming, "Get down! Get in your rooms! Get in your rooms!"

Two officers approach the classrooms minutes after the gunman enters, then run back amid the sounds of gunfire. From there, minutes tick by and more gunshots from the classrooms are heard as additional officers from multiple agencies arrive. More than an hour passes before a team finally advances down the hallway, breaches the classrooms and ends the massacre.

More than a dozen officers — some armed with rifles and bulletproof shields — are visible during some points of the video. During the long wait to confront the gunman, one man in body armor and a vest that says "sheriff" squeezes a few pulls of hand sanitizer from a dispenser mounted on the wall.

It is a starkly different scene than the one described by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott the day after shooting, when he praised a swift response and officers who "showed amazing courage by running toward gunfire." Abbott later said he was given wrong information but did not identify from whom.

That's just one example of inaccurate and conflicting statements given by authorities in the seven weeks since the shooting. Asked Wednesday if any officers should face discipline for their inaction, Abbott spokeswoman Renae Eze said the governor "believes it would be premature to decide any action" until investigations are complete.

After the 2018 shooting at Parkland High School in Florida that killed 17 people, a deputy who knew the gunman was loose but refused to go inside was arrested on criminal charges. Legal experts have called that an extremely rare case of someone essentially being charged for not going into harm's way and have expressed skepticism about the case, which is set for trial in February.

Former U.S. Attorney Joe Brown, who spent two decades as a Republican district attorney in North Texas, said there is "no criminal statute for dereliction of duty" and holding police criminally liable under such circumstances "carries a tremendous social cost." But he said officers who fail to meet their "moral duty to intervene" could still face ridicule or firing.

Uvalde Mayor Don McLaughlin said it was too early to decide whether any officers should be taken off the force. "I don't know they need to step down," he said. "But everything needs to be reviewed."

So far, officials have only publicly confirmed one officer on leave: Pete Arredondo, the Uvalde school district police chief who also stepped down from his newly won City Council seat last month. He has disputed state police's characterization that he was in charge of the scene.

A Texas Department of Public Safety spokesman said no troopers who were there have been suspended. Officials with the Uvalde police and sheriff's office did not answer questions about whether any of their officers have been suspended or placed on leave.

Greg Shaffer, a Dallas-based security consultant and retired member of the FBI's hostage rescue team, said at the very least, the officers in the video should switch to a different line of work.

"I think everyone in that hallway should reconsider their career choice," he said. "If you don't have the courage and the mindset to run toward gunfire, as a police officer, then you're in the wrong profession."

Witness tampering at Jan. 6 hearing? Cheney raises prospect

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the latest Jan. 6 hearing, already standing out for its notable moments, Rep. Liz Cheney saved the most startling for last.

In her closing remarks, the co-chair of the House investigating committee said the panel had learned that former President Donald Trump had recently tried to contact a witness whom "you have not yet seen in these hearings."

The witness apparently recognized the caller ID, and did not answer the phone, instead contacting a lawyer, who then told the committee. The committee in turn referred the matter to the Justice Department.

Though much remains uncertain about the call, including its purpose and the intended recipient, the way it was described Tuesday raised the prospect that Trump or someone close to him was hoping to shape

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witness testimony in the ongoing congressional hearings into the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the U.S. Capitol.

While the committee has focused largely on compiling a historical record of the attack and Trump's role in it, Cheney's assertions about the former president's phone call added another layer to the inquiry.

It was not the first time the committee has raised the possibility of witness tampering. Among its disclosures on that subject, last month the panel revealed that one witness had been contacted by someone it did not identify, reminding the person that they were perceived as "loyal" and would "do the right thing" at their deposition the next day.

The Justice Department declined to comment on Cheney's disclosure, and it was not clear whether prosecutors who are tracking the hearings might follow up on the outreach to witnesses.

Even so, such contact is problematic given how easy it is for prosecutors to read nefarious intent into it, and can be illegal in instances when someone instructs a witness in any official proceeding to lie, to not cooperate or to otherwise hinder an investigation.

"From a legal perspective, I'm advising my client, 'Don't make a call, don't tell someone to make a call, don't do anything where there's any appearance where you're trying to influence a witness,'" said Michael Weinstein, a former Justice Department prosecutor and criminal defense attorney in New Jersey.

Witness tampering prosecutions are relatively rare and when pursued are hardly slam dunks, Weinstein said, with prosecutors and defense lawyers often diverging on the meaning and intent of particular language to a witness.

The federal statute even says that defendants charged with witness tampering can raise as an affirmative defense that their sole intention was to encourage or induce a witness to testify truthfully.

"It's a very difficult case because unless someone is explicit — i.e. 'Don't Testify. If you testify, I'm going to kill you' — there are a lot of nuances," Weinstein said.

Instances cited by the Jan. 6 committee would appear to involve nuance. In one, a witness said they were told that "as long as I continue to be a team player, they know I'm on the right team. I'm doing the right thing. I'm protecting who I need to protect, you know, I'll continue to stay in good graces in Trump World."

The witness was reminded that Trump does read transcripts.

Another message described by the committee involved a witness who was contacted by a person purporting to pass along a message from someone "who wants me to let you know he's thinking about you. He knows you're loyal and you're going to do the right thing when you go in for your deposition."

None of the people were identified by the committee, but some media reports identified the person who got such a message as Cassidy Hutchinson, an aide to former Trump chief of staff Mark Meadows.

The principal statute governing witness tampering applies to federal proceedings, whether congressional, executive or judicial, and prosecutors must generally establish that the offender knowingly sought to influence, delay or prevent a witness's testimony. A separate statute makes it a crime to intentionally obstruct a pending congressional proceeding.

That witnesses have described being contacted, or that Trump is said to have a keen interest in testimony or cooperation that could be damaging to him, is perhaps not surprising. Special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation documented numerous instances in which Trump or his associates made contact with people they feared could harm them.

Longtime Trump confidant Roger Stone was indicted, then convicted, of witness tampering charges that accused him of urging a witness in a congressional investigation to do a "Frank Pentangeli" — a reference to a character in "The Godfather: Part II" who lies to lawmakers. Trump's campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, also faced accusations that he sought to tamper with witness testimony.

In addition, Mueller's report cites an account from Trump's former personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, that Trump called him a few days after the FBI served search warrants on Cohen and told the attorney to "hang in there" and to "stay strong." Friends of Trump told Cohen that the president loved him and had his back.

At the time, Trump's business, the Trump Organization, was paying Cohen's legal fees, but Cohen has said that stopped after he began discussing with family and friends that he was considering cooperating with Mueller's investigation.

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The Jan. 6 committee is also exploring payments and fees from Trump that have gone to people who have been asked to appear before the panel.

Trump's sprawling fundraising operation paid at least \$4.8 million for "legal expenses" to more than 30 different firms between February 2021 and May of this year, campaign finance disclosures show.

That includes a \$50,000 payment to a law firm where one of Steve Bannon's lawyers is a partner. Bannon, a former White House strategist and Trump ally, is facing trial next week on charges of defying the Jan. 6 committee's subpoena. His lawyer, M. Evan Corcoran, did not return an email seeking comment.

Separately, the committee has noted that Trump's political action committee has made a \$1 million charitable contribution to a foundation, the Conservative Partnership Institute, where Meadows is a senior partner. That contribution was made in July 2021, months before Meadows had halted his cooperation with the committee. A lawyer for Meadows declined to comment Wednesday.

The money was referenced last month by a committee investigator who alleged that large sums Trump raised from supporters to advance the lie that the election was stolen went to his PAC.

But proving that the payment to Meadows' foundation was in any way improper or meant to influence his testimony would be a significant challenge, said Steven Lubet, a Northwestern University law professor.

"You'd have to prove it's a corrupt motive and you'd have to prove that the intention is to hinder, delay, prevent or influence the testimony," Lubet said. "And transferring the money doesn't establish any of those requirements, so there'd have to be some additional proof that those things have happened."

Ex-CIA engineer convicted in massive theft of secret info

By LARRY NEUMEISTER and TOM HAYS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A former CIA software engineer was convicted Wednesday of federal charges accusing him of the biggest theft of classified information in CIA history.

Joshua Schulte, who chose to defend himself at a New York City retrial, had told jurors in closing arguments that the CIA and FBI made him a scapegoat for an embarrassing public release of a trove of CIA secrets by WikiLeaks in 2017.

Schulte watched without visibly reacting as U.S. District Judge Jesse M. Furman announced the guilty verdict on nine counts, which was reached in mid-afternoon by a jury that had deliberated since Friday.

The so-called Vault 7 leak revealed how the CIA hacked Apple and Android smartphones in overseas spying operations, and efforts to turn internet-connected televisions into listening devices. Prior to his arrest, Schulte had helped create the hacking tools as a coder at the agency's headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

A sentencing date was not immediately set because Schulte still awaits trial on charges of possessing and transporting child pornography. He has pleaded not guilty.

Attorney Sabrina Shroff, who advised Schulte during the trial, told Schulte's mother after the verdict that the outcome was a "kick to the gut, the brain and heart." It was unclear if Shroff was expressing her own sentiments or Schulte's.

In his closing, Schulte claimed he was singled out even though "hundreds of people had access to (the information). ... Hundreds of people could have stolen it."

"The government's case is riddled with reasonable doubt," he added. "There's simply no motive here."

Prosecutors alleged the 33-year-old Schulte was motivated to orchestrate the leak because he believed the CIA had disrespected him by ignoring his complaints about the work environment. So he tried "to burn to the ground" the very work he had helped the agency to create, they said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney David Denton encouraged jurors to consider evidence of an attempted cover-up, including a list of chores Schulte drew up that had an entry reading, "Delete suspicious emails."

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said in a statement that Schulte was convicted of "one of the most brazen and damaging acts of espionage in American history."

Williams said Schulte, motivated by resentment toward the CIA, leaked to the public and to U.S. adversaries some of the nation's "most valuable intelligence-gathering cyber tools used to battle terrorist organizations and other malign influences around the globe."

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The prosecutor said Schulte knew the leak would render the CIA's tools "essentially useless, having a devastating effect on our intelligence community by providing critical intelligence to those who wish to do us harm."

While behind bars awaiting trial, prosecutors said he continued his crimes by trying to leak additional classified materials as he carried on an "information war" against the government.

Once the jury left the courtroom for deliberations, the judge complimented Schulte on his closing argument.

"Mr. Schulte, that was impressively done," Furman said. "Depending on what happens here, you may have a future as a defense lawyer."

A mistrial was declared at Schulte's original 2020 trial after jurors deadlocked on the most serious counts, including illegal gathering and transmission of national defense information. Schulte told the judge last year that he wanted to serve as his own attorney for the retrial.

He has not announced whether he wants to represent himself at his next trial, which involves allegations that after leaving the CIA, Schulte moved to New York from Virginia with a computer that contained images and videos of child pornography he had downloaded from the internet from 2009 to March 2017.

Schulte has been held behind bars without bail since 2018. Last year, he complained in court papers that he was a victim of cruel and unusual punishment, awaiting the two trials in solitary confinement inside a vermin-infested cell of a jail unit where inmates are treated like "caged animals."

US inflation surges again in June, raising risks for economy

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. inflation surged to a new four-decade high in June because of rising prices for gas, food and rent, squeezing household budgets and pressuring the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates aggressively -- trends that raise the risk of a recession.

The government's consumer price index soared 9.1% over the past year, the biggest yearly increase since 1981, with nearly half of the increase due to higher energy costs.

Lower-income and Black and Hispanic American have been hit especially hard, since a disproportionate share of their income goes toward essentials such as transportation, housing and food. But with the cost of many goods and services rising faster than average incomes, a vast majority of Americans are feeling the pinch in their daily routines.

For 72-year-old Marcia Freeman, who is retired and lives off of a pension, there is no escape from rising expenses.

"Everything goes up, including cheaper items like store brands," said Freeman, who visited a food bank near Atlanta this week to try and gain control of her grocery costs. Grocery prices have jumped 12% in the past year, the steepest climb since 1979.

Accelerating inflation is a vexing problem for the Federal Reserve, too. The Fed is already engaged in the fastest series of interest rate hikes in three decades, which it hopes will cool inflation by tamping down borrowing and spending by consumers and businesses.

The U.S. economy shrank in the first three months of the year, and many analysts believe the trend continued in the second quarter.

"The Fed's rate hikes are doing what they are supposed to do, which is kill off demand," said Megan Greene, global chief economist at the Kroll Institute. "The trick is if they kill off too much and we get a recession."

The likelihood of larger rate hikes this year pushed stock indexes lower in afternoon trading. The central bank is expected to raise its key short-term rate later this month by a hefty three-quarters of a point, as it did last month.

As consumers' confidence in the economy declines, so have President Joe Biden's approval ratings, posing a major political threat to Democrats in the November congressional elections. Forty percent of adults said in a June AP-NORC poll that they thought tackling inflation should be a top government priority this year, up from just 14% who said so in December.

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After years of low prices, a swift rebound from the 2020 pandemic recession — combined with supply-chain snags — ignited inflation.

Consumers unleashed a wave of pent-up spending, spurred by vast federal aid, ultra-low borrowing costs and savings they had built up while hunkering down. As home-bound Americans spent heavily on furniture, appliances and exercise equipment, factories and shipping companies struggled to keep up and prices for goods soared. Russia's war against Ukraine further magnified energy and food prices.

In recent months, as COVID fears have receded, consumer spending has gradually shifted away from goods and toward services. Yet rather than pulling down inflation by reducing goods prices, the cost of furniture, cars, and other items has kept rising, while restaurant costs, rents and other services are also getting more expensive.

The year-over-year leap in consumer prices last month followed an 8.6% annual jump in May. From May to June, prices rose 1.3%, following a 1% increase from April to May.

Some economists believe inflation might be reaching a short-term peak. Gas prices, for example, have fallen from the eye-watering \$5 a gallon reached in mid-June to an average of \$4.63 nationwide Wednesday — still far higher than a year ago.

Shipping costs and commodity prices have also begun to fall, and pay increases have slowed. Surveys show that Americans' expectations for inflation over the long run have eased — a trend that often points to more moderate price increases over time.

"While today's headline inflation reading is unacceptably high, it is also out-of-date," President Biden said Wednesday. "All major economies are battling this COVID-related challenge."

The latest disappointing data on inflation came out at the outset of Biden's trip to the Middle East, where he will meet with officials from Saudi Arabia to discuss oil prices, among other subjects.

Republican members of Congress have blamed the higher prices on Biden's economic policies, specifically his \$1.9 trillion financial support package approved in March.

There have been signs that inflation was slowing before — last summer, and in April of this year — only for it to surge again in subsequent months.

"There may be some relief in the July numbers — commodity prices have come off the boil, at least — but we are a very, very long way from inflation normalizing, and there is no tangible sign of downward momentum," said Eric Winograd, an economist at asset manager AllianceBernstein.

For now, the relentless pace of price increases is frustrating many Americans.

Delores Bledsoe, a truck driver hauling freight from Carlisle, Pennsylvania to Wisconsin on Wednesday, said her fuel costs have tripled. "It's making me want to get out of the truck and go drive an Uber," said Bledsoe, who lives in Houston. "It's depressing."

Some people are placing blame on companies for using inflation as a cover to raise prices beyond the amount they need to cover their own higher costs.

"I feel the inflation pain every day," Susana Hazard said this week outside a grocery store in New York City. "Every day, everything is going up and up, more than inflation — they're price-adjusting. Because even if inflation doesn't happen, they've raised the prices."

Most economists say corporate price gouging is, at most, one of many causes of runaway inflation and not the primary one.

Housing and rental costs are rising steadily as solid job gains encourage more Americans to move out on their own. Rents have risen 5.8% compared with a year ago, the most since 1986. And the cost of decorating homes is still increasing at a rapid pace — furniture prices are up 13% from a year ago — even as retailers such as Walmart and Target experience rising inventories, which should help lower prices.

The biggest shock has been energy prices, which soared 7.5% just from May to June. Gas prices have skyrocketed nearly 60% compared with a year ago.

Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, so-called core prices rose 0.7% from May to June, the biggest such spike in a year. Core prices jumped 5.9% from a year ago.

Inflation is surging well beyond the United States, with 71 million people pushed into poverty in the three months after Russia invaded Ukraine, the U.N. Development Program said last week.

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The war's economic damage has been especially severe in Europe, with its reliance on Russian oil and natural gas squeezing businesses and consumers with sharply higher bills for utilities, groceries, gasoline and more. Inflation reached decades-high levels of 8.6% last month in the 19 countries that use the euro currency and 9.1% in the United Kingdom in May.

Biden delivers tough talk on Iran as he opens Mideast visit

By JOSH BOAK, JOSEF FEDERMAN and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — President Joe Biden on Wednesday opened his first visit to the Mideast since taking office by offering anxious Israeli leaders strong reassurances of his determination to stop Iran's growing nuclear program, saying he'd be willing to use force as a "last resort."

The president's comments came in an interview with Israel's Channel 12 taped before he left Washington and broadcast Wednesday, hours after the country's political leaders welcomed him with a red-carpet arrival ceremony at the Tel Aviv airport.

"The only thing worse than the Iran that exists now is an Iran with nuclear weapons," Biden said. Asked about using military force against Iran, Biden said, "If that was the last resort, yes."

U.S. ally Israel considers Iran to be its greatest enemy, citing its nuclear program, its calls for Israel's destruction and its support for hostile militant groups across the region.

The U.S. and Israel are expected Thursday to unveil a joint declaration cementing their close military ties and strengthening past calls to take military action to halt Iran's nuclear program. A senior Israeli official said before Biden arrived that both countries would commit to "using all elements of their national power against the Iranian nuclear threat." The official spoke on condition of anonymity pending the formal release of the statement.

Israeli leaders made clear as they marked Biden's arrival that Iran's nuclear program was the top item on their agenda.

"We will discuss the need to renew a strong global coalition that will stop the Iranian nuclear program," said Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid, as he greeted the Democratic president at the airport ceremony in Tel Aviv.

Biden said he would not remove Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps from the U.S. list of terrorist organizations, even if that kept Iran from rejoining the Iran nuclear deal.

Sanctions on the IRGC, which has carried out regional attacks, have been a sticking point in negotiations to bring Iran back into compliance with the agreement meant to keep it from having a nuclear weapon. Iran announced last week that it has enriched uranium to 60% purity, a technical step away from weapons-grade quality.

Iran insists its program is for peaceful purposes, though United Nations experts and Western intelligence agencies say Iran had an organized military nuclear program through 2003.

Biden's visit to Israel follows the collapse of a coalition-led government headed by Naftali Bennett. The president was greeted by Lapid, the caretaker prime minister who is hoping to hang on to power when Israelis hold their fifth election in three years this fall.

Lapid reminded Biden of when they first met roughly eight years earlier. Biden was vice president and Lapid was finance minister.

"You said to me, 'If only I had hair like yours, I would be president' to which I answered, 'And if only I had your height, I would be Prime Minister,'" Lapid said.

Biden made reviving the Iran nuclear deal, brokered by Barack Obama in 2015 and abandoned by Donald Trump in 2018, a key priority as he entered office. Biden said Trump made a "gigantic mistake" by withdrawing the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal.

"There are those who thought with the last administration we sort of walked away from the Middle East, that we were going to create a vacuum that China and or Russia would fill, and we can't let that happen," he said.

But indirect talks for the U.S. to reenter the deal have stalled as Iran has made rapid gains in developing its nuclear program. That's left the Biden administration increasingly pessimistic about resurrecting

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the deal, which placed significant restrictions on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

At the airport, Israeli President Isaac Herzog thanked Biden for championing Israel during his more than 50 years in public office. He then reminded the U.S. president of the "security challenges emanating directly from Iran and its proxies, threatening Israel and its neighbors and endangering our region."

Israelis seemed determined to underscore the imminent threat from Iran. Soon after he arrived, Biden was briefed on the country's "Iron Dome" and new "Iron Beam" missile defense systems.

The president later visited the Yad Vashem memorial to Holocaust victims in Jerusalem.

Biden, wearing a skullcap, was invited to rekindle the eternal flame in the memorial's Hall of Remembrance. Two Marines placed a wreath on the stone crypt containing the ashes of Holocaust victims and Biden listened as a cantor recited the remembrance prayer.

He then greeted two Holocaust survivors, kissing the women on their cheeks. His eyes welled with tears as he chatted with them.

"My mother would say 'God love you, dear,'" Biden told the women.

One of the survivors, Rena Quint, 86, later said she told Biden how her mother and brothers were killed in a death camp. Quint, who was born in Poland, said she was reunited with her father in a male slave labor factory, where she pretended to be a boy. Her father also was murdered. She later was adopted by a childless Jewish couple after she arrived in the United States in 1946.

"Did you see the president hug me?" she asked "He asked permission to kiss me and he kept on holding my hand and we were told not to touch him."

Biden is set to meet Thursday with Israeli officials, including Lapid, Herzog and opposition leader and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He'll meet Friday with Palestinian officials.

Biden said he will emphasize in talks with Israeli and Palestinian leaders his continued support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but acknowledged that outcome likely wouldn't be feasible "in the near term."

He maintained that a two-state solution is the best way to ensure a "future of equal measure of freedom, prosperity and democracy for Israelis and Palestinians alike." His national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said Biden would not offer any proposals during the trip aimed at restarting talks.

The White House has also been frustrated with repeated Iran-sponsored attacks on U.S. troops based in Iraq, though the administration says the frequency of such attacks has dropped precipitously over the last two years. Tehran also backs the rebel Houthis in a bloody war with the Saudis in Yemen. A U.N.-brokered cease-fire has been in place for more than four months, a fragile peace in a war that began in 2015.

Sullivan said this week that the administration believes Russia is turning to Iran to provide it with hundreds of unmanned aerial vehicles, including weapons-capable drones, for use in its ongoing war in Ukraine. Sullivan said Wednesday that Iranians showing a willingness to assist Russia is something that should be of great concern to the Israelis, Saudis and other Gulf allies that Biden will be meeting with this week.

"We think that this is of interest, to put it mildly, to countries we will be visiting on this trip," Sullivan said.

Pharmacies can't discriminate on reproductive health scripts

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

The Biden administration is warning pharmacies not to discriminate against women who may seek reproductive health prescriptions, including some that might be involved in ending a pregnancy.

The Department of Health and Human Services said Wednesday that pharmacies receiving federal money from programs such as Medicare and Medicaid cannot discriminate in how they supply medications or advise patients on prescriptions.

The agency noted that discrimination against people based on their pregnancy or related conditions would be a form of sex discrimination.

The announcement comes as the administration seeks to ensure reproductive health services for women following last month's Supreme Court decision that ended a constitutional right to abortion.

On Monday, the administration told hospitals that they "must" provide abortion services if the life of the

mother is at risk. The government said federal law on emergency treatment guidelines preempts state laws in jurisdictions that now ban the procedure without any exceptions. Now, all states provide an exception for the life of the mother.

President Joe Biden also has signed an executive order to try to protect some access to the procedure, but he also has acknowledged that his administration is limited in what it can do. He noted earlier this month that an act of Congress would be required to restore nationwide access to abortion services, and he has urged Americans angered by the Supreme Court's ruling to vote in November.

Wednesday's actions, like those outlined Monday, do not reflect new policy. They aim to remind care providers of their existing obligations under federal law.

"We are committed to ensuring that everyone can access health care, free of discrimination," Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said in a statement. "This includes access to prescription medications for reproductive health and other types of care."

The department's guidance to pharmacies outlined several hypothetical examples of potential discrimination. They include a pharmacy that refuses to fill a prescription of mifepristone followed by misoprostol to help manage complications from a miscarriage after a pregnancy loss.

That combination of drugs also is commonly used in medication abortions.

A pharmacy that refuses to fill a prescription of misoprostol prescribed to help deal with severe stomach ulcer complications may be discriminating based on disability, HHS said. The agency noted that the pharmacy also may be discriminating if it refuses to stock the drug based on its alternate use.

HHS also cited as another example of potential discrimination: a pharmacy that refuses to fill a prescription for methotrexate to halt an ectopic pregnancy, which grows outside the womb and is not viable.

The federal agency said people who believe their rights have been violated should visit an online portal for the Office for Civil Rights to file a complaint.

Experts rue simple steps not taken before latest COVID surge

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

With new omicron variants again driving COVID-19 hospital admissions and deaths higher in recent weeks, states and cities are rethinking their responses and the White House is stepping up efforts to alert the public.

Some experts said the warnings are too little, too late.

The highly transmissible BA.5 variant now accounts for 65% of cases with its cousin BA.4 contributing another 16%. The variants have shown a remarkable ability to get around the protection offered by infection and vaccination.

"It's well past the time when the warning could have been put out there," said Dr. Eric Topol, head of the Scripps Research Translational Institute, who has called BA.5 "the worst variant yet."

Global trends for the two mutants have been apparent for weeks, experts said — they quickly out-compete older variants and push cases higher wherever they appear. Yet Americans have tossed off their masks and jumped back into travel and social gatherings. And they have largely ignored booster shots, which protect against COVID-19's worst outcomes. Courts have blocked federal mask and vaccine mandates, tying the hands of U.S. officials.

"We learn a lot from how the virus is acting elsewhere and we should apply the knowledge here," said Ali Mokdad, a professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle.

White House COVID-19 coordinator Dr. Ashish Jha appeared on morning TV on Wednesday urging booster shots and renewed vigilance. Yet Mokdad said federal health officials need to be push harder on masks indoors, early detection and prompt antiviral treatment.

"They are not doing all that they can," Mokdad said.

The administration's challenge, in the view of the White House, is not their messaging, but people's willingness to hear it — due to pandemic fatigue and the politicization of the virus response.

For months, the White House has encouraged Americans to make use of free or cheap at-home rapid

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tests to detect the virus, as well as the free and effective antiviral treatment Paxlovid that protects against serious illness and death. On Tuesday, the White House response team called on all adults 50 and older to urgently get a booster if they haven't yet this year — and dissuaded people from waiting for the next generation of shots expected in the fall when they can roll up their sleeves and get some protection now.

Los Angeles County, the nation's largest by population, is facing a return to a broad indoor mask mandate if current trends in hospital admissions continue, health director Barbara Ferrer told county supervisors Tuesday.

"I do recognize that when we return to universal indoor masking to reduce high spread, for many this will feel like a step backwards," Ferrer said. But she stressed that requiring masks "helps us to reduce risk."

LA County has long required masks in some indoor spaces, including health care facilities, Metro trains and buses, airports, jails and homeless shelters. A universal mandate would expand the requirement to all indoor public spaces, including shared offices, manufacturing facilities, warehouses, retail stores, restaurants and bars, theaters and schools.

Sharon Fayette ripped off her mask the moment she stepped out of a Lyft ride in LA and groaned when informed another universal mask requirement might be coming. "Oh man, when will it end?" she wondered about the pandemic.

Fayette said she was exhausted by shifting regulations and dubious another mandate would be followed by most residents. "I just think people are over it, over all the rules," she said.

The nation's brief lull in COVID deaths has reversed. Last month, daily deaths were falling, though they never matched last year's low, and deaths are now heading up again.

The seven-day average for daily deaths in the U.S. rose 26% over the past two weeks to 489 on July 12.

The coronavirus is not killing nearly as many as it was last fall and winter, and experts do not expect death to reach those levels again soon. But hundreds of daily deaths for a summertime respiratory illness would normally be jaw-dropping, said Andrew Noymer, a public health professor at the University of California, Irvine. He noted that in Orange County, California, 46 people died of COVID-19 in June.

"That would be all hands on deck," Noymer said. "People would be like, 'There's this crazy new flu that's killing people in June.'"

Instead, simple, proven precautions are not being taken. Vaccinations, including booster shots for those eligible, lower the risk of hospitalization and death — even against the latest variants. But less than half of all eligible U.S. adults have gotten a single booster shot, and only about 1 in 4 Americans age 50 and older who are eligible for a second booster have received one.

"This has been a botched booster campaign," Topol said, noting that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still uses the term "fully vaccinated" for people with two shots of Moderna or Pfizer. "They haven't gotten across that two shots is totally inadequate," he said.

Noymer said if he were in charge of the nation's COVID response he would level with the American people in an effort to get their attention in this third year of the pandemic. He would tell Americans to take it seriously, mask indoors and "until we get better vaccines, there's going to be a new normal of a disease that kills over 100,000 Americans a year and impacts life expectancy."

That message probably wouldn't fly for political reasons, Noymer acknowledged.

It also might not fly with people who are tired of taking precautions after more than two years of the pandemic. Valerie Walker of New Hope, Pennsylvania, is mindful of the latest surge but is hardly alarmed.

"I was definitely concerned back then," she said of the pandemic's early days, with images of body bags on nightly news broadcasts. "Now there's fatigue, things were getting better and there was a vaccine. So I would say from a scale between one and 10, I'm probably at a four."

Even with two friends now sick with the virus, and her husband recently recovered, Walker says she has bigger problems.

"Sometimes when I think about it I still put a mask on when I go into a store, but honestly, it is not a daily thought for me," she said.

Wildfires scorch parts of Europe amid extreme heat wave

By HELENA ALVES and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — A spate of wildfires is scorching parts of Europe, with firefighters battling blazes in Portugal, Spain, Croatia and southern France on Wednesday amid an unusual heat wave that authorities are linking to climate change.

In Portugal, Civil Protection commander André Fernandes said multiple fires have caused the evacuation of more than 600 people. About 120 people needed medical treatment, with two people — one civilian and one firefighter — suffering serious injuries, Fernandes said.

Water-dumping planes helped 1,300 firefighters combat the worst of the blazes in the nation's central area, while another 1,000 worked to bring other fires under control.

The European heat wave is also sparking flames in Spain and France — and in Turkey at the other end of the Mediterranean.

More than 800 firefighters battled two wildfires in the region outside Bordeaux in southwest France, according to the regional emergency service. The fires began Tuesday near the towns of Landiras and La Teste-de-Buch, and firefighters hadn't been able to contain them by Wednesday morning.

About 6,500 people have been evacuated from campgrounds and villages in the forested area. The number of injuries is unclear. The two fires have destroyed more than 1,800 hectares (4,400 acres) of terrain. Images from firefighters showed flames racing through thickets of trees and grassland, fanned by strong winds, and smoke blackening the horizon.

The regional administration banned activity in forested areas at risk. Several regions in southern France are on fire alert because of hot, dry weather and high winds. Wildfires swept through the Gard region in southeast France last week.

Portugal has long experienced fatal forest fires. In 2017, wildfires killed more than 100 people. No one has died from a wildfire since then as Portugal improved its forest management and firefighting strategies.

Last year, Portugal recorded its lowest number of wildfires since 2011. But a mass of hot and dry air blown in by African winds are driving temperatures in the Iberian Peninsula beyond their usual highs.

The Atlantic country, which has been on alert of wildfires since last week, is sweltering under a spike in temperatures that is forecast to send thermometers in the central Alentejo region to 46 C (115 F) on Wednesday and Thursday. Authorities said that 96% of the country was classified at the end of June as being in either "extreme" or "severe" drought.

More than 3,000 hectares (7,400 acres) had been consumed alone in the district of Leiria, just north of Lisbon, Mayor Goncalo Lopes told Portuguese state broadcaster RTP.

Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa, who canceled a trip abroad to deal with the emergency, said that better care of woodlands and abandoned farmland was key to protecting them.

"In 2017, the country realized that having enough firefighters is essential, but it is not enough," Costa said. "We have to get to the root of the problem ... The abandonment of property and its non-management is one of the biggest risk factors for forest fires."

Neighboring Spain hit highs of 43 C (109.4 F) in several southern cities on Tuesday. Over 400 people were evacuated Tuesday because of a wildfire that has consumed 3,500 hectares (8,600 acres) in western Spain.

Fuelled by strong winds, fires raged along Croatia's Adriatic Sea coast as well, with the most dramatic situation reported near the town of Sibenik, where water-dropping planes and dozens of firefighters struggled to contain the flames that briefly engulfed some cars and a church tower. Regional N1 television reported that some residents evacuated the area in rubber boats. Fires were also reported near the coastal town of Zadar.

Firefighter Boris Dukić told state HRT television that "it's hell, we don't know where to go first."

European Union officials issued a warning last week that climate change is behind the extremely dry and hot summer so far on the continent, urging local authorities to brace for wildfires.

Cayetano Torres, spokesman for Spain's national weather forecaster, said that the "unusual" heat wave and lack of rainfall in recent months has created ideal circumstances for fires.

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"These are perfect conditions for the propagation of fires, which when you add to that some wind, you have have guaranteed propagation," he said.

In southwestern Turkey, a blaze erupted close to the village of Mesudiye, near the Aegean Sea resort of Datca, and was moving toward homes in the area, according to the provincial governor's office. It said at least nine water-dropping helicopters and five planes were deployed to battle the fire.

Last summer, blazes that were fed by strong winds and scorching temperatures tore through forests in Turkey's Mediterranean and Aegean regions. The wildfires, which killed at least eight people and countless animals, were described as the worst in Turkey's history.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government came under sharp criticism for its inadequate response and preparedness to fight large-scale wildfires, including a lack of modern firefighting planes.

Sri Lanka in crisis: President flees and ire turns to PM

By KRISHAN FRANCIS and KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lanka's president fled the country Wednesday, plunging a nation already reeling from economic chaos into more political turmoil. Protesters demanding a change in leadership then trained their ire on the prime minister and stormed his office.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his wife left aboard an air force plane bound for the Maldives, and he made his prime minister the acting president in his absence. That appeared to only further roil passions in the island nation, which has been gripped for months by an economic meltdown that has triggered severe shortages of food and fuel.

Thousands of protesters who wanted Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to go had anticipated that he would be put in charge. They rallied outside his office compound, and some scaled the walls. The crowd roared its support for the people charging in and tossed water bottles to them.

Dozens could later be seen inside the office or standing on a rooftop terrace waving Sri Lanka's flag — the latest in a series of takeovers of government buildings by demonstrators seeking a new government.

"We need both ... to go home," said Supun Eranga, a 28-year-old civil servant in the crowd. "Ranil couldn't deliver what he promised during his two months, so he should quit. All Ranil did was try to protect the Rajapaksas."

But Wickremesinghe appeared on television to reiterate that he would not leave until a new government was in place — though he urged the Parliament speaker to find a new prime minister agreeable to both the government and the opposition. It was not clear when that would happen, in part because the opposition is deeply fractured.

Although he fled, Rajapaksa has yet to officially resign, but the speaker of the parliament said the president assured him he would do so later in the day.

The political impasse only threatened to worsen the bankrupt nation's economic collapse since the absence of an alternative government could delay a hoped-for bailout from the International Monetary Fund. In the meantime, the country is relying on aid from neighboring India and from China.

Police initially used tear gas to try to disperse the protesters outside the prime minister's office but failed, and more and more marched down the lane toward the compound. As helicopters flew overhead, some demonstrators held up their middle fingers.

Eventually security forces appeared to give up, with some retreating from the area and others simply standing around the overrun compound. Inside the building, the mood was celebratory, as people sprawled on elegant sofas, watched TV and held mock meetings in wood-paneled conference rooms. Some wandered around as if touring a museum.

"We will cook here, eat here and live here. We will stay until (Wickremesinghe) hands over his resignation," said Lahiru Ishara, 32, a supervisor at a supermarket in Colombo who has been a part of the protests since they kicked off in April. "There's no other alternative."

Chief of Defense Staff Gen. Shavendra Silva issued another call for calm Wednesday and asked the public to cooperate with security forces. Similar comments in recent days rankled opposition lawmakers,

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who insisted that civilian leaders would be the ones to find a solution.

Over the weekend, protesters seized the president's home and office and the official residence of the prime minister following months of demonstrations that have all but dismantled the Rajapaksa family's political dynasty, which ruled Sri Lanka for most of the past two decades.

Protesters accuse the president and his relatives of siphoning money from government coffers for years and Rajapaksa's administration of hastening the country's collapse by mismanaging the economy.

The family has denied the corruption allegations, but Rajapaksa acknowledged some of his policies contributed to the meltdown, which has left the island nation laden with debt and unable to pay for imports of basic necessities.

The shortages have sown despair among Sri Lanka's 22 million people. The country's rapid decline was all the more shocking because, before the recent crisis, the economy had been expanding, and a comfortable middle class was growing.

"Not only Gotabaya and Ranil, all 225 members of Parliament should go home. Because for the last few decades, family politics have ruined our country," said Madusanka Perera, a laborer who came to Colombo from the city's outskirts on the day protesters occupied the first government buildings. He lost his job, and his father, a driver, can't work because of fuel shortages.

"I'm 29 years old — I should be having the best time of life, but instead I don't have a job, no money and no life," he said.

As the protests escalated Wednesday outside the prime minister's compound, his office imposed a state of emergency that gives broader powers to the military and police and declared an immediate nationwide curfew. It was unclear what effect the curfew would have: Some ignored it, while many others rarely leave their homes anyway because of fuel shortages.

In his TV appearance, Wickremesinghe said he created a committee of police and military chiefs to restore order.

The air force earlier said in a statement that it provided an aircraft, with defense ministry approval, for the president and his wife to travel to the Maldives, an archipelago in the Indian Ocean known for exclusive tourist resorts. It said all immigration and customs laws were followed.

Local media in the Maldives reported that Rajapaksa's planned travel to another country was delayed, forcing him to remain there Wednesday night.

The whereabouts of other family members who had served in the government, including several who resigned their posts in recent months, were uncertain.

Sri Lankan presidents are protected from arrest while in power, and it is likely Rajapaksa planned his escape while he still had constitutional immunity. A corruption lawsuit against him in his former role as a defense official was withdrawn when he was elected president in 2019.

Assuming Rajapaksa resigns as planned, Sri Lankan lawmakers agreed to elect a new president on July 20 who will serve the remainder of Rajapaksa's term, which ends in 2024. That person could potentially appoint a new prime minister, who would then have to be approved by Parliament.

"Gotabaya resigning is one problem solved — but there are so many more," said Bhasura Wickremesinghe, a 24-year-old student of maritime electrical engineering, who is not related to the prime minister.

He complained that Sri Lankan politics have been dominated for years by "old politicians" who all need to go. "Politics needs to be treated like a job — you need to have qualifications that get you hired, not because of what your last name is," he said, referring to the Rajapaksa family.

Advocates: Farah's story can help other trafficking victims

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Until this week, Mo Farah was a four-time Olympic champion winding down his hugely successful career as a long-distance runner. Now he's an icon for another reason: He is the most prominent person to come forward as a victim of people trafficking.

Farah's decision to tell the story of how he was brought to Britain illegally as a child and forced to work

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as a domestic servant has given a face to the often nameless victims of modern slavery, crime victims who many times are dismissed as "illegal" immigrants.

"I don't think there's ever been a case in British public life where somebody so familiar to the British public ... reveals how dark, how difficult, how complex his back story is," said Sunder Katwala, director of British Future, a nonpartisan think tank on identity and immigration. "We rarely have the voices and faces of people trafficked, but for it to be one of the most familiar public figures of Britain in this century is truly extraordinary."

Farah's revelations have the potential to create the safe space necessary for other trafficking victims to seek help, just as entertainers and athletes who came out as homosexual bolstered the gay rights movement, Katwala said. They will also put pressure on authorities to ensure that those who are exploited by traffickers are treated as victims, not criminals to be deported.

Farah, 39, said he decided to speak out about his experience to challenge public perceptions of trafficking and modern slavery.

His story, which has resonated globally, comes as conflict, climate change and economic collapse displace record numbers of people around the world, pushing more and more migrants into the hands of gangs who smuggle them into Britain, the European Union and the U.S.

Those who can afford it pay thousands of dollars to reach countries where they hope to find jobs and security. Others fall prey to criminals who force them into sex work, drug crimes and domestic servitude.

More than 10,000 people were referred to British authorities as possible victims of modern slavery in 2020, up from 2,340 in 2014, according to a report from the Home Office, the government agency responsible for border enforcement.

Britain has struggled to respond to this complex environment, with the government opening its doors to refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine in recent months while proposing to deport "illegal" immigrants from other countries who are seeking asylum to Rwanda. While Prime Minister Boris Johnson says the Rwanda plan will break the business model of criminals who smuggle people across the English Channel in small boats, immigrant advocates say the plan is illegal and inhumane.

Rob McNeil, deputy director of The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, said Farah's story is unlikely to change U.K. policy on its own, but it helps shift the debate by humanizing the abstract idea of an "illegal immigrant."

"Policy narratives about irregular migrants typically deal with them as a sort of homogenous group of 'wrongdoers' and a problem to be solved, rather than individuals at risk," he said. "A softening of the U.K.'s rhetoric and policy toward irregular arrivals seems likely only if the wider debate becomes more focused on the people who are being targeted, rather than the policy failures they represent."

In a documentary broadcast this week by the BBC, Farah said his real name is Hussein Abdi Kahin and he was born in Somaliland, a breakaway region of Somalia ravaged by war during his childhood.

He said he was 8 or 9 years old and living in neighboring Djibouti when a woman he didn't know brought him to Britain using fake travel documents that included his picture alongside the name Mohammed Farah, which became his identity.

Farah said he was excited because he'd never been on a plane and thought he was going to Europe to live with relatives. Instead, the woman took him to an apartment in west London, tore up a piece of paper that contained his relatives' contact details and forced him to care for her children, Farah said. He wasn't allowed to go to school until he was 12.

It was then that Farah's talent as a runner helped him escape his life of servitude. Farah said he confided in a physical education teacher who arranged for him to live with another family from Somalia.

After that, he bottled up his emotions and kept the truth about his early life secret. He described the wave of support following the documentary as "incredible."

"It has taken me a long time to come to this, but I'm glad I've made this documentary to show people the reality of what really happened to me as a child," he told the BBC in an interview broadcast Wednesday.

London's Metropolitan Police Service said it was "assessing" the information raised in the documentary.

Charity workers, lawyers and others who help victims of modern slavery praised Farah's courage in coming forward and said the publicity will help bring humanity to the debate. Many victims, they say, struggle for years to escape and overcome the trauma caused by their exploitation.

"To know that there is someone, as tragic as it is, who has gone through it, come through, and been able to be successful in his chosen field and to speak from lived experience is an immensely important thing," said Ryna Sherazi, director of fundraising and communications at Anti-Slavery International, a charity that works to eliminate slavery around the world.

Until this week, Farah had said he came to Britain as a refugee with his family. That is the story he told U.K. immigration officials when he became a citizen in 2000 at the age of 17.

He went on to represent Great Britain at three Olympic Games, winning gold in the 5,000- and 10,000-meter runs in both 2012 and 2016. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2017.

Despite his fame, Farah said he feared he would be deported if he told the truth about how he came to Britain. He expressed relief that after the documentary aired, the Home Office pledged not to take action against him.

Nando Sigona, an expert on migration at the University of Birmingham, put the Home Office's "mild reaction" down to the fact that the ruling Conservative Party is in the middle of a leadership election.

"At this point, it is unclear if the Mo Farah case will lead to something good for others," Sigona said. "The risk is that it remains a story that generates sympathy only because it involves an exceptionally talented person."

The documentary ends with Farah still wondering why he was brought to the U.K. Back in Africa, his mother tells him she never agreed for him to travel to England and only lost touch because of war and poor communications in her homeland.

But as Farah reveals his plan to come clean about his past, his mother offers unconditional support.

"Lying is a sin," she tells him.

Descendants of possible Tulsa massacre victims can give DNA

By KEN MILLER Associated Press

People who believe they are descendants of victims of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre can now provide genetic material to help scientists when they begin trying to identify remains of possible victims.

Danny Hellwig, laboratory director with Intermountain Forensics, said Wednesday that researchers are not ready to begin trying to match DNA for identification, but an outpouring of requests from local residents on how to provide genetic material led them to begin the process of accepting donations.

"That's what prompted this," Hellwig said. "We didn't expect the amount of support and willingness to help... people have jumped out of the woodwork" to offer their DNA for testing.

Black people who had ancestors in Tulsa in 1921 are sought, Hellwig said.

"What we need is to populate these databases with family lines" of direct descendants, making identifications of the remains possible within days, Hellwig said.

"If we're only matched with very distant relatives it can take much longer," with previous efforts to make such matches taking four years or more, he said.

The Salt Lake City nonprofit foundation is examining 14 sets of remains removed from a local cemetery a year ago and has said at least two of the remains contains enough usable DNA for testing for possible identification.

The remains have not been confirmed as victims of the 1921 massacre, a finding that officials say could be impossible because of the length of time since they died.

People can provide their information from genealogy sites such as ancestry.com or 23andme.com and upload that to www.tulsa1921dna.org, but it isn't known when the process of trying to match the DNA will begin.

Hellwig said donor have the option to prohibit their information from being shared with other agencies, including law enforcement, and can remove their information at any time.

The 1921 massacre occurred when a white mob descended on Greenwood, a predominantly Black neighborhood in Tulsa. More than 1,000 homes were burned, hundreds were looted and the thriving business district known as Black Wall Street was destroyed.

A search for the graves of massacre victims began in 2020 and resumed last year with nearly three dozen coffins containing remains of possible victims recovered.

Investigators haven't said when they'll analyze additional sites where suspected mass graves are located, but potential search areas are planned, according to city officials in Tulsa.

Judge rejects Amber Heard's request to set aside Depp win

By MATTHEW BARAKAT and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (AP) — A Virginia judge on Wednesday rejected an effort by actress Amber Heard to set aside the \$10 million judgment awarded against her in favor of her ex-husband, Johnny Depp.

Depp won a defamation suit against Heard last month in a high-profile civil trial. Heard won a smaller, \$2 million judgement on a counterclaim she filed against Depp.

Earlier this month, Heard filed a motion seeking to have Depp's verdict set aside, or have a mistrial declared. Her lawyers cited multiple factors, including an apparent case of mistaken identity with one of the jurors.

In a written order, Judge Penney Azcarate rejected all of Heard's claims and said the juror issue specifically was irrelevant and that Heard can't show she was prejudiced.

"The juror was vetted, sat for the entire jury, deliberated, and reached a verdict. The only evidence before this Court is that this juror and all jurors followed their oaths, the Court's instructions, and orders. This Court is bound by the competent decision of the jury," Azcarate wrote.

Depp sued for \$50 million in Fairfax County after Heard wrote a 2018 op-ed piece in The Washington Post about domestic violence in which she referred to herself as "a public figure representing domestic abuse." The article never mentioned Depp by name, but his lawyers said several passages in the article defamed him by implication by referring to highly publicized abuse allegations she made in 2016 as she filed for divorce.

Heard then filed a \$100 million counterclaim, also for defamation. By the time the case went to trial, her counterclaim had been whittled down to a few statements made by one of Depp's lawyers, who called Heard's abuse allegations a hoax.

The jury awarded \$15 million to Depp and \$2 million to Heard on her counterclaim. The \$15 million judgment was reduced to \$10.35 million because Virginia law caps punitive damages at \$350,000.

The judge did not spell out rationale for rejecting Heard's other claims in Wednesday's order.

Among other things, Heard argued that the \$10 million verdict is unsupported by the facts, and seems to demonstrate that jurors failed to focus on the fallout from the 2018 op-ed piece — as they were supposed to do — and instead just looked broadly at the damage Depp's reputation suffered as a result of the alleged abuse.

Heard's lawyers also argued that the verdicts for Depp on one hand and Heard on the other are fundamentally nonsensical.

"The jury's dueling verdicts are inconsistent and irreconcilable," her lawyers, Elaine Bredehoft and Benjamin Rottenborn, wrote.

Heard's lawyers also challenged the verdict on the basis that one of the seven jurors who decided the case was never summoned for jury duty. According to court papers, a 77-year-old county resident received a jury summons. But the man's son, who has the same name and lives at the same address, responded to the summons and served in his stead.

Heard's lawyers argued that Virginia law is strict about juror identities, and the case of mistaken identity is grounds for a mistrial. They presented no evidence that the 52-year-old son, identified in court papers only as Juror #15, purposefully or insidiously sought to replace his father, but they argue that possibility should not be discounted.

"The Court cannot assume, as Mr. Depp asks it to, that Juror 15's apparently improper service was an innocent mistake. It could have been an intentional attempt to serve on the jury of a high-profile case," Heard's lawyers wrote.

Heard still has the ability to appeal the verdict to the Virginia Court of Appeals. The issues presented to the appellate court could well be different from the issues Azcarate rejected Wednesday.

In a separate order, the judge ordered that dozens of court documents be unsealed, including motions seeking to compel independent medical examinations of both Depp and Heard. A handful of documents will remain sealed, mostly because they contain personal contact information or personal medical information.

"In this matter, both litigants sued one another, thereby opening themselves up to the public forum of a jury trial. Court records are public information," Azcarate wrote.

Bodies of missing man, 3 kids found in Indianapolis pond

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The bodies of a man and his three young children who vanished last week after leaving for a fishing trip were found along with a submerged car in the pond where they were headed, authorities said Wednesday.

The bodies discovered Tuesday night are those of Kyle Moorman, 27, of Indianapolis, and his children: 1-year-old Kyran Holland, 2-year-old Kyannah Holland and 5-year-old Kyle Moorman II, the Marion County Coroner's Office confirmed. The causes and manners of their deaths were pending.

The family went missing after leaving on July 6 to go to the pond on Indianapolis' south side.

Officers went to the pond Tuesday night after a report of a dead person in the water. A man was pronounced dead, and a dive team later found a vehicle with the bodies of three children inside, police said.

"Detectives are working to piece together what led up to this incident," police said in a statement.

Family and friends of the Moormans had offered a \$10,000 reward for information leading to their whereabouts. They had searched the pond and the surrounding area for days. A private helicopter and volunteers with a personal boat also searched Tuesday, The Indianapolis Star reported.

Moorman's sister Mariah Moorman had said her brother's phone last pinged near the pond about 12:40 a.m. on July 7, a few hours after he was seen. She said her brother often goes night fishing.

"As far as we know, he was coming out here to go fishing," she told The Indianapolis Star on Monday. "That's what he told my sister. It's not odd. He does it all the time."

The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department first revealed that the family had disappeared on Sunday. Earlier this week, police said officers searched the area and other locations on foot and using drones.

William Muse, a relative of Kyle Moorman's mother, said Tuesday he and other family members were frustrated investigators didn't search the pond sooner.

"They should have at least tried," Muse said.

EXPLAINER: Why Iran cracks down at home, cozies up to Moscow

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Backed into a corner by the West, Iran is ramping up uranium enrichment, clamping down on dissent and deepening ties with Russia in a challenge to the U.S. and Europe.

Russian President Vladimir Putin heads to Tehran next week to meet with Iran's leader — his second trip abroad since sending troops into Ukraine. The surprise announcement came a day after the White House said Tehran is preparing to send armed drones to Russia for use in Ukraine and before U.S. President Joe Biden headed to Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Tehran, severed from the global banking system by Western sanctions, wants to show it has alternatives. Talks to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, which eased sanctions on Iran in return for curbs on its atomic program, are at standstill.

Pressures are mounting on the Islamic Republic, with its economy shrinking and its people struggling, with no relief in sight.

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A look at the challenges facing Iran, and what it means for the world:

A BREWING NUCLEAR CRISIS

Former U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers in 2018 and sought to squeeze Iran economically until it returned to the negotiating table. A defiant Iran resumed prohibited nuclear work.

Biden took office with a promise to restore the deal. Then hard-line cleric Ebrahim Raisi became Iran's leader, and the nuclear talks have hit a stalemate.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog group, reports that Iran now has 43 kilograms (over 94 1/2 pounds) of uranium enriched to 60% — a short step from weapons-grade levels. That's enough fissile material for a weapon, if it chose to pursue one. However, Iran would still need to design a bomb and a delivery system, which likely would take months. Tehran is spinning more advanced centrifuges and has dismantled over two dozen IAEA cameras monitoring its work.

Iran insists its program is for peaceful purposes. U.N. experts and Western intelligence agencies say Iran had an organized military nuclear program through 2003.

Experts say Tehran increasingly sees a future without the nuclear accord, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, setting the stage for a possible crisis.

"The Iranians have come to the conclusion that the JCPOA is no longer serving their interests," said Ali Vaez, the International Crisis Group's Iran project director. Iran can't guarantee the U.S. won't again quit the pact and reimpose sanctions if a new president takes office in 2025.

"That political risk is something no one wants to shoulder," Vaez added.

The stakes extend beyond Iran. Israel, its archrival and the sole nuclear power in the region, has threatened military strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities.

"Iran could enrich to 90%, but that would be a very dramatic escalation, and I'm pretty confident that would spark a (military) reaction," said John Krzyzaniak, an Iranian proliferation expert at the Wisconsin Project, referring to weapons-grade enrichment levels.

IRAN'S INTENSIFYING CRACKDOWN

In 2019, some believed that Iran's 40-year-old revolution could be undone by a 50% fuel price increase, and the country's security forces responded ruthlessly to nationwide protests.

Nearly three years later, Iran remains under crippling sanctions. Inflation has skyrocketed, eating away at workers' incomes. The Iranian currency has plunged, wiping out savings. The government has cut subsidies on food staples, stoking public outrage. In May, a 10-story tower collapsed in southwestern Iran, killing at least 41 people and exposing corruption.

To stave off unrest, authorities have recently arrested protesters angry about high prices, teachers' union activists, acclaimed filmmakers and a prominent reformist politician.

Two of the detained dissident filmmakers had allegedly voiced support for demonstrations over the building collapse.

Facing pressure over its failure to deliver on promises of sanctions relief, the "system is directly signaling to the Iranian people they're not going to tolerate dissent," said Sanam Vakil, deputy director of the Middle East and North Africa Program at Chatham House.

That message has gained momentum as a kind of shadow war between Israel and Iran moves into the open — on the high seas and on Tehran's streets.

"Ordinary Iranians lobbying for better rights are going to be more persecuted because the crackdown is now in the name of national security," Vakil added.

ALLIANCE WITH RUSSIA

Facing a Western economic backlash over its action in Ukraine, Moscow sees Tehran as a key partner and potential source of arms. Amid intensifying diplomatic isolation, Iran has increasingly found common ground with Russia, including a shared adversary in Washington.

Biden is visiting the Middle East this week — first to Israel, Iran's biggest foe, and then to Saudi Arabia, another Tehran rival — and it was no coincidence the White House said Iran was preparing to provide Russia with drones and training just days before the trip.

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"We think that this is of interest, to put it mildly, to the countries we will be visiting on this trip," said National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan.

Citing a Russian Foreign Ministry source, the Interfax news agency described the drone deliveries as "disinformation" intended to "further fuel anti-Iranian sentiments in the Arab states."

One aim of Biden's trip is encouraging Arab nations to strengthen security alliances, built on the shared fear of Iran.

"We see the emergence of two opposite blocs," said Yoel Guzansky, a Gulf expert and senior fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv. "The U.S. is trying to unite the Arab world ... with Russia and Iran and perhaps China on the opposite side."

Military coordination between Tehran and Moscow has intensified since they pooled efforts to shore up Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government in the country's civil war.

Iran's advancing drone capabilities could prove valuable for Russia, Krzyzaniak said. The Iranian aircraft, in some cases mimicking the designs of U.S. military drones, are battle-tested by Yemen's Houthi rebels fighting a Saudi-led military coalition, according to Western officials and U.N. experts.

But the Iran-Russia relationship is not free of friction.

Their former empires were centuries-old rivals, and Russia's occupation of Iran during World War II — and its refusal to leave afterward — bred decades of distrust.

Those old differences are playing out in new ways. Sanctioned Russian oil, which is now more discounted than crude from Iran, is eating into Tehran's share of the crucial Chinese market and forcing it to slash prices, experts say.

Other differences include Putin's friendly ties with Israel. As part of a delicate balancing act, the Kremlin has struck deals in Syria, such as in 2018 when Moscow had Tehran keep its fighters away from the Golan Heights to accommodate Israeli concerns.

But with pressure growing on both countries, their bond seems sure to grow.

For Russia, Iran represents a source of expertise in how to avoid sanctions and access the world's black markets. Bilateral trade is booming, according to Tehran-based political analyst Saeed Leilaz, noting Russia has increased its imports of Iranian produce and seeks trade routes to India.

For Iran, "foreign policy is decided based on what the system sees as in the best interest for its survival," said Vaez, of the International Crisis Group.

EXPLAINER: Why US inflation is so high, and when it may ease

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Inflation's relentless surge didn't merely persist in June. It accelerated.

For the 12 months ending in June, the government's consumer price index rocketed 9.1%, the fastest year-over-year jump since 1981.

And that was nothing next to what energy prices did: Fueled by heavy demand and by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, energy costs shot up nearly 42% in the past 12 months, the largest such jump since 1980.

Even if you toss out food and energy prices — which are notoriously volatile and have driven much of the price spike — so-called core inflation soared 5.9% over the past year.

Consumers have endured the pain in everyday routines. Unleaded gasoline is up 61% in the past year. Men's suits, jackets and coats, 25%, Airline tickets, 34%. Eggs 33%. Breakfast sausage, 14%.

Under Chair Jerome Powell, the Federal Reserve never anticipated inflation this severe or persistent. Yet after having been merely an afterthought for decades, high inflation reasserted itself with ferocious speed as shortages of labor and supplies ran up against a propulsive rise in demand for goods and services across the economy.

In February 2021, the consumer price index was running just 1.7% above its level a year earlier. From there, it accelerated — past 2% in March, past 4% in April and 5% in May. By December, consumer prices hit the 7% year-over-year barrier. And on and on it went: 7.5% in January, 7.9% in February. And the increases have topped 8% every month since March.

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The United States has endured worse inflation before, but not in many decades. The post-World War II inflation peak reached nearly 20% in 1947, a result of the lifting of wartime price curbs, supply shortages and pent-up consumer demand. The inflation of the 1970s and early 1980s peaked at 14.8% in March 1980 before the Fed exorcized high prices with aggressive rate hikes that caused brutal back-to-back recessions in 1980 and 1981-1982.

For months, Powell and some others characterized high inflation as merely a “transitory” phenomenon while the economy rebounded from the pandemic recession faster than anyone had anticipated. No longer. Now, most economists expect inflation to remain painfully elevated well after this year, with demand outstripping supplies in numerous areas of the economy.

So the Fed has radically changed course by imposing a succession of large rate hikes. The central bank is making a high-risk bet that it can slow the economy enough to rein in inflation without weakening it so much as to trigger a recession.

The overall economy looks healthy for now, with a robust job market and extremely low unemployment. But many economists warn that the Fed’s steady credit tightening will likely cause a downturn.

WHAT’S CAUSED THE SPIKE IN INFLATION?

Good news — mostly. When the pandemic paralyzed the economy in the spring of 2020 and lockdowns kicked in, businesses closed or cut hours and consumers stayed home as a health precaution, employers slashed a breathtaking 22 million jobs. Economic output plunged at a record-shattering 31% annual rate in 2020’s April-June quarter.

Everyone braced for more misery. Companies cut investment and postponed restocking. A severe recession ensued.

But instead of sinking into a prolonged downturn, the economy staged an unexpectedly rousing recovery, fueled by vast infusions of government aid and emergency intervention by the Fed, which slashed rates among other things. By spring of last year, the rollout of vaccines had emboldened consumers to return to restaurants, bars, shops, airports and entertainment venues.

Suddenly, businesses had to scramble to meet demand. They couldn’t hire fast enough to fill job openings or buy enough supplies to meet customer orders. As business roared back, ports and freight yards couldn’t handle the traffic. Global supply chains seized up.

With demand up and supplies down, costs jumped. And companies found that they could pass along those higher costs in the form of higher prices to consumers, many of whom had managed to pile up savings during the pandemic.

Critics blamed, in part, President Joe Biden’s \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package, with its \$1,400 checks to most households, for overheating an economy that was already sizzling on its own. Many others assigned a greater blame to supply shortages. And some argued that the Fed kept rates near zero far too long, lending fuel to runaway spending and inflated prices in stocks, homes and other assets.

IS HIGH INFLATION AFFECTING JUST THE UNITED STATES?

Not by a long shot. Prices are rising just about everywhere in the world, in part a consequence of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which has elevated energy and food prices, and in part because of the supply chain bottlenecks that have driven U.S. prices up.

Eurostat, the statistical service of the European Union, says it expects year-over-year inflation to hit 8.6% last month from a year earlier in the 19 countries that share the euro currency, and up from an annual increase of 8.1% in May.

The International Monetary Fund has forecast that consumer prices in the world’s advanced economies will jump 5.7% this year, the most since 1984. The IMF foresees 8.7% inflation in poorer emerging market and developing countries, the highest such rate since 2008.

HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

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No one knows for sure. Elevated consumer price inflation could endure as long as companies struggle to keep up with consumers' demand for goods and services. A recovering job market — employers added a record 6.7 million jobs last year and a healthy average of 457,000 a month so far this year — means that Americans as a whole can afford to keep spending.

The Fed foresees inflation staying above its 2% annual target into 2024. But relief from higher prices might be coming. Oil prices have been tumbling on fears of an economic downturn. Jammed-up supply chains are showing some signs of improvement, at least in industries like transportation. Commodity prices have begun to fall. Pay increases have slowed. And surveys show that Americans' expectations for inflation over the long run have eased — a trend that often points to more moderate price increases over time.

What's more, the Fed's pivot toward an aggressively anti-inflationary policy could eventually reduce consumer demand. Inflation itself is eroding purchasing power and might force some consumers to shave spending.

At the same time, new COVID variants could cloud the outlook — either by causing outbreaks that force factories and ports to close and further disrupt supply chains or by keeping more people home and reducing demand for goods.

HOW ARE HIGHER PRICES AFFECTING CONSUMERS?

The strong job market is boosting workers' pay, though not enough to offset higher prices. The Labor Department says that after accounting for higher consumer prices, hourly earnings for private-sector employees fell 3.6% last month from a year earlier, the 15th straight drop.

There are exceptions: After-inflation wages rose more than 4% for hotel workers and 3% for those working in bars.

EXPLAINER: What's the impact of euro parity with the dollar?

By The Associated Press undefined

The euro is hovering close to parity with the dollar, falling to its lowest level in 20 years and even briefly touching a one-to-one exchange rate with the U.S. currency this week.

It's a psychological barrier in the markets. But psychology is important, and what the euro's slide underlines is the foreboding in the 19 European countries using the currency as they struggle with an energy crisis caused by Russia's war in Ukraine.

Here's why the euro's slide is happening and what impact it could have:

WHAT DOES EURO AND DOLLAR PARITY MEAN?

It means the European and American currencies are worth the same amount.

A currency's exchange rate can be a verdict on economic prospects, and Europe's have been fading. Expectations that the economy would see a rebound after turning the corner from the COVID-19 pandemic are being replaced by recession predictions.

More than anything, higher energy prices and record inflation are to blame. Europe is far more dependent on Russian oil and natural gas than the U.S. to keep industry humming and generate electricity. Fears that the war in Ukraine will lead to a loss of Russian oil on global markets have pushed oil prices higher. And Russia has been cutting back natural gas supplies to the European Union, which EU leaders described as retaliation for sanctions and weapons deliveries to Ukraine.

Energy prices have driven euro-area inflation to a record 8.6% in June, making everything from groceries to utility bills more expensive. They also have raised fears about governments rationing natural gas to industries like steel, glassmaking and agriculture if Russia further reduces or shuts off the gas taps completely.

The sense of doom increased when the major Nord Stream 1 pipeline from Russia to Germany closed Monday for scheduled maintenance, raising fears the Kremlin won't restart deliveries this month.

"What's the fall in the Euro saying? It's becoming increasingly clear that the Euro zone is heading into recession," Robin Brooks, chief economist at the Institute of International Finance banking trade group, tweeted Tuesday.

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WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME THE EURO WAS EQUAL TO THE DOLLAR?

The euro hasn't been valued below \$1 since July 15, 2002. It's now below \$1.01.

The European currency hit its all-time high of \$1.18 shortly after its launch on Jan. 1, 1999, but then began a long slide, falling through the \$1 mark in February 2000 and hitting a record low of 82.30 cents in October 2000. It rose above parity in 2002 as large trade deficits and accounting scandals on Wall Street weighed on the dollar.

Then as now, what appears to be a euro story is also in many ways a dollar story. That's because the U.S. dollar is still the world's dominant currency for trade and central bank reserves. And the dollar has been hitting 20-year highs against the currencies of its major trading partners, not just the euro.

The dollar is also benefiting from its status as a safe haven for investors in times of uncertainty.

WHY IS THE EURO FALLING?

Many analysts attribute the euro's slide to expectations for rapid interest rate increases by the U.S. Federal Reserve to combat 40-year highs in inflation, which hit an annual 9.1% on Wednesday.

As the Fed raises interest rates, the rates on interest-bearing investments tend to rise as well. If the Fed raises rates more than the European Central Bank, higher interest returns will attract investor money from euros into dollar-denominated investments. Those investors will have to sell euros and buy dollars to buy those holdings. That drives the euro down and the dollar up.

The ECB has announced it will raise interest rates next week and add another increase in September. But if the economy sinks into recession, that could halt the ECB's series of rate increases. Meanwhile, the U.S. economy looks more robust, meaning the Fed could go on tightening — and widen the rate gap.

WHO WINS?

American tourists in Europe will find cheaper hotel and restaurant bills and admission tickets. The weaker euro could make European export goods more competitive on price in the United States. The U.S. and the EU are major trade partners, so the exchange rate shift will get noticed.

In the U.S., a stronger dollar means lower prices on imported goods — from cars and computers to toys and medical equipment — which could help moderate inflation.

"The parity makes it easy for us, and a lot more money goes a lot further now, so we can do a lot more on our trip," said John Muldoon, who was visiting Rome this week from Delaware.

Olivia Navarret, another Rome tourist from Pennsylvania, said the exchange rate meant a shirt she bought was less expensive.

"It's cheaper to come here and buy stuff," she said. "So it's better to come here, I guess, and spend money here than spend money in the U.S."

WHO LOSES?

American companies that do a lot of business in Europe will see the revenue from those businesses shrink when and if they bring those earnings back to the U.S. If euro earnings remain in Europe to cover costs there, the exchange rate becomes less of an issue.

A key worry for the U.S. is that a stronger dollar makes U.S.-made products more expensive in overseas markets, widening the trade deficit and reducing economic output, while giving foreign products a price edge in the United States.

A weaker euro can be a headache for the European Central Bank because it can mean higher prices for imported goods, particularly oil, which is priced in dollars. The ECB is already being pulled in different directions: It is set to raise interest rates, the typical medicine for inflation, but higher rates also can slow economic growth.

LGBTQ harassment, slurs abound on social media, report says

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Social media platforms including Facebook and TikTok are failing to stop hate and threats against LGBTQ users, a report issued Wednesday from advocacy group GLAAD found.

Those are some of the internet's most vulnerable users, with a majority of LGBTQ people saying they've

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faced menacing posts or comments when they're scrolling through social media. But it's unclear how social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and YouTube are handling those threats.

Instead of protecting their users, GLAAD says in the report, the tech companies are safeguarding information about how they respond to those attacks, revealing few details about how often they take down posts or accounts that push hate speech or harass LGBTQ users.

"The reality is, there's very little transparency and very little accountability," said Jenni Olson, GLAAD's director for social media safety and author of the report. "And people feel helpless."

Los Angeles resident Peter Sapinsky, a gay musician who said he has faced harassment in the online gaming community, shared screenshots with The Associated Press of dozens of messages he's sent to YouTube about users and videos that use racist and homophobic slurs. YouTube has responded to only some of the messages, he said.

Sapinsky, 29, said some use YouTube to livestream themselves harassing people at Pride parades. They quickly delete those live videos once they've wrapped to evade being detected by YouTube for violating its policies against hate speech, he said. He listed a series of homophobic slurs he's heard in videos posted by users who are still operating on the site.

"YouTube doesn't do anything about it," Sapinsky said. "For someone who says they don't allow hate on the website, they sure do."

Hateful or violent speech directed at members of the LGBTQ community is prohibited on the platform, YouTube spokesperson Jack Malon said.

"Over the last few years, we've made significant progress in our ability to quickly remove hateful and harassing content," Malon said. "This work is ongoing, and we appreciate the thoughtful feedback from GLAAD."

A Twitter spokesperson said in a statement that the company was discussing the report's findings with GLAAD. A statement from TikTok did not directly address the report but said the company is working to create an "inclusive environment."

GLAAD recommended that the platforms start releasing the training methods for content moderators as well as the number of accounts and posts the companies remove for violating rules designed to protect LGBTQ users.

GLAAD's report examines the policies and actions Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Twitter have implemented around LGBTQ issues.

All of the social media platforms have outlined policies that are designed to prevent LGBTQ users from being harassed, threatened or discriminated against by other users because of their identity.

Twitter and TikTok also have specific policies against intentionally misgendering, using the wrong pronoun to describe someone, for example, or deadnaming, which involves reviving a transgender person's name from before the person transitioned to a new identity. Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, said it removes similar posts upon request.

Some users bully LGBTQ people on social media by misgendering or deadnaming them. One example came last month, when a conservative social media pundit sent a swarm of Twitter users to harass transgender actor Elliot Page with the wrong pronoun and name. That Twitter user was suspended under the company's hateful conduct policy.

"The idea that these figures with millions of followers are bullying and harassing trans people, for being trans, is just wrong," Olson said.

US, allies aim to cap Russian oil prices to hinder invasion

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With thousands of sanctions already imposed on Russia to flatten its economy, the U.S. and its allies are working on new measures to starve the Russian war machine while also stopping the price of oil and gasoline from soaring to levels that could crush the global economy.

The Kremlin's main pillar of financial revenue — oil — has kept the Russian economy afloat despite export

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bans, sanctions and the freezing of central bank assets. America's European allies plan to follow the Biden administration and take steps to stop their use of Russian oil by the end of this year, a move that some economists say could cause the supply of oil worldwide to drop and push prices as high as \$200 a barrel.

Washington and its allies want to form a buyers' cartel to force Russia to accept below-market prices for oil. Group of Seven leaders have tentatively agreed to back a cap on the price of Russian oil. Simply speaking, participating countries would agree to purchase the oil at lower-than-market price.

Russia has given no sign whether it might go along with this. The Kremlin also has the option of retaliating by taking its oil off the market, which would cause more turmoil.

High energy costs are already straining economies and threatening fissures among the countries opposing Russian President Vladimir Putin for the invasion of Ukraine in February. President Joe Biden has seen his public approval slip to levels that hurt Democrats' chances in the midterm elections, while leaders in the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy are coping with the economic devastation caused by trying to move away from Russian natural gas and petroleum.

The idea behind the cap is to lower gas prices for consumers and help bring the war in Ukraine to a halt. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is currently touring Indo-Pacific countries to lobby for the proposal. In Japan on Tuesday, Yellen and Japanese Finance Minister Suzuki Shunichi said in a joint statement that the countries have agreed to explore "the feasibility of price caps where appropriate."

However, China and India, two countries that have maintained business relationships with Russia during the war, will need to get on board. The administration is confident China and India, already buying from Russia at discounted prices, can be enticed to embrace the plan for price caps.

"We think that ultimately countries around the world that are currently purchasing Russian oil will be very interested in paying as little as possible for that Russian oil," Treasury Deputy Secretary Wally Adeyemo told The Associated Press.

The Russian price cap plan has support among some leading economic thinkers. Harvard economist Jason Furman tweeted that if the plan works, it would be a "win-win: maximizing damage to the Russian war machine while minimizing damage to the rest of the world." And David Wessel at the Brookings Institution said an "unpleasant alternative" is not attempting the price cap plan.

If a price cap is not implemented, oil prices will almost certainly spike due to a European Union decision to ban nearly all oil from Russia. The EU also plans to ban insuring and financing the maritime transport of Russian oil to third parties by the end of the year.

Without a price cap mechanism to reduce some Russian revenues, "there would be a greater risk that some Russian supply comes off the market. That could lead to higher prices, which would increase prices for Americans," Adeyemo said.

A June Barclay's report warns that with the EU oil embargo and other restrictions in place, Russian oil could rise to \$150 per barrel or even \$200 per barrel if most of its sea-borne exports are disrupted.

Brent crude on Tuesday was trading just under \$100 per barrel.

James Hamilton, an economist at the University of California, San Diego, said garnering the participation of China and India will be important to enforcing any price cap plan.

"It's an international diplomatic challenge on how you get people to agree. It's one thing if you get the U.S. to stop buying oil, but if India and China continue to buy" at elevated prices, "there's no impact on Russian revenues," Hamilton told the AP.

"The less revenue Russia gets from selling oil, the less money they have to send these bombs on Ukraine," he said.

Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security adviser, said during a Monday news briefing that "if it turns out that countries are imposing their own price cap and it is a substantial denial of revenue to Russia in terms of their ability to sell oil, that is not the failure of sanctions. That's actually the success of economic pressure because it is driving down revenues for Moscow."

One possibility is that Russia could retaliate and take its oil off the market completely.

In that case, "the main question is will countries have enough time to find alternatives" to prevent massive price increases, said Christiane Baumeister, an economist at the University of Notre Dame who studies

the dynamics of energy markets.

With five months until the end of the year, when EU bans begin to take effect, a Russian price cap plan would likely need to be in place and operating effectively to avoid further spikes in gas prices that have frustrated U.S. drivers. Biden has warned that high gas prices this summer were the cost of stopping Putin, but prices could climb to new records and lead to economic and political pain for the president.

Without the price cap, "if the EU import ban goes into effect together with the insurance ban," Baumeister said, the impacts "will be passed onto consumers through gasoline prices."

NBA stiffens take foul penalty, will keep play-in tournament

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The NBA has completed the process of changing the transition take foul rule, ending years of discussion about what to do with the long-maligned tactic.

And, also as expected, the play-in tournament is going to be around for the foreseeable future.

The league's board of governors finalized those two matters Tuesday, approving a plan to award one free throw when teams are disadvantaged by the take foul — as well as removing the "experimental" designation from the play-in element to the postseason.

"Generally, it was upbeat coming out of our meeting," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. "People are thrilled that as we head into next season, it looks like we'll be on our normal track in terms of when the season starts, in terms of our protocols around the game, particularly around the health and safety of our players."

It wasn't a surprise that the league changed the penalty on take fouls; Silver told The Associated Press in early June that it would change, though he cautioned that the new rule might still be tweaked in future years.

The take foul — in which the defender does not make a play on the ball — is what the league classifies as one that occurs either "during a transition scoring opportunity or immediately following a change of possession and before the offensive team had the opportunity to advance the ball." The exception is in the final 2 minutes of the fourth quarter or overtime.

The new penalty for such a foul is one free throw, which may be attempted by any player on the offended team in the game at the time the foul was committed, along with continued possession.

Silver addressed a number of other topics, including:

REVENUE

The NBA is coming off a massive financial year, with revenue topping \$10 billion for the first time and basketball-related income reaching \$8.9 billion, another record.

Silver said the numbers are particularly strong considering the league is still dealing with a pandemic, and it wasn't that long ago when some questioned whether sports could survive the coronavirus — at least in the sense of whether people would want to gather again.

"The numbers did surprise me to a certain degree because it exceeded projections, and the projections represent where we think our business is going," Silver said. "I think it's quite remarkable from where we came 2 1/2 years ago."

KEVIN DURANT

Kevin Durant is under contract for four more years with the Brooklyn Nets, and his trade request has been one of the biggest stories of the offseason.

It hasn't been one that Silver has particularly enjoyed.

"This needs to be a two-way street," Silver said. "Teams provide enormous security and guarantees to players, and the expectation in return is that they'll meet their end of the bargain. There's always conversations that go on behind closed doors between players and representatives and teams, but we don't like to see players requesting trades and we don't like to see it playing out the way it is."

PLAY-IN TOURNAMENT

The play-in tournament has generally been considered a success, so it was no surprise that the league

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is keeping it around.

The play-in tournament — in its current form — has been used in each of the last two seasons, where the teams that finish seventh, eighth, ninth and 10th in the East and West meet to determine the final two playoff spots in each conference.

The No. 7 team plays the No. 8 team, with the winner clinching the No. 7 seed in the playoffs. The No. 9 team plays the No. 10 team, with the loser eliminated and the winner moving on to face the team that lost the 7-8 game. The winner of that matchup is the No. 8 seed.

It's been a hit, primarily because it tends to give a March Madness feel — four elimination games before the playoffs even begin — and gives more teams incentive to not tank for better odds in the draft lottery.

There was a play-in element in 2020 as well in the restart bubble at Walt Disney World, when Portland beat Memphis for the No. 8 seed in the Western Conference. Memphis could have gotten the No. 8 seed that year by beating Portland twice; the Blazers had to win only one game to claim the spot.

LOAD MANAGEMENT

Load management — the fancy term given now when a player gets to sit out a game to rest — has been a challenge for the league and its teams in recent years. Silver said it will continue to be discussed with the players' association as the sides get more into negotiations for the next collective bargaining agreement.

The league has taken steps, driven by sleep science and other data, to try to make the schedule more player-friendly in recent years. The stretches of four games in five nights have been eliminated, instances of back-to-back games have dropped and the league has even tinkered with keeping teams in the same road city for consecutive games in an effort to limit travel over the course of a season.

That said, sometimes, a player still sits. Silver suggested it might be time to consider adding money as an incentive for playing more often.

"I'm all in favor of guaranteed contracts," he said. "But maybe that on top of your typical guaranteed contracts, some incremental money should be based on number of games played and results of those games. I mean, it's that's how most industries work, where there's financial incentives — even among highly paid executives for performance."

ABA PAYMENTS

The NBA and the NBPA announced a new program — jointly funded — to provide payments to approximately 115 ABA players who played at least three seasons but didn't qualify for NBA pensions. They'll get "recognition payments" of \$3,828 per year of service.

"Our players have a genuine sense of appreciation for those who paved the way and helped us achieve the success we enjoy today," NBPA Executive Director Tamika Tremaglio said. "We have always considered the ABA players a part of our brotherhood and we are proud to finally recognize them with this benefit."

Silver said the league and the players "felt a need to act on behalf of these former ABA players who are aging and, in many cases, facing difficult economic circumstances."

Minister: Ukraine needs assurances to resume grain exports

By OLEKSANDR STASHEVSKYI, HANNA ARHIROVA and MARIA GRAZIA MURRU Associated Press
Kyiv, Ukraine (AP) — The Ukrainian foreign minister says grain exports from his country's ports won't resume without security guarantees for ship owners, cargo owners and Ukraine as an independent nation.

Military officials from Russia and Ukraine held their governments' first face-to-face talks in months Wednesday. They met in Istanbul to discuss a United Nations plan for getting blocked Ukrainian grain to world markets through the Black Sea.

Speaking to The Associated Press ahead of the talks, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said any agreement needs to ensure Russia "will respect these corridors, they will not sneak into the harbor and attack ports or that they will not attack ports from the air with their missiles."

Kuleba also told the AP on Tuesday that Ukraine's military is "planning and preparing for full liberation" of Russian-occupied cities and towns near the country's Black Sea coast. Ukrainian forces already have stepped up their activity to retake territory in the south as Russia concentrates on eastern Ukraine.

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Asked about the likelihood of negotiations to end the war that started when Russia invaded neighboring Ukraine on Feb. 24, the foreign minister said peace talks were unlikely to happen soon.

"Russia continues to be in the war mood, and they are not seeking negotiations in good faith. They are seeking a way to make us implement their ultimatums, which is not going to happen," said Kuleba, who became Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's foreign minister in March 2020.

Moscow is attempting a de facto annexation of Kherson, Mariupol and other seized cities by introducing a Russian school curriculum, doing business in Russia's currency and offering Ukrainians Russian passports, he said.

"I'm pretty confident that once these territories are liberated, the vast majority of people will burn their Russian passports quietly in their fireplaces," Kuleba said.

In the meantime, Ukraine is insisting upon a full withdrawal of Russian forces as a condition for ending the conflict, he said.

"We are fighting for our freedom, for our territorial integrity, and we want peace. This war was imposed on us. This was not our choice," Kuleba told the AP.

He stressed that while Ukraine appreciates the support it has received from the United States and European nations during the war, the country needs Western weapons deliveries to speed up as the fighting drags on into a fifth month.

"As long as there is not enough to win, we will keep asking for more," Kuleba said. "You know, until you win, there are never enough weapons."

Kuleba, 41, whose father was a career diplomat in Ukraine, previously served as the deputy prime minister in charge of the country's efforts to forge closer ties with the European Union and NATO. He is the author of a 2019 book on disinformation titled "The War for Reality. How to Win in the World of Fakes, Truths and Communities."

During Russia's ground and air war in Ukraine, Kuleba has been second only to Zelenskyy in carrying their country's message and needs to an international audience, whether through Twitter posts or meetings with friendly foreign officials.

His firmness in asking for more weapons from abroad and portraying Russia as an untrustworthy aggressor is mirrored in the public support for Ukraine's determined resistance.

The foreign minister acknowledged that Ukraine suffered significant troop losses as the Kremlin concentrated its military offensive in the Donbas, an industrial region near the Russian border where Moscow's forces have gradually gained ground.

Ukraine nevertheless has enough people willing to join the armed forces, he said.

"The only goal that we pursue in this war is our survival. When you are fighting for your survival, you have no choice. You have to fight," Kuleba said.

Ukraine's top diplomat credited U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Turkish government for facilitating Wednesday's talks on grain shipments. A Turkish delegation and U.N. representatives joined the discussion between Russian and Ukrainian military officials.

Zelenskyy has said a Russian naval blockade stranded about 22 million tons of grain inside Ukraine, a country known as the "breadbasket of Europe" for its exports of wheat, corn and sunflower oil.

With shipments stalled because of the war is endangering food supplies in many developing nations and could worsen hunger for up to 181 million people, according to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. Kuleba said he was hopeful the talks in Istanbul would yield a deal on creating safe shipping corridors.

Ukraine's future, as well as his own, is still uncertain, the minister said.

"There were numerous wars between the Ukraine and Russia in the last 300 years. But all of the leaders of these efforts, on the Ukrainian side, in the end, they were either killed, or they wrote their memoirs in exile," Kuleba said. "So my personal ambition is to write my memoirs in Ukraine. And it will be a memoir of victory and a memoir of a person who belonged to the generation that changed history."

Israeli museum finds sketches hidden in Modigliani painting

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By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

HAIFA, Israel (AP) — Curators at an Israeli museum have discovered three previously unknown sketches by celebrated 20th-century artist Amedeo Modigliani hiding beneath the surface of one of his paintings.

The unfinished works by Modigliani, an Italian-born artist who worked in Paris before his death in 1920, came to light after the canvas of "Nude with a Hat" at the University of Haifa's Hecht Museum was X-rayed as part of a sweeping forensic study of his work for an upcoming exhibit in Philadelphia.

Inna Berkowits, an art historian at the Hecht Museum, said it was "quite an amazing discovery."

"Through the X-rays, we are really able to make this inanimate object speak," she told The Associated Press.

Modigliani is considered one of the 20th century's great Modernist artists. He lived a short, turbulent, Bohemian life in France, where his nude paintings were controversial. His work is typified by slender, elongated necks and faces, a signature style influenced by African and Cycladic Greek art that was just starting to arrive in France in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Jewish artist died aged 35, penniless.

One of his paintings, "Reclining Nude," fetched over \$170 million when it was sold at auction in 2015, making it one of the most expensive paintings ever sold. Another was sold in 2018 for \$157 million at auction.

The high demand for authentic Modigliani works has generated a thriving market for fakes and forgeries.

The last time Italy staged a big Modigliani show, a 2017 exhibit at Genoa's Palazzo Ducale, museum officials closed the show early after experts alleged that many of the works on display were fakes. A criminal trial has been underway for over a year.

In 2018, X-ray technology revealed a previously unknown Modigliani portrait beneath one of his paintings at London's Tate Gallery.

Modigliani's 1908 "Nude with a Hat" is already an unusual painting. Both sides of the canvas have portraits that are painted in opposite directions. Visitors entering the Hecht Museum's galleries are met by an upside down nude portrait. A likeness of Maud Abrantes, a female friend of the artist, on the reverse side is right-side up.

In 2010, the museum's curator noticed the eyes of a third figure peeking from beneath Abrantes' collar. But only this year was the hidden image brought into focus.

"When we decided to do the X-ray, we were only looking to learn a little bit more about the hidden figure underneath Maud Abrantes," Berkowits said. In addition to a hidden woman wearing a hat, they found two more portraits on the opposite side that were completely invisible to the naked eye: one of a man, and another of a woman with her hair pulled up in a bun.

The "Nude with a Hat" dates from early in Modigliani's career, not long after he moved to Paris from Italy, when he was struggling to find buyers for his art. The painting was purchased by the museum's founder in 1983.

The canvas is now known to contain five of his paintings, likely painted one atop the other out of necessity to save money on new canvases. X-ray photography and other noninvasive technologies have found hidden works by other artists such as Degas and Rembrandt.

Berkowits called the artwork "a sketchbook on a canvas," showing Modigliani's repeated tries and "never-ending search for artistic expression." She said there is "no doubt at all" that the painting is authentic.

"He was one of the very first multicultural artists who pulled inspiration from different sources," said Kenneth Wayne, director of the Modigliani Project, an organization that is working to compile an authenticated collection of the artist's works. He cited Modigliani's contemporaries Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse as other examples.

Modigliani sought "an air of the strange and beauty" and achieved that through the incorporation of those foreign styles in his art, Wayne added. Wayne and his colleagues use scientific methods and art expertise to weed out fakes.

The X-ray photography was conducted ahead of a sweeping exhibition of Modigliani's works at the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia.

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Wayne said a growing number of technical studies like that by the Barnes Foundation have increased confidence in confirming genuine Modiglianis.

The foundation museum said the exhibit opens Oct. 16 and will explore the artist's working methods and materials based on forensic study of dozens of Modigliani's paintings and sculptures loaned from collections around the world.

Today in History: July 14, Congress passes Sedition Act

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, July 14, the 195th day of 2022. There are 170 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 14, 2004, the Senate scuttled a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. (Forty-eight senators voted to advance the measure — 12 short of the 60 needed — and 50 voted to block it).

On this date:

In 1789, in an event symbolizing the start of the French Revolution, citizens of Paris stormed the Bastille prison and released the seven prisoners inside.

In 1798, Congress passed the Sedition Act, making it a federal crime to publish false, scandalous or malicious writing about the United States government.

In 1881, outlaw William H. Bonney Jr., alias "Billy the Kid," was shot and killed by Sheriff Pat Garrett in Fort Sumner in present-day New Mexico.

In 1912, American folk singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie ("This Land Is Your Land") was born in Okemah, Oklahoma.

In 1933, all German political parties, except the Nazi Party, were outlawed.

In 1945, Italy formally declared war on Japan, its former Axis partner during World War II.

In 1976, Jimmy Carter won the Democratic presidential nomination at the party's convention in New York.

In 1980, the Republican national convention opened in Detroit, where nominee-apparent Ronald Reagan told a welcoming rally he and his supporters were determined to "make America great again."

In 2009, disgraced financier Bernard Madoff arrived at the Butner Federal Correctional Complex in North Carolina to begin serving a 150-year sentence for his massive Ponzi scheme. (Madoff died in prison in April 2021.)

In 2015, world powers and Iran struck a deal to curb Iran's nuclear program in exchange for relief from international sanctions.

In 2016, terror struck Bastille Day celebrations in the French Riviera city of Nice (nees) as a large truck plowed into a festive crowd, killing 86 people in an attack claimed by Islamic State extremists; the driver was shot dead by police.

In 2020, researchers reported that the first COVID-19 vaccine tested in the U.S. revved up people's immune systems as scientists had hoped; the vaccine was developed by the National Institutes of Health and Moderna Inc. The federal government carried out its first execution in almost two decades, killing by lethal injection Daniel Lewis Lee, who'd been convicted of murdering an Arkansas family in a 1990s plot to build a whites-only nation in the Pacific Northwest.

Ten years ago: A suicide bomber blew himself up among guests at a wedding hall in northern Afghanistan, killing 23 people, including a prominent ex-Uzbek warlord turned lawmaker who was the father of the bride.

Five years ago: A Russian-American lobbyist said he attended a June 2016 meeting with President Donald Trump's son that was billed as part of a Russian government effort to help the Republican campaign. Arab assailants opened fire from inside a major Jerusalem shrine, killing two Israeli policemen before being shot dead.

One year ago: The World Health Organization reported that COVID-19 deaths had climbed globally in the preceding week after nine straight weeks of declines; the setback triggered another round of restrictions. The U.S. government reported that deaths from drug overdoses had soared to a record 93,000 in 2021

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in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic; experts said lockdowns and other restrictions had isolated those with drug addictions and made treatment harder to get.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Nancy Olson is 94. Former football player and actor Rosey Grier is 90. Actor Vincent Pastore is 76. Music company executive Tommy Mottola (muh-TOH'-luh) is 74. Rock musician Chris Cross (Ultravox) is 70. Actor Jerry Houser is 70. Actor-director Eric Laneuville is 70. Actor Stan Shaw is 70. Movie producer Scott Rudin is 64. Singer-guitarist Kyle Gass is 62. Actor Jane Lynch is 62. Actor Jackie Earle Haley is 61. Actor Matthew Fox is 56. Rock musician Ellen Reid (Crash Test Dummies) is 56. Rock singer-musician Tanya Donnelly is 56. Former child actor Missy Gold is 52. Olympic gold medal snowboarder Ross Rebagliati is 51. R&B singer Tameka Cottle (Xscape) is 47. Country singer Jamey Johnson is 47. Hip-hop musician "taboo" (Black Eyed Peas) is 47. Actor Scott Porter is 43. Actor/writer/producer Phoebe Waller-Bridge is 37. Rock singer Dan Smith (Bastille) is 36. Actor Sara Canning (TV: "The Vampire Diaries") is 35. Rock singer Dan Reynolds (Imagine Dragons) is 35.