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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

Thursday, Aug. 4
First allowable day of football practice

Monday, Aug. 8
First allowable day of boys golf practice

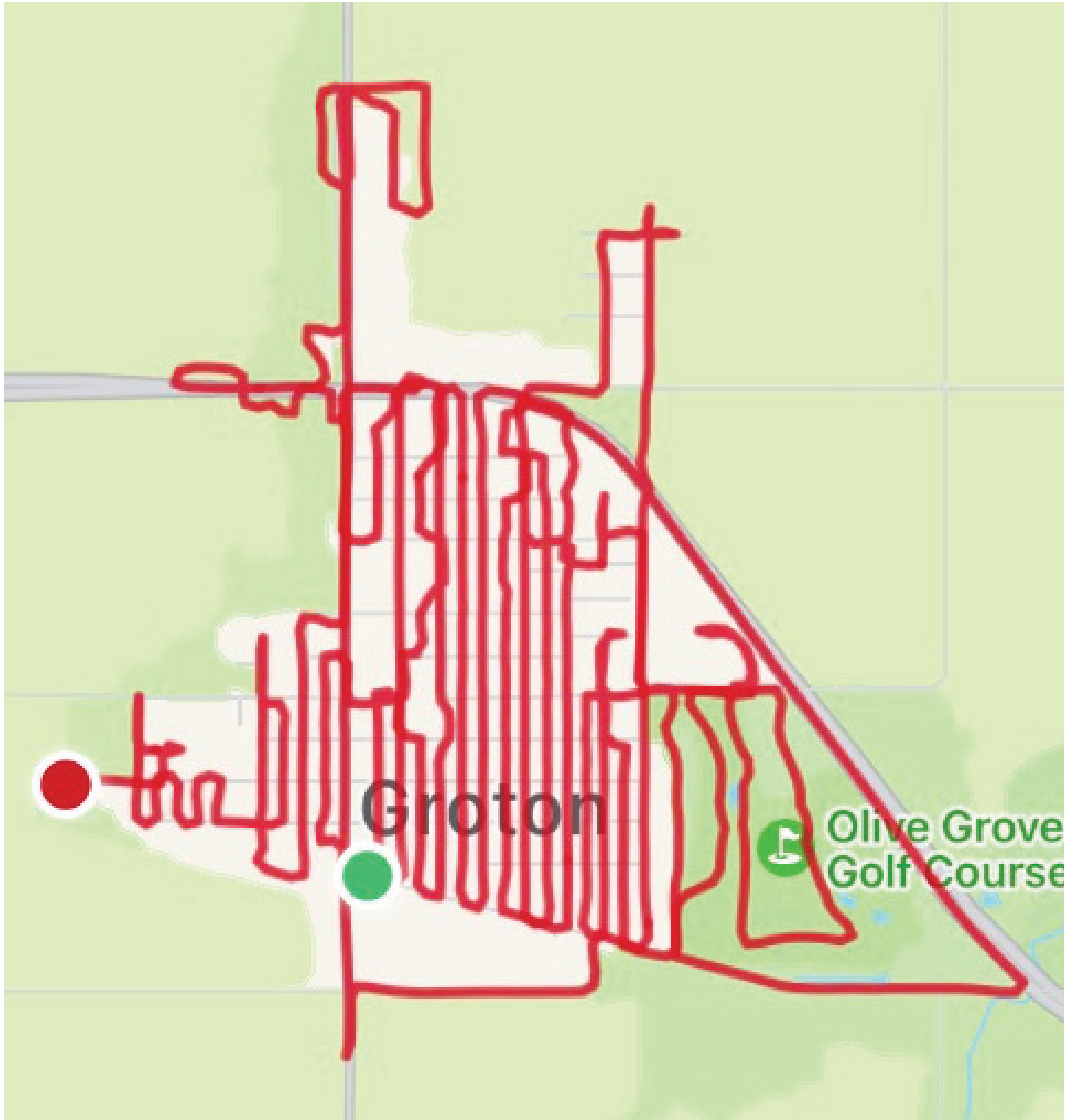
Thursday, Aug. 11
First allowable day of volleyball and cross country practice

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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Adult Mosquito Control Done Last Night



The City of Groton performed an adult mosquito control Friday night. The wind was easterly so only streets and alleys were done. Seven gallons of Evolver 4x4 was used. Temperature was 77 degrees. Twenty-five miles were driven.

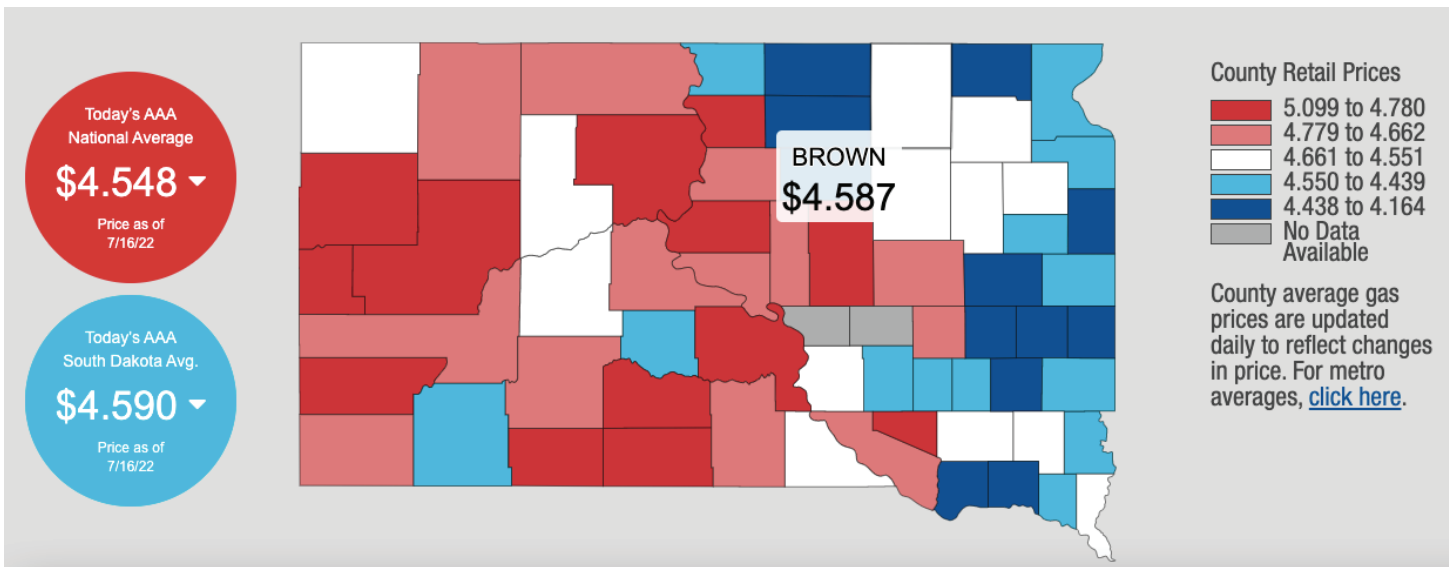
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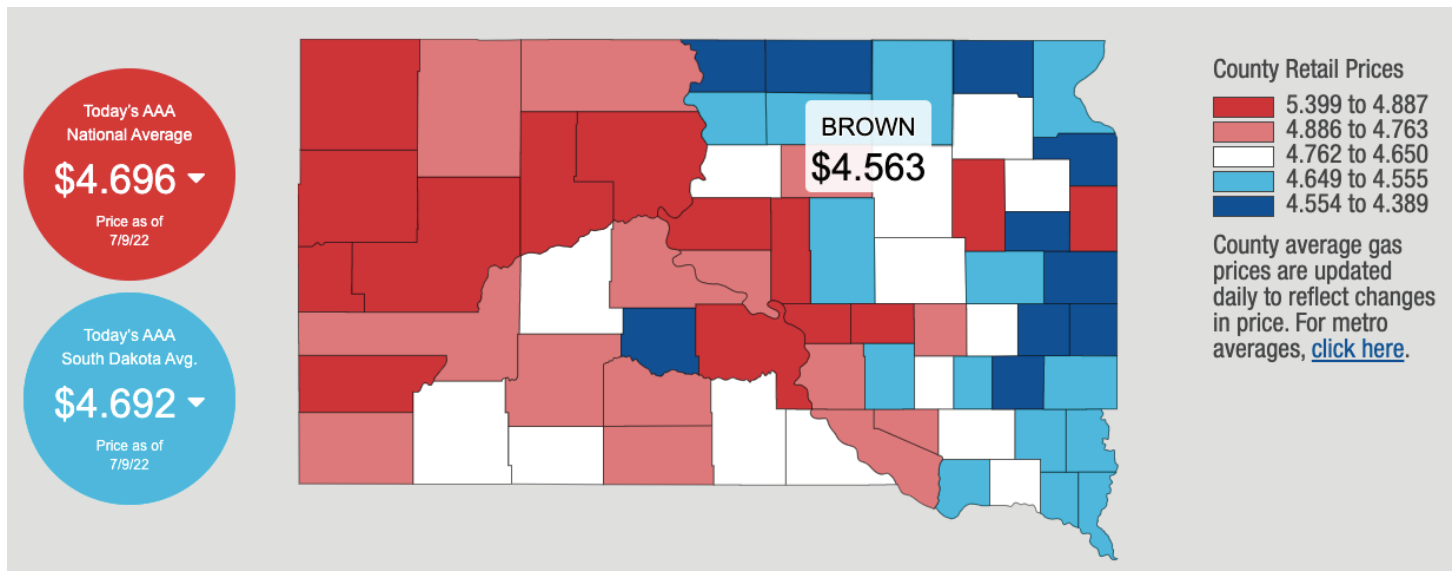
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$4.590	\$4.757	\$5.244	\$5.310
Yesterday Avg.	\$4.606	\$4.784	\$5.266	\$5.320
Week Ago Avg.	\$4.692	\$4.852	\$5.315	\$5.365
Month Ago Avg.	\$4.796	\$4.912	\$5.348	\$5.366
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.095	\$3.188	\$3.553	\$3.195

This Week



Last Week



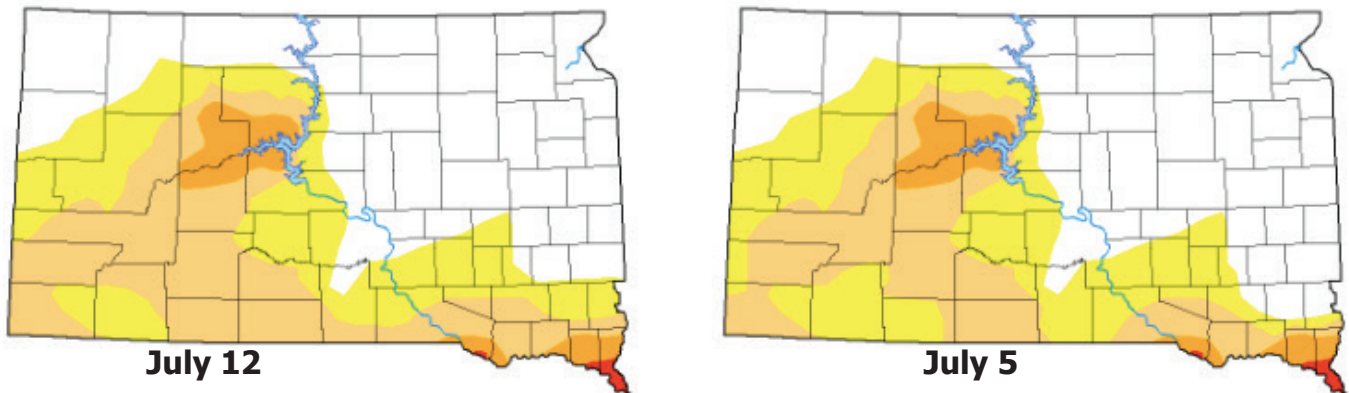
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Drought Classification



Drought Monitor

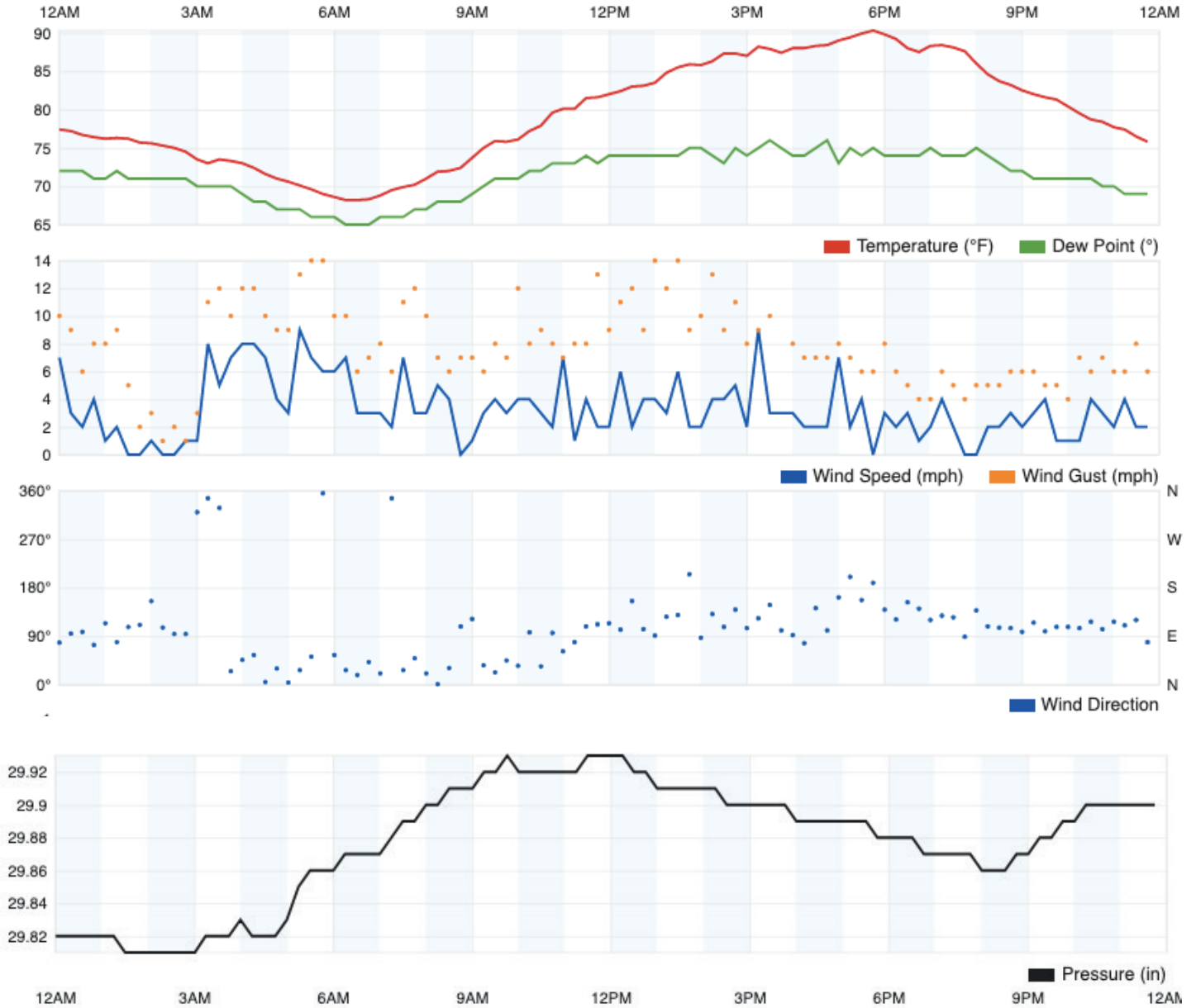


Most of the region had warmer-than-normal temperatures for the week, with most areas 1-3 degrees above normal. Heavy rains through western North Dakota, central and eastern South Dakota, northwest and central Nebraska, and northeastern Kansas helped with some dryness in the areas. The scattered nature of the rains left many dry, though, as summer thunderstorms were hit or miss in the region. Some improvements were made in Nebraska and central Kansas as well as on the plains of Colorado and Wyoming this week where the short-term wetness helped to alleviate concerns. Degradation took place over central Wyoming, southern South Dakota and western Kansas where longer-term dryness has been in place and most of these areas have missed out on earlier precipitation events. Exceptional drought was removed in southeast Colorado and extreme drought was reduced this week. Southeast Kansas is an area where abnormally dry and moderate drought expanded this week, as they are on the northern fringe of a flash drought that has been developing over the last 4-5 weeks.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
 40% 30%	 20%			
Heavy Rain	Slight Chance T-storms then Partly Cloudy	Hot	Mostly Clear	Hot
High: 86 °F	Low: 66 °F	High: 93 °F	Low: 70 °F	High: 99 °F



Unsettled Today

84-90°



Muggy. 20-40% chance for showers and storms
Severe weather not expected

WEEKEND'S WEATHER July 16 & 17, 2022



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



Hot and Dry Sunday

88-96°



Muggy. About 10 degrees above normal
Hotter yet on Monday

Don't be surprised if you experience a thundershower or two today, though it'll be dry most of the time with a mix of sun and clouds overhead. Stay weather-aware for potential lightning strikes if spending time outdoors! While seasonable temperature-wise today, higher heat builds Sunday (and peaks on Monday).

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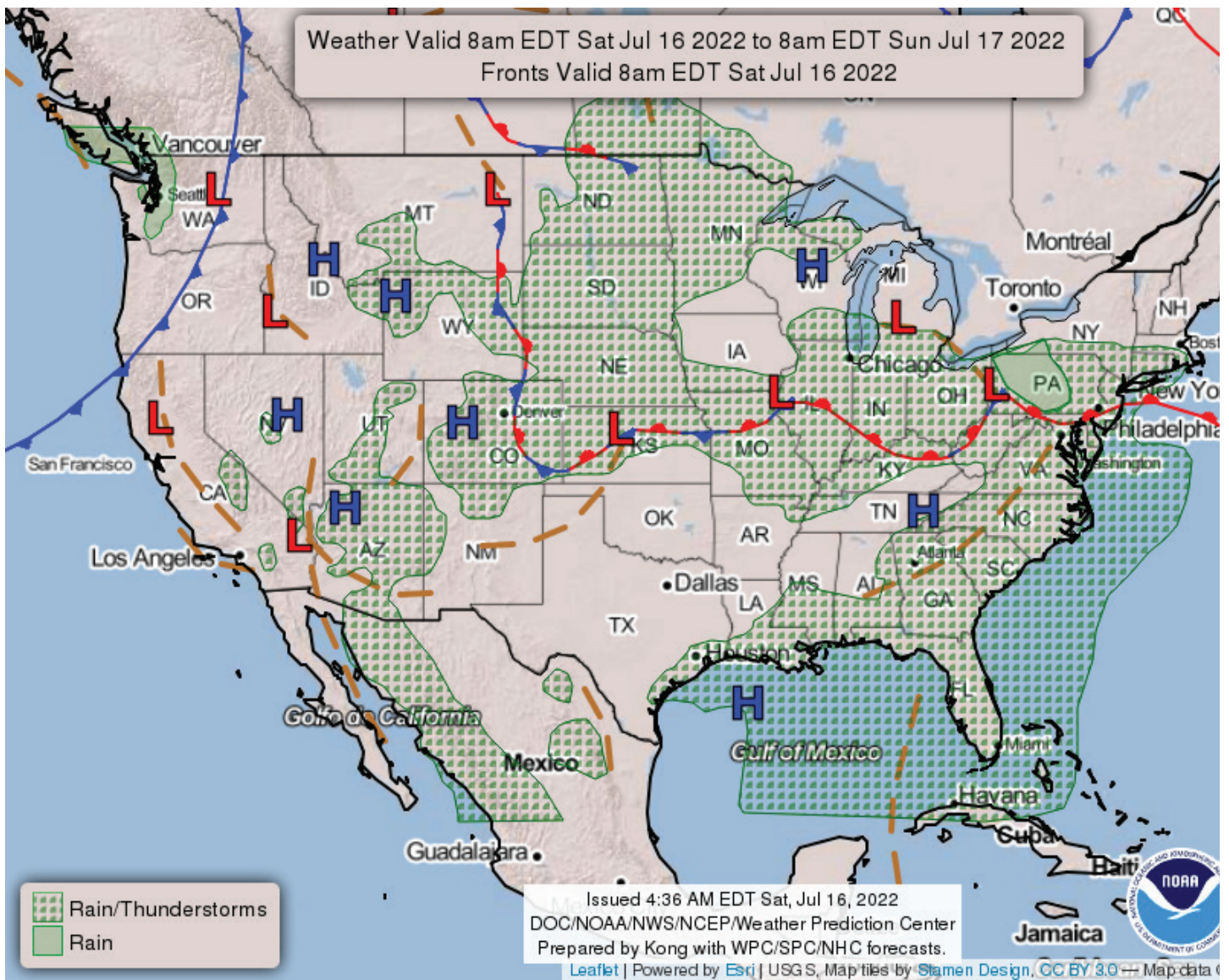
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 90.3 °F at 5:45 PM
Low Temp: 68.2 °F at 6:15 AM
Wind: 14 mph at 1:30 PM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 21 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 112 in 1936
Record Low: 42 in 1976
Average High: 85°F
Average Low: 60°F
Average Precip in July.: 1.80
Precip to date in July.: 2.25
Average Precip to date: 12.81
Precip Year to Date: 13.83
Sunset Tonight: 9:19:01 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:58:59 AM



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Today in Weather History

July 16, 1993: Thunderstorms, dumping two to seven inches of rain caused flooding problems in north-eastern South Dakota. Several dams and many roads were washed out. Most of the damage was in Marshall County. Six families were evacuated about six miles southeast of Britton as two private earthen dams broke. Winds, as high as 70 mph were also reported in a couple of locations in Marshall County. The torrential rains resulted in flooded farmland, roads, and basements in northeast South Dakota through July 21st. In Groton and Claremont at least 90 percent of the homes had water in the basements. Some storm total rainfall amounts include 3.20 inches in Leola; 3.14 in Ipswich; 3.13 in Britton; and 2.77 in Eureka.

July 16, 2001: Very heavy rains of 3 to 7 inches fell across north central Corson County causing flash flooding. Oak Creek along with several other streams washed out several roads and damaged some fences from Watauga to McIntosh to McLaughlin and north. Travel stopped for a while on the Highway north of McLaughlin.

1920 - A severe hailstorm over parts of Antelope and Boone counties in Nebraska stripped trees of bark and foliage, ruined roofs, and broke nearly every window facing north. (The Weather Channel)

1946 - The temperature at Medford, OR, soared to an all-time high of 115 degrees to begin a two week heat wave. During that Oregon heat wave the mercury hit 100 degrees at Sexton Summit for the only time in forty years of records. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1975 - An early afternoon thunderstorm raked the east side of Tucson, AZ, with gale force winds, heavy rain, and numerous lightning strikes. A thirteen year old boy was swept through a forty foot long culvert by raging waters before being rescued. (The Weather Channel)

1979: The most damaging tornado in Wyoming history touched down 3 miles west-northwest of the Cheyenne airport. This strong tornado moved east or east-southeast across the northern part of Cheyenne, causing \$22 million in damage and one fatality. 140 houses and 17 trailers were destroyed. 325 other homes were damaged. Four C-130 aircraft and National Guard equipment sustained \$12 million damage. Municipal hangars and buildings suffered \$10 million in losses.

1987 - Showers and thundestorms in the southwestern U.S. ended a record string of thirty-nine consecutive days of 100 degree heat at Tucson, AZ. A thunderstorm at Bullhead City, AZ, produced wind gusts to 70 mph reducing the visibility to near zero in blowing dust. Southerly winds gusting to 40 mph pushed temperature readings above 100 degrees in the Northern Plains. Rapid City, SD, reported a record high of 106 degrees, following a record low of 39 degrees just three days earlier. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty-seven cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Highs of 96 degrees at Bluefield, WV, and 104 degrees at Charleston WV were all-time records, and afternoon highs of 98 degrees at Binghamton, NY, 99 degrees at Elkins, WV, and 103 degrees at Pittsburgh PA, tied all- time records. Highs of 104 degrees at Baltimore, MD, and 105 degrees at Parkersburg WV were records for July, and Beckley, WV, equalled their record for July with a high of 94 degrees. Martinsburg, WV, was the hot spot in the nation with a reading of 107 degrees. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms raked the northeastern U.S. with large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Showers and thunderstorms developing along a stationary front drenched the Middle Atlantic Coast States with heavy rain, causing flooding in some areas. More than five inches of rain was reported near Madison and Ferncliff, VA. Hot weather prevailed in Texas. San Angelo reported a record high of 106 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

2009: A hailstone, 3.3 inches in diameter, 6.8 inches circumference, and weighing 2.1 ounces fell in Westford, Vermont. This hailstone is the largest ever found in Vermont.

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WHAT'S BETTER THAN GOLD?

The Island of Corregidor stands at the entrance to Manila Bay. To capture the island from the Japanese in World War II resulted in the death of many of our soldiers. It left countless others with scarred bodies and mangled limbs that made living difficult.

Once during heavy bombing, a chapel was hit, and everything in it destroyed except a pulpit Bible. A soldier who had been hiding nearby discovered it and took it with him to his tent. Every night before he went to sleep, he would read it, then place his head upon it and meditate on his readings. Before falling to sleep, he would ask God how he could put into practice what he read.

When the soldiers were finally captured, they were transferred to a prison and were allowed to take one item with them. Many of them took a blanket. However, he chose to take his Bible.

The following months almost defy description. The conditions were merciless whether they were on ships or in prisons, in boxcars or on daylong marches with little food or water. Many dropped dead, but he survived and carried his pulpit Bible with him. Nothing else mattered to him.

Finally, they were settled in a horrible camp and allowed to organize a church. One of the soldiers asked, "What are we to do without a Bible?" Hearing this, the soldier took his Bible and presented it to his commander. It gave them hope and help, and thousands found the Lord as Savior.

The Psalmist wrote, "I love Your commands more than gold, more than pure gold." God, not gold, gives strength for the journey and His hope for each difficult day.

Prayer: We know, Father, that only Your Word offers eternal life and a hope that brings peace and joy. Help us to live as if we know it! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Because I love your commands more than gold, more than pure gold. Psalm 119:127

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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
No Date Set: 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)
No Date Set: 6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm
09/11/2022 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10 a.m.
09/02-04: 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
No Date Set: 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

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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 Friday:

Mega Millions

08-20-26-53-64, Mega Ball: 15, Megaplier: 5

(eight, twenty, twenty-six, fifty-three, sixty-four; Mega Ball: fifteen; Megaplier: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$530,000,000

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: 82,000,000

South Dakota Gov. Noem: No special session on abortion

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said Friday that she has reversed her initial plan to call a special legislative session this year after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade.

When the Supreme Court's decision first leaked in May, Noem tweeted that she would "immediately call for a special session to save lives" if Roe was overturned. South Dakota already had a trigger law that immediately banned abortions after the ruling came out in June.

Noem, who has since shown caution in the evolving landscape of abortion politics, is among prominent Republican governors across the country who are navigating an issue that threatens to divide the party while giving Democrats a potential election-year boost.

"In the last few weeks, it has become clear that South Dakota is the most pro-life state in the nation," Noem said in a statement, pointing to a ban that allows a woman to have an abortion only if it will save her life, as well as a website she launched that directs pregnant women to state resources.

Noem said she has the support of top lawmakers, as well as influential anti-abortion groups, in holding off legislative action until next year.

For abortion rights advocates, the governor's announcement provided little comfort as they strategized how to restore access to the procedure in South Dakota.

The American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota said it would turn its attention to the November election and would closely follow the 2023 legislative session.

"Politicians who do not believe in protecting the civil rights and liberties of their constituents have no business in governors' mansions, in state attorneys general's offices or in state legislatures," Libby Skarin, the ACLU's campaign director, said in a statement.

One group of contrarian Republican lawmakers, which recently organized themselves as the South Dakota Freedom Caucus, was critical of Noem's change of plans. Earlier Friday, the caucus chairman, Republican Rep. Aaron Aylward, had said an immediate special session was necessary "to close the loopholes" in South Dakota's abortion ban.

Noem declines debate, claims public broadcaster slants left

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem won't participate in a debate sponsored by South Dakota Public Broadcasting because of what her campaign spokesman called its "extreme leftward swing."

In a break from precedent, the Republican governor has agreed to just one debate with her challenger, Democratic state Rep. Jamie Smith.

South Dakota Public Broadcasting said in a statement Friday that it would still proceed with "fair, in-depth candidate debates and interviews," but place an empty chair where Noem would have sat.

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Noem, who has also positioned herself for a 2024 White House bid, is following a nationwide trend of candidates — often Republicans — who are abandoning the time-honored tradition of debating their rivals before Election Day. For Noem, the snub was another opportunity to slam a media ecosystem that conservatives find elitist and cast herself in the mold of former President Donald Trump.

"In the past, Governor Noem has made clear that she will not participate in debates hosted by hyper-partisan organizations or outlets. SDPB has repeatedly promoted the radical effort to re-write American history and cancel our Founding Fathers," Ian Fury, a spokesman for Noem's campaign, said in a statement Friday.

He added that South Dakota Public Broadcasting's "extreme leftward swing precludes the possibility of a fair debate."

The statement pointed to South Dakota Public Broadcasting's interview last year with award-winning scholar and author Ibrahim X. Kendi in which he criticized Noem's efforts to bar public schools and universities from using certain approaches to teaching about race. Noem previously singled out Kendi's work in an executive order.

The station said in a statement: "South Dakota Public Broadcasting has a long history of fair and in-depth political coverage. Our longstanding tradition of hosting primetime debates for statewide and congressional offices furthers our public service mission. As the state's only public media station, we reach areas of the state that otherwise go unserved by most media outlets."

South Dakota Public Broadcasting is a state agency that operates under the Bureau of Information and Telecommunication, with \$9 million in public funds and additional money raised through a nonprofit.

Noem's campaign said South Dakota Public Broadcasting had inquired why she would not participate in its debate, as she did during the 2018 election cycle.

Her campaign had also criticized National Public Radio for declining to read the Declaration of Independence on July 4, which was previously an annual tradition.

Lori Walsh, who hosts and produces South Dakota Public Broadcasting's "In The Moment," read the document on the air Friday.

Noem's gubernatorial challenger, Smith, said, "This is just another example of her trying to push the narrative in a hyper-partisan manner. Here again, she's choosing not to debate on a platform that the South Dakota people have come to trust, and that's a detriment to the people of South Dakota."

Becky Hammon thriving in 1st season as WNBA coach of Aces

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — When Becky Hammon knew it was time to leave the NBA last winter after being an assistant coach for the San Antonio Spurs for eight seasons, she was faced with a tough choice.

She had to choose between the two WNBA franchises she once played for, and both lobbied hard to make her their head coach.

"It was either going to be Vegas or New York," the Aces coach said recently after a practice in New York. "I felt it was time for me to leave and to grow and have a different challenge. It was one or the other. By mid-December, I was like for sure I'm getting off this NBA path right now."

She had been a candidate for a few NBA head coaching jobs over the last few years, but never got them. She also had received some college offers in the past, as well as other assistant jobs in the NBA, but turned them down.

"This is way more advantageous and more beneficial for me than go be an assistant coach in Sacramento or Oklahoma City or some other (NBA) team," Hammon said.

The former Liberty guard acknowledged it was tough to say no to New York owners Joe and Clara Wu Tsai, saying she was really close to taking the job in the Big Apple.

Still, the 45-year-old Hammon has no regrets with her choice and becoming the first WNBA coach to command a million dollar annual salary.

"It's been one of the best decisions of my life. I absolutely love it," said Hammon, who was one of the

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All-Star coaches in Chicago last weekend.

Las Vegas got off to a great start, winning 13 of its first 15 games before hitting a skid ahead of the All-Star break, with five losses in seven games. The Aces swept New York in the two games after the break.

"No one said it was going to be easy. If being great was easy, everyone would be doing it," Hammon said. "You have to hit some adversity. There should be some hiccups. We came out like a rocket and then hit some rough patches.

"The adversity will be beneficial to us more than the win-loss record down the road."

Whether things were going well or when the team was struggling, Hammon said she talked with Spurs coach Gregg Popovich a few times a week, either via text or on the phone.

"The other day, I talked to him for an hour. He watches all our games," she said. "He tells me what he sees and what he thinks. That line of communication is very open."

So is the communication with her team.

Point guard Chelsea Gray said one of the biggest aspects Hammon has brought to the team is accountability — which is certainly a Popovich trait.

"She is holding everyone accountable top to bottom," Gray said. "It didn't take her any time to do that and be completely honest with us."

Hammon's coaching style has helped guard Kelsey Plum, who is having the best season of her WNBA career while averaging 20 points and 5.5 assists. The two connected last year when Hammon was in Las Vegas for a few days. They worked out and the 5-foot-6 Hammon gave the 5-8 Plum some tips on finishing in the lane.

"I had no idea that she'd be coaching me this year," Plum said. "She's been where we are, which helps."

Plum also noticed some teams are already starting to incorporate some of Hammon's coaching ideas. Las Vegas was one of the first teams to start playing a zone defense, and New York tried it Tuesday night against the Aces.

"I think people are starting to steal some of her stuff," Plum said. "People are taking some of our sets on offense, too. It's great to see her making such an impact already."

The Latest: On Biden visit, US doubles visa time for Saudis

By The Associated Press undefined

The Latest on U.S. President Joe Biden's trip to the Mideast:

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia — Saudi citizens will soon be able to obtain 10-year visitor visas, double the current validity, in an agreement during U.S. President Joe Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia.

The U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia announced Saturday the agreement extends the validity of visitor visas for Saudi citizens from five years to a decade as of August 1.

The announcement said travel contributes significantly to both of countries' economies and strengthens ties between citizens.

Biden is on a two-day visit to Saudi Arabia that began on Friday with a meeting with King Salman. That was followed by a highly-watched face-to-face meeting with the kingdom's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The two fist-bumped one another as they met for the first time during Biden's presidency.

Biden said he raised the issue of human rights in his meeting with the prince, but stressed that the visit's aim is to reassert U.S. influence in the region.

The Saudis say 18 cooperation agreements and memorandums were signed by the two delegations late Friday, including an accord with NASA allowing Saudi Arabia to undertake the joint exploration of the moon and Mars in cooperation with the American space agency.

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

Biden meets with Arab Gulf countries to counter Iran threat

In West Bank, Biden embraces 'two states for two peoples'

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As Biden visits, a look at those targeted in Saudi Arabia
Israeli politics a backdrop to Biden's visit to the Mideast

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia — U.S. President Joe Biden met with Egypt's president in Saudi Arabia on Saturday, the first face-to-face meeting between the two leaders since Biden took office in 2021.

Biden was heard thanking President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi for Egypt's role in a ceasefire to Israel's war with Hamas last year in the Gaza Strip, an acknowledgement of Cairo's role in the region.

"Looking forward to working with you on a whole range of issues," Biden was heard also saying to el-Sissi.

Egypt's president, who came to power following mass protests and a military takeover that ousted the divisive Muslim Brotherhood government in 2013, is facing an economic crisis as inflation from rising fuel and food prices hits the Arab world's most populous nation particularly hard. Around a third of Egypt's 103 million people live in poverty.

Although the former military strongman has been credited with stabilizing Egypt's economy following several years of political turmoil, the country is among the world's largest importers of wheat, with much of that from now-blocked Ukrainian ports.

Meanwhile, el-Sissi's government has not hesitated to deploy brute force while jailing thousands of people, mainly Islamists, but also secular activists in an effort to quash dissent.

In recent months, his government released hundreds of detainees and embarked on a so-called national dialogue with various groups, but the government continues to hold many high profile detainees, including pro-democracy activist Alaa Abdel-Fattah. Egyptian security forces have been accused of torturing detainees, including concerns economist Ayman Hadhoud was among those beaten to death while in police detention this year.

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia — President Joe Biden began his final day in Saudi Arabia by meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, who survived an assassination attempt with explosive drones last year.

Some in the country have blamed the attack Iranian-backed factions. It came amid soaring tensions and a stand-off between Iraqi security forces and pro-Iran Shiite militias over election results.

Biden said he wanted to support Iraq's democracy.

"I want the press and you to know we want to be (as) helpful as we can in doing that," he said.

Al-Kadhimi spoke about the "strategic, friendly relationship" between the U.S. and Iraq, and he thanked the U.S. for providing support to combat terrorist groups.

An estimated 2,500 U.S. troops remain in Iraq to support the country's fight against the Islamic State.

Biden is in Jeddah attending a summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The leaders of Egypt, Iraq and Jordan are also attending.

White House: Russian officials visited Iran to view drones

By AAMER MADHANI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — The White House says Russian officials have visited an airfield in central Iran at least twice in recent weeks to view weapons-capable drones it is looking to acquire for use in its ongoing war in Ukraine.

The administration released the intelligence as President Joe Biden was to meet Saturday with the leaders of six Arab Gulf countries, plus Egypt, Jordan and Iraq for a regional summit. Biden is expected to lay out a "major statement" explaining his vision for the Middle East as he closes the final leg of a four-day trip meant to bolster U.S. positioning and knit the region together against Iran.

Iran showcased the drones for Russian officials at Kashan Airfield on June 8 and July 15, according to the White House. The administration also released satellite imagery of Shahed-191 and Shahed-129 drones being displayed and in flight on the airfield, while a Russian delegation transport plane was on the ground.

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan in a statement said the administration has "infor-

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mation that the Iranian government is preparing to provide Russia with several hundred UAVs." UAVs are unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones.

"We assess an official Russian delegation recently received a showcase of Iranian attack-capable UAVs. We are releasing these images captured in June showing Iranian UAVs that the Russian government delegation saw that day," Sullivan said. "This suggests ongoing Russian interest in acquiring Iranian attack-capable UAVs."

Sullivan said U.S. officials believe the June visit "was the first time a Russian delegation has visited this airfield for such a showcase."

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment early Saturday regarding the White House's assertion.

On Friday, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, in a phone conversation with his Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba, rejected reports on exporting Iranian drones to Russia, calling them "baseless."

"This sort of claims parallel with Biden's visit to occupied Palestine, or Israel, are in direction of political intentions and purposes," the website of Iran's Foreign Ministry quoted Amirabdollahian as saying. "We oppose any move that could lead to continuation and intensifying conflicts."

Biden is looking to strengthen coordination among Middle East allies' response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and what the ongoing conflict means to the region. Many of the Gulf nations — Saudi Arabia, in particular — have grave concerns about Iran's malign activity in the region.

None of the countries represented at the summit have moved in lockstep with the U.S. to sanction Russia, a key foreign policy priority for the Biden administration. If anything, the United Arab Emirates has emerged as a sort of financial haven for Russian billionaires and their multimillion-dollar yachts. Egypt remains open to Russian tourists.

Kashan Air Base, located some 190 kilometers (120 miles) south of Tehran, is one of Iran's oldest airfields.

Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz in 2021 linked Kashan to Iran's drone program, alleging that Iran trained militants from Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen to fly drones at the facility.

The U.S. intelligence assessment was first reported by CNN.

Sri Lanka begins choosing leader to replace ex-president

By KRISHAN FRANCIS and BHARATHA MALLAWARACHI Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lankan lawmakers met Saturday to begin choosing a new leader to serve the rest of the term abandoned by the president who fled abroad and resigned after mass protests over the country's economic collapse.

A day earlier, Sri Lanka's prime minister was sworn in as interim president until Parliament elects a successor to Gotabaya Rajapaksa, whose term ends in 2024. Parliament Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana promised a swift and transparent political process that should be done within a week.

The new president could appoint a new prime minister, who would then have to be approved by Parliament.

Parliament's secretary general, Dhammika Dasanayake, said during a brief session on Saturday that nominations for the election of the new president will be heard on Tuesday and if there is more than one candidate, the lawmakers will vote on Wednesday.

Dasanayake also read Gotabaya's resignation letter out loud in Parliament.

In the letter, Rajapaksa says he was stepping down following requests by the people of Sri Lanka and political party leaders. He notes that the economic crisis was looming even when he took office in 2019 and was aggravated by frequent lockdowns during the coronavirus pandemic.

Security around the Parliament building in the capital, Colombo, was heightened on Saturday with armed masked soldiers on guard and roads near the building closed to the public.

In a televised statement on Friday, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said he would initiate steps to change the constitution to curb presidential powers and strengthen Parliament, restore law and order and take legal action against "insurgents."

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It was unclear to whom he was referring, although he said true protesters would not have gotten involved in clashes Wednesday night near Parliament, where many soldiers reportedly were injured.

"There is a big difference between protesters and insurgents. We will take legal action against insurgents," he said.

Wickremesinghe became acting president after Rajapaksa fled Sri Lanka on Wednesday and flew first to the Maldives and then to Singapore. Many protesters insisted that Wickremesinghe too should step aside.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's opposition leader, who is seeking the presidency, vowed to "listen to the people" and to hold Rajapaksa accountable.

In an interview with The Associated Press from his office, Sajith Premadasa said that if he wins the election in Parliament, he would ensure that "an elective dictatorship never, ever occurs" in Sri Lanka.

"That's what we should do. That is our function — catching those who looted Sri Lanka. That should be done through proper constitutional, legal, democratic procedures," Premadasa said.

Sri Lanka has run short of money to pay for imports of basic necessities such as food, fertilizer, medicine and fuel for its 22 million people. Its rapid economic decline has been all the more shocking because, before this crisis, the economy had been expanding, with a growing, comfortable middle class.

The protests underscored the dramatic fall of the Rajapaksa political clan that has ruled Sri Lanka for most of the past two decades.

The Rev. Jeewantha Peiris, a Catholic priest and protest leader, said the country had "come through a hard journey."

"We are happy as a collective effort because this struggle of Sri Lanka was participated by all the citizens of Sri Lanka, even diaspora of Sri Lanka," he said.

Sri Lanka remains a powder keg, and the military warned Thursday that it had powers to respond in case of chaos — a message some found ominous.

The speaker urged the public to "create a peaceful atmosphere" for the democratic process and for Parliament to "function freely and conscientiously."

Sri Lanka is seeking help from the International Monetary Fund and other creditors, but its finances are so poor that even obtaining a bailout has proven difficult, Wickremesinghe recently said.

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

Maduka Iroshan, 26, a university student and protester, said he was "thrilled" that Rajapaksa had quit, because he "ruined the dreams of the young generation."

Months of protests reached a frenzied peak last weekend when demonstrators stormed the president's home and office and Wickremesinghe's official residence. On Wednesday, they seized his office.

The demonstrators initially vowed to stay until a new government was in place, but they shifted tactics Thursday, apparently concerned that an escalation in violence could undermine their message following clashes outside Parliament that left dozens injured.

Protester Mirak Raheem noted the lack of violence and said the work was far from over.

"This is really something amazing, the fact that it happened on the back of largely peaceful protest. But obviously this is just a beginning," Raheem said, citing work to rebuild the economy and restore public confidence in the political system.

Rajapaksa and his wife slipped away in the night aboard a military plane early Wednesday. On Thursday, he went to Singapore, according to the city-state's Foreign Ministry. It said he had not requested asylum, and it was unclear if he would stay or move on. He previously has obtained medical services there, including undergoing heart surgery.

Since Sri Lankan presidents are protected from arrest while in power, Rajapaksa likely wanted to leave while he still had constitutional immunity and access to the plane.

As a military strategist whose brutal campaign helped end the country's 26-year civil war, Rajapaksa and his brother, who was president at the time, were once hailed by the island's Buddhist Sinhalese majority.

Despite accusations of wartime atrocities, including ordering military attacks on ethnic Tamil civilians and abducting journalists, Rajapaksa remained popular among many Sri Lankans. He has continually denied the allegations.

6 people die after storm causes Montana highway pileup

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

Six people have died after a dust storm fueled by wind gusts topping 60 mph caused a pileup Friday evening on Interstate 90 in Montana, authorities said.

Twenty-one vehicles crashed and Montana Highway Patrol Sgt. Jay Nelson said authorities believe the weather was the cause.

"It appears as though there was heavy winds, causing a dust storm with zero visibility," he said.

While the highway patrol did not have an immediate count of the number of injuries, Nelson said additional ambulances had to be called in from Billings to help.

Gov. Greg Gianforte said on Twitter: "I'm deeply saddened by the news of a mass casualty crash near Hardin. Please join me in prayer to lift up the victims and their loved ones. We're grateful to our first responders for their service."

Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen, who oversees the highway patrol, said in a statement: "The Montana Highway Patrol is on the scene with other first responders and investigating the incident. We will release more information as it becomes available and is appropriate out of respect of the lives lost and their loved ones.

"My prayers are with everyone affected by the tragic events during the dust storm in Big Horn County today," Knudsen added.

The incident happened 3 miles (5 kilometers) west of Hardin. A video from The Billings Gazette showed hundreds of tractor-trailers, campers and cars backed up for miles along the two eastbound lanes of the interstate.

The dust storm's roots can be traced back several hours, when storms popped up in central southern Montana between 1 and 2 p.m. and slowly began moving east, according to Nick Vertz, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Billings.

Those storms prompted a severe thunderstorm watch that covered Hardin and other parts of Montana from mid-afternoon until 9 p.m. Friday. Meteorologists forecasted the potential for isolated hail the size of a quarter, scattered wind gusts up to 75 mph (121 kph) and frequent lightning.

A so-called "outflow" — or a surge of wind that's produced by storms but can travel faster than them — flew east/southeast about 30 miles (48 kilometers) ahead of the storms, Vertz said.

A 40 mph (64 kph) gust of wind was recorded at the nearby Big Horn County Airport at 4:15 p.m. The crash was reported to the highway patrol at 4:28 p.m.

By the airport weather station's next reading at 4:35 p.m., the gusts had picked up to 62 mph (100 kph). Another reading 20 minutes later recorded a gust of 64 mph (103 kph).

The wind easily picked up dust — a product of recent temperatures into the 90s and triple digits over the last week — and reduced visibility to less than 1/4 mile (0.4 kilometers).

"If they looked up in the sky while they're in Hardin, they probably didn't see much of what you'd think of for a thunderstorm cloud, maybe not even much at all," Vertz said. "It was just a surge of wind that kind of appeared out of nowhere."

As first responders attempt to clear the wreckage, the meteorologist said they can expect to be safe from additional winds and thunderstorm activity.

"It should be a relatively clear, calm night for them," he said.

Biden meets with Arab Gulf countries to counter Iran threat

By AAMER MADHANI, AYA BATRAWY, CHRIS MEGERIAN and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — President Joe Biden on Saturday will lay out his strategy for the Middle

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East as he closes out of the final leg of a four-day trip meant to bolster U.S. positioning and knit the region together against Iran.

In the Red Sea port city of Jeddah, Biden will meet with heads of state from six Arab Gulf countries, plus Egypt, Jordan and Iraq for a regional summit. Hours before the Gulf Cooperation Council summit, the White House released satellite imagery that indicates Russian officials have twice visited Iran in recent weeks for a showcase of weapons-capable drones it is looking to acquire for use in its ongoing war in Ukraine.

None of the countries represented at the summit have moved in lockstep with the U.S. to sanction Russia, a key foreign policy priority for the Biden administration. If anything, the UAE has emerged as a sort of financial haven for Russian billionaires and their multimillion-dollar yachts. Egypt remains open to Russian tourists.

Release of the satellite imagery—which shows Russian officials visited Kashan Airfield on June 8 and July 15 to get a look at the drones—could help the administration better tie the relevance of the war to many Arab nations own concerns about Iran’s nuclear ambitions and other malign activity in the region.

A senior Biden administration officials, who briefed reporters ahead of the summit, said that Moscow’s efforts to acquire drones from Tehran show that Russia is “effectively making a bet on Iran.”

The gathering of leaders comes a day after he championed steps toward normalizing ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia, and sought to rebuild cooperation with the Saudi king and crown prince after once promising to make the kingdom a “pariah” for its human rights abuses.

When he speaks to the Gulf Cooperation Council and its Arab allies, the White House said, Biden will offer his most fulsome vision yet for the region and how the U.S. can cooperate with it. The Biden administration is also set to announce at the summit \$1 billion in food security assistance for the Middle East and North Africa, according to the administration official.

His first Middle East trip comes 11 months after the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, and as Biden aims to reprioritize the U.S. away from the Middle East’s ruinous wars and ongoing conflicts stretching from Libya to Syria.

“It’s a strategy fit for purpose for 2022 as opposed to the two decades of major land wars that the U.S. fought in this region over the course of the 2000s,” Biden national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters in a preview of the speech.

Energy prices — elevated since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine — were expected to be high on the agenda. But Biden aides tempered expectations that he would leave with a deal for regional producers to immediately boost supply.

“I suspect you won’t see that for another couple of weeks,” Biden told reporters late Friday.

At the summit, Biden was set to hear a chorus of concern about the region’s stability and security, as well as concerns about food security, climate change and the continued threat of terrorism.

Overall, there’s little that the nine Mideast heads of state agree on when it comes to foreign policy. For example, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates are trying to isolate and squeeze Iran over its regional reach and proxies. Oman and Qatar, on the other hand, have solid diplomatic ties with Iran and have acted as intermediaries for talks between Washington and Tehran.

Qatar recently hosted talks between U.S. and Iranian officials as they try to revive Iran’s nuclear accord. Iran not only shares a huge underwater gas field with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, it rushed to Qatar’s aid when Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt cut off ties and imposed a years-long embargo on Qatar that ended only shortly before Biden took office.

Biden’s actions have frustrated some of the leaders. While the U.S. has played an important role in encouraging a months-long ceasefire in Yemen, Biden’s decision to reverse a Trump-era move that had listed Yemen’s rebel Houthis as a terrorist group has outraged the Emirati and Saudi leadership.

On Friday, Biden fist-bumped Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom’s de facto leader, as he arrived at the royal palace in Jeddah. But he rejected the notion that he was ignoring the kingdom’s human rights abuses as he tries to reset a fraught diplomatic relationship.

“I said, very straightforwardly, for an American president to be silent on an issue of human rights is inconsistent with who we are and who I am,” Biden said. “I’ll always stand up for our values.”

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U.S. intelligence believes that the crown prince likely approved the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, a U.S.-based writer, four years ago. Biden said Prince Mohammed claimed that he was "not personally responsible" for the death. "I indicated I thought he was," the president said he replied.

As for U.S. concerns over China's expanding reach, China appears willing to provide Saudi Arabia with missile and nuclear technologies that the U.S. is much more hesitant to do. China is also the kingdom's biggest buyer of Saudi oil.

For Iraq, which has the deepest and strongest links to Iran of all the Arab countries, its presence at the meeting reflects Saudi efforts — supported by the U.S. — to bring Iraq closer to Arab positions and the so-called Arab fold. Iraq has hosted around five rounds of direct talks between Saudi and Iranian officials since Biden took office, though the talks have produced little results.

Ahead of the summit, Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Khadhimi, who survived an assassination attempt with armed drones in November, wrote in Foreign Policy that Iraq faces many problems, but is working "to solve Iraqi problems with Iraqi solutions".

"When U.S. President Joe Biden comes to the Middle East this week, he will be arriving in a region facing numerous challenges, from terrorism to food insecurity and climate change," he wrote. "But the Middle East is also a region that is increasingly facing those challenges together under a group of leaders pursuing positive change."

'Bang, bang': Children live and play near Ukraine front line

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

KRAMATORSK, Ukraine (AP) — The children flicker like ghosts on the empty playgrounds in weedy courtyards deep in a city whose residents have been told to get out now.

Six-year-old Tania has no more playmates left on her street in the eastern Ukraine city of Kramatorsk. She sits on a bench only steps away from the city's train station that was attacked by Russia in April, killing more than 50 people who had gathered there to evacuate. The remnants of a rocket from that attack bore the inscription in Russian: "For the children."

Tania and her parents aren't afraid to stay. In the shade near the now-closed station, they enjoy whatever quiet remains between the booms of outgoing artillery trying to keep out Russian forces.

"The bombs land all over the country. It's doesn't make sense to escape," said Tania's father, Oleksandr Rokytianskyi.

Chatting to herself while settling in with a lavish box of colored markers, Tania added, "Bang, bang!"

It's not unusual for older residents of eastern Ukraine to refuse to heed calls to evacuate to safer places elsewhere in the country. What's jarring, however, is to see children — even a baby stroller — near the front line. It is unknown how many remain as the Russians press their offensive in the region.

Children cannot escape the war, even in cities considered safe. Tania's parents spoke on the day a Russian missile struck Vinnytsia, far from the front in central Ukraine, killing 23 people including three children — a 4-year-old girl named Liza Dmytrieva and two boys aged 7 and 8.

Children who remain close to the fighting have their fates tied to that of their parents, and the dangers can be unexpected.

Outside a hospital, 18-year-old Sasha sits smoking with a 15-year-old friend. Sasha's right arm is bandaged, and he peers at the world from blackened eyes. He has scrapes all over after being struck while crossing the street by one of the military vehicles rumbling through the region.

The Ukrainian soldiers helped find him an ambulance, he said, his speech impaired by his injuries.

Sasha doesn't know why he's still living here. His mother decided the family wouldn't leave. Like some in eastern Ukraine, he didn't share his last name out of concern for his security.

"I'd rather stay because I have friends here," he said, but if he had small children, he would take them out.

In the four-bed hospital room that Sasha shares with other patients, an older man named Volodymyr

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has his right hand thickly bandaged. He said he was in his garden in a village near Bakhmut when cluster bombs exploded.

His family, including his 15-year-old child, plans to stay.

But "the small ones need to be evacuated," Volodymyr said. "The small ones, they haven't seen much in life."

Maksym, a wounded soldier recuperating from a concussion suffered during shelling, agreed.

For the first time since Russia's Feb. 24 invasion, he has left the forest trenches and is able to speak by phone with his teenage daughter, who is safe in the southern city of Zaporizhzhia, several hours' drive away.

This is also Maksym's first chance to see what passes for normal life in Ukraine in almost six months, and he is surprised to see children still so close to the fighting.

"They're kids," he said, with the same gruffness he uses to call the entire war "nonsense."

Dr. Vitalii Malanchuk said a "quite high" number of children are patients at the hospital. He finds it uncomfortable that some people who should be evacuating see his presence as a reassuring reason to stay.

As the latest air raid siren wails at a Kramatorsk playground and artillery booms, a girl in pigtails squeals and runs from the determined chase of a little boy. A small merry-go-round spins.

Dmytro and Karyna Ponomarenko wait for their daughter, nearly 5-year-old Anhelina, along with her pink bike with training wheels.

There are no safe places, they said, and Kramatorsk is home. They feel it's hard to leave and expensive to start anew elsewhere. Some residents who left are now returning, they said, preferring to take their chances.

They will stay as long as they can, even as the Russians inch closer.

"She is used to the sirens, but the explosions still bother her," Dmytro said of Anhelina. They tell her it's thunder, but somehow she has learned to fear the planes, even Ukrainian ones.

There are fewer children to play with day by day, but Anhelina entertains herself, her father said.

"Hyperactive," he added with a weary fondness.

With evening coming, the family leaves, walking by the statue of a tank that's now outnumbered by real ones on the streets.

Shadows edge across the cracked concrete square. The air raid siren is still going.

Ocasio-Cortez navigates the expectations that come with fame

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was almost hidden from the street as she stood behind a nondescript building in Queens that a local nonprofit is buying with federal money. But people spotted her anyway, slowly trickling up the sidewalk and forming a small line to get a picture with her.

The New York congresswoman wrapped up her visit, did a quick interview with a Bengali-language TV crew and posed for pictures with the people who were hovering nearby.

For most members of Congress, such swings through the district are routine, an opportunity to connect with voters back home and remind them of the tangible impact of their work on Capitol Hill, such as the \$2 million Ocasio-Cortez helped the Queens nonprofit secure as part of a \$1.5 trillion government-wide spending bill. But for Ocasio-Cortez, one of the most prominent progressive voices in U.S. politics, such visits carry added significance.

Four years ago, Ocasio-Cortez became famous when she toppled one of the most powerful Democrats in Congress with a message that he was more focused on his political ambitions in Washington than the working-class voters he represented in New York. As she seeks a third term this year and navigates the implications of being a celebrity in her own right, she's determined to avoid any suggestion that she is losing touch with her constituents.

"It's always a concern that that's a perception," Ocasio-Cortez said in an interview.

"I've never had any control over the fact that that kind of phenomenon started the moment I was elected," she continued. "If anything, that's why it's really important for me to continue to be here in the

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community.”

The intensity of interest in Ocasio-Cortez — and the sometimes misplaced belief that she can solve any problem — is on display during her visits to the district.

A March town hall in the Bronx attracted people like Daron Jones, a 21-year-old who was among those lining up to get a photo with Ocasio-Cortez. He doesn't live in the district — or even in New York. He drove about an hour from Hoboken, New Jersey, to see Ocasio-Cortez after having watched “Knock Down The House,” a Netflix documentary chronicling her 2018 campaign against then-Rep. Joe Crowley.

“I knew she was big,” he said. “It inspires me how she just is a regular person. She's just here trying to help the community.”

As she ticked through a slideshow of local U.S. government projects and tax credits newly available under last year's pandemic-relief laws, it was hard to miss the young people in the audience raising their phones to take pictures of her or the security guards stationed near her at the front of the room.

Nancy Johnson, who lived in the neighborhood, attended the event hoping Ocasio-Cortez could intervene in a dispute with her condominium board over elevator outages and other complaints. The congresswoman expressed sympathy for the challenge and said she was aware of the issue. But, noting that the condominium board was a private entity, she said her office could only counsel her and fellow residents on their options.

“I was very impressed with her and what she's doing,” Johnson said, but “just a little disappointed that she couldn't help us or even respond.”

Such high expectations of the 32-year-old Ocasio-Cortez were a reminder of how fame is both an asset and a liability for the congresswoman.

With 13 million followers on Twitter alone, a single social media post by Ocasio-Cortez can draw the type of attention that many veteran politicians can only dream of.

She has raised massive sums of campaign cash from mostly small-dollar donors that she distributes to candidates who share her progressive worldview. Her leadership political action committee has given at least \$207,500 to other campaign committees since the start of 2021, according to federal election data.

But her attempts to use her platform to bring attention to candidates or causes she cares about sometimes land with mixed results. Her picks in several high-profile congressional primaries this year from Cleveland to south Texas were defeated by more moderate candidates backed by the Democratic establishment.

Even in her hometown of New York City, the Ocasio-Cortez-backed candidate for mayor was defeated by the more moderate Eric Adams in a crowded Democratic primary last year. The two have developed a fraught relationship, sparring over everything from the city budget and policing to his choice of words when describing some workers as “low skill.”

Perhaps most memorably, she drew scrutiny in September for wearing a dress to the celebrity-packed Met Gala with the words “Tax the Rich” scrawled across the back. While she earned praise from some for the bold message, she was also criticized by some who considered it hypocritical to attend the ultra-exclusive event full of the wealthy and connected.

Ocasio-Cortez is now at something of a crossroads moment.

With Democrats facing steep headwinds to maintain control of the House after this year's midterms, she is poised to be in the minority for the first time. She is often mentioned as a potential Senate — or even presidential — contender. But she has opted against opportunities to seek higher office, including this year when there was speculation that she might challenge Chuck Schumer, the New York Democrat and Senate majority leader, in a primary.

With the need to appeal to both liberals in New York City and moderate voters upstate, Democrats who win statewide are often centrists, which would make it hard for Ocasio-Cortez to survive a primary if she sought higher office.

“Outside of the very online far-left, she's not popular,” said Jon Reinish, a Democratic political strategist in New York. “She is considerably to the left of the vast majority of New York voters.”

Ocasio-Cortez said she doesn't have a clear plan for what comes next for her.

"It's a common question that I get and it's not even an intention to be cagey or dismissive. It's just — I really don't know," she said. "I really do try to assess the landscape and see how I can best serve."

"Personally — this is — I'm already like way beyond anything that I ever thought was possible for my life," she added. "And so, I do not have this internal craving."

Jan. 6 panel subpoenas Secret Service for erased texts

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and MARY CLARE JALONICK The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee investigating the U.S. Capitol attack subpoenaed the Secret Service on Friday night for text messages agents reportedly deleted around Jan. 6, 2021, as the panel probes Donald Trump's actions at the time of the deadly siege.

Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., said in a statement that the committee understands the messages had been "erased." Thompson outlined an aggressive timeline for production of the documents by Tuesday.

"The USSS erased text messages from January 5 and 6, 2021, as part of a 'device-replacement program,'" Thompson said late Friday.

He said the panel "seeks the relevant text messages, as well as any after action reports that have been issued in any and all divisions of the USSS pertaining or relating in any way to the events of January 6, 2021."

The Secret Service did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The subpoenas come hours after the nine-member panel received a closed briefing from the watchdog for Department of Homeland Security, which oversees the Secret Service. The watchdog briefed the lawmakers about his finding that the Secret Service deleted texts from around Jan. 6, according to two people familiar with the matter.

For the Jan. 6 panel, the watchdog's finding raised the startling prospect of lost evidence that could shed further light on Trump's actions during the insurrection, particularly after earlier testimony about the president's confrontation with security as he tried to join supporters at the Capitol.

It was a rare action for the panel to issue a subpoena to an executive branch department. The committee's letter was to USSS Director James Murray, who is set to retire at the end of the month.

While lawmakers were tight-lipped about what they heard, the closed-door briefing with the inspector general, Joseph Cuffari, came two days after his office sent a letter to leaders of the House and Senate Homeland Security committees stating that Secret Service agents erased messages between Jan. 5 and Jan. 6, 2021 "as part of a device-replacement program." The deletion came after the watchdog office requested records from the agents as part of its probe into events surrounding the Jan. 6 attack, the letter said.

The committee had originally sought the electronic records in mid-January and made an official request in March for all communications received or sent from DHS employees between Jan. 5 and Jan. 7, 2021.

Thompson, the Democratic chairman of the House Jan. 6 panel, told the Associated Press on Friday that the committee is taking a deeper look at whether records may have been lost. "There have been some conflicting positions on the matter," the Mississippi lawmaker said.

The private briefing was confirmed by two people familiar with the matter who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity to discuss it.

The Secret Service insists proper procedures were followed. Agency spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said, "The insinuation that the Secret Service maliciously deleted text messages following a request is false. In fact, the Secret Service has been fully cooperating with the OIG in every respect — whether it be interviews, documents, emails, or texts."

He said the Secret Service had started to reset its mobile devices to factory settings in January 2021 "as part of a pre-planned, three-month system migration." In that process, some data was lost.

The inspector general has first requested the electronic communications on Feb. 26, "after the migra-

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tion was well under way," Guglielmi said.

The Secret Service said it has provided a substantial number of emails and chat messages that included conversations and details related to Jan. 6 to the inspector general. It also said text messages from the Capitol Police requesting assistance on Jan. 6 were preserved and provided to the inspector general's office.

The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, which has jurisdiction over the Department of Homeland Security and the Secret Service, is also expecting a briefing from the inspector general about the letter, according to a person familiar with the committee's discussions who was not authorized to discuss them publicly.

Ohio Republican Sen. Rob Portman said in a statement that he was "deeply concerned" by the OIG's recent letter. Portman, the ranking member on the Homeland Security committee, added "It is essential that the Department be transparent with its inspector general, Congress, and the American public."

The Jan. 6 committee has taken a renewed interest in the Secret Service following the dramatic testimony of former White House aide Cassidy Hutchinson, who recalled what she heard about Trump's actions the day of the insurrection.

Hutchinson recalled being told about a confrontation between Trump and his Secret Service detail as he angrily demanded to be driven to the Capitol, where his supporters would later breach the building. She also recalled overhearing Trump telling security officials to remove magnetometers for his rally on the Ellipse even though some of his supporters were armed.

Some details of that account were quickly disputed by those agents. Robert Engel, the agent who was driving the presidential SUV, and Trump security official Tony Ornato are willing to testify under oath that no agent was assaulted and Trump never lunged for the steering wheel, a person familiar with the matter told the AP. The person would not discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

With evidence still emerging, the House Jan. 6 committee on Friday officials scheduled its next hearing to take place Thursday in primetime. The 8 p.m. hearing, which is the eighth in a series that began in early June, will take a deeper look into the three-hour-plus stretch when Trump failed to act as a mob of supporters stormed the Capitol.

It will be the first hearing in prime time since June 9, the first on the committee's findings. That earlier hearing was viewed by 20 million people.

Mexico's capture of drug kingpin could be signal to US

By MARÍA VERZA and MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — As Mexican marines closed in on infamous drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero deep in the mountains of his native state of Sinaloa, it was a 6-year-old bloodhound named "Max" who roused from the undergrowth the man allegedly responsible for the murder of a U.S. DEA agent more than three decades ago.

While the United States' motivation to find Caro Quintero was never in doubt — hence the \$20 million reward for information leading to his capture — there was less certainty about the commitment of Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who had made clear his disinterest in pursuing drug lords.

Yet on Friday, three days after López Obrador and U.S. President Joe Biden met in the White House, the most wanted target of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration was in Mexican custody.

Mexico's Attorney General's Office said in a statement late Friday that Caro Quintero was arrested for extradition to the U.S. and he would be held at the maximum security Altiplano prison about 50 miles west of Mexico City.

"It seems to me that in the private talks between President Joe Biden and Andrés Manuel (López Obrador) they surely agreed to turning over high-profile drug traffickers again, which had been suspended," said security analyst David Saucedo.

Cooperation between the DEA and Mexico's marines had led to some of the highest-profile captures during previous administrations, but not under López Obrador, Saucedo noted.

Both presidents face domestic pressure to do more against drug traffickers. With Caro Quintero's arrest,

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"Narcos are being captured again and I believe that clearly it was what was in fact needed," Saucedo said.

Samuel González, who founded the organized crime office in Mexico's Attorney General's Office and now a security analyst, said that to López Obrador's benefit, the arrest "shows evidence that there's no protection of capos" from his administration.

González believes Caro Quintero has long been a thorn in the bilateral relationship, but said that "without doubt" his capture was fruit of the recent negotiations in Washington.

U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland and U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Ken Salazar both expressed gratitude for Mexico's efforts to catch the man blamed for the brutal torture and murder of DEA agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena in 1985 — a case that brought a low point in U.S.-Mexico relations.

"This achievement is a testament to Mexico's determination to bring to justice someone who terrorized and destabilized Mexico during his time in the Guadalajara Cartel; and is implicated in the kidnapping, torture, and murder of DEA agent Kiki Camarena," Salazar said in a statement late Friday.

Garland said the U.S. government would seek his immediate extradition.

Mexico's navy and Attorney's General Office led the operation deep in the mountains that straddle the border between Sinaloa and Chihuahua states, many miles from any paved road. They found Caro Quintero, with help of "Max," hiding in brush in a place in Sinaloa called San Simon.

Caro Quintero came from Badiraguato, Sinaloa, the same township as Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, the former leader of the Sinaloa cartel, which came later. Caro Quintero was one of the founders of the Guadalajara cartel and according to the DEA was one of the primary suppliers of heroin, cocaine and marijuana to the United States in the late 1970s.

He blamed Camarena for a raid on a huge marijuana plantation in 1984. The next year, Camarena was kidnapped in Guadalajara, allegedly on orders from Caro Quintero. His tortured body was found a month later.

Caro Quintero was serving a 40-year sentence in Mexico when an appeals court overturned his verdict in 2013. The Supreme Court upheld the sentence, but it was too late — Caro Quintero had been spirited off in a waiting vehicle.

Caro Quintero was added to FBI's 10 most wanted list in 2018 with a \$20 million reward for his capture.

López Obrador had previously seemed ambivalent about his case.

Last year, the president said the legal appeal that led to Caro Quintero's release was "justified" because supposedly no verdict had been handed down against the drug lord after 27 years in jail. López Obrador also depicted a later warrant for his re-arrest as an example of U.S. pressure.

"Once he was out, they had to look for him again, because the United States demanded he shouldn't have been released, but legally the appeal was justified," López Obrador said.

Presidential spokesman Jesús Ramírez said at the time, "The president was just saying that it was a legal aberration that the judge had not issued a verdict on Mr. Caro Quintero after 27 years ... but he was not defending his release."

Mexico captures infamous drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO and CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Infamous drug lord Rafael Caro Quintero, who was behind the killing of a U.S. DEA agent in 1985, was captured Friday by Mexican forces nearly a decade after walking out of a Mexican prison and returning to drug trafficking, Mexico's navy said.

Caro Quintero was arrested after a search dog named "Max" found him hiding in brush in the town of San Simon in Sinaloa state during a joint operation by the navy and Attorney General's Office, a navy statement said. The site was in the mountains near Sinaloa's border with the northern border state of Chihuahua.

Mexico's national arrest registry listed the time of Caro Quintero's arrest as around midday. There were two pending arrest orders for him as well as an extradition request from the U.S. government.

Mexico's Attorney General's Office said in a statement late Friday that Caro Quintero was arrested for

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extradition and would be held at the maximum security Altiplano prison about 50 miles west of Mexico City.

A very short video segment released by the navy showed Caro Quintero — his face blurred — dressed in jeans, a soaking wet blue shirt and baggy khaki jacket held by both arms by men wearing camouflage uniforms and carrying assault rifles.

A navy Blackhawk helicopter carrying 15 people crashed near the coastal city of Los Mochis during the operation, killing 14 of those aboard, the navy statement said. The available information indicated it suffered an "accident," the cause of which had not yet been determined, the statement said.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said via Twitter that the helicopter crashed shortly before landing after supporting those who conducted the capture of Caro Quintero. He expressed condolences to the families of the victims and said the crash would be investigated.

Caro Quintero had walked free in 2013 after 28 years in prison when a court overturned his 40-year sentence for the 1985 kidnapping and killing of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena. The brutal murder marked a low point in U.S.-Mexico relations.

Caro Quintero, the former leader of the Guadalajara cartel, had since returned to drug trafficking and unleashed bloody turf battles in the northern Mexico border state of Sonora.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has maintained that he is not interested in detaining drug lords and prefers to avoid violence.

But the arrest came just days after López Obrador met with U.S. President Joe Biden in the White House.

There had been tensions between the Mexican government and the DEA after Mexico enacted a law limiting the U.S. agency's operations. But recently, the DEA's new head in Mexico received a visa, which the U.S. officials marked as a sign of progress in the relationship.

Shortly before Caro Quintero's arrest Friday, U.S. Ambassador Ken Salazar told a gathering of reporters there had been progress in the security relationship.

"I have been in meetings with the foreign minister and with the security Cabinet, along with all our agencies that have included the new head of the DEA sitting at my right hand," Salazar said. "So if we weren't welcome here in Mexico that wouldn't happen."

An appeals court overturned Caro Quintero's verdict in 2013, but the Supreme Court upheld the sentence. It was too late by then; Caro Quintero was spirited off in a waiting vehicle.

He was on the FBI's most wanted list, with a \$20 million reward for his capture through the State Department's Narcotics Rewards Program. He was added to the FBI's top 10 most wanted list in 2018.

Caro Quintero was one of the primary suppliers of heroin, cocaine, and marijuana to the United States in the late 1970s. He blamed Camarena for a raid on a marijuana plantation in 1984. In 1985, Camarena was kidnapped in Guadalajara, allegedly on orders from Caro Quintero. His tortured body was found a month later.

Late Friday, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland expressed the U.S. government's deep gratitude to Mexican authorities for Caro Quintero's arrest and offered condolences for the Mexican military personnel who died in the helicopter crash.

"There is no hiding place for anyone who kidnaps, tortures, and murders American law enforcement," he said in a statement. "Today's arrest is the culmination of tireless work by DEA and their Mexican partners to bring Caro-Quintero to justice for his alleged crimes, including the torture and execution of DEA Special Agent Enrique 'Kiki' Camarena. We will be seeking his immediate extradition to the United States so he can be tried for these crimes in the very justice system Special Agent Camarena died defending."

Mike Vigil, the DEA's former chief of international operations, said Caro Quintero was believed to have been operating independently most recently, though there had been rumors he was back with the Sinaloa cartel.

Caro Quintero was from Badiraguato, Sinaloa, the same area as Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, the former Sinaloa cartel leader now serving a life sentence in the United States. He eventually became one of the "godfathers" of Mexican drug trafficking.

Vigil said he was surprised by Caro Quintero's arrest, considering López Obrador's stated disinterest in

going after drug cartel leaders, but he added that the DEA would never stop looking for someone who killed an agent.

"We didn't see a lot of effort (to capture Caro Quintero) in the last several years, especially when (López Obrador) came in and immediately started to dismantle a lot of the infrastructure and the bilateral relationships between the U.S. and Mexico relative to drug trafficking," Vigil said.

In Sonora, one of the state's hit hardest by Caro Quintero's efforts to reclaim his territory, there was a hope his arrest could help.

"I believe in Sonora, in general, there could be calm, and yes, relief for us, because I believe the disappearances will diminish," said Cecilia Duarte, an activist with a team of volunteer searchers in Sonora who look for the clandestine graves of the disappeared. Some activists have been threatened and even killed in Sonora amid Caro Quintero's turf wars with the sons of "El Chapo."

But, Duarte said, Caro Quintero "is only part (of the conflict), the conflict doesn't end."

Medical examiner: Jayland Walker was shot dozens of times

By MARK GILLISPIE Associated Press

AKRON, Ohio (AP) — Jayland Walker, the 25-year-old Black man who died last month at the hands of police in Akron, Ohio, was shot dozens of times, with 26 bullets recovered from his body, according to a preliminary autopsy report released Friday.

Dr. Lisa Kohler, the Summit County medical examiner, said it was impossible for her office to say which bullet killed Walker or the number of shots that were fired.

Walker "had several very devastating injuries that would cause death," including injuries to his heart, lungs and arteries, Kohler said. She tallied 41 entry wounds and five wounds from bullets that grazed Walker.

Preliminary findings released earlier indicated Walker's body had more than 60 wounds. Greta Johnson, Summit County communications director, said Friday it was "very possible" that one bullet could cause multiple entrance wounds, such as by passing through Walker's arm and into his torso.

Walker had five wounds in his back, but it's impossible to say whether those came as he ran away or turned as he was being shot, Kohler said.

The medical examiner gave a summary of the report on Walker's death at a news conference. The report was finalized Thursday.

The June 27 pursuit began when officers tried to pull him over for equipment violations. Authorities say Walker fired a gunshot from his car 40 seconds into the chase.

Kohler said no illegal drugs or alcohol were detected in Walker's body.

Ken Abbarno, a lawyer representing Walker's family, said the medical examiner's findings confirm that Walker — unarmed — "came to a brutal, senseless death."

Walker was remembered as a shy, kind, thoughtful man with a quiet sense of humor at his funeral Wednesday.

He had been grieving his fiancée's recent death but his family had no indication of concern beyond that, another lawyer for his family previously said.

A message seeking comment on the autopsy findings was sent Friday to a police department spokesperson.

The update comes a day after the NAACP made a direct plea to Attorney General Merrick Garland to have the Justice Department open a federal civil rights investigation into the fatal shooting.

Akron has seen daily protests since July 3, when city officials released body camera footage from the eight officers involved. Demonstrators marched peacefully through the city on the day the footage was made public, but late that night, police in full riot gear fired a dozen tear gas canisters to disperse a handful of protesters outside the justice center.

Downtown Akron has since been under a curfew from 11 p.m. to 5 a.m.

Police said Walker fled an attempted traffic stop for minor equipment violations and fired a shot from his car during the vehicle chase, but he wasn't armed when officers shot him.

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Police body camera footage shows Walker wearing a ski mask, jumping out the front passenger door of his still-moving car and then running into a parking lot where police opened fire. That blurry footage does not clearly show what authorities say was a threatening gesture made by Walker before he was shot.

Police chased him for about 10 seconds before officers fire from multiple directions, in a burst of shots that lasts 6 or 7 seconds.

An unloaded handgun, an ammunition clip and what appeared to be a wedding band were found on the front driver's seat of Walker's car, authorities said.

The officers involved are on paid leave while the state investigates the shooting. Seven of those officers are white, and one is Black. None of them has a record of discipline, substantiated complaints or fatal shootings, according to the police department.

The local police union has said the officers thought there was an immediate threat of serious harm, and that it believes their actions and the number of shots will be found justified in line with their training and protocols.

Police in neighboring New Franklin Township had tried to stop and then chased a car matching Walker's for the same minor equipment violations less than 24 hours before the Akron chase. A supervisor there called off the pursuit when the car crossed the township's border with Akron.

House votes to restore abortion rights, Senate odds dim

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House has voted to restore abortion rights nationwide in Democrats' first legislative response to the Supreme Court's landmark decision overturning Roe v. Wade.

The bill has little chance of becoming law, with the necessary support lacking in the 50-50 Senate. Yet voting marks the beginning of a new era in the debate as lawmakers, governors and legislatures grapple with the impact of the court's decision.

The legislation passed 219-210. The House also passed a second bill to prohibit punishment for a woman or child who decides to travel to another state to get an abortion, 223-205.

"Just three weeks ago the Supreme Court took a wrecking ball to the fundamental rights by overturning Roe v. Wade," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ahead of the votes, gathering with other Democratic women on the steps of the Capitol. "It is outrageous that 50 years later, women must again fight for our most basic rights against an extremist court."

Republicans spoke forcefully against the two bills, praising the Supreme Court's decision and warning that the legislation would go further than Roe ever did when it comes to legalizing abortion.

Urging her colleagues to vote no, Washington GOP Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers called abortion "the greatest human rights issue of our generation."

She said the Democratic legislation "has nothing to do with protecting the health of women. It has everything to do with forcing an extreme agenda on the American people."

The White House hailed Friday's votes as an "important step."

"These bills would ensure women's access to essential health care services, regardless of where they live, and protect the bedrock right to cross state lines for medical care," press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said. "A majority of Americans across the country support them." She called the GOP's refusal to support the bills "extreme" and "out of touch."

By overturning Roe, the court has allowed states to enact strict abortion limits, including many that had previously been deemed unconstitutional. The ruling is expected to lead to abortion bans in roughly half the states.

Already, a number of GOP-controlled states have moved quickly to curtail or outlaw abortion, while states controlled by Democrats have sought to champion access. Voters now rank abortion as among the most pressing issues facing the country, a shift in priorities that Democrats hope will reshape the political landscape in their favor for the midterm elections.

This is the second time the House has passed the bill, which would expand on the protections Roe had

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previously provided by banning what supporters say are medically unnecessary restrictions that block access to safe and accessible abortions. It would prevent abortion bans earlier than 24 weeks, which is when fetal viability, the ability of a human fetus to survive outside the uterus, is generally thought to begin. It allows exceptions for abortions after fetal viability when a provider determines the life or health of the mother is at risk.

The Democrats' proposal would also prevent states from requiring providers to share "medically inaccurate" information, or from requiring additional tests or waiting periods, often aimed at dissuading a patient from having an abortion.

The bill that would prohibit punishment for traveling out of state would specify that doctors can't be punished for providing reproductive care outside their home state. Democratic Rep. Lizzie Fletcher of Texas, one of the bill's authors, said the threats to travel "fail to reflect the fundamental rights that are granted in our Constitution."

Democrats have highlighted the case of a 10-year-old girl who had to cross state lines into Indiana to get an abortion after being raped, calling it an example of how the court's decision is already having severe consequences.

"We don't have to imagine why this might matter. We don't need to conjure up hypotheticals. We already know what's happened," Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar said Thursday on the Senate floor.

"Should the next little 10-year-old's right or 12-year-old's right or 14-year-old's right to get the care that she desperately needs be put in jeopardy?"

The Constitution doesn't explicitly say travel between states is a right, though the Supreme Court has said it is a right that "has been firmly established and repeatedly recognized." Yet the court has never said exactly where the right to travel comes from and that could leave it open to challenge or elimination, as the right to an abortion was.

Lawmakers in Missouri earlier this year, for example, considered making it illegal to "aid or abet" abortions that violate Missouri law, even if they occur out of state. The proposal was ultimately shelved.

Democrats have teed up more bills for passage in the coming weeks. Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said Friday that the House will vote next week on legislation guaranteeing a right to contraception.

GOP Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma, who supports instituting a nationwide ban on abortion, accused his colleagues across the aisle Thursday of seeking to "inflammate" the issue of abortion. He said proponents of the travel bill should ask themselves, "Does the child in the womb have the right to travel in their future?"

Only two Senate Republicans, Sens. Lisa Murkowski and Susan Collins, have been supportive of abortion rights, but they do not support the Democrats' proposal, calling it too far-reaching. They have introduced alternative legislation that would bar states from placing an "undue burden" on a woman's ability to obtain an abortion before fetal viability, among other provisions.

When pressed Thursday on whether Democrats should work with the two senators, Pelosi pushed back, "We're not going to negotiate a woman's right to choose."

Since the court's ruling last month, some activists have accused President Joe Biden and other top Democrats of failing to respond forcefully enough to the decision. Biden, who denounced the court's ruling as "extreme," last week issued an executive order intended to head off some potential penalties that women seeking abortion may face. His administration has also warned medical providers that they must offer abortion if the life of the mother is at risk.

Meanwhile, the Democratic National Committee has already launched a digital ad campaign to energize voters on the issue, warning that Republicans' ultimate goal is to outlaw abortion nationwide.

"We have to elect a couple more Democratic senators so that we can get around the filibuster so that we can pass legislation that truly impacts a woman's right to choose," she said. "There's no halfway measure."

Prosecutors seek 15-year sentence for armed Capitol rioter

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

Federal prosecutors are seeking a 15-year prison sentence for a Texas man who was convicted of storm-

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ing the U.S. Capitol with a holstered handgun, calling him a militia group member who took a central role in the pro-Trump mob's attack, according to a court filing Friday.

If a judge accepts the Justice Department's recommendation, Guy Wesley Reffitt's prison sentence would be nearly three times the length of the longest sentence among more than 200 defendants who have been sentenced for crimes related to the Jan. 6, 2021, riot in the nation's capital.

The longest sentence so far is five years and three months for Robert Palmer, a Florida man who pleaded guilty to attacking police officers at the Capitol.

U.S. District Judge Dabney Friedrich is scheduled to sentence Reffitt on Aug. 1. The judge isn't bound by any of the recommendations or the sentencing guidelines calculated by the court's probation department, which call for a sentence ranging from nine years to 11 years and three months,

Defense attorney Clinton Broden, who is asking for Reffitt to be sentenced to no more than two years in prison, said he was shocked by prosecutors' recommendation. He noted that Reffitt wasn't accused of entering the Capitol or assaulting any police officers that day.

"It's absolutely absurd," he said during a telephone interview Friday. "I certainly don't condone what Mr. Reffitt did. And I think everybody realizes the seriousness of the offenses. But at the same point, there has to be some proportionality here."

Prosecutors argue that an "upward departure for terrorism" is warranted in Reffitt's case, which would lead to significantly longer sentence if the judge agrees to apply it. They say the trial evidence showed that Reffitt planned for weeks ahead of January to travel to Washington, D.C., "with the specific intent of attacking the Capitol and taking over Congress."

"Reffitt did not intend to simply obstruct Congress's certification of the Electoral College vote. Rather, Reffitt intended to physically remove the legislators from the building (using his firearm and flexicuffs, and the power of the crowd) and actually 'take over' Congress," Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Nestler wrote.

Reffitt, the first Capitol riot defendant to be tried, was convicted by a jury in March of all five counts in his indictment. Jurors found him guilty of obstructing Congress' joint session to certify the Electoral College vote, of interfering with police officers who were guarding the Capitol and of threatening his two teenage children if they reported him to law enforcement.

Prosecutors say Reffitt was a leader of a Texas militia group. He told other militia group members that he planned to drag House Speaker Nancy Pelosi out of the Capitol building by her ankles, "with her head hitting every step on the way down," Nestler wrote.

Reffitt, a resident of Wylie, Texas, didn't testify at his trial.

During the trial's closing arguments, U.S. Attorney Risa Berkower told jurors that Reffitt proudly "lit the fire" that allowed others in a mob to overwhelm Capitol police officers near the Senate doors.

Jurors saw videos that captured the confrontation between a few Capitol police officers and a mob of people, including Reffitt, who approached them on the west side of the Capitol.

Reffitt was armed with a Smith & Wesson pistol in a holster on his waist, carrying zip-tie handcuffs and wearing body armor and a helmet equipped with a video camera when he advanced on police, according to prosecutors. He retreated after an officer pepper sprayed him in the face, but he waved on other rioters who ultimately breached the building, prosecutors said.

Reffitt drove to Washington, D.C., with Rocky Hardie, who said he and Reffitt were members of the Texas Three Percenters militia group. The Three Percenters militia movement refers to the myth that only 3% of Americans fought in the Revolutionary War against the British.

Hardie testified that both of them were armed with holstered handguns when they attended then-President Donald Trump's "Stop the Steal" rally before the riot. Hardie said Reffitt talked about dragging lawmakers out of the Capitol and replacing them with people who would "follow the Constitution." Hardie also said Reffitt gave him two pairs of zip-tie cuffs in case they needed to detain anybody.

Reffitt's 19-year-old son, Jackson, testified that his father threatened him and his sister, then 16, after he drove home from Washington. Reffitt told his children they would be traitors if they reported him to authorities and said "traitors get shot," Jackson Reffitt recalled.

Reffitt is "done with politics," his lawyer said in a court filing Friday.

"His only goal now is to put his family back together while recognizing that as much as he spent the past two decades providing for them, he is the one who has driven them apart," Broden wrote.

More than 840 people have been charged with federal crimes related to the riot. Over 330 of them have pleaded guilty, mostly to misdemeanors, and over 200 of them have been sentenced. More than 100 others have trial dates.

Biden's Saudi visit aims to balance rights, oil, security

By AAMER MADHANI, AYA BATRAWY, ELLEN KNICKMEYER and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — President Joe Biden met Friday with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the man he once pledged to shun for human rights violations, and shared a cordial fist bump as he tried to reset an important diplomatic relationship, bolster Mideast security and increase the global flow of oil.

It was the first encounter for the two leaders, and their chummy gesture was swiftly criticized. But Biden insisted that he did not shy away from pressing the crown prince on the kingdom's abuses, particularly the 2018 murder of the U.S.-based writer Jamal Khashoggi, which U.S. intelligence believes was approved by the heir to the throne.

"I said, very straightforwardly, for an American president to be silent on an issue of human rights is inconsistent with who we are and who I am," Biden said after the meeting. "I'll always stand up for our values."

Biden said Prince Mohammed claimed that he was "not personally responsible" for the death of Khashoggi, who wrote for The Washington Post. "I indicated I thought he was," the president said he replied.

Though he brushed off any focus on the fist bump, it was described as "shameful" by Fred Ryan, the Post's publisher.

"It projected a level of intimacy and comfort that delivers to MBS the unwarranted redemption he has been desperately seeking," Ryan said, referring to the crown prince by his initials.

Biden had long refused to speak to Prince Mohammed. But concerns about human rights have been somewhat eclipsed by other challenges, including Iran's nuclear ambitions and rising gas prices in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia wants to strengthen its security relationship with the United States and secure investments to transform its economy into one less reliant on pumping oil.

For now, it appears the two leaders are taking incremental steps together. Biden announced that U.S. peacekeepers would leave the Red Sea island of Tiran by the end of the year, paving the way for Saudi Arabia to develop tourist attractions there.

Because of a complex diplomatic arrangement governing control of the strategically located island, America's departure required Israel's assent, and the deal was the latest reflection of warmer relations between the Israelis and Saudis.

The agreement followed an earlier announcement that the Saudis were ending strict limits on Israeli commercial flights over their territory.

Biden also said progress was being made on extending a cease-fire in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia had been battling Iran-backed militants for years, leading to a humanitarian crisis.

The United States played down expectations for any immediate increases in Saudi oil production, which could help alleviate high gas prices that are politically damaging to Biden back home. But after his meeting with the crown prince, Biden hinted that relief could be on the way, although "you won't see that for another couple of weeks."

The current OPEC+ agreement expires in September, opening the door to potentially higher production after that, although questions remain about how much excess capacity the Saudis have.

Biden's nearly three hours at the royal palace were widely seen as a diplomatic victory for Prince Mohammed, who has tried to rehabilitate his image, draw investments to the kingdom for his reform plans

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and bolster the kingdom's security relationship with the U.S.

The Saudis carefully controlled the visit, even trying to bar Post reporters from a briefing with government officials before relenting.

They also released a steady stream of photos and videos from private meetings that journalists were barred from attending. Biden was shown shaking hands with King Salman, the 86-year-old monarch who suffers from poor health, including two hospitalizations this year, while the crown prince looked on.

Afterward, reporters were only briefly allowed into a meeting that Biden and the crown prince held with their advisers. The two men sat across from each other, an arrangement that burnished the perception that they are counterparts. It's an image that the crown prince has been eager to foster as he solidifies his path to the throne after sidelining, detaining and seizing the assets of royal rivals and critics.

Prince Mohammed's rise to power has ushered with it a new era for the kingdom, one in which Saudi Arabia is more assertive on the world stage as it expands its relations with Russia and China. In addition, budding ties with Israel are not only underpinned by shared enmity with Iran, but also a possible hedge against the perception that the U.S. has increasingly disengaged from the region.

Biden has spent his first trip to the Middle East since taking office trying to convince people otherwise.

During an earlier stop in Israel, he said he was going to Saudi Arabia to "promote U.S. interests in a way that I think we have an opportunity to reassert what I think we made a mistake of walking away from: our influence in the Middle East."

On Saturday, he'll participate in a gathering of leaders from the Gulf Cooperation Council — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — before returning to Washington. The leaders of Mideast neighbors Egypt, Iraq and Jordan are also to attend, and Biden's national security adviser said Biden would make a "major statement" on his vision for the Middle East.

The Saudi visit is one of the most delicate that Biden has faced on the international stage.

Any success in soothing relations could pay diplomatic dividends as the president seeks to ensure stability in the region. But it has also opened Biden, already floundering in public opinion polls at home, to deeper criticism that he is backtracking on his pledges to put human rights at the center of foreign policy. During his campaign for president, he had vowed to treat Saudi Arabia as a "pariah."

"If we ever needed a visual reminder of the continuing grip oil-rich autocrats have on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, we got it today," tweeted Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif. "One fist bump is worth a thousand words."

Khashoggi's fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, said that, with the visit to Saudi Arabia, Biden was backing down on human rights.

She told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday, "It's heartbreaking and disappointing. And Biden will lose his moral authority by putting oil and expediency over principles and values."

Russian cruise missiles rain down on southern Ukrainian city

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

VINNYTSIA, Ukraine (AP) — Cruise missiles fired by Russian strategic bombers struck a southeastern Ukrainian city late Friday, killing at least three people and wounding 15, as air raid sirens went off across the country, officials said.

The attack on Dnipro came a day after a Russian missile strike killed at least 23 people and wounded more than 200 in Vinnytsia, a city southwest of Kyiv, the capital.

Russia's military campaign has been focusing on the Donbas in Ukraine's east, but Russian forces also have been pounding other parts of the country in a relentless push to wrest territory from Ukraine and soften the morale of its leaders, civilians and troops as the war nears the five-month mark.

Ukraine's air force said several Kh-101 cruise missiles fired from Tu-95MS strategic bombers over the Caspian Sea hit a factory about 10 p.m. in Dnipro, a major city on the Dnieper River. Four incoming missiles were intercepted, it said. Videos posted on social media showed fiery explosions and towering plumes of dark smoke.

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The regional governor, Valentyn Reznichenko, said the missiles hit the factory and nearby streets, killing at least three people and wounding 15.

One of the dead was a bus driver who had just finished work and was returning to the depot when a missile struck, said Ivan Vasyuchkov, a member of the city council. The emergency service said two vehicles were burned up and 10 others were damaged. The missile strikes also set the factory on fire and blew out windows in nearby apartment buildings.

Airstrikes also were reported in Kremenchuk, another city along the Dnieper River south of Kyiv.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged everyone to heed air raid sirens and seek cover.

"The occupiers are realizing that we are gradually becoming stronger and the purpose of their terror is very simple — to put pressure on us, to put pressure on our society, to intimidate people, to cause maximum harm to Ukrainian cities, at least while the Russian terrorists are still capable of doing it," he said in his nightly video address to the nation.

The attack on Vinnytsia by cruise missiles launched from a Russian submarine was the latest to fan international outrage since Russian President Vladimir Putin began the invasion on Feb. 24. The dead included three children: a 4-year-old girl, and two boys, 7 and 8.

"She was reaching for her daughter, and Liza was already dead," the mother's aunt, Tetiana Dmytrysyna, told The Associated Press on Friday. "The mother was robbed of the most precious thing she had."

A video of Liza playing earlier in the day and a photo of her lifeless body have gone viral worldwide.

Ukraine's Interior Ministry said Friday that Russian forces had conducted more than 17,000 strikes on civilian targets during the war, killing thousands of fighters and civilians and driving millions from their homes. The invasion has also rippled through the world economy by hiking prices and crimping exports of key Ukrainian and Russian products such as grain, fuel and fertilizer.

As the fighting raged, Russia noted progress in talks on a possible deal to allow Ukraine to use the Black Sea to export millions of tons of grain that could help feed a world facing shortages and higher food prices.

Alluding to talks in Istanbul this week among Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Nations, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said a final document had been prepared and that other participants had "largely supported" Russian proposals to help ease grain shipments through Ukrainian ports.

He said work on the "Black Sea initiative" was to be completed shortly to allow shipments of food "while excluding the use of those logistical chains for the deliveries of weapons and military equipment" to Ukraine. He also said the plan seeks to "prevent any provocations."

About 22 million tons of grain have been stuck in Ukraine because of the war.

It was the most extensive Russian comment yet on the grain talks, which mostly involved military officials. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Russia and Ukraine had taken "a critical step" toward ensuring exports of the desperately needed grain.

After Thursday's strike on Vinnytsia, nearly 200 people sought medical attention and 80 remain hospitalized, the emergency service said. Zelenskyy said four people were still missing. Search teams were poring over two sites Friday — an office building with a medical center and a concert hall near an outdoor recreation area where mothers with children often stroll.

"Russia deliberately hit civilians and all those responsible for the crime must be brought to account," said Vinnytsia Gov. Serhiy Borzov, denouncing the "barbaric behavior by Russia that tramples on international humanitarian law."

Kyrylo Tymoshenko, a deputy head of the Ukrainian president's office, said three missiles were used.

"There is no answer to the question why yesterday, and why in Vinnytsia," Tymoshenko said. "We expect every second and minute that this could happen in any corner of Ukraine."

After initial silence about the missile strikes on Vinnytsia, Russia's Defense Ministry said Friday that its forces had struck an officers' club — the Soviet-era use of the concert hall.

Konashenkov, the Russian Defense Ministry spokesman, said the Kalibr cruise missiles landed as the "military facility hosted a meeting between Ukrainian air force command and representatives of foreign weapons suppliers." He said attendees were discussing prospective supplies of warplanes and weapons.

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"Participants of the meeting were eliminated in the strike," Konashenkov said.

His claim couldn't be independently verified. Ukrainian authorities have insisted the site had nothing to do with the military.

A Ukrainian singer reported that she had been scheduled to perform in the concert hall Sunday and that her sound engineer was killed in the missile strike. The singer, Roxolana, said on social media that another member of her crew was seriously injured.

In the Donetsk region, the governor reported that eight civilians were killed and 13 wounded Friday when several cities came under Russian shelling. The Donetsk region and the neighboring Luhansk region — now nearly totally controlled by Russian forces — make up the broader Donbas.

"The situation in the Donetsk region is exacerbating every day, and civilians must leave because the Russian army is using scorched-earth tactics," Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said. It appeared that the cities of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk were next in line for attacks by Russian forces.

Elsewhere, authorities in Mykolayiv said at least 10 explosions occurred in the southern city early Friday, accusing Russia of hitting universities. Mykolayiv Gov. Vitaliy Kim posted a video of smoke rising over the strikes.

The Russian news agency Tass, citing Russian-backed separatists, reported Friday that two civilians were killed and six injured after they said Ukrainian forces shelled a bus terminal in the city of Donetsk a day earlier.

Also, a British aid worker detained by the Donetsk separatists has died in captivity, a separatist official and a U.K. charity involved with his case said Friday.

Punitive political actions over the war continued, with Russian state news media reporting Friday that the Kremlin had barred 384 members of Japan's parliament from entering Russia, citing retaliation for Japan's sanctions against Russian parliament members.

Biden tells Dems to quickly pass pared-down economic package

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden seemed to bow Friday to Sen. Joe Manchin's demand for a slimmed-down economic package, telling Democrats to quickly push the election-year measure through Congress so families could "sleep easier" and enjoy the health care savings it proposes.

Biden's statement came hours after Manchin, the West Virginian who is one of Congress' more conservative Democrats, said that if party leaders wanted to pass a measure before next month's recess, it should be limited to provisions curbing prescription drug prices, extending subsidies for people buying health insurance and reducing the federal deficit.

Even so, Biden's directive would mean postponing congressional action on easing climate change and raising taxes on higher earners and large companies, components he and Democrats have long wanted in the economic package. That would represent a jarring setback for goals that rank among the party's most deeply held aspirations and would delay a risky showdown over the plan until the cusp of November's elections.

The president's remarks underscored a growing sentiment among Democrats that after months of bargaining with Manchin that only made the president's top-tier domestic priority ever smaller, it was time to declare victory. Reducing pharmaceutical costs, helping consumers purchase health coverage and trimming federal red ink are Democratic priorities and passage would let them flash achievements before voters that Republicans are on track to solidly oppose.

"Families all over the nation will sleep easier if Congress takes this action. The Senate should move forward, pass it before the August recess, and get it to my desk so I can sign it," Biden said in a statement released by the White House.

He thanked Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., who has spent months negotiating with Manchin, for "his dogged and determined effort to produce the strongest possible bill" and "even offering significant compromises to try to reach an agreement."

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That seemed like an unspoken dig at Manchin, whom Biden's statement did not mention and who in December sunk a much broader, \$2 trillion, 10-year version of the package.

Though its final scope remained unclear, a slimmed-down measure contoured to Manchin's latest demands could generate around \$288 billion in savings over 10 years by letting Medicare negotiate prices for the pharmaceuticals it buys, requiring rebates from drug makers if price increases exceed inflation and other cost reductions. It would spend just a fraction of that on health insurance subsidies that expire in January, with the rest going to deficit reduction, according to early estimates.

In a sign of movement, Democrats planned to begin vetting the prescription drug language next week with the Senate parliamentarian, said a Democratic aide, to make sure there are no provisions that violate the chamber's rules and must be dropped. The aide was not authorized to discuss the plans publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Manchin, whose vote is necessary for Democrats to succeed in the 50-50 Senate, had also said Friday that if party leaders want to pursue a broader measure aimed at global warming and raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations, they should wait until later this summer. He argued that would allow time to see what happens to inflation and interest rates this month.

"Let's wait until that comes out so we know we're going down the path that won't be inflammatory to add more to inflation," Manchin said on "Talkline," a West Virginia talk radio show hosted by Hoppy Kercheval.

After months of citing inflation fears among his reasons for seeking to trim Biden's overall package, Manchin raised sharpened concerns this week after the government said annual inflation hit 9.1% in June, the heftiest increase in 41 years. Polls show inflation is voters' top concern as November elections approach in which Republicans could well win control of the House and Senate.

In his statement, Biden said action on climate and clean energy "remains more urgent than ever" but acknowledged a willingness to accept delays in congressional action.

"If the Senate will not move to tackle the climate crisis and strengthen our domestic clean energy industry, I will take strong executive action to meet this moment," he said.

Biden's options for executive action or Environmental Protection Agency regulations could include rejecting permits for oil and gas drilling on federal lands and waters, tightening pollution allowed from coal-fired plants and restricting natural gas pipelines.

Biden's comments marked the latest retreat he and congressional Democratic leaders have made since initially pushing wider-ranging goals early last year that would have cost \$3.5 trillion or more.

Those priorities would have also provided free pre-kindergarten, low-cost child care, paid family leave and more. They ultimately fell victim to Democrats' slender majorities in Congress and changes in the political and economic climate that have seen voters' concerns over the inflation and the economy intensify.

Any plan that emerges faces certain unanimous opposition from Republicans, who argue its boosts in spending and taxes would further inflame inflation.

Manchin had told Schumer on Thursday that he could not support a bill now that would include other party goals like battling climate change and raising taxes on the wealthy and large corporations, according to a Democrat briefed on those talks.

The two lawmakers have been negotiating over a package that had been expected to reach around \$1 trillion over 10 years, with about half used to reduce federal deficits.

Manchin said he considered his talks with Schumer "still going." Yet his latest stance provoked a mixture of anger and pragmatism from fellow Democrats.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., told reporters she was unsure what remained in her party's proposal but added, "I would be very, of course, disappointed if the whole saving the planet is out of the bill." A spokesperson for Schumer did not return requests for comment.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., who leads the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said she was skeptical about Manchin's acceptance of a health care-focused package. "Look, the guy has changed his mind" before, Jayapal told reporters. "So let's see. I have no confidence."

"If there was a guarantee that we could get the bigger deal in September, I'm open to that," said Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., who chairs the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee. "But to go to the altar,

at some point we need to say, 'I do.'"

Delaying action until after the August break would leave Democrats facing a dangerously ticking clock. Special budget powers expire Oct. 1 that would let them push the legislation through the 50-50 Senate over solid GOP opposition, with Vice President Kamala Harris' tie-breaking vote.

That would pose a risk that any Democratic absences because of COVID-19 or other reasons would leave them lacking the votes they need. It would also push congressional action until just weeks before the November elections, when any votes can be quickly spun into a damaging campaign attack ad.

Manchin said he was concerned that raising corporate taxes would prompt layoffs and some of his party's environmental proposals would hinder "what this country needs to run the economic engine."

Other Democrats say the broader measure's initiatives would be more than paid for by making high earners and large corporations pay the costs. And they've noted that deficit reduction helps control inflation by reducing the government's need for borrowing, which would otherwise help boost interest rates.

Indiana doctor's lawyer tells AG to halt false statements

By ARLEIGH RODGERS Associated Press/Report for America

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — A lawyer on Friday emailed the Indiana state's attorney general asking him to stop spreading false or misleading information about an Indianapolis doctor who performed an abortion in June on a 10-year-old rape victim from Ohio.

Attorney Kathleen DeLaney sent the "cease and desist" letter to Indiana Republican Attorney General Todd Rokita on behalf of obstetrician-gynecologist Caitlin Bernard, who performed a medical abortion on the girl.

The letter says Rokita's statements Wednesday on Fox News "cast Dr. Bernard in a false light and allege misconduct in her profession." DeLaney said the doctor could file a defamation claim against Rokita if he does not comply.

Rokita told Fox that his office was investigating whether Bernard violated medical privacy laws by talking about the victim to the Indianapolis Star, and he said she failed to notify authorities about suspected child abuse. He offered no specific allegations of wrongdoing.

Records obtained by The Associated Press and other local media show Bernard submitted the report July 2, which is within the state's required three-day reporting period for an abortion performed on a girl younger than 16.

"We are especially concerned that, given the controversial political context of the statements, such inflammatory accusations have the potential to incite harassment or violence from the public which could prevent Dr. Bernard, an Indiana licensed physician, from providing care to her patients safely," the letter states.

A 27-year-old man has been charged in the girl's rape, confirming the case that was scrutinized by Republican politicians and some media outlets. Those reactions grew in intensity after Democratic President Joe Biden expressed sympathy for the girl when signing an executive order protecting some abortion access last week.

"Like any correspondence, it will be reviewed if and when it arrives. Regardless, no false or misleading statements have been made," Kelly Stevenson, a spokesperson in Rokita's office, said via email.

Bernard tweeted Friday that she hopes "to be able to share my story soon."

"It has been a difficult week, but my colleagues and I will continue to provide healthcare ethically, lovingly, and bravely each and every day," she wrote.

Dr. Diana Contreras, chief health care officer at Planned Parenthood Federation of America, issued a statement saying, "No medical provider should be harassed, intimidated, or criminalized for doing their job. It is unconscionable and unacceptable, and we condemn it in the strongest possible terms."

US officials: States getting more monkeypox vaccine soon

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

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NEW YORK (AP) — More than 100,000 monkeypox vaccine doses are being sent to states in the next few days, and several million more are on order in the months ahead, U.S. health officials said Friday.

They also acknowledged the vaccine supply hasn't kept up with the demand seen in New York, California and other places.

Officials predicted cases will keep rising for at least a few more weeks as the government tries to keep up with a surprising international outbreak accounting for hundreds of newly reported cases every day.

Some public health experts have begun to wonder if the outbreak is becoming widespread enough that monkeypox will become an entrenched sexually transmitted disease.

"All of our work right now is to prevent that from happening," said Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Monkeypox is endemic in parts of Africa, where people have been infected through bites from rodents or small animals. It does not usually spread easily among people.

But this year more than 12,000 cases have been reported in countries that historically don't see the disease. The infections emerged in men who had sex with men at gatherings in Europe, though health officials have stressed that anyone can catch the virus.

As of Friday, more than 1,800 U.S. cases had been reported, with hundreds of cases being added to the tally each day. Nearly all are men and the vast majority had same-sex encounters, according to the CDC.

Experts believe the case numbers are undercounts.

Walensky said she expected cases to rise at least into August, in part because it can take three weeks from the time someone is infected until they develop symptoms and are diagnosed.

The virus mainly spreads through skin-on-skin contact, but it can also transmit through touching linens used by someone with monkeypox.

People with monkeypox may experience fever, body aches, chills and fatigue. Many in the outbreak have developed zit-like bumps on many parts of the body.

No one has died, and the illness has been relatively mild in many men. But for some, the lesions can be "exquisitely painful" and there is a risk of scarring, said Dr. Mary Foote, medical director of the New York City health department's Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response.

When the outbreak was first identified in May, U.S. officials had only about 2,000 doses of a new, two-dose monkeypox vaccine available.

Officials have recommended the shots be given to people who know or suspect they were exposed to monkeypox in the previous two weeks, and vaccination clinics in some cities have been overwhelmed by demand. The government distributed 156,000 doses nationally as of Thursday, including 100,000 this week. And it expects to start delivering 131,000 more doses by Monday, said Dawn O'Connell of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

There also are about 800,000 doses in Denmark that will come to the U.S. soon. And the government this month announced orders of 5 million more doses, though most of those are not expected to arrive until next year.

The vaccine, Jynneos, has never been widely used in response to an outbreak like this, and the government will track how well it's working, Walensky said.

All about Manchin: What Biden wanted for US, senator did not

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — It launched as the new president's ambitious plan for rebuilding America — a \$2.3 trillion domestic infrastructure investment coupled with a \$1.8 trillion plan to bolster U.S. families with support for health care, child care, college costs, unseen in generations.

Totaling more than \$4 trillion when President Joe Biden unveiled the American Jobs and American Rescue plans in spring, what the administration called the "Build Back Better" agenda was instantly compared to those of his Democratic predecessors, Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal and Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society.

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And it was almost instantly shunned by Sen. Joe Manchin.

The conservative West Virginia Democrat said the proposals were too big, too costly, too much. As he engaged in negotiations, always the center of attention, the outcome was almost always reductive, cutting the size and scope of the package. His vote, in the even-split Senate, like those of every Democrat, would be needed for anything to pass.

This week, after more than 15 months of breathtaking political pivots, Manchin has reduced Biden's big ideas for a sweeping investment to just two: Reducing the costs of prescription drugs and shoring up the subsidies some families receive to buy health insurance.

While Manchin and Biden had agreed on a smaller infrastructure bill that eventually became law, the investments the president sought for families and to tackle climate change remain deeply in flux. On Friday, citing the nation's spiking inflation — as he did last year — Manchin wants another pause.

Here's a look of what Biden envisioned when he declared America is "arising anew" with his proposals, and what remains within reach with Manchin.

LOWERING HEALTH CARE, DRUG COSTS

Manchin stunned Washington again this week when it was disclosed that he wanted to drastically reduce the scope of revived package he was negotiating with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

Democrats are racing to prop up Biden's signature domestic proposal ahead of the midterm elections, and narrowed on a \$1 trillion package — far smaller than first envisioned and about half the size of the \$2 trillion package that passed the House late last year before Manchin walked away from talks.

What Manchin would be willing to do now was two proposals: Reduce the price of prescription drugs by allowing the federal government to negotiate with the pharmaceutical companies, while capping seniors' out-of-pocket expenses to \$2,000, and put the savings into subsidies that families are relying on to buy their own health care but that are about to expire.

Both are big Democratic priorities and would be consequential for Americans struggling to pay always high health care bills.

But compared to what could have been, they amount to about \$300 billion.

WHAT BIDEN ENVISIONED FOR FAMILIES...

Biden's American Families Plan envisioned a vast investment for the nation's families.

The cornerstone an enhanced \$300 monthly child tax credit, first approved during the pandemic, that for a time was sending extra cash straight into parents' bank accounts. It substantially reduced poverty and boosted households during the crisis. Biden wanted to extend it.

There was free pre-kindergarten for all, a \$200 billion preschool program for 3- and 4-year olds to provide early childhood education and to help working parents juggle child care. Also, a \$225 billion national paid family leave program so people could take time off, paid up to \$4,000 monthly, at pivotal junctures — births, deaths and to care for loved ones.

Biden wanted to also provide free community college and funds for housing and other basic needs.

Eventually versions of the plan included free dental and vision for seniors, a nod to a top priority from Biden's one-time rival Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

.... AND WHAT BIDEN WANTED FOR CLIMATE

The centerpiece of Biden's climate change agenda was a \$150 billion clean energy plan that would have rewarded power providers that use clean sources and penalized those that don't.

But that approach had to be scrapped when Manchin objected.

More recently Manchin and Schumer were in talks over a slimmed back package, about \$375 billion, of tax incentives and credits that the administration had hoped could achieve similar goals in reducing carbon emissions.

But that, too, is now scrapped. Manchin, among the post powerful coal state senators, prefers a "fuel neutral" approach that doesn't hurt his home state industry.

While Biden, Manchin and others had successfully negotiated the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill into law last year, it, too, fell short of the administration's climate goals.

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Rather than a massive \$174 billion investment in electric vehicles and a network of charging stations, the bipartisan compromise provided \$7.5 billion for electric vehicles with fewer charging stations, along with money for electric school buses.

INFRASTRUCTURE COMPROMISES

To be sure, the bipartisan infrastructure bill Manchin signed on to with Biden and the others made substantial investments in roads, bridges, broadband — all areas where Congress typically can find some agreement.

Yet even that bill, a hard-fought compromise, is much smaller than the White House envisioned in many areas — it provided half as much, \$55 billion, as the administration wanted for removing lead pipes.

IDEAS LONG GONE

Other Democratic priorities that rose and fell during more than a year of negotiations over Biden's once sweeping vision are long gone.

Also no longer on the table are the tax hikes on wealthy Americans and corporations that Biden and his party envisioned, in different variations, to pay for his big plan.

Biden had proposed raising the tax rate on those earning more than \$400,000 a year, \$450,000 for couples, back to 39.6% where it was before the 2017 GOP tax cuts. He wanted to lift the corporate rate to 28%.

In talks Democrats considered other options — a corporate minimum tax or a tax on billionaires.

It wasn't Manchin who necessarily stopped those options. In fact, he supported some. But another Democrat, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, had been a key hold out to many proposals for higher taxes.

Mexican art of mariachi takes center stage on US stamps

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — There are few corners of the globe where the echoes of mariachi music have yet to reach, filling street corners with the sounds of the blasting trumpets and strumming guitars that form the backbone of Mexico's traditional genre.

Now, all that festive fever is being packed into a tiny U.S. postage stamp.

The U.S. Postal Service on Friday celebrated the release of a new series of stamps honoring mariachi. The first-day-of-issue ceremony was held in New Mexico's largest city as musicians and fans from around the world convened for a weekend of concerts hosted by the 30th annual Mariachi Spectacular de Albuquerque.

The five graphic stamps were the creation of artist Rafael López, who lives and works in both Mexico and San Diego. Each features an individual performer dressed in traditional clothing with their instrument. While the outfits are ornate, the backgrounds are simple and bright, inspired by the palette of another Mexican craft — papel picado, the banners of elaborate paper cutouts that are often put up for parties and other events.

While mystery surrounds the origins of mariachi, López said there's no doubt the beats and rhythms that evolved over centuries in tiny Mexican villages are now known around the globe. There's something special about mariachi's celebratory nature and Latinos are proud to be able to share that with other cultures, López said.

And having it recognized now on the stamps is a bonus, said Robert Palacios, executive director of the Las Cruces International Mariachi Conference, which is held every November in the border city.

Palacios, 32, plays the guitarrón and credits the music for keeping him out of trouble when he was in middle school.

"It just turned things around for me," he said. "That's what I wanted to do and now 20 years later I'm the director of the mariachi conference and just working to keep it alive. So it's full circle for me, being a student and now being able to share that passion."

The effect of mariachi can be like magic, Lopez said, leaving people in a festive mood and turning strangers into quick friends. But he can't explain whether it's the beat, the outfits, the singing or every-

thing combined.

"It's a universal thing that mariachi has and it's hard to explain," he said, during an interview from his studio in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

"We all need a little bit of a moment to relax and feel happy once in a while and this music does it," he added. "So I think that's something that makes us Latinos very proud to see something that started in this region of Mexico and all of a sudden it becomes part of the Southwest culture, it becomes part of the United States as well. Before you know it, it's universal, it's international."

López grew up in Mexico City surrounded by mariachi music. He plays the guitar, the violin and the six-string guitarrón that provides the bass line for a mariachi ensemble.

He knows where each band member needs to place their hands to create that special tone. And that's reflected in the images on the postage stamps.

The images also were inspired by movie posters from Mexico's golden era of cinema during the 1940s and '50s and by travel posters put out by the U.S. government in the late 1930s and early '40s.

"I wanted to have that quality of nostalgia," said López, who also created the Latin Music Legend Series Merengue stamp and illustrated a children's book by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor. "I didn't want it to look modern but rather like something we would remember from when we were kids."

For the next generation, Palacios said he's hopeful this new wave of attention will spur more inspiration. "This is a big step for our culture, a beautiful step," he said.

Biden intervenes in railroad contract fight to block strike

By JOSH FUNK AP Business Writer

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — President Joe Biden on Friday blocked a freight railroad strike for at least 60 days by naming a board of arbitrators to intervene in the contract dispute, averting action that could have disrupted all kinds of shipments.

The widely expected move will keep 115,000 rail workers on the job while the arbitrators develop a set of contract recommendations for both sides to consider. Biden had to act before Monday to prevent a possible strike. A new round of negotiations is likely after those recommendations are issued.

The president wrote in an executive order naming the arbitrators that he'd "been notified by the National Mediation Board that in its judgment these disputes threaten substantially to interrupt interstate commerce to a degree that would deprive a section of the country of essential transportation service."

If the railroads and their 12 unions can't agree on a contract within the next 60 days, Congress would likely step in to prevent a strike by voting to impose terms or taking other action.

The United Rail Unions coalition said the labor unions are preparing to make their case to the board of arbitrators, and believe that current economic data shows the raises they are asking for "are more than warranted when compared to our memberships' contribution to the record profits of the rail carriers."

The National Carriers Conference Committee, which represents the nation's freight railroads in national collective bargaining, cheered Biden's move, noting that it "remains in the best interest of all parties — and the public — for the railroads and rail labor organizations to promptly settle the bargaining round on reasonable terms that provide employees with prompt and well-deserved pay increases and prevent rail service disruptions."

"Throughout the bargaining round, the railroads have worked to thoughtfully address issues raised by both sides and have offered pay increases that are consistent with labor market benchmarks and reward rail employees for their essential work," the committee said in a statement.

Any prolonged rail strike could cripple the supply chain that has been slowly recovering from the backlogs and delays that became common during the pandemic because of worker shortages at the ports, trucking companies and railroads as demand for imports surged.

"It's really in everybody's best interests to avoid a strike," Edward Jones analyst Jeff Windau said.

The group that represents Union Pacific, BNSF, CSX, Norfolk Southern, Kansas City Southern and other railroads and the unions have expressed optimism that this new presidential board will be able to help

them resolve the dispute that began more than two years ago.

Business groups had urged Biden to take this step to ensure the railroads would continue operating. They worry about what a strike or lockout would mean for the fragile supply chain because railroads deliver all kinds of raw materials, finished products and imported goods that businesses rely on. A railroad strike could jeopardize the health of the economy.

The board of arbitrators will hold hearings with both sides to learn more about their positions before issuing their recommendations about a month from now. The unions and the railroads will have 30 days to negotiate a new deal before a strike could be permitted under the federal law that governs railroad contract negotiations.

So far, the two sides have remained far apart because workers want raises that will offset inflation and cover increased health insurance costs while reflecting the current nationwide worker shortages. Railroads maintain that the double-digit raises they are offering over the five year contract that would date back to 2020 are fair based on the kind of raises other companies gave their workers at the time.

The unions are expecting significant raises because the railroads have been reporting record profits in recent years since they eliminated nearly one-third of their employees over the past six years as they overhauled their operations.

The unions also want the railroads to back off their proposals to cut train crews from two people down to one and ease some of the strict workplace rules they have adopted in recent years that workers say make it hard to take any time off.

Agreeing to a new deal would likely help the railroads hire more workers, which they are currently struggling to do. The major railroads have said they each need to hire hundreds more workers to handle the increased demand as the economy recovers and deal with the chronic delays and missed deliveries that have plagued their service this year.

3 men cleared in 1995 killing of NYC subway token clerk

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — After decades in prison, three men were cleared Friday in one of the most horrifying crimes of New York's violent 1990s — the killing of a clerk who was set on fire in a subway toll booth.

A judge dismissed the murder convictions of Vincent Ellerbe, James Irons and Thomas Malik after prosecutors said the case was built on falsehood-filled confessions, shaky witness identifications and other flawed evidence.

The three confessed to and were convicted of murdering token seller Harry Kaufman in 1995. The case resounded from New York to Washington to Hollywood, after parallels were drawn between the deadly arson and a scene in the movie "Money Train," which had been released four days earlier.

Malik and Irons, both 45, left court free for the first time in over a quarter-century. Ellerbe, 44, was paroled in 2020.

"What happened to us can never be fixed," Ellerbe told the court as he quietly described the ordeal of prison. "They break you, or they turn you into a monster."

Irons, leaving court, said only that he felt "great." Malik said the dismissal was "definitely too little, too late, but everything takes time."

"I just was happy that I was able to stand strong to endure this journey," Malik continued. "But it was a rough journey."

The men have long said they were coerced into falsely confessing in the case, which involved detectives who later were repeatedly accused of forcing confessions and framing suspects.

In fact, Irons was home with his mother, around the corner from the subway station, when he heard the explosion and called 911 — a call that was never played for jurors, said his lawyer, David Shanies.

While there were other potential suspects early in the investigation, it's unclear whether police or prosecutors plan to — or can — pursue any further investigation decades later.

Kaufman was attacked Nov. 26, 1995, while working an overnight shift on overtime to put away extra

money for his son's future college tuition. The attackers first tried to rob him, then squirted gasoline through the tollbooth coin slot and ignited the fuel with matches, authorities said at the time. The booth exploded, and the 50-year-old Kaufman ran from it in flames. The married father died two weeks later.

The attack bore some resemblance to a scene in "Money Train," a comparison that prompted then-Senate Majority Leader and Republican presidential hopeful Bob Dole to call for a boycott of the movie. Authorities gave mixed signals over the years about whether they believed the film had inspired the killing.

Police eventually came to question Irons, getting a confession that he acted as a lookout. He implicated Malik and Ellerbe as the ones who had torched the tollbooth.

The men maintained that they had been coerced into false confessions, with Malik saying Detective Louis Scarcella screamed at him and slammed his head into a locker. Scarcella testified that he cursed, pounded a table and was trying to scare the then-18-year-old Malik, but didn't beat him.

Prosecutors said their review found that Scarcella and his partner fed crime scene details to Irons and Malik while shrugging off inconsistencies in their confessions.

For instance, Irons said he had been able to see his supposed accomplices jump into a getaway car, although it was parked a block away and around a corner. Ellerbe described four attackers and said he had sprayed gasoline on the tollbooth exterior, when in fact it was poured in the coin slot. Malik described the car differently from how a witness did.

The same witness' identification of Malik was also problematic, partly because she had earlier pointed to someone else — a man an informant had named separately, prosecutors said.

"More than 25 years later, we do not have any confidence in the integrity of those convictions," assistant District Attorney Lori Glachman told the court.

At the time, Scarcella was a star Brooklyn homicide detective in a city reeling from crime. Citywide, killings topped more than 2,200 at their 1990 peak; that compares to 488 last year and a low of 295 in 2018.

But after questions accumulated about Scarcella's tactics, the Brooklyn district attorney's office began in 2013 to review scores of cases that he had worked.

Scarcella, who retired in 2000, has denied any wrongdoing. While more than a dozen convictions in his cases have been overturned, prosecutors have stood by scores of others.

A message seeking comment was sent Friday to an attorney who has represented him.

Brooklyn prosecutors' reexamination of old convictions is widely viewed as one of the most ambitious of its kind.

"This is no longer about one or two bad apples. This is about a systemic rot" at a time when panic about public safety made too many police, prosecutors and judges comfortable not asking enough questions, said lawyer Ronald Kuby, who represented Ellerbe and Malik.

"People, responsible people, who really did know better ... all should have done something," he said.

Ellerbe, now a chef, is the father of a 26-year-old daughter whom he didn't get to see grow up. Malik, still stunned that the case was finally over, said he was heading to see his mother, who recently had surgery.

How to move forward? "One day at a time," he said.

"Just keep it moving," Ellerbe added. "You can't look back."

Deposition of Trump, 2 children delayed after Ivana's death

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump and two of his children got their questioning postponed Friday in a New York civil investigation into their business dealings, a delay that follows the death of Trump's ex-wife Ivana.

The ex-president, son Donald Jr. and daughter Ivanka had been scheduled for depositions — a term for out-of-court questioning under oath — starting as soon as Friday. But New York Attorney General Letitia James' office said it agreed to postpone them because of Ivana Trump's death, announced Thursday.

"We offer our condolences to the Trump family," attorney general's office spokesperson Delaney Kempner said in a statement.

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There are no new dates yet for the depositions.

A message was left with the former president's lawyer. The younger Trumps' attorney, Alan Futerfas, declined to comment.

Ivana Trump died at her Manhattan home at age 73. She was married to the former president from 1977 to 1992, and they had three children together: Donald Jr., Ivanka and Eric.

The medical examiner's office said Friday that it ruled Ivana Trump's death an accident, caused by blunt impact injuries to the torso.

Two people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on Thursday that police were looking into whether she had fallen down the stairs. The people could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

James alleges that the ex-president's company, the Trump Organization, inflated the values of skyscrapers, golf courses and other holdings in order to get loans, insurance and other benefits.

Trump has denied the allegations, saying that it's common in the real estate industry to seek the best valuations. The Republican has dismissed the investigation as part of a politically motivated "witch hunt" by Democrats such as James.

Trump's deposition was looming as he lays the groundwork for a likely 2024 White House run but also faces growing scrutiny of his conduct in the 2020 election. There are investigations in Congress into his role in the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection and in Georgia into his efforts to overturn his loss.

Meanwhile, the Manhattan district attorney has been overseeing a criminal inquiry that parallels James' probe.

Sri Lanka's prime minister sworn in as interim president

By KRUTIKA PATHI, KRISHAN FRANCIS and BHARATHA MALLAWARACHI Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Sri Lanka's prime minister was sworn in Friday as interim president until Parliament elects a successor to Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled abroad and resigned after mass protests over the country's economic collapse.

Lawmakers were to convene Saturday to begin choosing a new leader who would serve the remainder of Rajapaksa's term, which ends in 2024.

A tenuous calm returned to the capital of Colombo on Thursday after protesters who had occupied government buildings retreated, but with the political opposition deeply fractured, a solution to Sri Lanka's many problems seemed no closer.

As people celebrated in the streets, Parliament Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana promised a swift and transparent political process that should be done within a week.

The new president could appoint a new prime minister, who would then have to be approved by Parliament. After Rajapaksa resigned, pressure on the prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, was rising.

In a televised statement, Wickremesinghe said he would initiate steps to change the constitution to curb presidential powers and strengthen Parliament, restore law and order and take legal action against "insurgents."

It was unclear to whom he was referring, although he said true protesters would not have gotten involved in clashes Wednesday night near Parliament, where many soldiers reportedly were injured.

"There is a big difference between protesters and insurgents. We will take legal action against insurgents," he said.

Wickremesinghe became acting president after Rajapaksa fled Sri Lanka on Wednesday, flying first to the Maldives and then to Singapore. The prime minister's office said Wickremesinghe was sworn in Friday as interim president Chief Justice Jayantha Jayasuriya.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's opposition leader, who is seeking the presidency, vowed to "listen to the people" and to hold Rajapaksa accountable.

In an interview with The Associated Press from his office, Sajith Premadasa said that if he wins the election in parliament, he would ensure that "an elective dictatorship never, ever occurs" in Sri Lanka.

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"That's what we should do. That is our function — catching those who looted Sri Lanka. That should be done through proper constitutional, legal, democratic procedures," Premadasa said.

Sri Lanka has run short of money to pay for imports of basic necessities such as food, fertilizer, medicine and fuel for its 22 million people. Its rapid economic decline has been all the more shocking because, before this crisis, the economy had been expanding, with a growing, comfortable middle class.

The protests underscored the dramatic fall of the Rajapaksa political clan that has ruled Sri Lanka for most of the past two decades.

The Rev. Jeewantha Peiris, a Catholic priest and protest leader, said the country had "come through a hard journey."

"We are happy as a collective effort because this struggle of Sri Lanka was participated by all the citizens of Sri Lanka, even diaspora of Sri Lanka," he said.

Protesters cooked and distributed milk rice — a food Sri Lankans enjoy to celebrate victories — after Rajapaksa resigned. At the main protest site in front of the president's office in Colombo, people welcomed his resignation but insisted Wickremesinghe also should step aside.

Sri Lanka remains a powder keg, its economy in ruins. And the military warned Thursday that it had powers to respond in case of chaos — a message some found ominous.

Abeywardana, the speaker of Parliament, urged the public to "create a peaceful atmosphere in order to implement the proper parliamentary democratic process and enable all members of Parliament to participate in the meetings and function freely and conscientiously."

Sri Lanka is seeking help from the International Monetary Fund and other creditors, but its finances are so poor that even obtaining a bailout has proven difficult, Wickremesinghe recently said.

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

Maduka Iroshan, 26, a university student and protester, said he was "thrilled" that Rajapaksa had quit, because he "ruined the dreams of the young generation."

Months of protests reached a frenzied peak last weekend when demonstrators stormed the president's home and office and Wickremesinghe's official residence. On Wednesday, they seized his office.

Images of protesters inside the buildings — lounging on elegant sofas and beds, posing at officials' desks and touring the opulent settings — captured the world's attention.

The demonstrators initially vowed to stay until a new government was in place, but they shifted tactics Thursday, apparently concerned that an escalation in violence could undermine their message following clashes outside Parliament that left dozens injured.

Protester Mirak Raheem noted that the lack of violence was important, though their work was far from over.

"This is really something amazing, the fact that it happened on the back of largely peaceful protest. But obviously this is just a beginning," Raheem said, citing work to rebuild the economy and restore public confidence in the political system.

Rajapaksa and his wife slipped away in the night aboard a military plane early Wednesday. On Thursday, he went to Singapore, according to the city-state's Foreign Ministry. It said he had not requested asylum, and it was unclear if he would stay or move on. He previously has obtained medical services there, including undergoing heart surgery.

Since Sri Lankan presidents are protected from arrest while in power, Rajapaksa likely wanted to leave while he still had constitutional immunity and access to the plane.

As a military strategist whose brutal campaign helped end the country's 26-year civil war, Rajapaksa and his brother, who was president at the time, were hailed by the island's Buddhist Sinhalese majority. Despite accusations of wartime atrocities, including ordering military attacks on ethnic Tamil civilians and abducting journalists, Rajapaksa remained popular among many Sri Lankans. He has continually denied

the allegations.

5-letter word for fun? Hasbro, NYT create Wordle board game

By MARK PRATT Associated Press

The company that makes some of the world's most iconic board games including Scrabble, Monopoly, and Clue is developing a new one based on Wordle, the obsessively popular digital word-guessing game.

Hasbro Inc. and The New York Times — which purchased Wordle earlier this year — announced Thursday that Wordle: The Party Game will be available for purchase in North America in October, with preorders already being accepted.

"Since Wordle burst onto the scene, it's undoubtedly been a staple in social and pop culture vocabulary," Adam Biehl, Pawtucket, Rhode Island-based Hasbro's general manager of gaming said in a statement. "We're beyond thrilled to work with New York Times Games to bring our gaming worlds together and extend Wordle in new ways."

In the free online version, players get six tries to guess a five-letter word with only the previous guess providing clues.

The appeal is its ease of play. Start by typing in a five-letter word. If a square turns green, it's the right letter in the right place. If it turns yellow, the letter is in the word but in the incorrect spot. Gray squares mean the letters are not in that day's word.

The drawback is that it can only be played once per day.

The board game will give players the opportunity to play against others, and play as much as they want.

One player picks a random five-letter word, and the others try to guess it.

There will also be multiple play options, including classic, fast, timed, or teams, Hasbro and New York Times Games said.

Wordle was created by Josh Wardle, a Brooklyn software engineer. He originally made it for his partner, but released it to the public in October. On Nov. 1, only 90 people had played it. Within two months, that number had grown to 300,000 as the addictive phenomenon spread rapidly on social media.

New York Times Games announced in January that it had purchased the game for an undisclosed price it described as the "low-seven figures," and it now has millions of players per day.

"Wordle truly brought us all together and that's what makes it so special," said Jonathan Knight, head of Games for The New York Times.

'Robbed of the most precious thing': Missile kills Liza, 4

by HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

VINNYTSIA, Ukraine (AP) — Liza, a 4-year-old girl with Down syndrome, was en route to see a speech therapist with her mother in central Ukraine when a Russian missile rained down from the sky.

She never made it to the appointment. Now the images that tell the story of her life and its end are touching hearts worldwide.

Wearing a blue denim jacket with flowers, Liza was among 23 people killed, including boys aged 7 and 8, in Thursday's missile strike in Vinnytsia. Her mother, Iryna Dmytrieva, was among the scores injured.

After the explosion, the mother and daughter went in different directions. Iryna, 33, went into a hospital's intensive care unit while Liza went to a morgue.

"She remembered that she was reaching for her daughter, and Liza was already dead," Iryna's aunt, Tetiana Dmytrysyna, told The Associated Press on Friday. "The mother was robbed of the most precious thing she had."

Shortly before the explosion, Dmytrieva had posted a video on social media showing her daughter straining to reach the handlebars to push her own stroller, happily walking through Vinnytsia, wearing the denim jacket and white pants, her hair decorated with a barrette. Another video on social media showed the little girl twirling in a lavender dress in a field of lavender.

After the Russian missile strike, Ukraine's emergency services shared photos showing her lifeless body

on the ground next to her blood-stained stroller. The videos and photos have gone viral, the latest images and stories from the brutal war in Ukraine to horrify the world.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's wife posted that she had met this "wonderful girl" while filming a Christmas video with a group of children who were given oversized ornaments to paint.

"The little mischievous girl then managed in a half an hour to paint not only herself, her holiday dress, but also all the other children, me, the cameramen and the director ... Look at her alive, please," Olena Zelenska wrote in a note accompanying the video.

When the war started, Dmytrieva and her family fled Kyiv, the capital, for Vinnytsia, a city 268 kilometers (167 miles) to the southwest. Until Thursday, Vinnytsia was considered relatively safe.

Dmytrieva gave birth to her only daughter when she was 29. The girl was born with a heart defect but doctors saved her. She also suffered from Down syndrome.

"Liza was a sunny baby," her great-aunt recalled. "They say that these children do not understand or know how to do everything. But this is not true. She was a very bright child. She knew how to draw, spoke, always helped adults and always smiled. Always cheerful."

For her mother, Liza was the greatest gift of her life.

"She loved her infinitely," said the great-aunt.

The explosion site is now cordoned off. People come to leave flowers, candles and teddy bears. Another item at a makeshift shrine is a page from a children's lesson book. Among the mourners are mothers deeply touched by the story of Iryna and Liza Dmytrieva.

"Innocent children die," said Kateryna Kondratyuk, bursting into tears at the explosion scene.

Meanwhile, Iryna is conscious and in intensive care.

"She is a fighter. She will get out. We are all praying for her," her aunt says.

Liza's father was at the morgue Friday, completing the paperwork to receive his daughter's body for burial.

Rescued Oklahoma tigers get care in California and new home

HAVEN DALEY undefined

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Two neglected tigers rescued from a long-shuttered roadside tourist attraction in Oklahoma are beginning new lives more than 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) away at California's Oakland Zoo after receiving much-needed medical treatment.

The female tigers, now named Lola and Mia, were rescued in June from an Oklahoma attraction that was closed in 2008 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for multiple animal safety and welfare violations.

Lola had a facial deformity caused by an untreated infected tooth and underwent dental surgery on Thursday at the Oakland Zoo.

Mia had been declawed as a cub, a painful process that removes part of the animal's paws and it is believed the big cat was used for taking pictures with tourists.

A concerned citizen alerted the Oakland Zoo that there were underfed big cats still living in small cages at the Oklahoma drive-thru zoo that were not receiving proper care. The Oakland Zoo did not disclose the name of the roadside attraction business because it said doing so could reveal the name of the tipster.

The tigers were kept in enclosures that were probably about 10 feet (3 meters) by about 15 feet (4.5 meters) and lived among piles of feces and dirty water dishes, said Colleen Kinzley, Director of Animal Care, Conservation and Research, at the Oakland Zoo.

"These are just atrocious conditions for an animal to live in and receive no medical care," she said. "We're very happy to be able to provide them with a forever home and a good quality of life."

The animals are now receiving medical care and regaining their strength before they move to Oakland Zoo's newly remodeled tiger exhibit, which had been empty since their previous rescued tiger passed away last year.

"It will be very heartwarming to see them be able to walk out on grass for probably the first time ever. Tigers love water. The moment they get to jump into the pool, I think there's going to be so many times when we really will be so happy about this work that we're doing," Kinzley said.

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The owner of the Oklahoma attraction was known to trade tigers with Joe Exotic from the Netflix series "Tiger King," according to the Oakland Zoo. But since there were no records of the big cats' history, it's not known if either were bred or raised by Joe Exotic.

Joe Exotic — whose real name is Joseph Maldonado-Passage — is serving a 21-year prison sentence after being convicted of hiring two different men to kill animal welfare activist Carole Baskin.

The former private zookeeper was sentenced in January 2020 to 22 years in prison but after an appeal on his murder-for-hire conviction, a judge this year lowered his sentence to 21 years.

The Oakland Zoo says the treatment the tigers need points to the need to pass the federal Big Cat Public Safety Act, which would regulate the possession, exhibition, or breeding of the animals and restrict direct contact between the public and the big cats.

The bill has stalled since being introduced in the House last year. Currently, the ownership and breeding of exotic animals is controlled by state laws.

California has strict laws protecting big cats but other states like Oklahoma are more lenient.

Buffalo market reopens to debate over healing, sensitivity

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Cariol Horne started her morning outside the Tops Friendly Market in Buffalo, placing white roses at a colorful memorial to the 10 Black people slain there two months ago by a white gunman.

Across the fenced-off parking lot, the supermarket chain's president and employees were preparing to lead media on a preview of the refurbished store, a day ahead of its Friday reopening to the public.

Count Horne, a 54-year-old activist and retired Buffalo police officer, was among those in the neighborhood who say it's too soon.

"We're pretty much shopping on people's blood," she said. "I think that this is more about putting people to work rather than letting them heal. ... Just two months ago, these people were running for their lives."

Yet even Horne carries the mixed emotions of seemingly everyone in the community, where the store has doubled as a gathering spot for two decades.

Her 97-year-old father, a World War II veteran, lives close enough to the market to shop there on his own. The produce at Tops is fresher than the foods available at smaller convenience stores and bodegas in the neighborhood, she said. She gets it.

How do you decide how, when or even whether to let the site of a mass atrocity return to being what it was before it was a crime scene? How do you help people move forward without erasing the memory of an event that devastated so many?

It's hard enough to answer those questions when it's a school, a church, a synagogue. It's a different sort of hard when it's a place of business, especially one as central to a community as Tops is to east Buffalo.

It took six months for a movie theater to reopen in Aurora, Colorado, after a mass shooter killed 12 people there in 2012. That was one theater in a 16-screen suburban cineplex.

Tops is the social hub of its neighborhood. That's why frequent shoppers, the store's managers and employees, community leaders and those who lost loved ones in the hail of bullets two months ago tell The Associated Press simply: It's complicated.

On the one hand, residents fought for years to win a grocery store on Buffalo's east side, which had long suffered from disinvestment and lackluster economic activity. The arrival of Tops in 2003 was a godsend to an area that had been considered a food desert.

On the other hand, polishing store fixtures and floors is a far cry from addressing the systemic inequality and unhealed trauma in east Buffalo's Black community, several residents said.

Tops President John Persons said Thursday that the company began hearing from customers, community members and civic leaders the day after the May 14 shooting. Almost immediately, the company started running a free shuttle from the neighborhood to other Tops stores.

Ultimately, the management team felt confident that store associates and most area residents needed

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and wanted the store to reopen.

"I'll be honest, those are the people that we really wanted to listen to, the people that were in the neighborhood, the people that were in the Jefferson Avenue neighborhood and the immediate community to find out what their thoughts were," Persons said.

On Friday morning, store associates handed single carnations to customers as they entered the newly reopening store. Some also received Tops gift cards — the store planned to hand out more than 200 of them, a representative confirmed.

"The key to life is to get back to living," said shopper Alan Hall, who lives two blocks away from the Jefferson Avenue store. "We're happy that it's open. It looks good. It's well stocked. Of course, there's still that undercurrent of grief, which will never leave. But it's good to be back."

The store has a calming palate of muted grays and greens. Over the entrance are Adinkra symbols, one representing peace and harmony, another hospitality and generosity and a third, farewell and goodbye.

"Everything you see here was taken down to the bare walls," Persons said. "It's all fresh product. This is all new equipment. All throughout, from the ceiling to the floor has been repainted or redone."

It is also made to be safer, with a new emergency evacuation alarm system and additional emergency exits. Outside, the parking lot and perimeter have new LED lighting.

Fragrance Harris Stanfield, a customer relations employee of Tops, returned to the store Thursday for the first time since the shooting. She initially struggled to get past the foyer, just inside the entrance.

"I couldn't really pass the threshold. At that point, it just was extremely overwhelming, very emotional," Stanfield said. "But everyone was so supportive and they knew I needed a moment."

What calmed her were the water fountains flanking a memorial and poem displayed in tribute to the shooting victims. At the base of the fountain, a sign reads, "To respect the requests of some of the victims' loved ones names are not included on this memorial."

Tops says it is working with state, city and community leaders to create a permanent public memorial to be installed outside the store.

Stanfield said she understands why some believe it's too soon to reopen.

"I think there's still a place of mourning and grieving," she said. "We're still kind of in a blaming space, where they need somewhere to focus that energy. And so it's just being focused here, which is completely understandable."

Near the store's entrance, signs labeled "community counseling" hung from pitched tents. On Thursday, residents looked on from behind the fence, some of them angrily, as Tops managers hosted the press event.

Part of the anger stems from a sense that not enough effort was made to seek enough voices from the community.

"No one's come door to door to ask the people, who live within a mile, or four blocks, or even two blocks of Tops, 'Are you comfortable with this? What do you want here?'" said David Louis, another activist who, like Horne, recognizes that others miss not just the goods on Tops' shelves but the good in its aisles.

"This is such a family store, it's so close to everyone's homes," said Louis, who frequently walked the four blocks to the store wearing Crocs and house pants. "When I'm in Tops, I know that these people aren't judging me."

Robert Neimeyer, director of the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition, said reopening a site of a mass atrocity can be like walking a tightrope. The Buffalo market, in particular, isn't just a typical business, he said.

"It really is a kind of linchpin of that community, and so it has enormous cultural and practical significance," Neimeyer said. "It's just as important a place to live as it is to mourn."

Still, he said, "Not every site of mass homicide in the United States can become a 9/11 memorial, whether it's in Uvalde or Buffalo."

He said the store managers would send a strong message to the community if Tops funneled a portion of the proceeds from grocery sales to a scholarship fund.

"In that way, even shopping in the store becomes a commemorative act," Neimeyer said.

Mark Talley, the son of Buffalo shooting victim Geraldine Talley, said he grew up going to the Tops on

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Jefferson Avenue with his mom. Now, he's hoping to honor her memory through advocacy, community service projects and a fledgling nonprofit organization.

The 33-year-old also attended the Tops preview event Thursday and said he understands why there are mixed feelings.

"When I was first asked this question weeks after it happened, I said, 'No, I want the Tops closed. I want it to just be dedicated to all the loved ones there,'" Talley said.

"But if you do that, then you just succumb to defeat," he said. "I don't want the east side of Buffalo to seem weak. I want us to become stronger than that. Let's just build it back up."

New this week: Beyoncé, Shark Week, ESPYS and 'The Gray Man'

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's a collection curated by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists of what's arriving on TV, streaming services and music platforms this week.

MOVIES

— Netflix places one of its biggest bets yet on "The Gray Man," a globe-trotting action thriller starring Ryan Gosling, Chris Evans and Ana de Armas. One of the streamer's most expensive films, "The Gray Man" is directed by Anthony and Joe Russo, the brothers who presided over one of the biggest box-office smashes ever ("Avengers: Endgame") before they started churning out blockbusters for Netflix. Their "Extraction," with Chris Hemsworth, ranks as one of the service's most-watched films, and "The Gray Man" — a spy vs. spy adventure with some comic flare and major franchise ambitions — is likely to follow suit. It debuts Friday.

— Before Billy Porter was a Broadway star and red-carpet doyen, he was a kid in Pittsburgh. In "Anything's Possible," Porter returns to his hometown to make his directorial debut, a trans coming-of-age comedy. The film, which debuts Friday on Amazon Prime Video, stars Eva Reign as a Black transgender girl in a relationship with a boy (Abubakr Ali) that causes a high school-wide stir. Porter fashioned his film, written by Ximena García Lecuona, as a teen rom-com for Gen Z and a love letter to Pittsburgh.

— AP Film Writer Jake Coyle

MUSIC

— Few details about Beyoncé's new album "Renaissance" out Friday, July 22 are available but the lead single is performing well. Her "Break My Soul" became the first song to debut in the top 10 in 26 years on Billboard's R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay chart. Of the 16-track album itself Beyoncé calls it "a beautiful journey of exploration." Creating it "allowed me a place to dream and to find escape during a scary time for the world," the superstar wrote on Instagram, next to an image of her on a see-through horse. Back in June, she teased on her social media accounts that "Renaissance" would be "act i," but it's unclear how many acts will follow or when they will be released.

— It's July so that means a promised second 2022 album from the mad professor of rock, Jack White. He follows up the April release of "Fear of the Dawn" with the 11-track "Entering Heaven Alive." The two albums share the same song — "Taking Me Back" — but arranged differently, one heavy, one jazzy. Another song on the new set is titled "Queen of the Bees" and has the silly lyric "I want to hold you like a sloth hugs a tree." He told EW: "I was challenging myself to sort of see what I could get away with!"

— ZZ Top — now without Dusty Hill — have a new, 11-track live album, called "Raw," with several of the band's hits like "Gimmie All Your Lovin'" and "La Grange." Recorded at Gruene Hall — "the oldest continually run dance hall in Texas" — in 2019, "Raw" features the band's original lineup of electric guitar player Billy Gibbons, drummer Frank Beard and the late Hill on bass. Made in connection with the 2019 ZZ Top Netflix documentary, "That Little Ol' Band From Texas," the 11-track album was produced by Gibbons, and is dedicated "in righteous memory of Dusty Hill."

— Ben Harper has never really minced words and that's clearly the case on his new album, the 11-track "Bloodline Maintenance. "Slavery/We need to talk about it/Black Lives Matter/'Cause history says we don't," he sings over a funky guitar on the lead single, "We Need To Talk About It." The new record sees Harper

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reflecting on the loss of his father and the personal nature of the subject matter led Ben to perform most of the album himself — playing guitar, bass, drums and percussion, including a plastic toy snare. “I knew the sounds I was hearing in my head were so unorthodox that I had to do most of it myself,” he says.

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

TELEVISION

— Stephen Curry is the host of the ESPYS sports awards, and more. The NBA championship finals MVP is up for three honors including best male athlete at the ceremony airing Wednesday on ABC. Curry’s rivals for the top award include Shohei Ohtani of the Los Angeles Angels, with Olympic champs Sunisa Lee and Katie Ledecky among those competing for best female athlete. ESPN previously said the ceremony will honor Vitali Klitschko, former heavyweight boxing champion and mayor of Kyiv, Ukraine, with the Arthur Ashe Courage Award. Retired Army Command Sgt. Maj. Gretchen Evans will receive the Pat Tillman Award for Service.

— Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward were acclaimed actors and a long-married couple. They were also “The Last Movie Stars,” according to the six-part documentary of that title out on Thursday on HBO Max. The docuseries, directed by actor Ethan Hawke, promises a definitive account of their “dedication to their art, philanthropy and each other.” Transcriptions of interviews with Newman and intimates — conducted for his autobiography that went uncompleted — are voiced by actors including George Clooney and Laura Linney. Also heard from are several of their children and Martin Scorsese, an executive producer for the film. Woodward, who is 92, was married to Newman from 1958 until his death in 2008 at age 83.

— The summer thrill ride known as Shark Week is back on Discovery Channel for its 34th year, with stars including tiger sharks with a taste for pork and “monster” hammerheads. The Bahamas’ Exuma Islands and Papua New Guinea are among the new spots visited during the extravaganza airing from Sunday, July 24, to Saturday, July 30, with Dwayne Johnson as its first emcee. Marine biologists and institutions contribute insights about shark mating and migration, with findings about a new and undescribed species promised. Among the highlights: “Island of Walking Sharks,” on Wednesday, with a scientist’s investigation of shark evolution.

Lawyer: 30 women settle Watson-related claims against Texans

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Thirty women who had accused the Houston Texans of turning a blind eye to allegations that their former star quarterback Deshaun Watson was sexually assaulting and harassing women during massage sessions have settled their legal claims against the team, their attorney said Friday.

The terms of the settlements between each of the women and the Texans are confidential, said attorney Tony Buzbee.

While only one of the women had filed a lawsuit against the team, the others intended to make legal claims against the Texans before the settlements were reached, Buzbee said.

In separate lawsuits, 24 women accused Watson of exposing himself, touching them with his penis or kissing them against their will during massage appointments while he played for the Texans. One woman alleged Watson forced her to perform oral sex. Last month, Buzbee announced 20 of those 24 lawsuits have been settled.

In a statement, Texans owners Janice McNair and Hannah and Cal McNair said while the team did not have any knowledge of Watson’s alleged misconduct, they were “shocked and deeply saddened” when they first learned about the accusations and chose to resolve the claims against the team “amicably.”

“This is not an admission of any wrongdoing, but instead a clear stand against any form of sexual assault and misconduct. We hope that today’s resolution will provide some form of closure to the parties involved, our fans and the Houston community at large. As an organization, we will now turn our focus to the future and doing what we can to ensure respect for all,” the McNairs said in their statement.

In the lawsuit filed last month against the Texans, a woman accused the team and some of its employees of having been told or being aware of Watson’s troubling behavior and “known tendency to push bound-

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aries during massage sessions." The lawsuit alleged the Texans provided Watson with various resources, including rooms at a Houston hotel, massage tables and a nondisclosure agreement the women were told to sign, that allowed the quarterback "to further his misconduct with women."

Buzbee said while he would have no additional comment on the allegations against the Texans, in a statement he added "there is a marked contrast in the way in which the Texans addressed these allegations, and the way in which Watson's team has done so."

Watson, who agreed to be traded to the Cleveland Browns in March after four seasons with Houston, has claimed his innocence and that any sex with the therapists was consensual. The 26-year-old is facing possible discipline from the NFL over the allegations.

Watson, who signed a five-year, \$230 million contract with the Browns, is waiting to see if he'll be eligible to play this season. NFL disciplinary officer Sue L. Robinson will decide whether the three-time Pro Bowler violated the league's personal conduct policy with his off-field behavior.

A former federal judge in Delaware, Robinson held a hearing last month during which the league and the NFL Players Association presented arguments. The league has insisted on an indefinite suspension for Watson while the union says there are no grounds for a lengthy ban since he did not commit any crimes.

Two separate grand juries in Texas declined to indict Watson on any criminal complaints.

This is the first case for Robinson, who was jointly appointed by the league and union to handle discipline. She has been reviewing post-hearing briefs from both sides.

The Browns, who traded three first-round picks to Houston and six total for Watson, are eager to know how long they could be without their starting quarterback. The team opens training camp July 25.

Buzbee said he hopes to take to trial the four remaining lawsuits against Watson sometime next spring.

New 988 hotline is the 911 for mental health emergencies

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

Quick help for suicidal thoughts and other mental health emergencies will soon be as easy as 9-8-8.

The United States' first nationwide three-digit mental health crisis hotline goes live on Saturday. It's designed to be as easy to remember and use as 911, but instead of a dispatcher sending police, firefighters or paramedics, 988 will connect callers with trained mental health counselors.

The federal government has provided over \$280 million to help states create systems that will do much more, including mobile mental health crisis teams that can be sent to people's homes and emergency mental health centers, similar to urgent care clinics that treat physical aches and pains.

"This is one of the most exciting things that has happened" in mental health care, said Dr. Brian Hepburn, a psychiatrist who heads the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors.

Hepburn cautions that when 988 kicks off, it will not be like "the flick of a switch. It's going to take a number of years in order for us to be able to reach everybody across the country."

Some states already have comprehensive mental health crisis systems, but others have a long way to go. And widespread shortages of mental health specialists are expected to slow their ability to expand services.

A RAND Corp. survey published last month found that fewer than half of state or regional public health officials were confident about being ready for 988, which is expected to generate an influx of calls.

Nearly 60% said call-center staffers had specialized suicide prevention training; half said they had mobile crisis response teams available 24/7 with licensed counselors; and fewer than one-third had urgent mental-health care units.

The 988 system will build on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, an existing network of over 200 crisis centers nationwide staffed by counselors who answer millions of calls each year — about 2.4 million in 2020. Calls to the old lifeline, 1-800-273-8255, will still go through even with 988 in place.

"If we can get 988 to work like 911 ... lives will be saved," said Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra.

Dispatching paramedics for heart attacks and police for crimes makes sense — but not for psychiatric

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emergencies, mental health advocates say. Calls to 911 for those crises often lead to violent law enforcement encounters and trips to jail or crowded emergency rooms where suicidal people can wait days for treatment.

The 988 system "is a real opportunity to do things right," said Hannah Wesolowski of the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Sustained funding will be needed. According to the National Academy of State Health Policy, four states have enacted laws to impose telecommunications fees to support 988 and many others are working on the issue.

A desperate call to a Utah state senator in 2013 helped spark the idea of a three-digit mental health crisis line.

Sen. Daniel Thatcher says a good friend sought his help after taking his suicidal son to an emergency room, only to be told by a doctor to come back if the boy hurt himself.

Thatcher has battled depression and at 17, he also considered suicide. He knew that despondent people in crisis may lack the wherewithal to seek out help or to remember the 10-digit national suicide lifeline number.

Thatcher found that many of Utah's in-state crisis lines went straight to police dispatchers or voicemail. He wondered why there was no 911 service for mental health, and the idea got national attention after he mentioned it to longtime Sen. Orrin Hatch.

In 2020, Congress passed the bill designating the 3-digit crisis number and then-President Donald Trump signed it into law.

Thatcher's mother was a nurse and knew where to get him help. He says 988 has the potential to make it that easy for others.

"If you get help, you live. It really is that simple," Thatcher said.

Retail sales up 1% in June, easing fears of a recession

By ANNE D'INNOENZIO and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Consumers picked up their spending from May to June, underscoring their resilience despite painfully higher prices at the gas pump and in grocery aisles and allaying fears that the economy might be on the verge of a recession.

U.S. retail sales rose 1% in June, from a revised decline of 0.1 % in May, the Commerce Department said Friday.

The figures aren't adjusted for inflation and so largely reflect higher prices, particularly for gas. But they also show that consumers are still providing crucial support for the economy and spending on such discretionary items as furniture, restaurant meals and sporting goods.

At the same time, last month's spending gain is modest enough that it likely won't encourage the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates even more aggressively. Stock prices rose after the report's release.

"People did not fold in the face of the Ukraine shock and the subsequent surge in food and energy prices," said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics. "Instead, they ran down a small part of their pandemic savings in order to keep up their discretionary spending."

Consumers still have significant savings, on average, bolstered by pandemic-era government relief checks and strong hiring and pay gains. JPMorgan executives said Thursday that their customers are still breaking out their credit and debit cards at a healthy pace.

Kathy Bostjancic, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, said that excluding inflation, retail sales still rose about 0.3% in June, up from a contraction of 0.4% in May. She expects the economy to grow at a slim 0.5% annual rate in the April-June quarter, after shrinking in the first three months of the year.

The report showed consumers' ongoing appetite for non-essentials like gadgets and furniture. In fact, sales at furniture stores rose 1.4%, while consumer electronics stores rose 0.4%. Online sales showed resurgence, posting a 2.2% increase. Business at restaurants was up 1%. But department stores took a hit, posting a 2.6% decline.

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The solid figures bold well for the back-to-school shopping season, the second largest sales period behind the winter holidays. Mastercard SpendingPulse, which tracks spending across all payment forms including cash, forecasts that back-to-school spending will be up 7.5% from July 14 through Sept. 5 compared with the year-ago period when sales rose 11%.

But spending is volatile. The latest round of retail earnings reports released in May showed some slowing of spending, particularly with low-income shoppers. RH, an upscale furniture chain, cut its sales outlook for the year last month, pointing to deteriorating macro-economic conditions. It cited higher mortgage rates, which are slowing sales of luxury homes, indicating that even wealthy shoppers are pulling back.

Nevertheless, the overall solid spending came even as shoppers were confronted with high prices in all areas. 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 Fed to raise rates aggressively — trends that raise the risk of a recession.

The government's consumer price index soared 9.1% in June compared with a year ago, the biggest yearly increase since 1981, with nearly half of the increase due to higher energy costs. 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 \$5 a gallon reached in mid-June to an average of \$4.57 nationwide Thursday — still far higher than a year ago.

Arie Kotler, chairman, president and CEO of Arko Corp., one of the largest operators of convenience stores in the U.S., believes that if gas prices keep coming down "people will have more money in their pocket to spend inside the store." The chain, located mostly in rural and small towns, continues to offer deals on coffee and food like \$1.99 for a slice of pizza.

Accelerating inflation is a big problem for the Fed, too. The central bank is already involved in the fastest series of interest rate hikes in three decades, which it hopes will tame inflation by tamping down borrowing and spending by consumers and businesses.

The retail sales report covers about a third of overall consumer spending and doesn't include services, such as haircuts, hotel stays and plane tickets.

Tiger Woods gets emotional sendoff from St. Andrews

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

ST. ANDREWS, Scotland (AP) — Tiger Woods removed his cap a few strides from Swilcan Bridge, knowing Friday might be the last time he crossed over in a British Open at St. Andrews.

This is where the legends pause, pose and wave goodbye.

"Stop! Stop!" a few photographers cried out as they positioned themselves for another historic moment at the home of golf.

Woods kept right on walking, even as tears began to form in his eyes.

"That's when I started to realize — that's when I started thinking about — the next time it comes around here, I might not be around," Woods said.

He said this wouldn't be his last British Open. Woods just doesn't know if his 46-year-old body, battered by multiple surgeries on both legs and his back, would be fit enough to compete when it returns to the home of golf. Woods mentioned 2030. The R&A hasn't announced the rotation that far out.

Still, the moment was not lost on him.

Woods saluted the thousands of fans in the grandstands on the left, and thousands more who watched from hotel balconies and rooftops on the perimeter of the Old Course, some peering through windows, others without a ticket hanging from the top of the fence on the road down the right side of the 18th fairway.

Rory McIlroy looked over at him from the first fairway — he was starting his second round as Woods was finishing a 75 to miss the cut — and tipped his cap. Justin Thomas was on the first tee and nodded

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to Woods.

"As I got closer to the green, the ovation got louder," Woods said. "You could feel the warmth and you could feel the people from both sides. Felt like the whole tournament was right there."

It may as well have been.

This is where Woods won his first Open in 2000 to become the youngest player to complete the career Grand Slam. He won another claret jug at St. Andrews in 2005, the year Jack Nicklaus finished his major championship career.

No one has ever won an Open at St. Andrews three times, and Woods wasn't about to change that. The only thing ceremonial for him was his golf — a 78 in the first round, only one birdie in the second round despite the most benign conditions of the week.

No matter. The Old Course, which had been relatively quiet all morning, came to life the closer he made his way to the finish.

"The people knew that I wasn't going to make the cut," Woods said. "But the ovations got louder as I was coming home. And that to me was ... just the respect. I've always respected this event. I've always respected the traditions of the game."

"I put my heart and soul into this event over the years," he said. "And I think the people have appreciated my play."

Woods gave them little to celebrate on what might be his final round at St. Andrews. He only had four reasonable birdie chances. His flop shot over a pot bunker guarding the front pin on the 16th hit the top and rolled back into the sand, leading to his third double bogey of the week.

By then, it didn't matter. The people just wanted to see him.

After he ripped his drive over the Old Course Hotel sign and into the 17th fairway, hotel guests and spectators lined up against the wall in front of the hotel and the Jigger Inn. The grandstand was full behind the 17th, and people stood six deep in the space behind the road and the stands.

It was similar to when Nicklaus played for the last time in 2005. He was 65 and had announced months out it would be his last Open, his 166th and final major. Everyone knew it was coming.

Not even Woods knows his future, only that he was thankful — and lucky — to be playing an Open on the Old Course just 17 months after he crashed his car in Los Angeles and sustained so many broken bones that doctors contemplated amputation on his right leg.

He headed to the 18th tee, the home hole. All he said he could think about was whether to hit 3-wood or 5-wood. But as he walked off the tee and got closer to the bridge, he realized his caddie, Joe LaCava, was lagging behind. So were Matt Fitzpatrick and Max Homa, who rode shotgun for an emotional day involving the best player of their lifetimes in golf.

"It was amazing. It gave me goosebumps," said Fitzpatrick, who won his first major last month in the U.S. Open. "Just looking around, seeing everyone stood up, and giving him a standing ovation coming down 18. It was incredible. It's something that will live with me forever."

"It's thoroughly deserved, and I think towards the end of it, you could see he was a little bit emotional as well. Yeah, it was a big deal."

Not even Woods could deny that. He just wished he could have written a better ending. He chipped with a mid-iron to about 4 feet for one last chance at birdie, a fitting farewell. Thomas, Shane Lowry and Viktor Hovland were at their second shots to the first hole. They all turned to watch Woods finish out.

He missed the putt.

All that mattered to Woods was an ovation he won't forget.

"It's very emotional for me," he said. "To me it felt like this might have been my last British Open here at St. Andrews. And the fans, the ovation and the warmth, it was an unbelievable feeling, I understand what Jack and Arnold (Palmer) had gone through in the past. I was kind of feeling that way there at the end."

Griner lawyer: WNBA star had doctor's note for cannabis use

By JIM HEINTZ Associated Press

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KHIMKI, Russia (AP) — A lawyer for WNBA star Brittney Griner at her drug possession trial in Russia on Friday gave the court a U.S. doctor's letter recommending she use medical cannabis to treat pain.

Griner, a two-time Olympic gold medalist and standout for the Phoenix Mercury, was arrested at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport in February after customs officials said they found vape canisters containing cannabis oil in her luggage. She faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted on charges of transporting drugs.

In court last week, Griner pleaded guilty and acknowledged possessing the canisters but said she had no criminal intent and said they were in her luggage because she packed hastily in her return to Russia to play for the UMMC Ekaterinburg basketball team during the WNBA's offseason.

In Russia's judicial system, admitting guilt doesn't automatically end a trial. Since that plea, her court sessions have focused on in-person and written testimony to her good character and athletic prowess.

Griner wore a Nirvana T-shirt as she sat inside the defendant's cage that is customary in Russian courtrooms. At one point, she held up a photo of fellow WNBA players wearing her name and No. 42 on their uniforms in tribute during part of Sunday's All-Star Game in Chicago.

"The attending physician gave Brittney recommendations for the use of medical cannabis," said her lawyer, Maria Blagovolina. "The permission was issued on behalf of the Arizona Department of Health."

Medical marijuana is not legal in Russia.

The defense on Friday also submitted tests she underwent as part of an anti-doping check, which didn't detect any prohibited substances in her system.

The next hearing of Griner's case was scheduled for July 26.

U.S. President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken have said they are doing all they could to win her release, as well as that of other Americans the U.S. considers "wrongly detained" by Russia, including former Marine Paul Whelan who is serving 16 years on an espionage conviction.

Washington may have little leverage with Moscow, though, because of strong animosity over its military operation in Ukraine.

"In the hearings yesterday and today what became very clear is the tremendous amount of respect and admiration both in the United States and here in Russia where Miss Griner has been playing basketball for seven years, not only for her professional achievements but for her character and integrity," U.S. Embassy charge d'affaires Elizabeth Rood said outside the courthouse in the Moscow suburb of Khimki, where the airport is located.

The director and team captain of UMMC Ekaterinburg testified on her behalf on Thursday.

Russian media have speculated that Griner could be swapped for Russian arms trader Viktor Bout, nicknamed "the Merchant of Death," who is serving a 25-year sentence in the U.S. after being convicted of conspiracy to kill U.S. citizens and providing aid to a terrorist organization.

Russia has agitated for Bout's release for years. But the wide discrepancy in the seriousness of their cases could make such a trade unpalatable to Washington. Others have suggested that Griner could be traded along with Whelan, who is serving 16 years in Russia on an espionage conviction that the U.S. has described as a setup.

The State Department's designation of Griner as wrongfully detained moves her case under the supervision of its special presidential envoy for hostage affairs, effectively the government's chief hostage negotiator. The classification has irritated Russia.

Asked about the possibility of Griner being swapped for a Russian jailed in the U.S., Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, the senior Russian diplomat, has noted that until her trial is over "there are no formal or procedural reasons to talk about any further steps."

Ryabkov warned that U.S. criticism, including the description of Griner as wrongfully detained and dismissive comments about the Russian judicial system, "makes it difficult to engage in detailed discussion of any possible exchanges."

Griner's detention has been authorized through Dec. 20, suggesting the trial could last months. Griner's lawyers, however, said they expect it to conclude around the beginning of August.

Some schools build affordable housing to retain teachers

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

DALY CITY, Calif. (AP) — San Francisco Bay Area high school teacher Lisa Raskin moved out of a cramped apartment she was sharing with a roommate and into her own place this month, paying a deeply discounted \$1,500 a month for a one-bedroom with expansive views within walking distance to work.

It was once an impossible dream in an exorbitantly priced region hostile to new housing. But her employer, a 4,000-student school district south of San Francisco, was the rare success story in the struggle to provide affordable housing and in May, it opened 122 apartments for teachers and staff.

"I have a sense of community, which I think is more valuable than anything else," the 41-year-old San Francisco native said. "More districts really need to consider this model. I think it shows educators that they value them."

The Jefferson Union High School District in San Mateo County's Daly City is among just a handful of places in the country with educator housing. But with a national teacher shortage and rapidly rising rents, the working-class district could serve as a harbinger as schools across the U.S. seek to attract and retain educators.

"This is absolutely a solution for other districts. As we've gone through the process, we've learned of so many other districts interested in doing what we've done," said Andrew Lie, a school board trustee. "For us to be at the front end of this new wave of teacher and staff housing is actually pretty exciting."

"It's like a great gift coming from the district," said math teacher Eleonor Obedoza of her family's new three-bedroom apartment.

In West Virginia, the American Federation of Teachers recently helped open a building with apartments for teachers and retail shops that officials hope will revitalize the rural town of Welch.

Teachers were traveling "hours and hours to get to school and back," said Randi Weingarten, AFT union president. "So this became an idea to spark economic development and to create housing."

Jeff Vincent, co-founder and director of the Center for Cities & Schools at the University of California, Berkeley, said such housing complexes are rare, but he expects more school districts to explore the concept given the benefits of teachers living in the communities where they work, so they can get to know students and families better.

But such projects face obstacles, including pushback from residents. Vincent urges districts to be cautious.

"One of the biggest barriers is the need for people to think outside the box," he said. "There are skeptics of whether schools should be doing this with their land."

Roughly a quarter of the 500 employees at Jefferson Union were resigning or retiring every year and the district, where teacher salaries for the 2022-23 year start at \$60,000, could not compete with wealthier schools that pay new teachers \$76,000 or more.

So in 2017-2018, officials came up with a plan to address recruitment and retention, including a \$75 million housing complex for teachers and staff financed in part by a \$30 million bond measure approved by voters in 2018.

The district also has a more ambitious plan to lease school property for a 1,200-unit development that would mix retail with market-rate housing and generate revenue to beef up teacher salaries. But the Sierra Club's local chapter and others have expressed objections. They want more units at below-market rents and taller buildings to preserve more open space, including a decades-old garden scheduled for razing.

So far, the district is opposed to those changes, inflaming critics.

"It's terrible the schools have to come up with schemes to build housing to pay teachers," said Gladwyn d'Souza, a Sierra Club member who supports workforce housing but says there should be more homes for everyone.

Tenants at the school district complex can stay up to five years, hopefully using the time to save up for a down payment on a house.

But those too are becoming more difficult to buy. A 2016 study by Redfin found that only 20% of homes for sale across major U.S. metro areas were affordable on an average teacher's salary of \$62,800, down

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from 34% in 2012.

Boston high school English teacher Shirley Jones-Luke, who bought her house nearly two decades ago, said there's no way she'd be able to afford one today in the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood of Dorchester where she's taught for years.

"It's important to students to know that their teachers live in the same communities as them, shop at the same stores," said Jones-Luke, who is Black. "They realize the teachers aren't out of touch because we live in the same 'hood. I know what's going on in the 'hood just as much as they do."

In California, the 2016 study found only 17% of homes were affordable on the average state teacher salary of roughly \$74,000, down from 30% in 2012. The average teacher could afford 0.2% of homes in San Francisco and none in Silicon Valley, where the median sales price of a home was \$1.5 million in June.

California lawmakers in 2016 made it easier for districts to build workforce housing on school property, but some efforts have stalled over financing and residential pushback. Five workforce housing complexes currently exist in Los Angeles, Santa Clara and San Mateo county school districts.

After two decades of trying, San Francisco Unified plans to break ground this summer on a 135-unit complex for educators. It could be ready to lease in 2024 — two years behind schedule.

"It was a fight to get it, and it isn't built yet," said Cassondra Curiel, president of United Educators of San Francisco. "It'll alleviate pressure, and it'll be great for those folks who get in there. The bottom line and the objective truth is, it's not enough."

Jefferson Union was the rare success story, building the new complex on a former parking lot of an old high school currently used for district offices.

The apartments range in monthly rent from \$1,356 for a one-bedroom to \$2,511 for a three-bedroom, which officials say is 58% of market rate. There are multiple washers and dryers on every floor, a bike room and meeting rooms where teachers can socialize or collaborate on lessons.

Taylor and Darnel Garcia, both 27, despaired of ever moving out of a two-bedroom in-law unit that was too small for them and their children, ages 3 and 6. The administrative assistant and her husband, a mechanic for the school district, pondered whether they could afford to stay in the Bay Area.

"We were kind of floating in the unknown for a while," she said after moving into their new three-bedroom apartment in May. "It's so hard to say, 'Hey, I have a good career, and I still can't afford to live here.' So this provided that for us."

About 80 employees are to move in by fall and another 30 are applying, including about a dozen new hires, said Tina Van Raaphorst, associate superintendent of business services. The average annual salary of residents is \$62,300, and includes janitors, cafeteria workers and bus drivers who earn far less than teachers.

Melissa Kallstrom, a mom to a district student, does not begrudge the employees their new homes. But she objects to plans to tear up the community garden she and others say provides rare green space.

"This hasn't been developed. This has just come naturally," she said of the garden.

Raskin understands change is difficult. She grew up in San Francisco's Mission District, a working-class neighborhood now trendy with fashionable restaurants where she cannot afford to live by herself.

During the pandemic, she moved out of her mother's house to share an apartment with a friend. But living quarters were tight. The chance to move into a place of her own was like hitting the jackpot, said Raskin, who teaches health and social science.

"This is mine," she said.

Today in History: July 16, Apollo 11 heads to the moon

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, July 16, the 197th day of 2022. There are 168 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 16, 1969, Apollo 11 blasted off from Cape Kennedy on the first manned mission to the surface

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of the moon.

On this date:

In 1790, a site along the Potomac River was designated the permanent seat of the United States government; the area became Washington, D.C.

In 1862, Flag Officer David G. Farragut became the first rear admiral in the United States Navy.

In 1945, the United States exploded its first experimental atomic bomb in the desert of Alamogordo (ahl-ah-moh-GOHR'-doh), New Mexico; the same day, the heavy cruiser USS Indianapolis left Mare (mar-AY') Island Naval Shipyard in California on a secret mission to deliver atomic bomb components to Tinian Island in the Marianas.

In 1951, the novel "The Catcher in the Rye" by J.D. Salinger was first published by Little, Brown and Co.

In 1957, Marine Corps Maj. John Glenn set a transcontinental speed record by flying a Vought F8U Crusader jet from California to New York in 3 hours, 23 minutes and 8.4 seconds.

In 1964, as he accepted the Republican presidential nomination in San Francisco, Barry M. Goldwater declared that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice" and that "moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."

In 1980, former California Gov. Ronald Reagan won the Republican presidential nomination at the party's convention in Detroit.

In 1999, John F. Kennedy Jr., his wife, Carolyn, and her sister, Lauren Bessette (bih-SEHT'), died when their single-engine plane, piloted by Kennedy, plunged into the Atlantic Ocean near Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts.

In 2004, Martha Stewart was sentenced to five months in prison and five months of home confinement by a federal judge in New York for lying about a stock sale.

In 2008, Florida resident Casey Anthony, whose 2-year-old daughter, Caylee, had been missing a month, was arrested on charges of child neglect, making false official statements and obstructing a criminal investigation. (Casey Anthony was later acquitted at trial of murdering Caylee, whose skeletal remains were found in December 2008; she was convicted of lying to police.)

In 2015, a jury in Centennial, Colorado, convicted James Holmes of 165 counts of murder, attempted murder and other charges in the 2012 Aurora movie theater rampage that left 12 people dead. A gunman unleashed a barrage of fire at a recruiting center and another U.S. military site a few miles apart in Chattanooga, Tennessee, killing four Marines and a sailor before he was shot to death by police; authorities identified the gunman as Kuwaiti-born Muhammad Youssef Abdulazeez of Tennessee.

In 2016, Republican presidential nominee-apparent Donald Trump formally introduced his running mate, Mike Pence, during an event in New York, hailing the Indiana governor as his "first choice" and his "partner in the campaign" a day after announcing the selection on Twitter.

Ten years ago: Singer Kitty Wells, whose hits such as "Making Believe" and "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels" made her the first female superstar of country music, died at age 92.

Five years ago: Ten people died at a popular swimming hole in Arizona's Tonto National Forest after a rainstorm unleashed a flash flood. Roger Federer won a record-breaking 8th Wimbledon title, beating Marin Cilic (CHIHl'-ihch) 6-3, 6-1, 6-4. British actor Jodie Whittaker was announced as the next star of the long-running science fiction series "Doctor Who" — the first woman to take a role that had been played by a dozen men over six decades.

One year ago: A federal judge in Texas ruled illegal an Obama-era program that prevented the deportation of thousands of immigrants who were brought into the U.S. as children. Rapper and DJ Biz Markie, known for the 1989 song "Just a Friend," died at the age of 57. The Eiffel Tower reopened to tourists for the first time in nearly nine months, even as France introduced new rules aimed at warding off a fourth surge; they included mandatory COVID-19 passes to enter restaurants and tourist venues.

Today's Birthdays: Soul singer William Bell is 83. International Tennis Hall of Famer Margaret Court is 80. College Football Hall of Famer and football coach Jimmy Johnson is 79. Violinist Pinchas Zukerman is 74. Actor-singer Ruben Blades is 74. Rock composer-musician Stewart Copeland is 70. Playwright Tony Kushner is 66. Actor Faye Grant is 65. Dancer Michael Flatley is 64. Actor Phoebe Cates is 59. Actor Paul

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Hipp is 59. Actor Daryl "Chill" Mitchell is 57. Actor-comedian Will Ferrell is 55. Actor Jonathan Adams is 55. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Barry Sanders is 54. Actor Rain Pryor is 53. Actor Corey Feldman is 51. Rock musician Ed Kowalczyk (koh-WAHL'-chek) (Live) is 51. Rock singer Ryan McCombs (Drowning Pool) is 48. Actor Jayma Mays is 43. Retired soccer star Carli Lloyd is 40. Actor AnnaLynne McCord is 35. Actor-singer James Maslow is 32. Actor Mark Indelicato is 28. Pop singer-musician Luke Hemmings (5 Seconds to Summer) is 26.