

Groton Daily Independent

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Street Seal Project to be done on Thursday. Have your vehicles removed off the streets by then. See map on Page 63



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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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

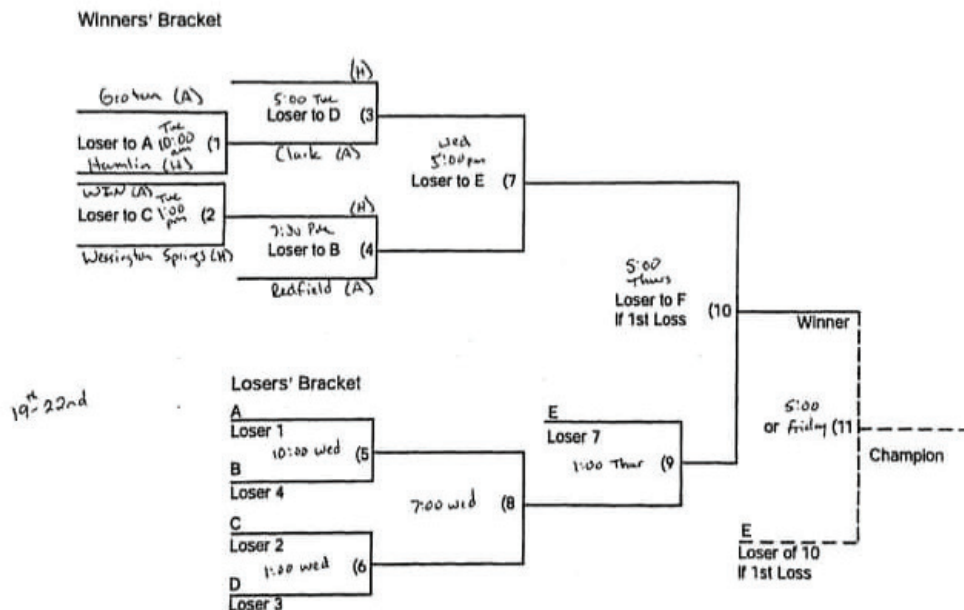
July 19, 2022 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
2. Minutes
3. Bills
4. June Finance Report
5. Approval of Updated Community Center Fees
6. Approval of Special Event Alcoholic Beverage License – Downtown Sip & Shop – July 21, 2022
7. September 28-29, 2022 – NESD Family Violence Prevention Conference – Stacy Mayou
8. Announcement: Water Restrictions - Absolutely No Watering Beginning September 1, 2022
9. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
10. Adjournment

6 Team Double Elimination Bracket



Weekly Vikings Recap

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

As we near the end of the offseason for the Vikings, we carry on with our analysis of the different position groups for the Vikings. We'll look at any competition that might occur and predictions on who will make the final 53-man roster. This week we will look at the safeties.

Safeties:

Lock to make the 53-man roster: Harrison Smith, Lewis Cine, and Cam Bynum

Harrison Smith, who has been the best Vikings player over the past decade, will be entering this Vikings' season at the age of 33. Despite being only four years younger than Vikings' head coach, Kevin O'Connell, Smith has shown little regression from his peak years. Smith's "off-years" are still better than 90% of the safeties in the league's best year. Perhaps one day we will see Smith's name in the Ring of Honor, or maybe even with a bust in Canton.

The question of who will start next to Harrison Smith will continue this year. Last year, Smith played next to Xavier Woods, who left in free agency to the Carolina Panthers. This season, there will be a competition between star rookie Lewis Cine, and second-year player, Cam Bynum, to see who will take that starting role.

For Bynum, he enters his second season after seeing very little playing time at the safety position last year. Despite the lack of playing time, Bynum seemed to excel when given the chance to play. The special thing that Bynum brings to the table is that he played some cornerback in college at Cal. Some experts believe that Bynum's experience at that position might lead to the Vikings using three safeties on the field at once. As Bynum appears to have the chance to grow into a solid player, it is always good to find ways to get as many of your best players on the field at once.

The other interesting player in this safety group is Lewis Cine, the new Vikings' regime's first draft pick. Based on his college highlights, Cine is a heat-seeking missile on the field. Despite playing on arguably the best college defense of the last ten years, Cine stood out in many ways when watching Georgia's defense. That ability to go and make plays on a talented defense may bode well for Cine when playing on this Vikings team, which have a lot of big-name veterans on it. However, given that Cine is a rookie, the Vikings might wait to throw him to the wolves as the starting safety opposite Harrison Smith until he feels comfortable on the field.

Players competing for the final spot on the safety group: Josh Metellus and Myles Dorn

I will be shocked if Josh Metellus is not on the final roster for the Vikings. For starters, Metellus has shown himself to be one of the best special teams player on the team. Also, reports indicated that the Vikings started him over Cine during mini-camp when deploying their three-safety looks on the field. Cine may likely pass Metellus on the depth chart coming into training camp, there is still a good indication that Metellus is highly valued by the coaching staff.

Myles Dorn, on the other hand, will likely be subject to the practice squad rather than the Vikings' final roster. Dorn is entering his third season and has shown nothing when it comes to cracking the lineup. Given that the Vikings only have four reliable players at the safety position, Dorn might be valuable to keep on the practice squad just in case a player gets hurt.

Likely to be cut or placed on the practice squad: Mike Brown

53-man roster predictions:

Jack Kolsrud's prediction

Harrison Smith, Lewis Cine, Cam Bynum, and Josh Metellus

Duane Kolsrud's prediction

Harrison Smith, Lewis Cine, Cam Bynum, and Josh Metellus- Dad still wishes they would have drafted Antoine Winfield, Jr when they had the chance.

Groton Post 39 Jr Legion Walks Away Victorious Over Titans Varsity in High-Scoring Game, 19-9

Both Groton Post 39 Jr Legion and Titans Varsity had their offenses going on Monday, but Groton Post 39 Jr Legion eventually prevailed 19-9.

Groton Post 39 Jr Legion secured the victory thanks to 14 runs in the third inning. Groton Post 39 Jr Legion big bats were led by Braxton Imrie, Brevin Flihs, Caden McInerney, Teylor Diegel, Kaleb Hoover, and Colby Dunker, who each had RBIs in the inning.

Groton Post 39 Jr Legion opened up scoring in the first inning when Logan Ringgenberg singled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one run.

Groton Post 39 Jr Legion took the lead for good with 14 runs in the third inning. In the third Imrie singled on a 2-1 count, scoring one run, Flihs was hit by a pitch, driving in a run, McInerney singled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one run, Levi Little induced Diegel to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored, Hoover singled on a 2-2 count, scoring two runs, Dunker singled on a 1-0 count, scoring one run, Imrie singled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one run, Ringgenberg singled on a 1-0 count, scoring one run, Korbin Kucker singled on a 0-1 count, scoring two runs, McInerney singled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one run, and Diegel doubled on a 1-1 count, scoring two runs.

Titans Varsity scored three runs in the fourth inning. Connor Spitzer, Little, and Milo Sumption each had RBIs in the frame.

Ringgenberg was the winning pitcher for Groton Post 39 Jr Legion. The pitcher lasted two and a third innings, allowing six hits and five runs while striking out two. Dunker threw two-thirds of an inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Little took the loss for Titans Varsity. The pitcher allowed 15 hits and 17 runs over two and two-thirds innings, striking out one.

Kaleb Antonsen started the game for Groton Post 39 Jr Legion. Antonsen went two innings, allowing four runs on one hit and striking out one

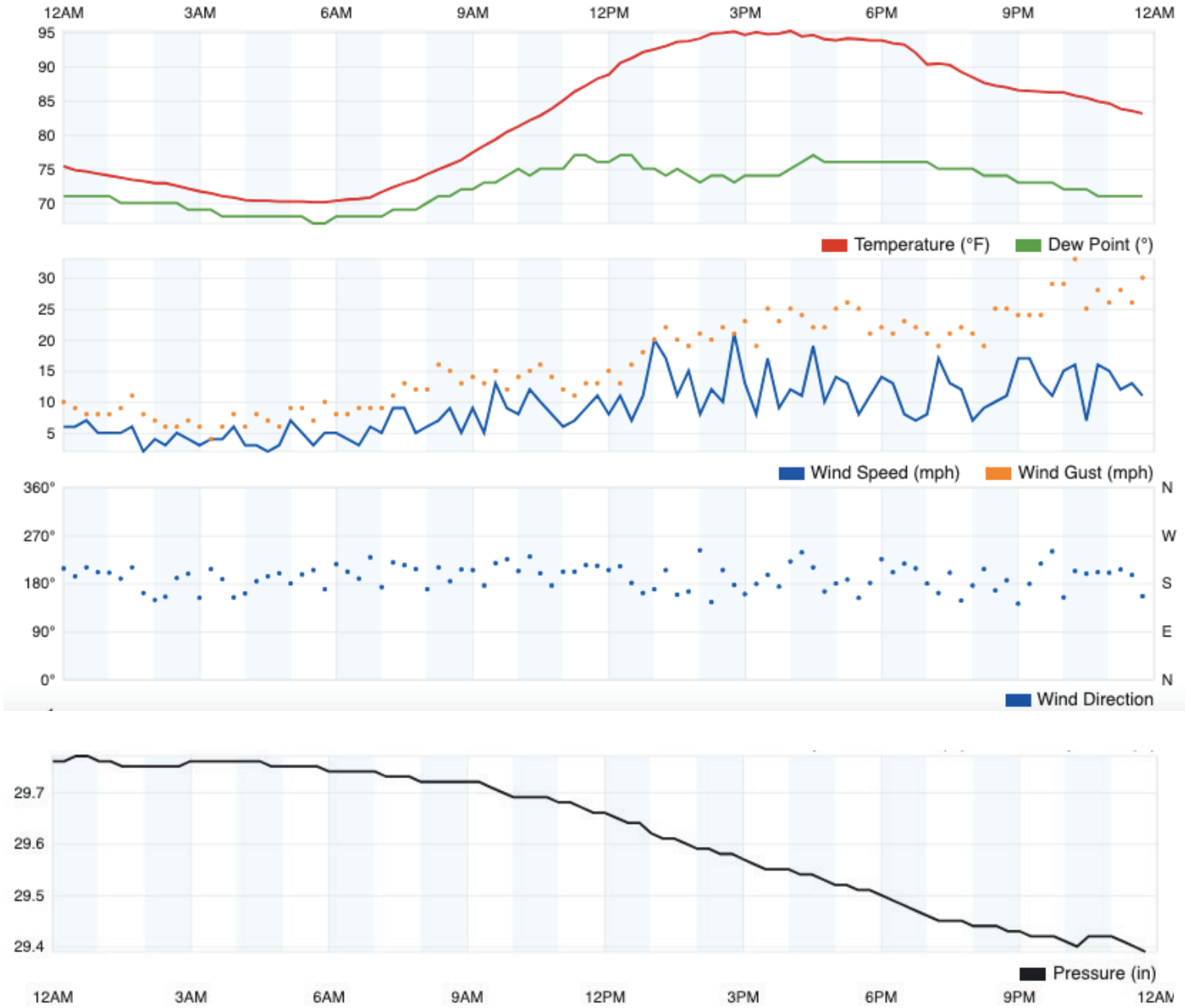
Groton Post 39 Jr Legion had 18 hits in the game. Dunker, Ringgenberg, Imrie, McInerney, Hoover, and Flihs all collected multiple hits for Groton Post 39 Jr Legion. Imrie, Ringgenberg, and Dunker each managed three hits to lead Groton Post 39 Jr Legion.

Titans Varsity racked up seven hits. McKinley Kosters and Sumption each had multiple hits for Titans Varsity. Brayden Sumption led Titans Varsity with four stolen bases, as they ran wild on the base paths with eight stolen bases.

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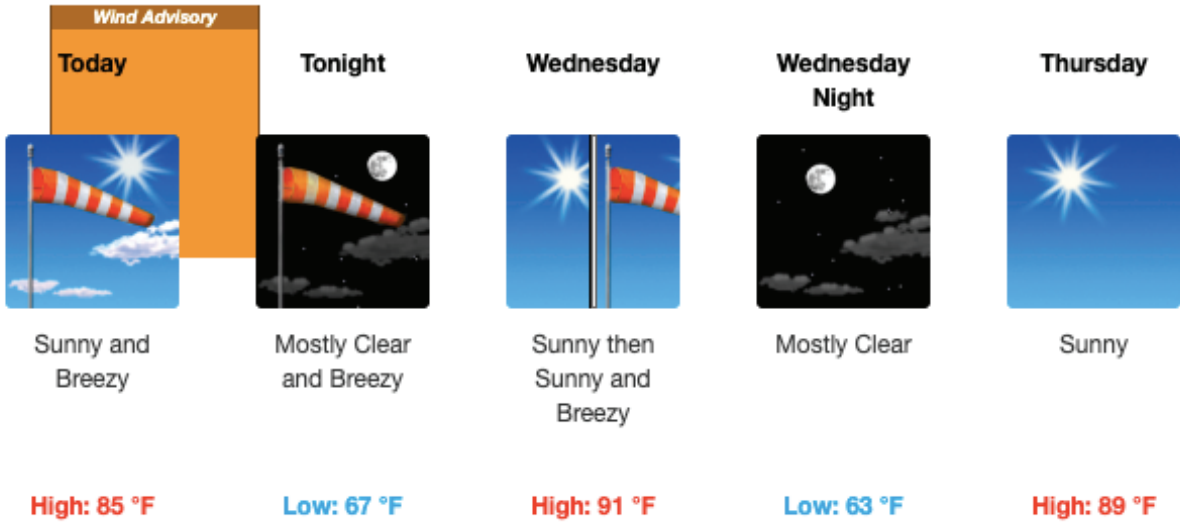
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Windy & Cooler Today

July 19, 2022
3:14 AM

Today
Slight chc showers north, Highs in 80s

Tonight
Cooler, Lows in the 60s

Wednesday
Partly Cloudy, Highs in the 90s

	7/19 Tue						7/20 Wed
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am
Aberdeen	40	36	43	46	40	38	35
Britton	32	33	41	44	39	38	36
Eagle Butte	45	46	49	51	45	37	25
Eureka	40	41	47	51	46	39	32
Gettysburg	41	41	47	49	44	36	29
Kennebec	43	39	45	45	39	31	28
McIntosh	41	47	54	53	47	38	28
Milbank	29	31	35	40	38	39	39
Miller	43	40	41	45	40	35	31
Mobridge	38	41	48	47	43	35	26
Murdo	39	39	46	46	40	31	28
Pierre	37	39	46	46	40	30	24
Redfield	38	36	41	45	40	36	32
Sisseton	32	35	37	43	39	41	39
Watertown	30	33	39	43	41	38	38
Webster	36	37	43	44	40	40	39
Wheaton	28	29	33	38	36	36	38

*Table values in mph
 **Created: 3 am CDT Tue 7/19/2022
 ***Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.

It will be windy over most of the area today with gusts as high as 50 mph over the Missouri valley, and also a bit cooler. #sdwx #mnwx

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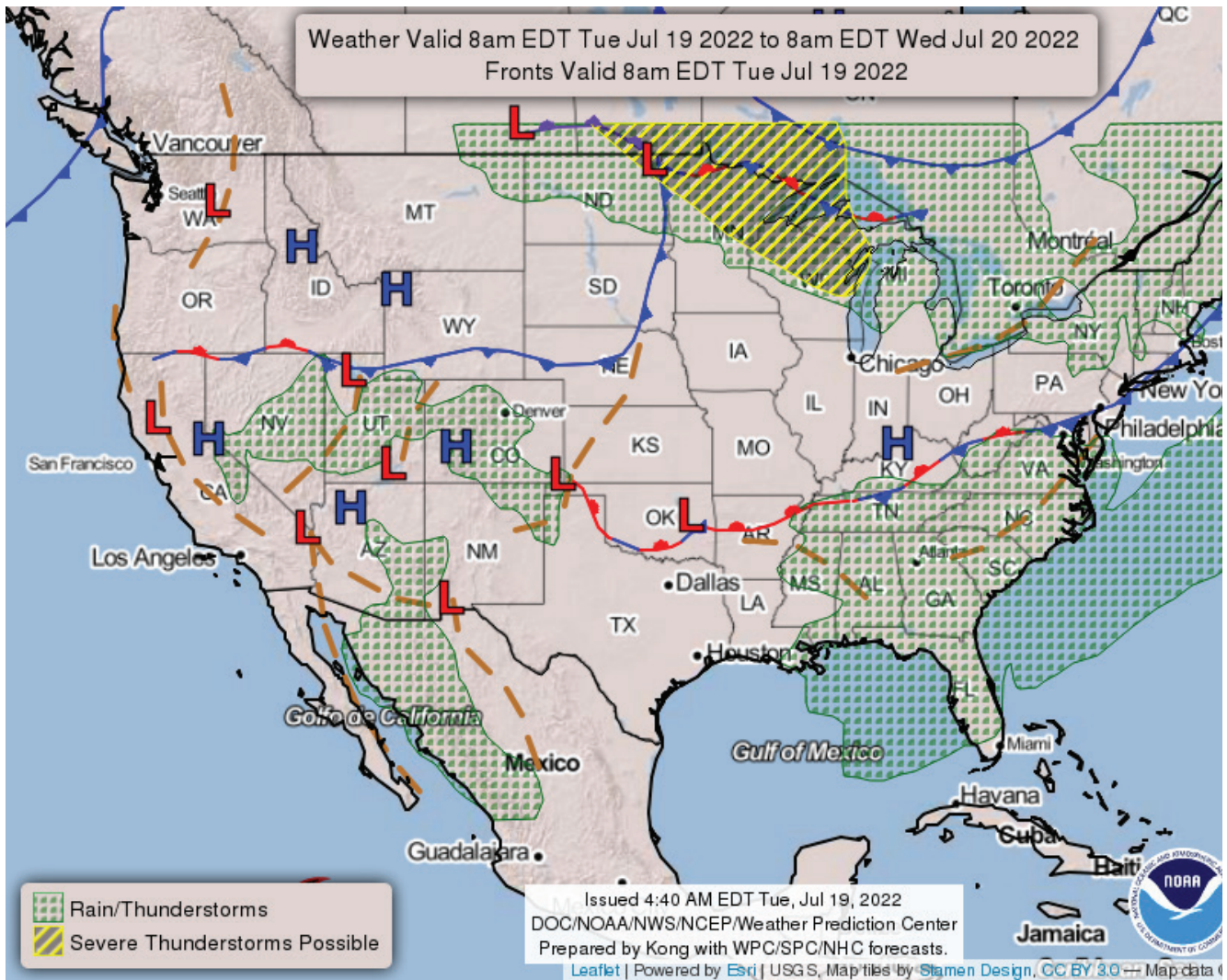
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 95.2 °F at 4:00 PM
Low Temp: 70.1 °F at 5:30 AM
Wind: 33 mph at 10:15 PM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 15 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1932
Record Low: 42 in 1900
Average High: 85°F
Average Low: 60°F
Average Precip in July.: 2.09
Precip to date in July.: 2.25
Average Precip to date: 13.10
Precip Year to Date: 13.83
Sunset Tonight: 9:16:31 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:02:00 AM



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Today in Weather History

July 19, 1933: An F2 tornado moved ESE from west of Tulare to 3 miles ENE of Hitchcock. About ten farms had damage, and several barns were destroyed.

July 19, 2010: Severe storms produced a wide swath of hail and high winds from northern Butte County, through southern Meade, eastern Pennington, Jackson, and Bennett Counties. Millions of dollars in crop damage was reported, along with some damage to homes and automobiles.

1886: The 1886 Atlanta Hurricane season was a very active year with ten hurricanes, seven of which struck the United States. During the evening hours of July 18th, a category 1 storm made landfall near Homosassa Springs, Florida. Damage was slight as the area was thinly inhabited. The hurricane weakened to tropical storm status south of Gainesville and emerged on the eastern side of Florida, south of Jacksonville during the morning hours of the 19th. This was the fourth hurricane to make landfall in the United States.

1960 - Cow Creek and Greenland Ranch in Death Valley, CA, reported morning lows of 102 degrees. The afternoon high at Greenland Ranch was 124 degrees, and the high at Cow Creek that afternoon was 126 degrees. The coolest low for the entire month for both locations was 82 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1974 - A severe thunderstorm with winds to 80 mph and up to two inches of rain washed out four to five foot deep sections of roadway in Lake Havasu City, AZ. Three persons in a station wagon died as it was carried 3000 feet down a wash by a ten foot wall of water. (The Weather Channel)

1977 - Thunderstorms produced torrential rains over parts of southwestern Pennsylvania. Some places receive more than twelve inches in a seven hour period. The heavy rains cause flash flooding along streams resulting in widespread severe damage. The cloudburst floods Johnstown with up to ten feet of water resulting in 76 deaths, countless injuries, and 424 million dollars damage. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Fifteen cities in the western and the southeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Winnemucca, NV, with a reading of 33 degrees. Flagstaff AZ reported a record low of 34 degrees. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in New York State and New Jersey. High winds and hail two inches in diameter injured two persons and caused considerable damage to crops in the Pine Island area of central New York State. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms in Nebraska produced more than five inches of rain at Red Cloud, including two inches in fifteen minutes. Torrid temperatures continued over California, with record highs of 115 degrees at Red Bluff and 116 degrees at Redding. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Early morning thunderstorms in the Lower Mississippi Valley produced 5.50 inches of rain south of Alexander, AR, in just ninety minutes, and flash flooding which resulted claimed the life of one woman. Thunderstorms in Indiana produced 4.95 inches of rain in twelve hours east of Muncie. Eight cities in the southwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Las Vegas, NV, with a reading of 115 degrees, and Phoenix, AZ, with a high of 116 degrees. The low that night at Phoenix of 93 degrees was the warmest of record for that location. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2005 - A severe heat wave gripped the region during early to mid-July. Las Vegas, NV tied their all-time record high temperature of 117 degrees, equalling the old record set on July 24, 1942.

2006: A derecho impacted a sellout crowd of almost 44,000 St. Louis Cardinals fans, packed into the new Busch Stadium. Winds of about 80 mph whirled around the St. Louis area, sending the fans running for shelter. The winds knocked out power and broke windows out of the press box. Nearly two minutes after the winds began at 100 mph, they stopped, and it started to rain. In all, about 30 people were injured at the stadium.

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GOD WORKS

"Do you know what U.N. stands for?" he asked.

"The United Nations," I replied quickly and confidently.

"Not at all," was his reply. "It stands for Unsettled Nations," he informed me.

Then he continued, "Does the Lord care about the condition of the nations of the world? And, if He does care, why doesn't He intervene and make things better?"

"Yes, He cares," I answered. "But we need to see how God has intervened in the past by studying His Word so we can understand what He is doing today."

One nation above all others seems to be the center of God's attention: Israel. Psalm 105:24 describes what we might call an "explosion of people." "The Lord made His people very fruitful. He made them too numerous for their foes." We have often heard that there is "strength in numbers." Here we see this "in action." As the Israelites grew in numbers, they grew in strength, and they were able to overcome their adversaries.

This "strength in numbers" made the Exodus possible. The historian continues by revealing another fact to us: those "whose hearts He turned to hate His people, and to conspire against His servants," were led by Moses, His servant, and Aaron, His chosen one, to lead them into the land that God had prepared for them. Ultimately, it was the persecution that led them to the Promised Land.

Is God involved in the affairs of nations? Indeed, He is. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord!" We may not see it now, but we will see it when the time is right.

Prayer: May we look to You, Lord, as the only One who can save our nation. May our leaders seek Your guidance. Please help me look more faithfully to you for guidance. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The Lord made His people very fruitful. He made them too numerous for their foes, whose hearts He turned to hate His people, and to conspire against His servants. Psalm 105:24-25

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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

Subscription Form

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 530,000,000

Powerball

14-34-36-50-58, Powerball: 5, Power Play: 3

(fourteen, thirty-four, thirty-six, fifty, fifty-eight; Powerball: five; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$101,000,000

EXPLAINER: Challenge pending to North Dakota abortion ban

By DAVE KOLPACK Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota's only abortion clinic, the Red River Women's Clinic, has gone to state court seeking to declare the state's imminent abortion ban is contrary to the state constitution.

The lawsuit also seeks to at least delay the July 28 date for the ban to kick in.

Clinic director Tammy Kromenaker has said the lawsuit should at least give more time to provide abortion care in North Dakota while she prepares for a possible relocation a few miles away to Moorhead, Minnesota, where abortion remains legal.

Here are some questions and answers about abortion law and the clinic's complaint:

WHAT IS THE TRIGGER LAW?

North Dakota is one of about 10 states that enacted trigger laws to ban abortion in the event the U.S. Supreme Court overturned its landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling legalizing the procedure nationwide.

The North Dakota Legislature passed its trigger law in 2007 that made abortion illegal in the state except in cases of rape, incest and the life of the mother. The measure said the ban will go into effect 30 days after the "issuance of the judgment in any decision of the United States Supreme Court which, in whole or in part, restores to the states authority to prohibit abortion."

WHAT ABOUT THE CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION?

The clinic argues that state law guarantees the rights of life, liberty, safety and happiness, all of which protect the right to abortion.

North Dakota courts faced a similar question in a 2011 bill meant to regulate medication abortions. In declaring that law unconstitutional, Cass County Judge Wickham Corwin said it would essentially eliminate the procedure altogether and illegally restrict abortion rights.

The case went to the state Supreme Court, where views on the constitutional question were mixed. Chief Justice Gerald VandeWalle and Justice Dale Sandstrom both found the 2011 ban constitutional. Justices Carol Ronning Kapsner and Mary Muehlen Maring agreed with Corwin's finding. Justice Daniel Crothers said the issue need not be decided by the state's highest court.

It takes four justices to declare a law unconstitutional and the result was a reversal of Corwin's ruling.

WAS THE BAN CERTIFIED TOO EARLY?

North Dakota Attorney General Drew Wrigley last month authorized the abortion ban to start July 28, stating that conditions for enforcement "have been satisfied."

The lawsuit said Wrigley acted too early. It argues that even though the Supreme Court released its opinion on June 24, it does not issue its judgment to the lower courts until at least 25 days after the opinion. The judgment is a separate order from the opinion, the suit said.

Wrigley said his office is "carefully reviewing and evaluating" the complaint and will not comment further until they file their response to the suit, which is due on Tuesday.

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WHAT DO EXPERTS SAY?

Steven Morrison, a University of North Dakota law professor who wrote a brief for the 2011 case, said the clinic faces an uphill battle on the constitutional question because the state Supreme Court has a history of being supportive of abortion restrictions.

"Simply because Roe vs. Wade is overturned doesn't suggest to me the North Dakota Supreme Court or any district court judge in North Dakota is going to start changing their tune and start reading into the state constitution's right to abortion," Morrison said.

Of the justices who heard the 2011 case, only VandeWalle and Crothers remain, but the court hasn't become more liberal, Morrison said. He noted that VandeWalle, the author of the 2011 opinion, is not seen as conservative by North Dakota standards and is viewed as an "intelligent, perceptive judge who is willing to listen to both sides."

VandeWalle was "very clear" in his majority opinion of the 2011 medication abortion measure that state law doesn't offer protection for abortion, said Laura Hermer, a Hamline Mitchell law professor who specializes in abortion cases. She believes Wrigley was premature with the trigger ban date.

However, Hermer said that the lawsuit is likely just delaying what the clinic "considers to be the inevitable."

WHEN WILL THE SUIT BE DECIDED?

That's unclear. Experts say it's likely that a district judge will hit pause on the abortion ban to give the players time to lay out arguments on the constitutionality. And a quick ruling could add fuel to an appeal.

Meanwhile, a GoFundMe page established to help pay for the clinic's transition from Fargo to Moorhead has raised nearly \$1 million.

MORE ABOUT THE TRIGGER BAN

Meanwhile, doctors and hospitals say they have concerns about how the looming ban fits with existing state law on how they may handle dangerous pregnancies.

The Abortion Control Act, passed by the state in 2013, would in theory protect doctors who perform abortions if a pregnant patient is deemed to be at serious risk of substantial and irreversible impairment. The trigger law only mentions defenses for doctors who perform the procedure to save the life of the mother. The trigger law has exceptions for abortions in cases of rape or incest, the Abortion Control Act does not.

"There are some serious concerns about the inconsistencies," said Courtney Koebele, executive director of the North Dakota Medical Association.

UK breaks its record for highest temperature as heat builds

By DANICA KIRKA and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain shattered its record for highest temperature ever registered Tuesday, with a provisional reading of 39.1 degrees Celsius (102.4 degrees Fahrenheit), according to the country's weather office — and the heat was only expected to rise.

The highest temperature previously recorded in Britain was 38.7 C (101.7 F), a record set in 2019. Tuesday's record was in Charlwood, England.

"Temperatures are likely to rise further through today," the forecaster said.

The high Tuesday came as the country sweltered in heat that also scorched mainland Europe for the past week. Travel, health care and schools were disrupted in a country not prepared for such extremes.

A huge chunk of England, from London in the south to Manchester and Leeds in the north, remained under the country's first warning of "extreme" heat Tuesday, meaning there is danger of death even for healthy people.

Britain's Supreme Court closed to visitors after a problem with the air conditioning forced it to move hearings online. The British Museum planned to close early. Many public buildings, including hospitals don't have air conditioning, a reflection of how unusual such extreme heat is in the country better known for rain and mild temperatures.

Unusually hot, dry weather has gripped large swaths of the continent since last week, triggering wildfires from Portugal to the Balkans and leading to hundreds of heat-related deaths. Images of flames racing

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toward a French beach and Britons sweltering — even at the seaside — have driven home concerns about climate change.

The U.K.'s Met Office weather agency also reported that provisional figures showed the temperature remained above 25 C (77 F) overnight in parts of the country for the first time.

Many people coped with the heat wave by staying put. Road traffic was down from its usual levels on Monday. Trains ran at low speed out of concern rails could buckle, or did not run at all. London's Kings Cross Station, one of the country's busiest rail hubs, was empty on Tuesday, with no trains on the busy east coast line connecting the capital to the north and Scotland. London's Luton Airport had to close its runway because of heat damage.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said Britain's transport infrastructure, some of it dating from Victorian times, "just wasn't built to withstand this type of temperature — and it will be many years before we can replace infrastructure with the kind of infrastructure that could."

At least five people were reported to have drowned across the U.K. in rivers, lakes and reservoirs while trying to cool off.

Climate experts warn that global warming has increased the frequency of extreme weather events, with studies showing that the likelihood of temperatures in the U.K. reaching 40 C (104 F) is now 10 times higher than in the pre-industrial era. Drought and heat waves tied to climate change have also made wildfires harder to fight.

The dangers of extreme heat were on display in southern Europe. At least 748 heat-related deaths have been reported in the heat wave in Spain and neighboring Portugal, where temperatures reached 47 C (117 F) earlier this month.

In the Gironde region of southwestern France, ferocious wildfires continued to spread through tinder-dry pines forests, frustrating firefighting efforts by more than 2,000 firefighters and water-bombing planes.

More than 37,000 people have been evacuated from homes and summer vacation spots since the fires broke out July 12 and burned through 190 square kilometers (more than 70 square miles) of forests and vegetation, Gironde authorities said.

A smaller third fire broke out late Monday in the Medoc wine region north of Bordeaux, further taxing firefighting resources. Five camping sites went up in flames in the Atlantic coast beach zone where blazes raged, around the Arcachon maritime basin famous for its oysters and resorts.

But weather forecasts offered some consolation, with heat-wave temperatures expected to ease along the Atlantic seaboard Tuesday and the possibility of rains rolling in late in the day.

Putin heads to Tehran for talks with leaders of Iran, Turkey

By NASSER KARIMI and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Iran starting Tuesday is intended to deepen ties with regional heavyweights as part of Moscow's challenge to the United States and Europe amid its grinding campaign in Ukraine.

In only his second trip abroad since Russian tanks rolled into its neighbor in February, Putin is scheduled to hold talks with Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan about the pressing issues facing the region, including the conflict in Syria and a U.N.-backed proposal to resume exports of Ukrainian grain to ease the global food crisis.

As the West heaps sanctions on Russia and the costly campaign drags on, Putin is seeking to bolster ties with Tehran, a fellow target of severe U.S. sanctions and a potential military and trade partner. In recent weeks, Russian officials visited an airfield in central Iran at least twice to review Tehran's weapons-capable drones for possible use in Ukraine, the White House has alleged.

But perhaps most crucially, the Tehran trip offers Putin a chance for a high-stakes meeting with Erdogan, who has sought to help broker talks on a peaceful settlement of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as well as help negotiations to unblock Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea.

Turkey, a NATO member, has found itself opposite Russia in bloody conflicts in Azerbaijan, Libya and

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Syria. It has even sold lethal drones that Ukrainian forces have used to attack Russia. But Turkey hasn't imposed sanctions on the Kremlin, making it a sorely needed partner for Moscow. Grappling with runaway inflation and a rapidly depreciating currency, Turkey also relies on the Russian market.

The gathering has symbolic meaning for Putin's domestic audience as well, showing off Russia's international clout even as it grows increasingly isolated and plunges deeper into confrontation with the West. It comes just days after U.S. President Joe Biden's visited Israel and Saudi Arabia — Tehran's primary rivals in the region.

From Jerusalem and Jeddah, Biden urged Israel and Arab countries to push back on Russian, Chinese and Iranian influence that has expanded with the perception of America's retreat from the region.

It was a tough sell. Israel maintains good relations with Putin, a necessity given Russian presence in Syria, Israel's northeastern neighbor and frequent target of its airstrikes. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have so far declined to pump more oil beyond a plan approved by their energy alliance with Moscow.

But all the countries — despite their long-standing rivalries — could agree on drawing closer to counter Iran, which has rapidly advanced its nuclear program since former U.S. President Donald Trump abandoned Tehran's atomic accord with world powers and reimposed crushing sanctions. Talks to restore the deal have hit a deadlock. On his trip, Biden said he'd be willing to use military force against Iran as a last resort.

Backed into a corner by the West and its regional rivals, the Iranian government is ramping up uranium enrichment, cracking down on dissent and grabbing headlines with optimistic, hard-line stances intended to keep the Iranian currency, the rial, from crashing. Without sanctions relief in sight, Iran's tactical partnership with Russia has become one of survival, even as Moscow appears to be undercutting Tehran in the black market oil trade.

"Iran is (the) center of dynamic diplomacy," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian wrote on Twitter, adding the meetings will "develop economic cooperation, focus on security of the region via political solution ... and ensure food security."

Fadahossein Maleki, a member of the Iranian parliament's influential committee on national security and foreign policy, described Russia as Iran's "most strategic partner" on Monday. His comments belied decades of animosity stemming from Russia's occupation of Iran during World War II — and its refusal to leave afterward.

Putin's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov called Iran "an important partner for Russia" in a briefing Monday, saying the countries shared "a desire to take their relations to a new level of strategic partnership."

In his fifth visit to Tehran, Putin will meet Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, with whom he has a "trusting dialogue," Ushakov said. He will also hold talks with President Raisi on issues including Tehran's nuclear deal, of which Russia is a key signatory. The leaders met in Moscow in January and again last month in Turkmenistan.

The focus of the talks among the three presidents will be the decade-old conflict in Syria, where Iran and Russia have backed President Bashar Assad's government, while Turkey has supported armed opposition factions. Russia intervened in the conflict in 2015, pooling efforts with Lebanon's Hezbollah militants and Iranian forces and using its air power to shore up Assad's fledgling military and ultimately turning the tide in his favor.

Ushakov said the parties will discuss efforts to encourage a political settlement, while Erdogan is expected to take up Turkey's threats of a new military offensive in northern Syria to drive away U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters from its borders. The operation is part of Turkey's plan to create a safe zone along its border with Syria that would encourage the voluntary return of Syrian refugees.

In a meeting with Erdogan, Khamenei delivered a stern warning against the planned Turkish incursion. "Any sort of military attack in northern Syria will definitely harm Turkey, Syria and the entire region, and will benefit terrorists," Iran's top leader said, stressing the need to "bring the issue to an end through talks."

Humanitarian issues in Syria have also come into focus since Russia used its veto power at the U.N. Security Council last week to force a restriction in aid deliveries to 4.1 million people in Syria's rebel-held northwest after six months, instead of a year.

Talks to lift a Russian blockade and get Ukraine's grain into global markets will also be on the agenda. Last week, U.N., Russian, Ukrainian and Turkish officials reached a tentative agreement on some aspects of a deal to ensure the export of 22 million tons of desperately needed grain and other agricultural products trapped in Ukraine's Black Sea ports by the fighting.

Tuesday's meeting between Putin and Erdogan could help clear the remaining hurdles, a major step toward alleviating a food crisis that has sent prices of vital commodities like wheat and barley soaring.

Africa's wildlife parks managers meet to boost conservation

By WANJOHI KABUKURU Associated Press

MOMBASA, Kenya (AP) — Officials are meeting in Kigali in Rwanda this week as part of the continent's first-ever Africa Protected Areas Congress in a bid to expand the preservation of land and marine wildlife, despite little funding and the low quality of many existing conservation areas in the region.

Just 14% of Africa's land and inland water ecosystems and 17% of coastal and marine areas are protected, according to United Nations estimates. The continent currently has 9,118 protected areas. Over 100 countries worldwide have ambitions to expand conservation efforts and protect wildlife from human-caused damages.

"Africa's protected and conserved areas face serious issues that need to be addressed urgently," said Ken Mwathe, policy coordinator for Birdlife International in Africa. He said climate change, the decline in quality for protected areas due to underfunding and the growth of infrastructure development in protected areas area severely hampering biodiversity on the continent.

"The push for development in protected and other key biodiversity areas is one that governments and stakeholders should critically interrogate during the congress," Mwathe said.

Those working on the frontlines of conservation are already facing increasing challenges. On Kenya's Wasini Island, where coral reefs and fish are protected by a community-managed marine park, conservation managers say it's difficult for these projects to succeed.

"Managing this local marine park is quite expensive for the community and requires a lot of external support," said Dosa Mshenga, a member of the community that looks after the coral reefs. "However it has a major positive side. Since we started coral restoration and watching the designated area around eight years ago, we have seen fish, octopus and even lobsters which had disappeared returning."

But these gains are now threatened by the construction of a major fishing port in Shimoni, just 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) from the island, Mshenga said.

The Great Blue Wall Initiative — a project to protect marine life across Africa's east coast — will play a prominent part in marine conservation discussions, alongside community-led projects like those in Wasini, Luther Anukur, regional director of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, which is hosting the conference, said. He added that local communities and Indigenous people will be at the forefront of conservation efforts.

"It is important to note that African people have not only lived alongside wildlife but have been its protectors too," Anukur said.

African governments have found themselves under increasing public pressure and international condemnation in recent weeks following evictions of Indigenous communities from conservation areas, with the Maasai in Tanzania appealing to the U.N. for better protections following violent confrontations that forced them to leave their ancestral homes in Ngorongoro Conservation Area.

The congress brings together wildlife parks and reserves managers, scientists, and Indigenous and community leaders. It's hoped that increasing the dialogue between groups will improve the health of Africa's biodiversity hotspots and combat worrying trends, such as the increase in poaching and the illegal wildlife trade.

A high-level discussion on the link between climate change and biodiversity, with an emphasis on protected areas that can significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions, will be central to the meeting, organizer Anukur added.

Gun violence leads community groups to take bolder action

By THALIA BEATY Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Dominique Davis was inside a Seattle-area church one day in March 2021 when a man with a handgun opened fire during a meeting of Community Passageways, a group he founded that works to curb gun violence.

The gunman shot 19-year-old Omari Wallace several times before fleeing. Wallace, who was attending an orientation for a program to steer young people away from violence and keep them out of prison, died from his wounds.

Two more Seattle shootings followed that week. "It was back to back to back," Davis recalled.

In 2021, Seattle recorded more shootings involving injuries and fatalities than in the previous five years. Davis heard that a leader of one of two rival groups whose confrontations had intensified said the only way the bloodshed would stop would be if the groups could put some distance between each other.

So he seized the opportunity. Davis arranged for 16 young men from the two groups to leave the city — one to Phoenix, the other to Los Angeles — and paid them to stay away for 30 days and work with therapists and mentors. Davis said that since returning to Seattle, all but three of the young men, several of whom had previously been involved in gun violence, have faced no charges.

The unusual plan is an example of how community groups across the country that have long sought to prevent violence are adopting new ways to stem the surge in shootings over the past two years as well as a spike in gun purchases. Known as community violence intervention, the approach deploys people with personal connections — and credibility — with those most likely to be involved in gun violence. Though the approach isn't new, interest in it is growing.

The Biden administration has made community violence intervention a key priority. It has designated \$5 billion in support over eight years, though that funding has stalled in Congress, along with the rest of the administration's Build Back Better legislation.

And under the just-passed bipartisan gun violence law, which seeks to keep guns away from dangerous people after the Uvalde killings fanned momentum for reforms, Congress provided \$250 million for community violence prevention. The administration has also told municipalities and states that they could spend federal stimulus money, allocated last year, for violence intervention.

Support for these local organizations marks a departure from a long-standing reliance on policing to curb gun violence. Alia Harvey Quinn, executive director of FORCE Detroit, one such group, likens the approach to "how we prevent drunk driving with our friends: just intervening and snatching the keys aggressively and using our relationships to do so."

In the same church in south Seattle in June, Davis invited members of local groups who try to defuse conflicts to the front of the room. The leaders — predominantly people of color, mainly Black — said their work is part of a long struggle for safety and justice and against systemic racism.

Beneath the words "Love," "Joy" and "Peace" on the wall, Davis tallied the years in prison they'd served. Some shared journeys of redemption, how they eventually achieved freedom and now devote themselves to healing their communities.

They shared strategies with representatives from similar groups in Newark and Baltimore, part of an 18-month initiative sponsored by the Biden administration and paid for by a dozen philanthropic foundations. The Community Violence Intervention Collaborative launched in June 2021 to train and expand local organizations in 16 cities.

The training is funded by \$7.4 million from the philanthropies, including the Ford Foundation, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Hyphen, a nonprofit specializing in public-philanthropic partnerships, manages the initiative. Its founder, Archana Sahgal, called the effort a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

"You're able to turbocharge a social movement that reimagines public safety in this country," Sahgal said.

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So far, few large cities or states have responded to Biden's call to invest in these programs. But municipalities have until 2024 to allocate their funding from the \$1.9 trillion stimulus package, which was enacted in 2021 to address the pandemic and the economic damage it caused.

Researchers Amanda Kass of the University of Illinois Chicago and Philip Rocco of Marquette University analyzed how the money was spent between March and November 2021. They found that \$79 million had been allocated by nine states and 79 localities for violence intervention.

That's much less than the \$5 billion Biden hoped to direct toward this work, although budgets adopted by those same entities propose spending \$470 million on the projects over time.

Many leaders and participants in Seattle's network of gun violence intervention have survived gunshots or have relatives who have been injured or killed by guns. They feel a growing urgency about their work. Some liken their fight for funding — from the city and King County or for small grants allocated through intermediary organizations — to "The Hunger Games."

"We're saying, give us the \$30 million," Davis said. "We know who is doing the work."

Another Seattle-area organization, the SE Network, arranges community gatherings on Friday evenings — in the parking lot of a grocery store where a fatal shooting occurred in 2020 — to try to prevent further violence. The group's executive director, Marty Jackson, said they use data about where shootings have occurred to determine where to deploy their teams.

"We totally know the rest of the city needs this kind of attention," Jackson said. "We need resources to replicate what we know for sure is working in these concentrated places."

Every year, she seeks renewed funding for her work, which includes sending trained workers to spend time around schools.

"You have to create performance measures for your work," Jackson said, "and then market it yourself. It's a daunting task."

Jeffrey A. Butts, director of research at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York and one of the authors of a recent review of community intervention programs, cautioned against drawing easy conclusions about the effectiveness of such intervention.

"They say, 'We started doing program X here two years ago and our shootings have gone down by 30%.' And the audience applauds and everyone congratulates themselves," Butts said. "But that's not evidence that the program resulted in that change."

Some evidence does support such intervention, but Butts noted that many projects called community violence intervention actually target younger children or housing or economic programs. Without rigorous evaluation, he said, it's difficult to assess the effectiveness of community violence intervention or determine which strategies work best.

Tim Daly, program director for gun violence at The Joyce Foundation, said government investment is critical.

"We need public dollars to be able to scale those strategies to the extent that is necessary," Daly said.

Until then, organizations that intervene in gun violence are competing for a limited number of grants. Several groups that underwent training sponsored by the White House and philanthropies said they could use many more times their funding.

Alia Harvey Quinn of Detroit said her group could easily spend \$15 million annually to provide a broad ecosystem of services, including therapy and entrepreneurship training. That would be in addition to the street outreach at the heart of community intervention — engaging with people who are likely to be involved with shootings. Her group's annual budget is just \$1.2 million.

A recently passed Michigan state budget included \$500,000 for Harvey Quinn's group and \$3 million for a group in Flint, as well as \$11 million in competitive grants that could go to community intervention. Detroit has allocated \$12 million of its pandemic relief funding for the programs that hasn't been spent yet.

In last year's budget, Seattle granted \$1.5 million to the violence intervention collaborative that includes

Community Passageways and the SE Network. But the city has exhausted its pandemic relief funding. King County said it's allocated around \$1 million from pandemic relief funds to community violence intervention.

The Biden administration says it hopes its new program can generate further funding.

"By bringing philanthropy, the federal government and (community intervention) leaders together in this first-of-its-kind partnership, it puts our country on a path to redefining public safety in this country and reducing gun violence," said Julie Rodriguez, a senior advisor to Biden.

Sri Lanka's political turmoil sows worries for recovery

By KRUTIKA PATHI and BHARATHA MALLAWARACHI Associated Press

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — A day after Sri Lanka's president fled, Mohamed Ishad waited outside an immigration office near the capital, clutching a file of documents that he hopes will get his passport renewed so he can leave, too.

With the nation in the throes of its worst economic crisis, Ishad has no job, relies on relatives for financial help and sells vegetables to feed his wife and three children. He wants to go to Japan and find work there so he can send money back home.

Ishad is devastated to leave his family behind, but feels there is no choice — and no opportunity — in his country. "Living in Sri Lanka right now is not good — if you want a good life, you need to leave," he said. Not only has the economy collapsed, but "there's hardly a government functioning right now."

Bankruptcy has forced the island nation's government to a near standstill. Its once-beloved and now reviled former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled to Singapore before resigning last week. The acting president and prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, is seen as his proxy and opposed by angry crowds.

Parliament is expected to elect a new president Wednesday, paving the way for a fresh government, but it is unclear if that's enough to fix a shattered economy and placate a furious nation of 22 million that has grown disillusioned with politicians of all stripes.

The political ruckus has deepened worries that solutions to the crisis, including a crucial assistance from the International Monetary Fund, may be delayed.

"Right now, the eye is off the ball," said Dayan Jayatilleka, a former diplomat and political analyst. "It's like in the middle of a serious surgery, everybody from the top surgeon to the anesthesiologist, ran out of the operation room to start a revolution — but they need to come back and finish the surgery before the patient is dead."

The IMF is monitoring the situation closely, but any bailout package will be contingent on Sri Lanka's debt-restructuring strategy and political stability. "People are probably thinking, who do we talk to? Don't you guys care about the economy? Will the real president please stand up?" Jayatilleka said.

For months, the country has been on edge, triggered by a foreign exchange crisis that has crippled imports of essentials like fuel, food and medicine. Doctors are warning people to not get sick while families are struggling to eat three meals a day in a country that was once an inspiration across South Asia for its expanding middle class and high per capita income.

Now, the government owes \$51 billion in debt and is unable to make payments on its loans. Its currency has collapsed by 80%, making imports more expensive and worsening inflation. Sri Lanka has only \$25 million in usable foreign reserves and needs \$6 billion to stay afloat over the next few months.

"Gotabaya resigning is one problem solved -- there are so many more. They will continue if we don't make the right choice in choosing our leaders," said Bhasura Wickremesinghe, a 24-year-old maritime engineering student.

The most contentious candidate for president is Wickremesinghe, who can count on support of the governing party. Protesters have rallied for weeks to kick him out of office, accusing him of protecting the Rajapaksa dynasty. If he is nominated and chosen, it will be a "powder keg," said Jayatilleka.

The six-time prime minister, who is also the finance minister, was appointed by Rajapaksa in May to begin difficult negotiations with lenders and financial institutions. He has also promised to overhaul the political system to clip presidential powers. But his unpopularity grew as lines for fuel got longer, food

prices surged and power cuts continued.

He recently called the protesters "fascists" and imposed a state of emergency after his office was seized and his private residence torched.

Other candidates are Dullas Alahapperuma, a former minister under Rajapaksa who is backed by some members of the ruling coalition, and Anura Dissanayake, a Marxist leader whose public support has grown during the crisis. One expected candidate, Sajith Premadasa, the leader of the main opposition party, has thrown his support behind Alahapperuma.

Wickremesinghe is the only lawmaker from his party to hold a seat in Parliament after it suffered a humiliating defeat in 2020, limiting his public support and political heft. Many don't see him as a legitimate leader despite his seasoned political career and expertise, said Bhavani Fonseka, a senior researcher at Colombo-based Center for Policy Alternatives.

"This political uncertainty is a killer of the economy -- that has to be resolved fast and in a way that satisfies the people of the country," said W.A. Wijewardena, a former deputy governor of the Sri Lankan central bank. An immediate roadmap is needed, focused on boosting exports, increasing revenue through new taxes and slashing expenditure, but none of this can be achieved if there is no stable government in place, he added.

Many people are aching for a tangible change in their lives right now, Fonseka said, and don't care about the complex negotiations. "For them, it's the basics of fuel and food — are they getting it or not?"

She said that whoever forms the government "cannot rule the way it was before, they will need to engage better with the public and protesters to show they are different."

"But if it is someone who does not have the confidence or trust of the people, then the tumultuous protests will continue, and there won't be any stability or solutions in near sight."

Aviation faces hurdles to hit goals for cutting emissions

By DAVID KOENIG and KELVIN CHAN Associated Press

FARNBOROUGH, England (AP) — Airplanes are a minor contributor to global greenhouse-gas emissions, but their share is sure to grow as more people travel in coming years — and that has the aviation industry facing the prospect of tighter environmental regulations and higher costs.

The industry has embraced a goal of reaching net-zero greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050. Experts who track the issue are skeptical.

Until the COVID-19 pandemic caused travel to slump, airlines were on a steady course of burning more fuel, year after year. Today's aircraft engines are the most efficient ever, but improvements in reducing fuel burn are agonizingly slow — about 1% a year on average.

At Monday's opening of a huge aviation industry show near London, discussion about climate change replaced much of the usual buzz over big airplane orders.

The weather was fitting. The Farnborough International Airshow opened as U.K. authorities issued the first extreme heat warning in England's history. Two nearby airports closed their runways, one reporting that heat caused the surface to buckle.

As airlines confront climate change, the stakes could hardly be higher.

Jim Harris, who leads the aerospace practice at consultant Bain & Co., says that with airlines recovering from the jolt of the pandemic, hitting net-zero by 2050 is now the industry's biggest challenge.

"There is no obvious solution, there is no one technology, there is no one set of actions that are going to get the industry there," Harris says. "The amount of change required, and the timeline, are big issues."

Aviation releases only one-sixth the amount of carbon dioxide produced by cars and trucks, according to World Resources Institute, a nonprofit research group based in Washington. However, aviation is used by far fewer people per day.

Jet fuel use by the four biggest U.S. airlines — American, United, Delta and Southwest — rose 15% in the five years leading up to 2019, the last year before air travel dropped, even as they updated their fleets

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with more efficient planes.

Airbus and Boeing, the world's two biggest aircraft makers, both addressed sustainability during Monday's opening day at Farnborough, although they approached the issue in different ways.

Europe's Airbus and seven airline groups announced a venture in West Texas to explore removing carbon dioxide from the air and injecting it deep underground, while Boeing officials said sustainable aviation fuel, or SAF, will be the best tool — but not the only one — to reduce emissions.

Last September, airline leaders and President Joe Biden touted an agreement to cut aircraft emissions 20% by 2030 by producing 3 billion gallons of SAF by then and replacing all conventional jet fuel by 2050. Climate experts praised the idea but said the voluntary targets are overly optimistic. Current SAF production is around 5 million gallons per year.

Sustainable fuel is biofuel made from cooking oil, animal fats, municipal waste or other feedstocks. Its chief advantage is that it can be blended with conventional fuel to power jet engines. It has been used many times on test flights and even regular flights with passengers on board.

Among SAF's drawbacks are the high cost — about three times more than conventional jet fuel. As airlines seek to buy and use more of it, the price will rise further. Advocates are lobbying for tax breaks and other incentives to boost production.

Policymakers see SAF as a bridge fuel — a way to reduce emissions until more dramatic breakthroughs, such as electric- or hydrogen-powered planes, are ready. Those technologies might not be widely available for airline-size planes for two or three decades.

Several companies are designing and starting to build electric-powered planes, but most are small aircraft that take off and land vertically, like helicopters, and they are about the same size — with room for only a few passengers.

Electric-powered planes big enough to carry around 200 passengers — a medium-size jet by airline standards — would require much bigger batteries for longer flights. The batteries would weigh about 40 times more than jet fuel to produce the same amount of power, making electric airliners impractical without huge leaps in battery technology.

Hydrogen, on the other hand, "is a very light fuel," says Dan Rutherford, who leads the study of decarbonizing cars and planes for an environmental group, the International Council on Clean Transportation. "But you need a lot of volume to store it, and the fuel tanks themselves are heavy."

Despite that, Rutherford remains "cautiously optimistic" about hydrogen. His group believes that by 2035, there could be hydrogen-powered planes capable of flying about 2,100 miles (3,380 kilometers). Others, however, see obstacles including the need for massive and expensive new infrastructure at airports to store hydrogen that has been chilled into liquid form.

Airlines face the risk of increasingly tough emissions regulations.

The U.N. aviation organization reached an agreement — voluntary until 2026, then mandatory — in which airlines can offset their emissions by investing in projects to reduce greenhouse gases in other ways. However, some major countries didn't sign it, and environmentalists say the scheme won't reduce emissions.

Even some in the airline industry, such as United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby, have mocked carbon offsets, which companies can get for things like paying to plant trees.

The European Union has its own plan to slash emissions 55% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050 while bringing aviation under the goals of the 2015 Paris agreement on climate change. It is trying to finalize an emissions-trading system and impose higher taxes on fossil fuels including jet fuel. The rules would apply only to flights within Europe.

"The taxation policies that are already in place, particularly in Europe, are going to drive the cost of operations for airlines way up," says Harris, the Bain consultant. "Ultimately, fares rise whether it be paying more for sustainable aviation fuel or it's taxes on fossil fuels."

Airlines also face the risk of flight shaming — that more consumers could decide to travel by train or electric vehicle instead of by plane if those produce lower emissions. That does not seem to be inhibiting many travelers this summer, however, as pent-up travel demand has led to full planes.

Whether changes in fuel and planes can cut emissions fast enough to hit the industry 2050 target — and

whether airlines act on their own or under pressure from regulators — remains to be seen. But it won't be easy.

"We're not on a path to deliver those goals," Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian says. "We need the energy producers to invest in sustainable product for us, (which) is going to require government to come in."

Rutherford, the transportation expert, notes that net zero "is a really challenging target."

"If we aren't clearly on a trajectory of down emissions and massive uptake of clean fuels by 2030 and 2035, we are not going to hit net zero in 2050," he says.

Authorities in south China apologize over COVID-19 break-ins

BEIJING (AP) — Authorities in southern China have apologized for breaking into the homes of people who had been taken to a quarantine hotel in the latest example of heavy-handed virus-prevention measures that have sparked a rare public backlash.

State media said that 84 homes in an apartment complex in Guangzhou city's Liwan district had been opened in an effort to find any "close contacts" hiding inside and to disinfect the premises.

The doors were later sealed and new locks installed, the Global Times newspaper reported.

The Liwan district government apologized Monday for such "oversimplified and violent" behavior, the paper said. An investigation has been launched and "relevant people" will be severely punished, it said.

China's leadership has maintained its hard-line "zero-COVID" policy despite the mounting economic costs and disruption to the lives of citizens, who continue to be subjected to routine testing and quarantines, even while the rest of the world has opened up to living with the disease.

Numerous cases of police and health workers breaking into homes around China in the name of anti-COVID-19 measures have been documented on social media. In some, doors have been broken down and residents threatened with punishment, even when they tested negative for the virus. Authorities have demanded keys to lock in residents of apartment buildings where cases have been detected, steel barriers erected to prevent them leaving their compounds and iron bars welded over doors.

China's Communist leaders exert stringent control over the government, police and levers of social control. Most citizens are inured to a lack of privacy and restrictions on free speech and the right to assembly.

However, the strict anti-COVID-19 measures have tested that tolerance, particularly in Shanghai, where a ruthless and often chaotic lockdown spurred protests online and in person among those unable to access food, health care and basic necessities.

Authorities in Beijing have taken a gentler approach, concerned with prompting unrest in the capital ahead of a key party congress later this year at which president and party leader Xi Jinping is expected to receive a third five-year term amid radically slower economic growth and high unemployment among college graduates and migrant workers. A requirement that only vaccinated people could enter public spaces was swiftly canceled last week after city residents denounced it as having been announced without warning and unfair to those who have not had their shots.

"Zero-COVID" has been justified as necessary to avoid a wider outbreak among a population that has had relatively little exposure to the virus and less natural immunity. Although China's vaccination rate hovers at around 90%, it is considerably lower among the elderly, while questions have been raised about the efficacy of China's domestically produced vaccines.

Although China's Fosun Pharma reached an agreement to distribute, and eventually manufacture, the mRNA vaccine made by Pfizer and BioNTech, it still has not been cleared for use in mainland China, despite being authorized for use by separate authorities in Hong Kong and Macao.

Studies have consistently shown that inoculation with mRNA vaccines offers the best protection against hospitalization and death from COVID-19. Chinese vaccines made with older technology proved fairly effective against the original strain of the virus, but much less so against more recent variants.

Now health experts say the delay in approving mRNA vaccines — a consequence of placing politics and national pride above public health — could lead to avoidable coronavirus deaths and deeper economic losses.

China's national borders remain largely closed and although domestic tourism has picked up, travel around

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the country remains subject to an array of regulations, with quarantine restrictions constantly in flux.

In one recent incident, some 2,000 visitors to the southern tourist hub of Beihai have been forced to prolong their stays after more than 500 cases were found and they were barred from leaving.

The local government was struggling to find hotel rooms for those who had already prepared to return home, while hotels and airlines were providing refunds for those who had booked holidays to the city that had to be canceled.

China regulates travel and access to public places through a health code app on citizens' smartphones that must be updated with regular testing. The app tracks a person's movements as a form of contact tracing, allowing a further imposition of public monitoring.

The measures remain in place despite relatively low rates of infection. The National Health Commission on Tuesday announced just 699 new cases of domestic transmission detected over the previous 24 hours, the bulk of which were asymptomatic.

Arrest of Saudi for lying to FBI shows kingdom's reach in US

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — It began with a message that appeared on Danah al-Mayouf's phone from an anonymous Instagram account — a promise to help her "crush" a \$5 million lawsuit she faced from a pro-government Saudi fashion model.

But, the mystery texter said, she had to meet him in person.

It was December 2019, a year after the killing and dismemberment of prominent U.S.-based Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul, and al-Mayouf feared possibly being kidnapped and taken back to the kingdom like others.

"I can't meet someone I don't know," al-Mayouf ultimately responded. "Especially with all the kidnappings and killings."

Now, she's glad she didn't go. U.S. federal prosecutors have arrested the man behind the messages, 42-year-old Ibrahim Alhussayen, on charges of lying to federal officials about using the fake account to harass and threaten Saudi critics — mostly women — living in the U.S. and Canada.

A spokesperson for the FBI declined to comment on the charges. A lawyer for Alhussayen did not respond to multiple requests for comment, nor did the Saudi Embassy in Washington.

A complaint unsealed last month in federal court in Brooklyn points to a wider investigation into online harassment campaigns targeting Saudi dissidents in the U.S. and their relatives — part of a trend of transnational repression that has alarmed American authorities in recent years as various autocratic governments seek to punish critics overseas.

Earlier this year, for instance, the Justice Department revealed a plot by operatives acting on behalf of the Chinese government to stalk, harass and surveil dissidents in the U.S.

The complaint comes as Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman continues to clamp down on opposition, both in the kingdom and abroad, while working to burnish an image as a liberal reformer. The Saudi government has maintained in the past that its critics incite violence, broadly defined, and pose a threat to the kingdom's security.

Nonetheless, President Joe Biden met — and shared a cordial fist-bump with — Prince Mohammed at a diplomatic summit last week in Saudi Arabia.

The scenes drew scathing criticism from fellow Democrats and rights groups after Biden had vowed to treat the kingdom like a "pariah" and deemed Prince Mohammed responsible for Khashoggi's killing.

From Jeddah, Biden said he raised Khashoggi's "outrageous" murder with Prince Mohammed and was "straightforward and direct" about human rights issues, without elaborating.

"If anything like that occurs again," Biden said of Saudi government efforts to target dissidents abroad, "they'll get that response and much more."

While some accuse Biden of abandoning his promise to put human rights at the heart of his foreign policy with his trip to the kingdom, the arrest of Alhussayen in New York underscores that federal officials

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are increasingly scrambling to prevent those rights abuses from occurring on U.S. soil.

The kingdom's campaign to silence criticism has played out in America for some time. In 2019, U.S. prosecutors alleged Saudi Arabia recruited two Twitter employees to spy on thousands of accounts including those of American citizens and Saudi dissidents.

"This guy is just the tip of the iceberg," said Abdullah Alaoudh, Gulf research director for Democracy for the Arab World Now, a Washington-based human rights watchdog. Alaoudh alleges he was also harassed by Alhussayen although he is not named in the complaint. "It's a much larger campaign by the Saudi government to reach people outside."

Alhussayen was a graduate student at two universities in Mississippi. But online, the FBI says he was "@samar16490," an account that ruthlessly insulted and threatened young women on Instagram with the apparent aim of aiding the Saudi government.

Between January 2019 and August 2020, he allegedly maintained regular contact with a Saudi government employee who reported to an official at the royal court.

Prosecutors also said Alhussayen had taken screenshots of Khashoggi's Twitter posts dating back a year before his death and kept photos of Khashoggi on his phone this year, revealing an obsession with Saudi dissidents.

Alhussayen was charged with lying to federal authorities during three interviews between June 2021 and January 2022. The FBI says he told investigators he didn't use any social media accounts other than those in his own name.

Alhussayen's victims routinely checked their phones to discover new waves of vitriolic attacks. As women critical of the Saudi government, they said Alhussayen's warnings were part of a powerful campaign unleashed by legions of social media trolls.

"MBS will wipe you off the face of the earth, you will see," Alhussayen reportedly told al-Mayouf, the Saudi activist, referring to the crown prince by his initials.

He allegedly threatened al-Mayouf with the fate of well-known Saudi women imprisoned in the kingdom, filling his texts with expletives.

From New York, al-Mayouf hosts a popular YouTube show that delivers biting takes on Saudi-related current events and criticizes prominent officials.

For her and a few other victims, there were signs that Alhussayen's intentions went beyond causing offense.

After al-Mayouf rejected his help with the lawsuit and refused to meet, he lashed out. He attempted to obtain her location, the court filing said, "to surveil and further harass" her in person. The complaint did not elaborate.

"I do believe some of them are here, in the U.S.," she said of online bullies who flood her and her American fiancé with death threats each day. "I'm afraid something might happen to me."

She and her fiancé moved after pro-government accounts posted their home address on Twitter.

Moudi Aljohani, a prominent Saudi women's rights activist who petitioned for asylum in the U.S., also believes Alhussayen was trying to gain her trust and lure her into a face-to-face meeting.

After speaking out on social media against the country's male guardianship system, Aljohani fled the kingdom and the stifling grip of her parents in 2016. She fears her family will kill her if she returns.

Aljohani said she was shaken when Alhussayen reached out in 2020 from his fake Instagram account with a cryptic picture of her close family member.

But she, too, earned his ire when she didn't respond. Alhussayen allegedly told her he wanted to spit in her face. He said he hoped she met the same fate as Nada al-Qahtani, a Saudi woman who was fatally shot by her brother in a so-called "honor killing" in the kingdom in 2020.

In recent years, Aljohani has refrained from publicizing her critical opinions of the government because of what she described as a relentless smear campaign.

But a lower political profile hasn't helped. She, and the others, live in fear of their government's reach. "The Saudis are paying big money to fix their image and the way they see it, we're ruining it for them,"

Aljohani said. "I feel like there's no place that's safe."

Europe broils in heat wave that fuels fires in France, Spain

By BOB EDME and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

LA TESTE-DE-BUCH, France (AP) — A heat wave broiling Europe spilled northward Monday to Britain and fueled ferocious wildfires in Spain and France, which evacuated thousands of people and scrambled water-bombing planes and firefighters to battle flames in tinder-dry forests.

Two people were killed in the blazes in Spain that its prime minister linked to global warming, saying, "Climate change kills."

That toll comes on top of the hundreds of heat-related deaths reported in the Iberian peninsula, as high temperatures have gripped the continent in recent days and triggered wildfires from Portugal to the Balkans. Some areas, including northern Italy, are also experiencing extended droughts. Climate change makes such life-threatening extremes less of a rarity — and heat waves have come even to places like Britain, which braced for possible record-breaking temperatures.

The hot weather in the U.K. was expected to be so severe this week that train operators warned it could warp the rails and some schools set up wading pools to help children cool off.

In France, heat records were broken and swirling hot winds complicated firefighting in the country's southwest.

"The fire is literally exploding," said Marc Vermeulen, the regional fire service chief who described tree trunks shattering as flames consumed them, sending burning embers into the air and further spreading the blazes.

"We're facing extreme and exceptional circumstances," he said.

Authorities evacuated more towns, moving another 14,900 people from areas that could find themselves in the path of the fires and choking smoke. In all, more than 31,000 people have been forced from their homes and summer vacation spots in the Gironde region since the wildfires began July 12.

Three additional planes were sent to join six others fighting the fires, scooping up seawater and making repeated runs through dense clouds of smoke, the Interior Ministry said Sunday night.

More than 200 reinforcements headed to join the 1,500 firefighters trying to contain the blazes in the Gironde, where flames neared prized vineyards and billowed smoke across the Arcachon maritime basin famed for its oysters and beaches.

Spain, meanwhile, reported a second fatality in two days in its own blazes. The body of a 69-year-old sheep farmer was found Monday in the same hilly area where a 62-year-old firefighter died a day earlier when he was trapped by flames in the northwestern Zamora province. More than 30 forest fires around Spain have forced the evacuation of thousands of people and blackened 220 square kilometers (85 square miles) of forest and scrub.

Passengers on a train through Zamora got a frightening, close look at a blaze, when their train halted in the countryside. Video of the unscheduled — and unnerving — stop showed about a dozen passengers in a railcar becoming alarmed as they looked out of the windows at the flames encroaching on both sides of the track.

Climate scientists say heat waves are more intense, more frequent and longer because of climate change — and coupled with droughts have made wildfires harder to fight. They say climate change will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

"Climate change kills," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said Monday during a visit to the Extremadura region, the site of three major blazes. "It kills people, it kills our ecosystems and biodiversity."

Teresa Ribera, Spain's minister for ecological transition, described her country as "literally under fire" as she attended talks on climate change in Berlin.

She warned of "terrifying prospects still for the days to come" — after more than 10 days of temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), cooling only moderately at night.

At least 748 heat-related deaths have been reported in the heat wave in Spain and neighboring Portugal,

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where temperatures reached 47 C (117 F) earlier this month.

The heat wave in Spain was forecast to ease on Tuesday, but the respite will be brief as temperatures rise again on Wednesday, especially in the dry western Extremadura region.

In Britain, officials have issued the first-ever extreme heat warning, and the weather service forecast that the record high of 38.7 C (101.7 F), set in 2019, could be shattered.

"Forty-one isn't off the cards," said Met Office CEO Penelope Endersby. "We've even got some 43s in the model, but we're hoping it won't be as high as that."

France's often-temperate Brittany region sweltered with a record 39.3 C (102.7 F) degrees in the port of Brest, surpassing a high of 35.1 C that had stood since September 2003, French weather service Météo-France said.

Regional records in France were broken in over a dozen towns, as the weather service said Monday was "the hottest day of this heat wave."

The Balkans region expected the worst of the heat later this week, but has already seen sporadic wildfires.

Early Monday, authorities in Slovenia said firefighters brought one fire under control. Croatia sent a water-dropping plane there to help after struggling last week with its own wildfires along the Adriatic Sea. A fire in Sibenik forced some people to evacuate their homes but was later extinguished.

In Portugal, much cooler weather Monday helped fire crews make progress. More than 600 firefighters attended four major fires in northern Portugal.

Juan Soto overcomes JRod, contract talk to win HR Derby

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Juan Soto bet heavily on his own talent and health by turning down a massive, long-term contract extension from the Washington Nationals.

Soto then went to the Home Run Derby at Dodger Stadium and showed why he almost certainly can't lose.

Soto won the Derby for the first time Monday night, holding off Seattle Mariners rookie Julio Rodríguez 19-18 in the final.

The 23-year-old Soto hit 53 total homers, beating each of his three opponents by one homer while hitting second each time in the midseason power showcase. Soto was locked in at the plate even after spending an hour earlier at Chavez Ravine answering repeated questions about his possible departure from the Nats after turning down a \$440 million offer.

"It feels amazing. It feels tiring," said Soto, a reserve on the NL All-Star team for Tuesday's Midsummer Classic. "I just tried to concentrate to square off the balls, because I know I have the power."

With a big celebratory bat flip after the final homer dropped into the stands, Soto became the second-youngest Home Run Derby winner in baseball history — by a single day. At 23 years and 266 days old, Soto is only one day older than Juan González was when he won in 1993.

Soto hit a 482-foot blast to right-center while beating Cleveland's José Ramírez 18-17 in the first round, and he got past 42-year-old Albert Pujols 16-15 to reach the final.

Rodríguez was even more impressive in the first two rounds while signaling his arrival on baseball's biggest stages, particularly when he knocked off two-time defending champion Pete Alonso of the Mets 31-23 in the second round. Only four players had managed to hit 30 homers in a single Derby round before the Mariners' 21-year-old phenom did it twice, and he finished the night with 81 of them.

"What did I show the fans? Who I am," said Rodríguez, who made his big league debut on April 8 and hit his first career homer on May 1. "A little bit of my style, of who I am. I think they know a little bit now."

In the final-round matchup between Dominican-born friends who sometimes play "Call of Duty" together, Soto started slowly while batting second, failing to hit his first homer until his 10th swing. He eventually caught fire to win a lively Derby that began with an on-field pyrotechnic flame display that spooked the competitors.

Soto hit the winning 415-foot homer with 20 seconds of bonus time to spare, then whipped his bat in

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the air before being swarmed by other Dominican All-Stars. His homers traveled a total of 5.41 miles.

Soto earns a \$1 million prize — a whole lot more than his \$700,000 salary this season — and another highlight on his resume as his time with Washington possibly nears an end. Soto started his day at Dodger Stadium answering rapid-fire questions in two languages about his future, with agent Scott Boras standing right next to him throughout the grilling.

"I'm a lone survivor," Soto said with a laugh. "I've been going through all this stuff, and I'm still here standing up and with my chin up, all the time. And that shows you I can go through anything."

Soto turned down a \$440 million, 15-year contract to stay with the Nationals in a decision first reported by The Athletic last weekend, and he could be traded by the end of the month. That contract would have been the biggest in total value and the 19th-largest by average salary in baseball history.

"Right now, I'm not even thinking about it," Soto said while hoisting the trophy over his head. "I'm a champion, and I will be a champion for the Nationals."

Potential suitors for Soto are chasing a former World Series champion still reaching his prime, one whose power is just one aspect of his overall ability — but as he showed in Los Angeles, the long ball is a key component of his skills. Soto will turn 26 years old around the time when he is eligible for free agency after the 2024 season.

But until the final, the Derby's best stories were the oldest and the youngest competitors.

Pujols beat top-seeded Kyle Schwarber in a heartwarming first-round upset before Soto finished his night in a victory that probably didn't much bother Pujols, an idol to fellow Dominican stars such as Soto and Rodríguez.

"In (the Dominican Republic), I know all the people are really proud," Soto said. "Since we all three were in the finals, three Dominicans, it just shows you, it's a win for the DR, so we feel pretty proud about it."

Pujols, a special commissioner's invitee for Tuesday's game, was embraced by both his fellow All-Stars and the Southern California fans who cheered for him for nine seasons in Anaheim and again last year with the Dodgers.

Rodríguez became the third-youngest Derby finalist at 21 years, 201 days old, with only Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and Bryce Harper getting there quicker. Rodríguez will have another chance to become the youngest Derby winner next year at home in Seattle's T-Mobile Park, since he'll still be younger than González was in 1993 or Soto is today.

Rodríguez's 32 dingers against Texas' Corey Seager in the first round were the second-most ever in that round, and the rookie was nearly as sharp in the second round while finishing off Alonso, whose mid-competition meditation sessions didn't do the trick.

Pujols was seemingly everybody's sentimental favorite competitor heading into his fifth and final Home Run Derby, this time as a platoon player with just six homers this season for the Cardinals. Pujols is fifth on baseball's career list with 685 homers, but he hadn't tried the Derby since 2015 while with the Angels.

He hit just one homer in the first minute at Dodger Stadium before taking his timeout and choosing a lighter bat, which allowed him to finish strong with 13 homers in regular time in the opening round — including a break for a 30-second ovation from the other All-Stars, who gathered around him and cheered before his bonus time.

Pujols' total was the lowest so far in the Derby, and he thought he was done — he even gave away his batting gloves to Joe Musgrove's cousin. He had to retrieve the gloves for overtime after Schwarber managed only 13 himself, and Pujols held off Schwarber to advance.

Scars of COVID persist for sickest survivors, their families

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

Freddy Fernandez almost wasn't here, on his couch in his Missouri home, his baby on his lap, gnawing on the pulse oximeter that he uses to check his oxygen levels after a months-long bout with COVID-19.

Months after being warned that her partner might never hold his daughter, Vanessa smiles as the girl works to cut two teeth on the device that Freddy wears like a necklace, a blue ribbon tied around it.

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Freddy spent five months hospitalized a four-hour drive away from the couple's home in the southwest Missouri town of Carthage on the most intense life support available. The 41-year-old father of six nearly died repeatedly and now he — like so many who survived COVID-19 hospitalizations — has returned home changed.

While more than 1 million died from COVID in the U.S., many more survived ICU stays that have left them with anxiety, PTSD and a host of health issues. Research has shown that intensive therapy starting in the ICU can help, but it was often hard to provide as hospitals teemed with patients.

"There is a human cost that the patient pays for ICU survivorship," says Dr. Vinaya Sermadevi, who helped care for Freddy throughout his stay at Mercy Hospital St. Louis. "It is almost like going to war and having the aftermath."

Freddy's memories from those long months come in snatches — moments where he regained consciousness, hooked up to machines to breathe for him, clinging to life. Sometimes he asked for his mother, who died of COVID-19 in September 2020.

He missed the birth of his daughter, Mariana, and the first four months of her life. He may never be able to return to his construction job. His other young daughter is terrified he'll go away again.

As the world moves on and mask mandates fall away, COVID-19 is not gone for them.

"We're left with dealing with the leftovers of what it caused," Vanessa says.

Vanessa, 28, was still pregnant with Mariana last summer when the delta variant struck poorly vaccinated southwest Missouri. She was skeptical about the vaccine, but her obstetrician reassured her it was safe and she decided to go ahead and get it.

Freddy was warming up to the idea, too. The native of Mexico City, had come to the U.S. around 20 years ago to work construction — cement jobs mostly — and was now a permanent resident. Sometimes he would work from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., and often at least one day on the weekend.

On the very day in late August that they planned to schedule an appointment to be vaccinated, his throat began to ache. It was COVID.

Days later, with Freddy coughing and struggling to breathe, Vanessa rushed him to the emergency room at the local community hospital. Freddy, although worried about his family, recalls thinking that "it's only a little bit."

But pneumonia was running through both of his lungs. The next day, he was taken to a larger Springfield hospital that was overflowing with patients and placed on a ventilator. That too wasn't enough.

He wound up in St. Louis, nearly 270 miles away from his two young daughters; Vanessa's 10-year-old son, Miguel, who considers Freddy his father; and three other children with his ex-wife — 10-, 8- and 7-year-old boys.

It was a dark period when many people hoped the pandemic was ending, but the delta variant once again flooded the healthcare system. Filling shifts was a daily battle, and death was everywhere, recalls Dr. Sermadevi. She said that at the beginning of the pandemic, everyone was "stunned and astounded that this was even happening." But grief, she says, has a "cumulative effect" and by the time the delta surge came "there wasn't even room for those emotions."

Freddy was lucky, though. For all the talk of ventilator capacity, what was in shortest supply during the delta surge was something called ECMO, or extracorporeal membrane oxygenation. It is used when a ventilator isn't enough, pumping blood out of the body, oxygenating it, and then returning it.

Mercy Hospital St. Louis only had the equipment and staff to care for three ECMO patients at a time. And on Sept. 3, Freddy became one of them.

There were risks, though, to the long hospital stay he was embarking upon, says Dr. Ann Parker, a pulmonologist who co-directs the Post-Acute COVID-19 Team clinic at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Survival rates for ECMO patients slipped during the pandemic to around 50%, according to a 2021 report by the medical journal The Lancet.

That meant even being on the machine, his chances at surviving were far from guaranteed.

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Vanessa delivered Mariana on Oct 13. Freddy had been in the hospital for 48 days, and he didn't even know he was the father of a healthy, 6-pound, 11-ounce daughter.

Far away from her fiancé, Vanessa logged into video calls with Freddy's doctors the same day she brought the newborn home. The news wasn't good - Freddy was suffering from infections and wasn't recovering well.

A lung transplant, Sermadevi said, appeared to be his best option, but was a long shot, she warned them. "I don't want to give you false hope," Sermadevi recalls telling the family. "And there is a chance that Mariana might grow up without a father."

Vanessa, helping the hospital interpreter translate for Freddy's family, glanced at the baby snuggled on a bouncy chair by her side. She was wearing the same hand knitted yellow and white sweater and booties that the couple's oldest daughter, now 4-year-old Melanii, had also worn home from the hospital.

She wanted to keep fighting.

So when the baby was just a week old, Vanessa began making the weekly drive from Carthage to St. Louis, where she stayed in a hotel from Mondays through Fridays. Freddy's sister joined her, and her parents watched the children. It meant giving up the early months with the newborn.

"I have to split myself into two," Vanessa remembers deciding. "I knew she needed me, but he also needed me. And so I knew that if I was there with him, there is a chance for him to come home and then we would all be able to be home with her. So I had to take that risk."

Some of the most important keys to recovery in critical care aren't medical. Visits from relatives, along with physical, occupational and speech therapists, have long been shown to be a difference maker for the sickest of patients.

COVID-19 upended those practices at many hospitals, as families were kept away to keep the virus from spreading.

"When our health care system starts to get overwhelmed and our hospitals start to get overwhelmed, some of those things are not prioritized as much as we would like them to be," Parker says. "And this impacts patient care and patient outcomes."

Fears of infection, plus short staffing, also often meant less physical therapy, proven to speed recovery. When Freddy's family came, it made all the difference.

His room was transformed, photos of his family thumbtacked to the ceiling. Freddy's family held his hand when he had respiratory distress, talking him through it. He needed less sedation and pain medication because, she says, "they were that for him."

"We would just hear such love at the bedside," she says. "And I feel like there's only so much you can do in medicine, and then there is the rest."

Money grew tight, though, with both Freddy and Vanessa no longer working. People showed up on the family's doorstep. "Here," they told her, "we know you need it." A devout Catholic, she prayed sometimes 10 times a day, begging God, "Please, give them a miracle; heal him. He has all these kids he has to watch grow up."

As the weeks wore on, staying on the ECMO was becoming unsustainable. There was bleeding and infections.

What followed was a careful dance that involved weaning down the ECMO settings and increasing the ventilator settings to get his lungs to do more of the work.

Dec. 2 was the day he came off the machine, and Vanessa was warned there were no guarantees that it would be a success.

"But in my mind and in my heart, I guess spiritually, I didn't have that mentality," Vanessa says. "I had the mentality that he was going to make it."

That first night was fitful. After he made it through, his sister embraced the doctors. He had a chance.

With his lungs slowly improving, soon Freddy was up and trying to walk. Three people helped as he

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took his first steps on legs that were so numb just a few weeks earlier that he asked a cousin whether he still had them. The staff was overjoyed — a manager pulled out pom-poms, and there were streamers.

Ultimately, lung transplant talk was tabled.

By Feb. 9, he was heading home, 167 days after he first arrived at the hospital in his hometown.

Outside, the glass door of Freddy's room, the nurses had drawn two lungs, coloring them blue and red. Next to the lungs, they wrote "We'll be the-air for you."

All Vanessa could think was "finally." Freddy had never met his baby. Nor had he seen any of his other children. Their interactions had been limited to Facetime and pictures.

Freddy arrives home. Melanii is shy, hugging him briefly along with older brother Miguel, before clinging to her mother.

"I told you daddy was going to come home, right?" Vanessa tells a smiling Melanii before pulling the baby from the car seat.

"Can your daddy hold your sister?"

Vanessa kisses the baby and then lays him in Freddy's arms. Now just days away from turning 4 months old, Mariana smiles at him.

Melanii had been his shadow before the pandemic, "Daddy's Princess," following him around the house and outside as he cleaned his truck. In the months that he was gone, she consoled herself by watching a video of her parents dancing to Latin country music. Her father spins her mother around; both are smiling.

Now, she is still afraid, Vanessa says, "because every time he has an appointment, she'll say, 'Don't go.' She doesn't cry. She just says, 'Don't go.'"

Freddy relied on a walker and a wheelchair at first. He couldn't sit or eat on his own.

But now the wheelchair is abandoned on the home's back steps. He walks around the entire block, pulling a portable oxygen canister behind him on a dolly. He's on the cusp of being able to carry his oxygen around in a backpack, which would give him more freedom.

The family spends hours outside in the late afternoon and evening, Freddy watching the children jump on the trampoline. His German Shepard sticks by his side.

"At the beginning he would be anxious," Vanessa says. "Now I think with him seeing his own change progressing, I notice he's been doing a lot better. I think he's more upbeat than anybody right now. He'll have his moments where he's like, 'Oh, I feel good.'"

Vanessa is returning to work, life returning "back to normal a little bit."

They want to wait until Freddy gets better to get married.

Yet they don't know how much better he will get — or how quickly.

Such is the story of so many, who are alive yet forever changed, says Sermadevi, who has followed his progress from afar. Some of the nurses even became Facebook friends with Vanessa.

"It's sad and happy at the same time," she acknowledges. "And that's very hard to reconcile."

House to vote on same-sex marriage, push back against court

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House is set to vote to protect same-sex and interracial marriages, a direct confrontation with the Supreme Court, whose conservative majority in overturning *Roe v. Wade* abortion access has sparked concerns that other rights enjoyed by countless Americans may be in jeopardy.

Tuesday's vote in the House is part political strategy setting up an election-year roll call that will force all lawmakers, Republicans and Democrats, to go on the record with their views on the high-profile social issue. It's also part of the legislative branch asserting its authority, pushing back against an aggressive court that appears intent on revisiting many settled U.S. laws.

"As this Court may take aim at other fundamental rights, we cannot sit idly by," Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said in a statement.

While the Respect for Marriage Act is expected to pass the House, it is almost certain to stall in the Senate, where most Republicans would surely block it. It's one of several bills, including those enshrining

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abortion access, that Democrats are pushing to confront the court's conservative majority. Another bill, guaranteeing access to contraceptive services, is set for a vote later this week.

The Respect for Marriage Act would repeal a leftover law still on the books from the Clinton era that defines marriage as a heterogeneous relationship between man and woman. It would also provide legal protections for interracial marriages by prohibiting any state from denying out-of-state marriage licenses and benefits on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity or national origin.

The 1996 law, the Defense of Marriage Act, had basically been sidelined by Obama-era court rulings, including *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which established the rights of same-sex couples to marry nationwide, a landmark case for gay rights.

But last month, in doing away with the *Roe v. Wade* constitutional right to an abortion, the conservative court majority put in place during the Trump era left critics concerned there may be more to come.

In writing for the majority overturning *Roe*, Justice Samuel Alito argued for a more narrow interpretation of the rights guaranteed to Americans, saying the right to an abortion is not spelled out in the Constitution.

"We therefore hold that the Constitution does not confer a right to abortion," Alito wrote.

In a concurring opinion, conservative Justice Clarence Thomas went further, saying other rulings similar to *Roe*, including those around same-sex marriage and the right for couples to use contraception, should be reconsidered.

While Alito insisted in the majority opinion that "this decision concerns the constitutional right to abortion and no other right," others have taken notice.

Jim Obergefell, the plaintiff in the landmark ruling legalizing same-sex marriage and now running as a Democrat for the Ohio House, said after the court's ruling on abortion, "When we lose one right that we have relied on and enjoyed, other rights are at risk."

Election 2022: Maryland voters choosing Gov. Hogan successor

By BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — With Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan term-limited, the highly competitive contest to replace him has drawn the attention of former President Donald Trump, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and even Oprah Winfrey.

As voters on Tuesday choose nominees in statewide, legislative and congressional races, the pivotal governor's race takes top billing. Hogan, a rare two-term Republican governor in a Democratic-leaning state, won plaudits from both sides of the aisle for his bipartisan approach and his willingness to challenge Trump.

His legacy on the line, Hogan has endorsed Kelly Schulz in the Republican gubernatorial primary. Schulz, who served as labor and commerce secretaries in Hogan's administration, faces a challenge from Dan Cox, a Trump-backed state legislator who sued Hogan over his pandemic policies and later sought unsuccessfully to impeach him.

On the Democratic side, Tom Perez, a former U.S. labor secretary and former Democratic Party chair, has the backing of Pelosi, a native daughter of Baltimore, while bestselling author Wes Moore has clinched the support of Winfrey and U.S. Rep. Steny Hoyer, the No. 2 House Democrat. Other top candidates include Comptroller Peter Franchot, former Attorney General Doug Gansler and former U.S. Education Secretary John B. King Jr.

The big-name endorsements that have rolled into Maryland's primary elections for governor illustrate the high stakes for both parties. Democrats see the contest as one of their best chances nationwide to flip a governor's mansion in this year's midterm elections, while Republicans want to cement the party's hold on the office.

The Republican primary provides a potential 2024 preview of the appeal of candidates in the mold of Hogan and Trump, who offer competing visions for the future of the party.

Other top races in Tuesday's election includes contests for U.S. Senate, U.S. House and attorney general. Democratic Sen. Chris Van Hollen is facing a primary challenger two months after suffering a minor

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stroke, but is expected to easily win renomination. The state's eight-member congressional delegation has an open seat representing a district in the Washington suburbs. And the daughter of the state's former attorney general is vying for her father's old job.

It could take days, or even longer, to determine the winners in the most closely contested races. That's because Maryland law prohibits counties from opening mail ballots until the Thursday after election day.

In all, 10 candidates are on the ballot for the Democratic nomination for governor. Perez has support from labor unions around the state, while Moore, the former CEO of the Robin Hood Foundation, an anti-poverty organization, has been endorsed by the state's teachers union and the two top leaders of the Maryland General Assembly, House Speaker Adrienne Jones and Senate President Bill Ferguson.

Franchot, who has won four statewide races by wide margins to be the state's tax collector, brings significant name recognition to the primary. Gansler, a longtime prosecutor, is running as a moderate. King served in President Barack Obama's Cabinet.

Voter Laura Kretchman, a 41-year-old high school teacher, said Moore's endorsement by the Maryland State Education Association helped her decide to cast her ballot for him. She said she's impressed by what Moore has accomplished after rising above childhood challenges and being raised by a single mom.

"I teach children at a school that also come from difficult upbringings, so I'd like to see maybe what he can bring to helping those students that are struggling and challenged," said Kretchman, an Annapolis resident.

While Moore has highlighted his credentials outside of government, some voters said they preferred a long resume of government service. For that reason, Curtis Fatig, a 67-year-old voter in Annapolis, settled on Perez, who also worked on the Montgomery County Council, as Maryland's secretary of labor and as the assistant attorney general for civil rights in Obama's administration.

"He's not a newcomer," said Fatig, who also likes that Perez has union support.

In the Republican primary for governor, Hogan has stood firmly behind Schulz, whom he sees as the strongest candidate to go up against a Democrat in November. Democrats seem to agree, with the Democratic National Committee plowing more than \$1 million behind an ad intended to boost Cox in the Republican primary. It's a tactic they've used in other states in an effort to face an easier opponent in the general election.

Hogan has criticized Cox for organizing busloads of Trump supporters to go to Washington on Jan. 6, 2021, for the "Stop the Steal" rally that preceded the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. Cox has said he didn't go to the Capitol and left before the rioting began.

In a tweet he later deleted, Cox called then-Vice President Mike Pence a "traitor" for refusing to heed Trump's demands not to certify the 2020 election. He apologized for it and denounced the attack on the Capitol.

Trump, meanwhile, has branded Schulz and Hogan as RINOs, or Republicans In Name Only, a term of derision reserved for party members who don't fall in line behind him.

"Get rid of Shutdown RINO Larry Hogan who is trying to get another RINO into office, Kelly Schulz," Trump said in a statement late Monday.

Maryland's only open congressional seat is in the 4th Congressional District, a heavily Democratic Black-majority district in the suburbs of the nation's capital. Incumbent U.S. Rep. Anthony Brown is leaving his safe seat to run for attorney general. Former Rep. Donna Edwards, who previously held the seat, is running to get her job back and faces former county prosecutor Glenn Ivey in Tuesday's Democratic primary.

The Democratic primary for attorney general has turned into a battle between former Gov. Martin O'Malley's wife, Katie Curran O'Malley, who is a former Baltimore judge and the daughter of former Attorney General J. Joseph Curran Jr., and Brown, O'Malley's lieutenant governor who lost the 2014 governor's race to Hogan.

The two are vying to replace Democratic Attorney General Brian Frosh, who is retiring. Maryland hasn't had a Republican attorney general in nearly 70 years.

In other races, candidates are on the ballot for all 188 seats in the Maryland General Assembly, which is controlled by Democrats.

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The Maryland primary was delayed by three weeks by the state's highest court because of lawsuits challenging the state's congressional and state legislative maps.

Partisan lines form over Dem drug price curbs, economic plan

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell is warning that Democrats' plans to curb drug prices would insert "socialist price controls" between Americans and the treatments they need as partisan battle lines form over a shrunken economic package that President Joe Biden wants Congress to complete within weeks.

"Bring it on," No. 2 Senate Democratic leader Dick Durbin of Illinois told reporters in response Monday, underscoring his party's hopes that the fight would buttress them in November's congressional elections. "This prescription drug issue is an inflation issue. It's a public health issue. It's a cost to the government issue. And it's something the American people get."

Biden conceded last week he would settle for a far narrower economic plan than he'd sought at the beginning of his presidency. Capitulating to Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., Biden said he wanted Democrats to quickly write and pass a measure limiting pharmaceutical prices, extending expiring subsidies for people buying health insurance and modestly reducing federal deficits.

Manchin, one of his party's most conservative members, a fossil fuel champion and an indispensable vote in the 50-50 Senate, announced last week that those were the only elements he was willing to include in the legislation. He cited concerns about inflation that's risen rapidly this year. Manchin's remarks meant Democrats' hopes of including efforts to reverse climate change were at best a long shot this year.

"I haven't walked away from anything," the West Virginian told reporters Monday about monthslong talks over the party's economic push, now seemingly on life support, with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. He called inflation his "greatest concern" and added, "I don't know what tomorrow brings."

While Democrats largely seemed ready to accept the pared-down bill and claim an election-season achievement, Manchin's performance is clearly wearing on many. His objections spiked most of Biden's multitrillion-dollar aspirations to strengthen child care and other social programs and raise taxes on the rich, contributing to criticisms that Democrats have fallen short while controlling the White House and — narrowly — Congress.

"I think Joe should have made his position clear a hell of a long time ago," Durbin said. "We've spent a lot of time, wasted a lot of time on negotiation."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., told fellow Democrats in a letter that the Senate's proposed health provisions "are essential, as we must act to reduce the cost of prescription drugs." Said Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.: "We have waited a year and a half for 50 votes. It's time to move where we can move."

The prescription drug measure negotiated by Schumer and Manchin would let Medicare negotiate prices for the pharmaceuticals it buys, require manufacturers to pay rebates for some price increases, clamp a \$2,000 annual ceiling on Medicare recipients' out-of-pocket drug costs and provide free vaccines for older people.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said the proposal would save the government \$288 billion over the coming decade, chiefly because the government would pay less for pharmaceuticals. The extended health care subsidies would use some of that money, with the rest for deficit reduction.

McConnell said the proposal would punish an industry that delivered COVID-19 vaccines just two years ago, a remarkably rapid and effective achievement, and hurt patients.

"Washington Democrats are working right now, right now to find ways to put more bureaucracy between American patients and the treatments they rely on," he said. "They want to put socialist price controls between American innovators and new cures for debilitating diseases."

White House officials touted the benefits of shoring up subsidies for millions to purchase coverage under the Affordable Care Act and reducing the cost of prescription drugs. Both are longtime Democratic goals.

"We're on the cusp of a very big win here" on health care, said White House press secretary Karine

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Jean-Pierre. She reiterated a pledge from Biden last week to take executive action if Congress fails to act on climate, but offered no specifics of what Biden might do.

Notably, Schumer did not mention the economic legislation as the Senate began its session Monday. Democratic senators seemed certain to discuss their plans during their weekly Tuesday lunch. Biden and party leaders hope to approve a package over likely unanimous Republican opposition before Congress begins its August recess.

Manchin has said he would consider climate change legislation in September once he's seen updated inflation figures. Approving a measure in the heat of election campaigns would be extremely difficult. Republicans seem likely to win House control and have a realistic chance of capturing the Senate as well.

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, known as PhRMA, the industry's most influential lobbying group, said Democrats' latest bill had gone "from bad to worse for patients." Spokesperson Debra DeShong said the measure would "threaten patient access and future innovations."

PhRMA said its member companies spent a record \$102.3 billion on research and development last year.

Overall, the industry spent \$83 billion on research and development in 2019, 10 times the inflation-adjusted value of what it spent annually in the 1980s, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said in a report last year.

Drugmakers on average spent a quarter of their net revenues on R&D in 2019, a far larger proportion than the semiconductor, technology hardware and software industries, the budget office said.

Amid Russia shelling, Ukraine aims to strengthen government

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — As Russia kept up its relentless shelling across the country, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expanded the shakeup of his security services on Monday by suspending 28 more officials, a day after he dismissed two senior officials over allegations that their agencies harbored "collaborators and traitors."

In his nightly video address, Zelenskyy said a "personnel audit" of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) was underway, and the dismissal of the 28 officials was being decided.

"Different levels, different areas of focus. But the reasons are similar — unsatisfactory results of work," Zelenskyy said.

On Sunday, he had fired SBU chief Ivan Bakanov and Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova. Zelenskyy, citing hundreds of criminal proceedings into treason and collaboration by people within their departments and other law enforcement agencies.

"Six months into the war, we continue to uncover loads of these people in each of these agencies," said Andriy Smirnov, deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office.

Analysts said the moves are designed to strengthen Zelenskyy's control over the army and security agencies, which have been led by people appointed before the Russian invasion began on Feb. 24.

"In the conditions of a war, Zelenskyy needs leaders that are capable of tackling several tasks at the same time -- to resist Russia's intrigues within the country to create a fifth column, to be in contact and coordination with international experts, to do their actual job effectively," Volodymyr Fesenko, a political analyst with the Penta Center think tank, told The Associated Press.

Bakanov is a childhood friend and former business partner of Zelenskyy, who appointed him to head the SBU. Bakanov had come under growing criticism over security breaches since the war began.

Venediktova won international praise for her drive to gather war-crimes evidence against Russian military commanders and officials, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, over the destruction of Ukrainian cities and the killing of civilians.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price, speaking to reporters in Washington, said when asked about the personnel changes that the two governments were in close contact.

"The fact is that in all of our relationships, and including in this relationship, we invest not in personalities. We invest in institutions and, of course, President Zelenskyy has spoken to his rationale for making

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these personnel shifts," Price said.

He said Washington would continue to work with Kyiv on war-crimes investigations and information sharing. Intelligence, he said, is "an important element of the assistance that we are providing to our Ukrainian partners in an effort to help them defend themselves."

Zelensky appointed the first deputy head of the SBU, Vasyl Maliuk, to be acting head. Maliuk, 39, is known for efforts to fight corruption in the security agencies; his appointment was seen as part of Zelenskyy's efforts to get rid of pro-Russian staffers in the SBU.

Fesenko said discontent with Bakanov and Venediktova had been brewing for a while, and it was possible that Ukraine's Western partners pointed out the underperformance of the SBU and the prosecutor general's office to Zelenskyy.

Meanwhile, Russia pressed forward with its missile and shelling attacks, which Ukrainian officials said were designed to intimidate the civilian population and create panic.

The commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian armed forces, however, said his troops had "stabilized the situation" on the front, largely thanks to Western deliveries of technically advanced rocket systems.

"It is complex, tense, but completely controllable," Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhny wrote on Telegram after a phone call with the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark A. Milley.

"An important factor contributing to our holding our defensive lines and positions is the timely arrival of the M142 HIMARS, delivering targeted strikes against enemy command posts, ammunition and fuel depots," Zaluzhny said, referring to the light multiple-rocket launchers recently delivered from the U.S.

Ukraine's Emergency Service said at least six people were killed by Russian shelling Monday targeting the city of Toretsk in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine. Toretsk was taken briefly in the Russian invasion of 2014, but Ukrainian forces ended up taking the city back.

Donetsk governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said Russian shelling there is incessant. Four Russian strikes had been carried out on the city of Kramatorsk, he said, and he urged civilians to evacuate.

"We're seeing that the Russians want to sow fear and panic," Kyrylenko said in televised remarks. "The front line is moving, so civilians must leave the region and evacuate."

Nearly 1,000 civilians were evacuated to Ukraine on Monday from Russian-held territories in the northern Kharkiv region, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said. About a third of the region remains in Russian hands after Moscow's troops overran it in April.

In Kyiv on Monday, a funeral was held at St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery for a Ukrainian soldier killed when his car hit a land mine near Iziurm last week. His family couldn't bury him in their hometown in eastern Ukraine because it remains under Russian occupation.

The cathedral was packed with mourners paying their last respects to Fanat, as the soldier was known. Whenever the priest paused, the voice of the soldier's mother echoed in the church.

"We will love you forever and ever. We will miss you so much!" she cried, caressing the closed coffin. "Why do we need to live in this cursed war?"

In other developments Monday:

— Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu inspected troops involved in the fighting in Ukraine and ordered the military to prioritize destruction of Ukraine's long-range missiles and artillery, according to a ministry statement. It was not immediately clear when or where the inspection took place.

— U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' spokesman said that "incrementally, there's been a little bit more progress" on a proposed U.N. package deal that would enable millions of tons of Ukraine's grain to be shipped from the Black Sea, and Russian grain and fertilizer to be sent to world markets without restrictions. Spokesman Farhan Haq said the U.N. chief spoke to Zelenskyy about the negotiations. A new round of talks could take place in Turkey later this week, said Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar. Some 22 million tons of grain are stuck in Ukraine because of the war.

— Ukraine says some Russian forces have been using topographical maps from 1969 as they fight in the country's east. The Ukrainian military's general staff, citing the country's internal security service, said the maps were used by Russian troops fighting around the Kharkiv but did not have buildings built since the early 1970s.

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— Ukraine's first lady, Olena Zelenska, met with Secretary of State Antony Blinken as she began a series of high-profile appearances in Washington. She is to meet with her U.S. counterpart, Jill Biden, on Tuesday. Price said Blinken assured Zelenska of the United States' commitment to Ukraine, and commended her for her work with civilians dealing with trauma and other damage from the war.

Former White House aides to testify at next Jan. 6 hearing

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two former White House aides are expected to testify at the House Jan. 6 committee's prime-time hearing Thursday as the panel examines what Donald Trump was doing as his supporters broke into the Capitol, according to a person familiar with the plans.

Matthew Pottinger, former deputy national security adviser, and Sarah Matthews, a former press aide, are expected to testify, according to the person, who was not authorized to publicly discuss the matter and requested anonymity. Both Pottinger and Matthews resigned immediately after the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection that interrupted the congressional certification of President Joe Biden's victory.

The two witnesses will add to the committee's narrative in its eighth, and possibly final, hearing this summer. The prime-time hearing will detail what Trump did — or did not do — during several hours that day as his supporters beat police officers and broke into the Capitol.

Previous hearings have detailed chaos in the White House and aides and outsiders were begging the president to tell the rioters to leave. But he waited more than three hours to do so, and there are still many unanswered questions about what exactly he was doing and saying as the violence unfolded.

A spokesperson for the committee declined to comment. CNN was the first to report the identity of Thursday's witnesses.

Lawmakers on the nine-member panel have said the hearing will offer the most compelling evidence yet of Trump's "dereliction of duty" that day, with witnesses detailing his failure to stem the angry mob.

"We have filled in the blanks," Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., a member of the House committee investigating the riot who will help lead Thursday's session, said Sunday. "This is going to open people's eyes in a big way."

"The president didn't do very much but gleefully watch television during this timeframe," he added.

Throughout its yearlong investigation, the panel has uncovered several details regarding what the former president was doing as a mob of rioters breached the Capitol complex. Testimony and documents revealed that those closest to Trump, including his allies in Congress, Fox News anchors and even his own children, tried to persuade him to call off the mob or put out a statement calling for the rioters to go home.

At one point, according to testimony, Ivanka Trump went to her father to plead with him personally when those around him had failed to get through. All those efforts were unsuccessful.

Thursday's hearing will be the first in the prime-time slot since the June 9 debut that was viewed by an estimated 20 million people.

The hearing comes nearly one week after committee members received a closed briefing from the watchdog for the Department of Homeland Security after it was discovered that the Secret Service had deleted text messages sent and received around Jan. 6. Shortly after, the committee subpoenaed the agency, seeking all relevant electronic communication from agents around the time of the attack. The deadline for the Secret Service to respond is Tuesday.

Committee member Rep. Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., told The Associated Press on Monday that the Secret Service informed them it will turn over records within the requirements of the subpoena.

Jury selection for ex-Trump adviser Bannon heads for 2nd day

By GARY FIELDS and ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Trump adviser Steve Bannon's contempt-of-Congress trial will stretch into a second day after lawyers labored through a long Monday session trying to select a jury without preconceived opinions. Bannon is facing criminal charges after refusing for months to cooperate with the

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House committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection.

Bannon, an unofficial adviser to President Donald Trump at the time of the Capitol attack is charged in federal court with defying a subpoena from the Jan. 6 committee that sought his records and testimony. He was indicted in November on two counts of criminal contempt of Congress, one month after the Justice Department received a congressional referral. Each count carries a minimum of 30 days of jail and as long as a year behind bars.

Monday's session before U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols was entirely focused on jury selection in a slow-moving process known as voir dire. By the end of the day, 22 prospective jurors had been identified. The trial will resume Tuesday morning as lawyers for Bannon and the government whittle the list down to 14 — with 12 jurors and two alternates.

Much of Monday's questioning of potential jurors by Bannon's lawyer, Evan Corcoran, centered on how much of the wide coverage of the Jan. 6 hearings they've watched and whether they have opinions about the committee and its work.

In one case, a prospective juror told Nichols that remaining impartial would be "a challenge" for him since "I do believe (Bannon) is guilty."

That admission, in addition to disqualifying the potential juror, prompted additional questioning of others who had sat next to the man to determine how widely he had shared his opinion.

The high-profile and divisive nature of the case hung over Monday's session, with Corcoran seeking to block jurors who expressed strong opinions about Bannon or Trump, or who had any sort of personal connection to Jan. 6 or the Capitol.

At one point, Judge Nichols agreed to disqualify a woman whose mother is a staffer for Democratic Florida Rep. Lois Frankel. In another case Corcoran argued successfully to disqualify a man who said the Jan. 6 committee's work was "important" and he was closely tracking its developments.

"He comes into it with a frame of mind where he's highly focused on Jan. 6," Corcoran said. "I just don't think he can be fair."

Bannon attended the entire session, but never spoke.

The trial follows a flurry of activity in the case since July 9. Over a week ago, the former White House strategist notified the committee that he is now willing to testify. His former lawyer, Robert Costello, said the change was because Trump had waived his executive privilege claim preventing the testimony.

Bannon, 68, had been one of the most prominent of the Trump-allied holdouts refusing to testify before the committee. He had argued that his testimony was protected by Trump's claim of executive privilege, which allows presidents to withhold confidential information from the courts and the legislative branch.

Trump has repeatedly asserted executive privilege — even though he's a former, not current president — to try to block witness testimony and the release of White House documents. The Supreme Court in January ruled against Trump's efforts to stop the National Archives from cooperating with the committee after a lower court judge — Ketanji Brown Jackson, now on the Supreme Court — noted, in part, "Presidents are not kings."

The committee has also noted that Trump fired Bannon from the White House in 2017 and Bannon was thus a private citizen when he was consulting with the president in the run-up to the riot.

Judge Nichols declined motions to delay the contempt trial in separate hearings last week, including Thursday when Bannon's lawyers raised concerns about an upcoming CNN report that has since aired about their client and what they said were prejudicial comments made during a hearing last week held by the House committee.

"I am cognizant of current concerns about publicity and bias and whether we can seat a jury that is going to be appropriate and fair, but as I said before, I believe the appropriate course is to go through the voir dire process," Nichols said Thursday. The judge said he intended to get a jury that "is going to be appropriate, fair and unbiased."

While the judge allowed the trial to move forward, Nichols left open the possibility that letters about Trump waiving his privilege and Bannon's offer to cooperate with the committee could be referenced at

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trial, saying the information was "at least potentially relevant" to Bannon's defense.

Roscoe Howard Jr., the former U.S. attorney in Washington, said the best case for Bannon was if the information on his cooperation offer gets to the jury. Even if it does, however, a claim that executive privilege stopped him from cooperating earlier will be a hard argument to make because Bannon refused to even answer the subpoena, Howard said.

"You have to show up to invoke the privilege claim. You can't phone it in," he said.

Uvalde report takeaways: Massive response but little action

By JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

A massive but uncoordinated and chaotic law enforcement response. A "regrettable" culture of noncompliance on school security regarding the basics of locked doors. Online signals of coming violence from the shooter.

The long-awaited Texas House report into the May 24 shooting at Robb Elementary in Uvalde that killed 19 fourth-graders and two teachers spread the responsibility of the bungled response from law enforcement wider than previous accounts. It also questioned security protocols at the school and took a deeper dive into the shooter's background.

Here are major findings of the House investigation:

MASSIVE BUT INEPT RESPONSE

The report noted a massive but inept response from heavily armed local, state and federal law enforcement. That began moments after the shooter crashed his truck on school grounds and entered the building, then continued through the excruciating inaction that dragged out more than an hour, even as parents begged officers to do something and dispatchers took 911 calls from inside the classrooms.

"At Robb Elementary, law enforcement responders failed to adhere to their active shooter training, and they failed to prioritize saving the lives of innocent victims over their own safety," the report said.

Although much of the criticism has been leveled at the Uvalde school district police, the report cast blame across all responding agencies, spreading responsibility much further than previously suggested.

Nearly 400 law enforcement officials rushed to the school, most of them state and federal officers, only to spend a chaotic hour where no one seemed to take command. Pete Arredondo, the Uvalde schools police chief who has received more scrutiny than any other officer on the scene that day, failed to establish himself as the incident commander and didn't transfer that responsibility to anyone else, the report said.

And yet, no other officers stepped in to take over, despite an "obvious atmosphere of chaos," the report found.

While the group of initial responders on the scene "acted appropriately by attempting to breach the classrooms and stop the attacker," they were driven back by gunfire. They lost critical momentum by treating the scene as a "barricaded shooter" instead of "active shooter."

LOCKDOWN FATIGUE

The report noted the initial response may have lacked urgency because of the frequency of school lockdowns in recent months as law enforcement chased suspected human traffickers smuggling migrants into the country. In some instances, traffickers will crash vehicles and passengers flee in all directions.

The school district had about 50 such alarms between February and May 2022. That frequency of less-serious alerts in Uvalde "diluted the significance of alerts and dampened everyone's readiness to act," the report concluded.

"The initial reaction of many administrators, teachers, and law enforcement responders was that it likely was a less-dangerous" situation, the report said.

Even Arredondo and another responding officer said they considered that possibility when they didn't immediately see victims after they entered the school.

BUILDING SECURITY

Whether school doors were properly locked and could have delayed the shooter's unimpeded entry has been a key question since the day of the shooting.

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Robb Elementary had a recurring problem with maintaining locks and doors, and the school had a “culture of noncompliance” regarding locked doors, “which turned out to be fatal,” the report said.

The door the shooter used to get into the building wasn’t locked like it should have been, and the door to one of the classrooms he entered probably was not locked, the report said. The lock for that classroom was known by the teacher, the principal, another school employee and many fourth grade students to not be working properly. No work order was ever placed to fix it.

SHOOTER’S HINTS OF VIOLENCE

The shooter had given some hints of coming violence in the months and days before the shooting.

A year before the shooting, he was showing online interest in gore and violent sex and at one point carried around a dead cat. While playing online games, he would become enraged when he lost and would threaten others, especially women. He also shared a developing fascination with school shootings, and eventually earned the nickname “school shooter” on one online platform.

The report said a “vague idea” for a school shooting appears to have taken root in late 2021 and accelerated after the shooter had a falling out with his mother in early 2022.

Several family members knew he was estranged from his mother and that he had asked for help buying guns, so-called “straw purchases” that would have been illegal. They refused but later learned that the week between his 18th birthday and the May 24 attack, he had legally purchased firearms and that his grandparents insisted they be removed from their home.

In one May 14 online conversation, he simply wrote, “10 more days.”

“Prior to the shooting, the attacker had no criminal history and had never been arrested. He is not known to have espoused any ideology or political views of any kind. Private individuals alone knew the many warning signals” the report said.

BORDER PATROL

While much of the investigation initially focused on local and state law enforcement agencies, the report noted the U.S. Border Patrol had 149 officers who responded to the scene — by far the most of any agency.

And while the Border Patrol’s tactical unit led the final breach of the classroom to take down the gunman, the report noted that Border Patrol officers were among those who waited to take action.

The commander of the Border Patrol tactical team waited for a bulletproof shield and working master key for a door to the classrooms that may have not even been needed, before entering and killing the attacker, the report said.

The committee was told none of the Border Patrol agents involved in opening the door to the classroom were wearing activated body cameras. The investigating committee spoke to the tactical team’s Acting Commander Paul Guerrero, but the Border Patrol was not among the agencies to give any public testimony in Texas House and Senate hearings last month.

Gunfire, shootings and panic mar American weekend

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN and MARC LEVY The Associated Press

A man firing a rifle killed shoppers at an Indiana mall’s food court. A gunfight at a Houston home killed four people.

A stand-up act by the comedian Craig Robinson in North Carolina didn’t even begin before club-goers fled from a man with a gun.

In Las Vegas, the specter of gunfire at the MGM Grand sent the crowded casino into pandemonium over a panic that started with a shattered glass door.

As gamblers fled for the exits at the MGM and others ducked behind overturned card tables, professional poker player Daniel Negreanu was trampled in what he called a sad reflection of an anxious America gripped by gun violence.

“On the surface, other people would look at it and think it was an overreaction,” Negreanu said. “But it’s warranted ... because we live in a state of fear now.”

It was a false alarm in Las Vegas, but the weekend’s gun violence left more than a half-dozen dead or

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wounded, including a 12-year-old, two 16-year-olds and an 18-year-old.

Fear of shooters has left more people on edge and the shootings — or panic over the fear of them — were just the latest to hit America in 2022 after a school, church, grocery store and a July Fourth parade in Highland Park, Illinois, all become murder scenes in recent months.

In addition, authorities released a damning report that criticized all levels of law enforcement — including inaction by hundreds of federal, state and local officers — for a chaotic and feckless response on May 24 to a gunman who killed 19 students and two teachers inside Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas.

Here is a look at some of what happened this weekend:

GREENWOOD, INDIANA

Three people died and two were injured after a man with a rifle started shooting at the Greenwood Park Mall on Sunday evening. An armed civilian shot and killed him, police said.

The shooter began firing after leaving a bathroom at the suburban Indianapolis mall shortly before it closed, Greenwood police Chief James Ison said Monday.

Witnesses described panicked mall goers fleeing.

Killed were a married couple — Pedro Pineda, 56, and Rosa Mirian Rivera de Pineda, 37 — and Victor Gomez, 30, according to coroners' offices.

A 22-year-old who was legally carrying a firearm killed the gunman, stopping the shooter "almost as soon as he began," Ison said.

"Many more people would have died last night if not for a responsible armed citizen," Ison said.

The three people who died were in addition to the 20-year-old shooter. Police did not yet know a motive.

Ison said the man used an AR-15-style rifle during the shooting, firing 24 rounds within two minutes. Investigators found another one and magazines with more than 100 rounds of ammunition in the bathroom. They also found a handgun on the shooter.

HOUSTON

Four people died after a gunfight at an apartment complex in Houston late Saturday.

The Harris County sheriff's office said witnesses reported seeing several people, including the victims, shooting at each other after they began arguing.

Sheriff Ed Gonzalez said those killed included two 16-year-olds, a 19-year-old and a 25-year-old.

The sheriff's office did not identify the victims, a motive or a suspect.

EAST GLACIER PARK, MONTANA

Two men and an 18-month old toddler died after being shot at the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, a community of 17,000 people just outside Glacier National Park.

Two women were injured, at least one of them wounded by a gun.

Authorities said there were no other imminent threats to the public and declined to release more information.

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Patrons waiting for the show to start at The Comedy Zone fled on Saturday night when a man waved a gun, told everyone to leave and then fired it in the empty venue, according to police and witnesses.

No one was injured. The man, identified by police as Omar McCombs, pulled the gun before actor and comedian Craig Robinson came out to perform.

About 50 customers had been inside.

McCombs, 36, was taken into custody and faces several charges, including assault. Police did not disclose a motive.

LAS VEGAS

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People fled and upturned poker tables in a panic over the mistaken belief that gunfire had erupted at the MGM Grand casino hotel late Saturday night.

Police found no evidence of gunfire; just a shattered glass door in the valet area.

Video posted to social media showed people scrambling across the Strip, including one video that showed officers approaching with guns drawn and lowered as several people hurried in the opposite direction.

Negreanu said his wrist was bloodied and injured in the stampede of people fleeing.

TULSA

An 18-year-old woman was killed after an altercation led to gunfire early Sunday morning at a downtown gathering spot called the Center of the Universe, police said.

Police said she was a passenger in a vehicle when an altercation broke out between two groups of people. Gunfire erupted, hitting the woman and a building, shattering glass doors, according to police.

Police received a call about gunfire and kids "running everywhere" at the gathering spot, a concrete circle known for its acoustic features.

UVALDE, TEXAS

Sunday saw the release of a long-awaited report that further laid bare the chaotic response to May 24's mass shooting at Robb Elementary in Uvalde.

The findings of an investigative committee criticized both state and federal law enforcement, and not just local authorities for the bewildering inaction by heavily armed officers outside while a gunman fired bullets inside adjoining fourth-grade classrooms.

Nearly 400 law enforcement officials rushed to the school, but "egregiously poor decision making" resulted in more than an hour of chaos before the gunman was finally confronted and killed, according to the report written by an investigative committee from the Texas House of Representatives.

The gunman fired approximately 142 rounds inside the building — and it is "almost certain" that at least 100 shots came before any officer entered, according to the report, which laid out numerous failures.

The committee didn't "receive medical evidence" to show that police storming the classrooms sooner would have saved lives, but it concluded that "it is plausible that some victims could have survived if they had not had to wait 73 additional minutes for rescue."

Hours after the report was released, Uvalde officials separately released hours of body camera footage from the city's police officers who responded to the attack.

Video from Uvalde Staff Sgt. Eduardo Canales, the head of the city's SWAT team, showed the officer approaching the classrooms when gunfire rang out at 11:37 a.m.

A minute later, Canales said: "Dude, we've got to get in there. We've got to get in there, he just keeps shooting."

It was 72 minutes later, at 12:50 p.m., when officers finally breached the classrooms and killed the shooter.

Prosecutor recalls coldness, cruelty of Parkland gunman

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — The prosecutor seeking the death penalty for the gunman who massacred 17 people at a Parkland, Florida, high school detailed for jurors Monday how Nikolas Cruz coldly mowed down his victims, returning to some as they lay wounded to finish them off with a second volley.

Some parents wept as prosecutor Mike Satz described in his opening statement how Cruz killed their children at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Feb. 14, 2018. Others sat stoically, their arms crossed over their chests. One woman who lost her daughter fled the courtroom, sobbing and holding tissue to her face.

Satz's comments came at the start of the trial to determine whether Cruz is executed or serves life in prison without parole.

The prosecutor's presentation went over how Cruz shot each of the 14 students and three staff members

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who died and some of the 17 who were wounded. Some were shot sitting at their desks, some as they fled and some as they lay bleeding on the floor while the former Stoneman Douglas student methodically stalked through a three-story building for almost seven minutes with an AR-15 semi-automatic rifle.

Cruz, 23, pleaded guilty in October to murder and attempted murder and is contesting only his sentence. The trial, which is expected to last four months, was supposed to begin in 2020, but it was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and legal fights.

Satz called the murders cold, calculated, cruel and heinous, quoting the video Cruz, then 19, made three days before the shooting.

"This is what the defendant said: 'Hello, my name is Nik. I'm going to be the next school shooter of 2018. My goal is at least 20 people with an AR-15 and some tracer rounds. It's going to be a big event, and when you see me on the news, you'll know who I am. You're all going to die. Ah yeah, I can't wait,'" Satz said.

Among the first witnesses was Danielle Gilbert, a junior who was in psychology class when the shooting began. The teacher told students to get behind her desk.

"We were sitting like sitting ducks. We had no way to protect ourselves," said Gilbert, who is now a student at the University of Central Florida.

The jury was then shown cellphone video Gilbert took inside the classroom. The footage began with a girl curled up beneath the teacher's desk and others, including Gilbert, mostly unseen as they crouch behind it. About two dozen shots that seemed to be coming from just outside the door are heard in rapid succession as the fire alarm sounds. An unseen wounded boy cries out twice, "Someone help me."

The gunshots get further away, but the students remain quiet and huddled, speaking only in whispers. Eventually, the voices of police officers can be heard approaching. The teacher stands up, holding her head.

"They're coming, they're coming, we're OK," a boy whispers.

SWAT officers, carrying rifles, then burst in, wanting to know if anyone is hurt. The students point and Gilbert stands up with her camera. A wounded boy and girl are carried out. A dead girl lies in a pool of blood. The officers tell the students to run out. They passed two more bodies lying in the hallway before exiting into a parking lot.

Her testimony over, Gilbert broke down in sobs. Her father put his arm around her and led her from the courtroom.

Prosecutors also presented cellphone video from another student that showed classmates crouching behind chairs as Cruz fired through the classroom door window, the bangs reverberating over screams.

From the back of the courtroom, a relative of a girl who died in that classroom yelled for prosecutors to turn it off before bailiffs asked the woman to be quiet. The defense requested a mistrial over the outburst, but it was denied.

The seven-man, five-woman jury is backed up by 10 alternates. It is the nation's deadliest mass shooting to go before a jury.

Nine other gunmen who killed at least 17 people died during or immediately after their shootings, either by suicide or police gunfire. The suspect in the 2019 slaying of 23 people at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, is awaiting trial.

It wasn't clear if anyone was in the courtroom to support Cruz, who sat at the defense table between his attorneys. During Satz's opening statement, he mostly looked down at a pad of paper with a pencil in his hand, but he did not appear to write. He would sometimes look up to stare at Satz or the jury, peer at the audience or whisper to his lawyers.

After Satz spoke, Cruz's lawyers announced that they would not give their opening statement until it is time to present their case weeks from now. That is a rare and risky strategy because it gives Satz the only say before jurors examine grisly evidence and hear testimony from survivors and the victims' parents and spouses.

When lead defender Melisa McNeill gives her statement, she will likely emphasize that Cruz is a young adult with lifelong emotional and psychological problems who allegedly suffered from fetal alcohol syndrome and abuse.

It's the first death penalty trial for Circuit Judge Elizabeth Scherer. When jurors eventually get the case in the fall, they will vote 17 times, once for each of the victims, on whether to recommend capital punishment.

Every vote must be unanimous. A non-unanimous vote for any one of the victims means Cruz's sentence for that person would be life in prison. The jurors are told that to vote for the death penalty, the aggravating circumstances presented by the prosecution for the victim in question must, in their judgment, outweigh mitigating factors presented by the defense.

Regardless of the evidence, any juror can vote for life in prison out of mercy. During jury selection, the panelists said under oath that they are capable of voting for either sentence.

Texas killer earned ominous nickname: 'school shooter'

By BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

The Uvalde, Texas, gunman gave off so many warning signs that he was obsessed with violence and notoriety in the months leading up to the attack that teens who knew him began calling him "school shooter."

He was once bullied as a fourth-grader in one of the same classrooms where he killed 19 children and two teachers. And in the planning for the May 24 massacre, he collected articles about the Buffalo, New York, supermarket shooting and played video games with a young student while quizzing him about the school schedule.

A state investigative report that highlighted law enforcement's bungled response to the mass shooting at Robb Elementary School has also provided the most in-depth account to date about missed red flags and possible motivations surrounding 18-year-old Salvador Ramos. Despite many warning signs, he still managed to legally amass more than \$5,000 in guns, ammunition and gear in the weeks leading up to the killings.

Just days before the attack, Ramos spoke out on social media of his plans to do something that would "put him all over the news." He wrote of a desire to kill himself, shared online videos of beheadings and violent sex, and sent footage of himself driving around with "someone he met on the internet" holding a plastic bag containing a dead cat and pointing BB guns at people out the window.

"The attacker became focused on achieving notoriety," according to the interim report released Sunday by an investigative panel of the Texas House of Representatives. "He believed his TikTok and YouTube channels would be successful. The small number of views he received led him to tell those with whom he interacted that he was 'famous,' that they were mere 'randoms' by comparison."

The 77-page report — based on interviews with family members, testimony and data from Ramos' phone — lays out a long trail of missed signals prior to the massacre but notes these clues were known only to "private individuals" and not reported to authorities. It also found Ramos had no known ideological or political views that would have made his rantings more widely known.

The report traces the descent of a shy, quiet boy once thought by a teacher as a "wonderful student" with a "positive attitude" into a mass murderer who gave plenty of signs online and to family members that he was prone to violence as he amassed an arsenal of rifles, body armor and ammunition.

A former girlfriend told the FBI that she believed Ramos had been sexually assaulted by one of his mother's boyfriends at an early age, the report said, but when Ramos told his mother at the time, she didn't believe him.

Without assigning a specific motive, the report noted that Ramos talked about painful fourth-grade memories to an acquaintance weeks before the shooting.

Family members told investigators how Ramos had been bullied as a fourth-grader in one of the same linked classrooms where he carried out the attack. They said he faced ridicule over his stutter, short hair and for wearing the same clothing nearly every day.

At one point, the report said, a fellow student tied his shoelaces together and Ramos fell on his face, injuring himself. The report noted that Ramos was flagged by school officials as "at risk," but never received any special education services.

Failing grades soon were accompanied by frequent absences — more than 100 a year beginning in 2018.

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The report noted it was unclear if a school resource officer ever visited Ramos' home. Uvalde High School officials involuntarily withdrew him last fall, when he had only completed the ninth grade. That was about the same time he moved out of his mother's house and began living with his grandmother, just blocks from the elementary school.

Months before the shooting, Ramos began contacting acquaintances with "vague but ominous messages" about doing something soon.

In March 2022, two months before the shooting, a student on Instagram told him that "people at school talk (expletive) about you and call you school shooter."

The next month Ramos asked in a direct message on Instagram, "Are you still gonna remember me in 50 something days?" After the answer — "probably not" — Ramos replied, "Hmm alright we'll see in may."

Crystal Foutz, who attended school with Ramos, told The Associated Press he was frequently angry and gave off "vibes" like he could shoot up the place, though it was taken more as joke than serious.

"You heard people joke and say, 'He looks like a school shooter,'" said Foutz, though she quickly added, "I've heard it said about other people."

Ramos took jobs at two fast-food restaurants to save money for what he told acquaintances was "something big," which family members assumed was his own apartment or car. Instead it was guns and bullets, which he tried to get two people to buy for him while he was 17 and unable to obtain legally.

But on May 16, the gunman turned 18, and began purchasing firearms and ammunition, persuading an uncle to drive him to a gun store. He eventually spent more than \$5,000 on two AR-style rifles, ammunition and other gear. And with no criminal history or even arrest, Ramos passed all background checks.

He had earlier written online "10 more days," eliciting speculation from readers that he was planning to "shoot up a school or something" or commit "mass murder." A friend told him that an acquaintance was "telling everyone u shooting up the school."

He also spent time playing the children's videogame Roblox with his cousin's son, a student at the Robb Elementary, and "elicited from him details about his schedule and how lunch periods worked at the school."

"I got a lil secret," Ramos wrote on Snapchat to a German teenager he had befriended days before the May 24 shooting, adding that first he was waiting for something "being delivered" on Monday. His order of 1,740 hollow-point bullets that expand in bodies upon impact, more easily killing, arrived later that day.

"None of his online behavior was ever reported to law enforcement," the report said, "and if it was reported by other users to any social media platform, it does not appear that actions were taken to restrict his access or to report him to authorities as a threat."

Shortly before entering Robb Elementary, the gunman reached out to the German teenager he had befriended earlier, posting a message that he had just shot his grandmother in the face and was about to "shoot up" an elementary school.

Not sure he was serious, the German teenager replied: "Cool."

Senate panel subpoenas federal prisons director to testify

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The outgoing director of the Bureau of Prisons has been subpoenaed to testify before a Senate committee examining abuse and corruption in the beleaguered federal agency.

Michael Carvajal was served a subpoena to appear at a hearing later this month. The subpoena was announced Monday by Sen. Jon Ossoff, the chairman of the U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.

The committee's subpoena follows an investigation by The Associated Press exposing systemic issues in the agency, including widespread criminal activity by staff and rampant sexual assault at a women's prison in California.

The Justice Department announced last week it was replacing Carvajal with Colette Peters, the director of Oregon's prison system. That announcement came about seven months after Carvajal submitted his resignation amid mounting pressure from Congress after the AP's investigation.

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Though Carvajal is a holdover from the Trump administration, the issuance of the subpoena to compel him to appear before the Senate panel is rare, in part because Democrats have control of both the Senate and the White House. The decision to issue a subpoena exemplifies the lengths members of Congress and congressional investigators are going to bring additional oversight to the embattled agency that has long skirted intense public attention.

Ossoff and Sen. Ron Johnson, the committee's top Republican, said the subpoena was issued after the Justice Department refused to make Carvajal available to testify voluntarily.

In a statement, the Justice Department said it was disappointed that Ossoff issued the subpoena and said officials had cooperated extensively with the subcommittee's work and had offered to provide a lower-level official in Carvajal's place.

The department said it was "committed to focusing" Carvajal's last days on preparing for Peters to take over and said having him prepare for a congressional hearing days before Peters takes control of the agency would be distracting.

"As the Department has previously explained to the Subcommittee, we believe that preparation for testimony just five business days before this critical leadership transition may distract Director Carvajal's time and attention away from this goal," the Justice Department's statement said. "Nevertheless, we continue to work with the Subcommittee to find an agreeable solution."

Carvajal has been at the center of myriad crises within the federal prison system. His tumultuous tenure included the rampant spread of coronavirus inside federal prisons, a failed response to the pandemic, dozens of escapes, deaths and critically low staffing levels that have hampered responses to emergencies.

The committee's investigation has included examination of abuse, misconduct and corruption both at the U.S. Penitentiary in Atlanta — Ossoff's home state — and more broadly in the federal prison system.

"To date, the Subcommittee has been provided no legal basis that would prevent Director Carvajal's testimony before the Subcommittee, and the Department of Justice continues to refuse to make him available to testify," Ossoff and Johnson said in a joint statement.

The Biden administration had faced increasing pressure to remove Carvajal and do more to fix the federal prison system after President Joe Biden's campaign promise to push criminal justice reforms. The Bureau of Prisons is one of the largest Justice Department agencies, budgeted for around 37,500 employees and over 150,000 federal prisoners. It has an annual budget of around \$8 billion.

Peters is set to take over the agency in August.

Olena Zelenska, Ukraine first lady, on high-profile US trip

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Ukraine's first lady, Olena Zelenska, met with Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday as she began a series of high-profile appearances in Washington that will include a session with U.S. counterpart Jill Biden.

Blue and yellow Ukrainian flags flew alongside American ones on Pennsylvania Avenue as Zelenska headed for her first announced event in the United States, the meeting with Blinken.

State Department spokesman Ned Price said the secretary of state assured Zelenska of the United States' commitment to Ukraine. Blinken also commended her for her work with civilians dealing with trauma and other damage from the war.

The first lady also met Monday with Samantha Power, head of the U.S. Agency for International Development. Power's agency has given billions of dollars to support Ukraine's government and to humanitarian needs, and is working to ease a global food shortage aggravated by Russia's war.

The State Department announced and then canceled a planned brief appearance by Blinken and Zelenska before photographers there. The low-key arrival reflects that Zelenska is not traveling as an official representative of the government of her husband, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Zelenska studied architecture in college but worked as a comedy scriptwriter, including for Zelenskyy, who was a comedian with a popular television show before winning the presidency in 2019.

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During the war, Zelenskyy has won admiration from Ukrainians and Ukraine's supporters abroad by staying put in the capital, Kyiv, after Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his attack on Ukraine in February.

Zelenska largely disappeared with the couple's two children during the first months after the invasion. In an interview with Time magazine this month, she described the war forcing her to shelter away from Zelenskyy for security reasons from the first hours of Russia's bombing. Their children, like other Ukrainians, largely have seen Zelenskyy since then in nightly video addresses he makes to the country.

Zelenska emerged from seclusion May 8 to greet Jill Biden, who was making an unannounced visit to western Ukraine.

The two first ladies met then at a school, where they hugged, talked, and joined schoolchildren making tissue-paper bears as gifts for Mother's Day.

Zelenska has taken a higher public profile since that meeting. That includes giving more newspaper interviews about Ukraine's struggles and about her projects during the conflict. She has promoted counseling for the millions of Ukrainians now dealing with grief and trauma.

She meets with Jill Biden at the White House on Tuesday and will speak in the congressional auditorium at the Capitol to lawmakers on Wednesday. Her husband received standing ovations from congressional members in a video address to lawmakers in the same auditorium earlier in the war.

Ukrainian officials did not immediately respond to questions Monday about the schedule of her visit.

Owner: Mississippi abortion clinic is sold, won't reopen

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — The Mississippi abortion clinic at the center of a U.S. Supreme Court case that overturned Roe v. Wade has been sold and will not reopen even if it's allowed to do so by a state court, its owner told The Associated Press on Monday.

Diane Derzis said the furniture and equipment from Jackson Women's Health Organization have been moved to a new abortion clinic she will open soon in Las Cruces, New Mexico. The Jackson clinic is best known as the Pink House because of its bright paint job, and it was Mississippi's last abortion clinic.

Derzis said people were calling her to ask about buying the building within minutes after the Supreme Court released its June 24 ruling that overturned Roe v. Wade and took away women's constitutional protection for abortion nationwide.

She said she does not think the building will be used as a medical facility.

"I didn't ask because I really didn't care," Derzis said Monday. "It's a great building."

The building is in Jackson's Fondren neighborhood, home to an eclectic mix of restaurants, retail shops and entertainment venues.

The Pink House stopped offering medication and surgical abortions July 6, the day before Mississippi enacted a law that bans most abortions. Mississippi was one of several states with a trigger law contingent on the Supreme Court overturning Roe v. Wade, the landmark 1973 ruling that legalized abortion nationwide.

The Mississippi trigger law, passed in 2007, says abortion is legal only if the pregnant woman's life is in danger or if a pregnancy is caused by a rape reported to law enforcement. It does not have an exception for pregnancies caused by incest.

The Pink House is still engaged in a legal battle in Mississippi. On July 5, a state court judge rejected a request to block the trigger law from taking effect. The clinic appealed her ruling to the state Supreme Court.

Attorneys for the clinic cited a 1998 Mississippi Supreme Court ruling that said the state constitution invokes a right to privacy that "includes an implied right to choose whether or not to have an abortion."

The state attorney general's office argued that the 1998 ruling was rooted in U.S. Supreme Court decisions in 1973 and 1992 that established or protected abortion rights but were overturned on June 24. But Rob McDuff, a Mississippi Center for Justice attorney representing the clinic, argued that state justices never said their ruling was made because of the federal Constitution.

The state Supreme Court has set a July 25 deadline for state attorneys to respond to the clinic's appeal.

GM CEO Barra says headquarters to stay in downtown Detroit

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — General Motors will keep its headquarters in its seven-building office tower complex in downtown Detroit, its CEO says.

Mary Barra, in an interview with The Associated Press, said the automaker's main office will remain in the Renaissance Center, the centerpiece of the city's skyline just across the Detroit River from Canada.

"Our headquarters will always be in Detroit, in the RenCen," she said, using the name given to the complex by locals. "Right now the plan is for it to be at the Renaissance Center. That's our home," she said.

Barra qualified her remarks, saying she can't predict what will happen in five, 10 or 15 years.

She also said the company has to look at its space needs now that many white-collar employees are staying at home much of the work week on a hybrid home-and-office schedule.

The company takes up about 1 1/2 of the RenCen's towers, which have seen little pedestrian traffic for years. Much of GM's work force, including product development and engineering, is north of the city at an updated 1950s technical center in suburban Warren. After GM's 2009 bankruptcy, the company considered moving the headquarters there.

"As we move to having more of a hybrid work structure, we have to look at what's the right space," Barra said.

GM is still evaluating whether the hybrid model is viable for those who can do their jobs remotely. Like many CEOs, Barra wonders if working from home will still allow for collaboration and for reinforcement of a corporate culture. "There are huge benefits to being in the office," she said. "I think we've got to make sure we have the right balance of collaboration and interaction to make sure that two, three, four, five years from now, we still are maintaining the culture that we think is so important for the company," she said.

Whether hybrid work is permanent, she said, depends on the company and industry. At GM, people have gotten used to the flexibility of working from home. Although workers don't need to be at the office every day at the same time, teams of workers do need time together, she said.

Barra also hinted at that the company is exploring riverfront development opportunities with the city. The city is expanding a riverfront trail that will run from the south side of downtown to a bridge that connects to an island park called Belle Isle.

"I think the riverfront is a gem," Barra said "The Riverwalk keeps getting voted one of the best in the country. So if there's opportunities that we can improve that area and do the right thing for the city, we will."

The Renaissance Center was built by Henry Ford II, who formed a coalition in the 1970s in an effort to reinvigorate Detroit's downtown. GM bought the complex in 1996 and renovated it, moving its headquarters there from an area north of downtown.

US Rep. Hice fights subpoena in Georgia election probe

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Republican U.S. Rep. Jody Hice of Georgia is fighting a subpoena seeking to have him testify before a special grand jury that is investigating whether former President Donald Trump and others illegally tried to interfere in the 2020 election in the state.

The subpoena, which Hice received on June 29, orders him to appear before the special grand jury in Atlanta on Tuesday, his lawyer said in a court filing. Hice on Monday filed a motion to quash the subpoena in federal court in Atlanta.

Any discussions Hice had as he investigated "alleged irregularities" in the election were within his authority as a member of Congress and are shielded by the U.S. Constitution from any legal proceedings and inquiry, his lawyer wrote in the filing. High-ranking officials, such as members of Congress, also should not be called as witnesses unless the information that they could provide cannot be obtained from another source, the filing says.

Hice is challenging the subpoena in federal court rather than before the Fulton County Superior Court

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judge who's overseeing the special grand jury. A federal judge has set a hearing for June 25.

Hice's lawyer and the Fulton County district attorney's office have agreed that he will not testify before the special grand jury before the court has time to address the issues in his motion to quash, according to a court filing from his lawyer.

"At this time, Mr. Hice is eager to return to Washington, D.C. to fulfill his duties as a member of Congress as the House of Representatives is in session this week," Hice spokeswoman Sarah Selip said in an emailed statement.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis opened an investigation early last year into whether Trump and his allies committed any crimes as they sought to overturn his narrow election loss in the state. A special grand jury with subpoena power was seated in May at her request.

A number of top Republican state officials — including Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and Attorney General Chris Carr — have already testified before the special grand jury. Gov. Brian Kemp is set to give a sworn recorded statement on July 25.

Hice, who will leave office in January after an unsuccessful bid to unseat Raffensperger, was one of several GOP lawmakers who attended a December 2020 meeting at the White House in which Trump allies discussed various ways to overturn Joe Biden's electoral win. Hice joined other members of the House Freedom Caucus, a conservative wing of the chamber, in the hourslong meeting to discuss with then-White House chief of staff Mark Meadows two specific strategies to subvert the election results.

The first was an effort to appoint an alternate slate of electors who would falsely declare Trump was the winner in seven battleground states won by Biden. The second was a plan to ramp up a pressure campaign against then-Vice President Mike Pence to disregard the true electoral votes from those seven states when he presided over the ceremonial certification process on Jan. 6, 2021.

Cassidy Hutchinson, a former aide to Meadows, revealed the details of the White House meeting to the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

Earlier this month, Willis began a process to subpoena out-of-state witnesses to testify. That included some close Trump advisers and allies, including U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who also served as Trump's lawyer.

Graham has filed a motion to quash in federal court in South Carolina to try to fight Willis' attempt to get him to testify.

Willis, a Democrat, has indicted that she's interested in the actions of the group of 16 Georgia Republicans who, acting as an alternate slate of electors, signed a certificate falsely stating that Trump had won the state when it was actually Biden who got the most votes.

GOP establishment steps up push to block Trump ally in Ariz.

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey has already helped block one of former President Donald Trump's allies from winning the Republican nomination for governor in a crucial battleground state. Now he's hoping for a repeat in his own backyard.

Ducey is part of a burgeoning effort among establishment Republicans to lift up little-known housing developer Karrin Taylor Robson against former television news anchor Kari Lake, who is backed by Trump. Other prominent Republicans, including former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, have also lined up behind Robson in recent days.

On Monday, Robson's campaign announced the endorsement of former Vice President Mike Pence, who will campaign with her on Friday — the same day Trump is scheduled to hold a rally for Lake, creating a split-screen moment underscoring the divide between the GOP establishment and Trump.

The push for Robson is reminiscent of how many leading Republicans, including Ducey, rallied around Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp in the final stretch of his ultimately successful bid to fend off a Trump-endorsed primary challenger.

Few states have been as central to Trump's election lies as Georgia and Arizona, the two closest 2020 battlegrounds where he pushed aggressively to overturn the results and fumed when Kemp and Ducey

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refused to go along. Trump has already faced a setback in Georgia, and the Aug. 2 race in Arizona is among his last opportunities to settle scores and install allies to lead states that may prove decisive if he decides to run again in 2024.

"In Arizona, people are independent minded, much like they are in Georgia, and they pick the person that they think will be best for the responsibility," Ducey told The Associated Press. "In Georgia, the voters said Brian Kemp, and I'm hopeful in Arizona, they'll say Karrin Taylor Robson."

As an incumbent seeking reelection, Kemp had an advantage over his primary rival, David Perdue, and ultimately defeated him by nearly 52 percentage points. Without an incumbent on the ballot — Ducey faces term limits — the GOP contest in Arizona will likely be much closer.

But what once looked like an insurmountable lead for Lake could end in a more competitive finish. With early voting already underway, Robson is drawing on her family's vast fortune to drown out Lake who, despite Trump's endorsement, has lagged in fundraising. Robson had outspent Lake more than 5 to 1 as of the end of June.

The final maneuvering by some leading GOP figures could prove significant in a close race. Beyond Ducey and Christie, Robson has lined up support from former U.S. Rep. Matt Salmon, who dropped out of the governor's race and endorsed her. The Border Patrol union, meanwhile, broke with Trump and backed Robson, citing in part Lake's prior statements supporting a pathway to citizenship for people living in the country illegally.

Pence, who notably split with Trump in Georgia and campaigned alongside Kemp, praised Robson as "the only candidate for Governor that will keep Arizona's border secure and streets safe, empower parents and create great schools, and promote conservative values." Pence said he was "proud to support her."

For her part, Lake is an unlikely MAGA champion.

A well-known former local news anchor who donated to Barack Obama and for years hung around with drag queens at a gay bar near the television station, Lake once was the antithesis of Trump's brand of politics.

Yet she rocketed to the top of the field since she walked away from her three-decade television career, declared "journalism is dead" and took a sledgehammer to a pile of TVs.

She built on the powerful connection she'd formed with viewers over 27 years in the Phoenix media market and created a uniquely strong bond with the base that propelled Trump to the White House in 2016 and still doesn't believe he lost in 2020.

Even Trump seemed impressed by the ovation her name inspired when he mentioned it during a rally in Phoenix last year. He endorsed her a short time later.

She, in turn, has adopted his combative style, his narrative about the 2020 election — she falsely says it was corrupt and stolen — and his get-tough approach to border security. She's walked away from her close ties with John McCain's family and now feuds with the late U.S. senator's children.

"We're either gonna go the way of the past, which is the McCain mafia running the show, or we're gonna go with America first," Lake told a crowd of hundreds at a country western bar in Tucson last week. Many arrived well over an hour early and waited in the Southern Arizona heat for a chance to get inside.

Lake, 52, routinely berates journalists trying to question her and releases the footage on social media.

Last year, she said she wants to put cameras in classrooms to monitor teachers, nodding to the backlash on the right to teachings on race and history in public schools.

If elected, she says, she'd immediately invoke an untested legal theory that illegal immigration constitutes an "invasion" of the United States and gives the governor war powers to remove people from the country without proceedings in immigration courts.

Since Robson and her allies began their full-court press, Lake has claimed without evidence that "they might be trying to set the stage for another steal."

"They have been such RINOs for so long, and I don't trust that they have our country as a priority," said Rosa Alfonso, a 60-year-old speech language pathologist in Tucson. "That's a big deal."

Robson, 57, is making her first run for office, though she has lifelong ties to GOP politics. Her father and

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brother both held elected office as Republicans.

An attorney for real estate developers, she has been at the center of the suburban sprawl that has propelled the Phoenix area's prodigious growth. Ducey appointed her to the board overseeing Arizona's three public universities, her most high-profile public role before she quit to run for governor.

"These are serious times," Robson said during a recent debate. "We need a serious candidate with a record of accomplishment."

Her husband, housing developer Ed Robson, 91, is one of the state's richest residents, amassing a fortune building master planned retirement communities. She says the 2020 election was "unfair" but has stopped short of calling it fraudulent. Like Lake, she's running as a border hawk.

She brands her rival "Fake Lake," highlighting a \$350 donation she gave to Obama's 2008 campaign, though Robson has herself contributed large sums to Democrats.

"It's all an act," Ducey said of Lake. "The campaign she's been running bears no resemblance to the life she's lived for the past three decades, nor to the interactions that she's had with me. She's putting on a show. We'll see how many people buy it."

Q&A: Jordan Peele on the dreams and nightmares of 'Nope'

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — There's little in contemporary movies quite like the arrival of a new Jordan Peele film. They tend to descend ominously and mysteriously, a little like an unknown object from above that casts an expanding, darkening shadow the closer it comes.

"Nope," the writer-director's third film, is nearly here. After Peele's singular debut, "Get Out," about the possession of Black bodies and the fallacy of post-racial America, and his follow-up, "Us," a monstrous tale of doppelgangers and societal mirrors, the closely-kept-under-wraps "Nope" brings a new set of horrors and unsettling metaphors. For Peele, who writes through shooting and considers the conversation generated by a movie one of its main ingredients, "Nope" is far from a finished project.

"Movie's done," Peele said in a recent interview. "I'm still writing it."

It's Peele's most ambitious film yet, a flying saucer horror that digs into the nature of spectacle and the desire to document it — a multithreaded theme that encompasses Hollywood history and "Nope," itself. Daniel Kaluuya and Keke Palmer star as a brother and sister in a family horse wrangling business for film productions. Their California ranch is visited by a strange and violent force in the clouds that they strive to capture on film.

"Nope," which opens in theaters Friday, also extends Peele's own self-conjured mythology. His movies are very loosely tethered together (some fictional establishments appear in several of them), and now even encompass a "Nope" theme park attraction at Universal Studios Hollywood. Peele's dark world is increasingly ours.

For Peele, as he said speaking recently by Zoom from Los Angeles, "Nope" is about reaching for a kind of Hollywood movie once unattainable. He pointedly opens the film with Eadweard Muybridge's 1887 photographic study showing a Black rider on a horse. It was one of the first moving pictures. But while the name of the horse and its owner was recorded, the name of the Black jockey is unknown.

"I feel like this is the first moment that anyone would ever allow me or anyone to make this movie. And so I had to take advantage. I had to go as big as possible," said Peele. "I was like: 'Let's go.'"

Responses have been edited for brevity and clarity.

AP: The Eadweard Muybridge loop looms over "Nope"; your characters are said to be descendants from its unnamed rider. To you, what does it mean that the erasure of Black men was there at the foundation of cinema?

Peele: It's a sad part of this industry. It was something I was learning at a good point for myself in this story. I felt like five, 10 years ago, I would never have been able to sell this movie to anyone. So I'm juxtaposing this origin story of film at the same time I'm trying to make a story that's scary and joyous

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and adventurous and everything I love about film. It just felt very fitting for that starting point to be acknowledged and have ancestral implications for our main characters.

AP: Do you think of your movie as like an antidote to that film?

Peele: Yes. I've been trying to put that together. It's a sequel, it's an antidote, it's a reboot, it's an answer to the way films began and have continued.

AP: Kaluuya and Palmer's characters work on movie sets and "Nope" centers on their attempts to capture something on film. To you, is "Nope" about the movie industry?

Peele: It became very meta very quick. Making a movie is basically like chasing the impossible, trying to bottle something that doesn't exist. I was inspired by films like "King Kong" and "Jurassic Park" that really deal with the human addiction to spectacle and the presentation and monetization of that. The meta part is you're commenting on this notion at the same time you're trying to utilize it and trying to create something that people can't look away from.

AP: Why do you think in writing "Nope" your thoughts went back to the beginning of film?

Peele: Part of the world of "Nope" is flirting with real Hollywood and the Hollywood that takes place in my liminal dreams and nightmares. In real life, of the prominent Hollywood horse trainers, there's not an African American one I'm representing. The Haywoods are a very made-up family and notion. It was fun to weave the Hollywood fiction with reality and try and make a seamless immersion into what's real and what's not.

AP: A poster of Sidney Poitier's 1972 Western "Buck and the Preacher" is seen in the background of several shots. Was that an important film to you?

Peele: It's the first film that that I know of that had Black cowboys represented in it. The myth that cowboys were just white guys running around, it's just not true, but we don't know that because of Hollywood and the romanticized view of a very brutalized era. The film, it shares a spirit.

AP: Since seeing your film, clouds have taken on a sinister appearance to me. What led you to build your film around that image of an unmoving cloud?

Peele: The beauty of the sky is enthralling — the first movies, in a way. Every now and then you'll see a cloud that sits alone and is too low, and it gives me this vertigo and this sense of Presence with a capital P. I can't describe it, but I knew if I could bottle that and put it into a horror movie, it might change the way people look at the sky.

AP: How much were you thinking about "Close Encounters of the Third Kind"?

Peele: Yeah, "Close Encounters" is something I think about a lot, as is "Signs" by M. Night Shyamalan. These are big-vision directors who have taken flying saucers and science fiction and have brought magic to the way they told those stories. I wanted to toss my hat in the ring to one of my favorite subgenres, in UFOs, and do it in a way only I can.

AP: When the U.S. government declassified video of Navy pilots encountering unexplained aircraft — something your movie references — how did you react? Were you affected by those images?

Peele: I was. It made it very real, very much in the moment. It's one of the reasons, I guess, I can proudly say this movie is based on a true story. But what was most nerve-wracking or scary to me about the whole thing is that you'd like to think that when actual video proof of UFOs comes out that something would change in our lifestyle, not it's really business as usual. It just proves that there is a desensitization to spectacle. We're addicted and we're in over our heads with this addiction. We have proof of UFOs or UAPs (unidentified aerial phenomena), but the interest with the major public goes so far. It's very interesting.

AP: You seem to be referring to movies as spectacles but were there also political dimensions to that? You developed this film through some very tumultuous times in American life, including the Jan. 6 Capitol riot.

Peele: Attention can be a violent thing and our addiction to spectacle can have negative consequences. I think sometimes if we give the wrong spectacle too much attention, it can give it too much power. If we are obsessed with the wrong spectacle, it can distract us from what's really going on. There's really a human need to see the unseeable that our entire society is based around. And in so many ways we see it. The last five years, it feels like we've gone from seeking spectacle to being inundated with it. And that's the environment I wrote the film in.

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AP: There aren't many filmmakers with as much freedom to make original studio movies as you. You've had chances to join major franchises. How focused are you on crafting your own films from the bottom up?

Peele: Nothing is more rewarding than being able to lead the charge on something that comes from somewhere deep and to get the support of a team on something like that. I feel like if I were working off of someone else's property, I would owe something to someone else. Besides that core piece of inspiration, it just doesn't seem as fun to me.

AP: Have you been tempted?

Peele: Yeah, there has been temptation. Sure. And there is temptation. There's so many things I love. And yet, when faced with my very favorite properties, it still doesn't beat the thing I haven't written yet or the thing I haven't figured out.

AP: Do you get asked a lot about a sequel to "Get Out"?

Peele: I do get asked that a lot. Never say never. There's certainly a lot to talk about left. We'll see.

AP: After "Get Out," you suggested you would embark on a series of genre films that grapple with big societal issues. Three films in, where do you feel you are in that project?

Peele: I feel like I'm off to the races. I just don't know if I could limit how many films I have that are me. I'm starting to lose sight of what I would be doing if I wasn't doing movies like this. So I would say the project has extended.

The AP Interview: GM's Barra talks electric vehicles, future

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The economy is a bit wobbly, but General Motors CEO Mary Barra isn't backing off of an audacious prediction: By the middle of this decade, her company will sell more electric vehicles in the U.S. than Tesla, the global sales leader.

To fulfill that pledge in as little as 2 1/2 years, she faces some long odds against immense economic forces that are working against auto sales. Inflation has spiked, interest rates are rising, material costs have soared and a global shortage of computer chips is still braking assembly lines at GM and other companies.

But in an interview with The Associated Press, Barra said she's confident GM can unseat Tesla with higher-priced specialty vehicles, and it will beat Elon Musk to high-range EVs at prices that people can afford.

Last year GM sold just 25,000 electric vehicles in the U.S., less than one-tenth of the estimated 352,000 sold by Tesla. Although EV sales are rising dramatically, they're still only about 5% of the U.S. new vehicle market, with many Americans still reluctant to change.

"To really get to 30, 40, 50% EVs being sold, you have to appeal to people that are in that \$30,000 to \$35,000 price range," Barra said.

Already the company has pledged to cut the starting price of the Chevrolet Bolt small SUV to around \$26,000 later this year. GM is planning to roll out a Chevy Equinox small SUV with 300 miles of range for around \$30,000 in fall 2023. And on Monday night in California, it will unveil a larger (and more expensive) Chevy Blazer SUV that goes on sale next summer.

They'll join a couple of gargantuan Hummer EVs, an upcoming electric Silverado pickup and a Cadillac luxury SUV in taking on Tesla. And Barra said there's more to come on the way to offering 30 battery-powered vehicles globally by 2025. "What we have coming, it's in the heart of the market," she said, without giving details.

The mainstream vehicle is something Tesla has yet to master. A rear-wheel-drive version of the Model 3 sedan, its lowest-priced vehicle, starts around \$48,000 with shipping.

Barra is hoping to keep prices relatively low, banking on chemistry breakthroughs to cut battery costs, offsetting huge price increases for Lithium and other key elements that make batteries work.

Part of the strategy is convincing buyers that an electric vehicle can meet all their transportation needs. Many EV owners, she said, also have a gas-powered auto for longer trips.

That's why the company announced a partnership to place 2,000 charging stations at up to 500 Pilot Travel centers, spaced 50 miles apart along interstate travel corridors. "If the only vehicle you own is going

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to be an EV, you have to feel confident of charging," Barra said.

GM has a goal of making only electric passenger vehicles by 2035.

The switch to EVs would be monumental on its own for GM, a company that has made a living largely on the internal combustion engine for more than 113 years.

But Barra also has to manage the finances, keeping the profits flowing from gasoline vehicles to pay for battery development — even though GM currently can't run its factories flat-out due to the chip shortage. And at some point, money from gas vehicles will decline, so the EVs have to be profitable almost from the start.

Also, auto prices have risen to an average of around \$45,000, boosting carmakers' bottom lines but pushing new vehicles out of reach of the middle class. Economists are predicting the Federal Reserve could add up to a full point to interest rates, raising the cost of auto loans. And there's talk about the U.S. heading back into recession.

"It's pretty volatile right now," Barra conceded. "We're looking at many different scenarios as any prudent business leader would to make sure we're ready for whatever, however the situation evolves."

She said she expects parts and chip shortages will last into next year, with coronavirus outbreaks continuing to crimp the flow.

To deal with the semiconductor shortage, GM is throwing out its old model of letting parts supply companies acquire the chips with GM knowing little about them. Instead, by 2025, it will move toward three families of chips that Barra said the company will buy and control itself. They will be able to do multiple tasks, eliminating the need for dozens of chips in every vehicle.

That standardization will give GM the scale to buy in bulk and make sure supplies don't get interrupted in the future, Barra said: "We're also working with a select group of strategic companies to source these for the volumes. We'll have much better control and a stable supply."

Barra said new car prices are skewed right now because automakers are allocating scarce chips to higher-margin vehicles, and prices should come down as more chips become available.

Still, she knows affordability will be a problem. With that in mind, she said GM offers the Chevrolet Trail Blazer starting at just below \$20,000. The company also is linking used vehicle buyers to dealer inventories nationwide. And GM's Cruise autonomous vehicle unit is starting a driverless ride-hailing service in San Francisco that will spread to more cities, offering another affordable transportation mode, she said.

GM exited Europe in 2017 by selling its Opel brand after years of losses, but Barra said plans are being formed to re-enter the huge market with electric vehicles. "All I can tell you is I think it's a huge growth opportunity for the company, and we're excited to be back," Barra said.

She has no plans to change GM's joint venture in China with state-owned automaker SAIC, even though Beijing has stopped requiring that foreign automakers enter such partnerships with Chinese companies. But Barra said there may be a chance for GM to bring in iconic and luxury vehicles.

GM's transition to EVs comes amid growing calls for corporations to take stands on political and social issues such as race relations and abortion. Yet opportunities for missteps are many as companies like GM walk a fine line of doing so without alienating sectors of a customer base that spans the political spectrum.

Most electric vehicles, for instance, are sold on the coasts, where people tend to have more liberal views. But most of GM's income comes from pickup and SUV sales in the country's more conservative midsection.

Regarding abortion, Barra said she didn't want to speak broadly about the Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe vs. Wade, but she noted that GM does pay for employees to travel to get medical services.

"We're going to continue with that practice, really not a lot of change in what we're doing from what we've done in the past, other than we will make sure we comply with all state laws," she said.

In 2020, after George Floyd was killed by a Minneapolis police officer, Barra issued a strong public statement and committed to several changes at the company, including creating an internal inclusion board and evaluating employees on inclusionary action.

Throughout her career, Barra, who was GM's product planning chief before becoming CEO in January 2014, has had to make difficult decisions. To manage the complexities of her job, she'll need to draw on that experience.

"I'm an engineer, so I'm a problem solver," she said.

Fauci expects to retire by end of Biden's current term

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, said Monday he plans to retire by the end of President Joe Biden's term in January 2025.

Fauci, 81, was appointed director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in 1984, and has led research in HIV/AIDS, respiratory infections, Ebola, Zika and the coronavirus. He has advised seven presidents and is Biden's chief medical adviser.

In an interview with Politico, Fauci said he hoped to "leave behind an institution where I have picked the best people in the country, if not the world, who will continue my vision."

Asked Monday on CNN when he planned to retire, Fauci said he does not have a specific retirement date in mind and hasn't started the process. He said he expects to leave government before the end of Biden's current term, which ends in January 2025.

"By the time we get to the end of Biden's first term, I will very likely (retire)," Fauci said. He added: "it is extremely unlikely — in fact, for sure — that I am not going to be here beyond January 2025."

Fauci, long a prominent figure of the government's response to infectious disease, was thrust even more into the spotlight at the height of the coronavirus pandemic under then-President Donald Trump. As the pandemic response became politicized, with Trump suggesting the pandemic would "fade away," promoting unproven treatment methods and vilifying scientists who countered him, Fauci had to get security protection when he and his family received death threats and harassment.

Fauci testified repeatedly to Congress about the virus, and he and some Republicans, including Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, engaged in heated exchanges over the origins of the virus.

Fauci said Monday his decision to eventually leave his role was unrelated to politics.

"It has nothing to do with pressures, nothing to do with all of the other nonsense that you hear about, all the barbs, the slings and the arrows. That has no influence on me," he said.

Millions swelter as UK endures its 1st extreme heat warning

By DANICA KIRKA and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Millions of people in Britain stayed home or sought shade Monday during the country's first-ever extreme heat warning, as the hot, dry weather that has scorched mainland Europe for the past week moved north, buckling rail lines and forcing two airports to close their runways.

The red heat alert covers a big chunk of England and is to last through Tuesday, when temperatures may reach 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) for the first time, posing a risk of serious illness and even death among healthy people, according to the Met Office, the U.K.'s meteorological agency.

The extreme heat warning stretches from London in the south to Manchester and Leeds in the north.

The temperature Monday reached 38.1 C (100.6 F) at Downham in eastern England, just shy of the highest-ever recorded in Britain — 38.7 C (101.7 F), a record set in 2019. The country isn't at all prepared to handle such heat — most homes, schools and small businesses in Britain don't have air conditioning.

Wales provisionally recorded its highest-ever temperature, the Met Office said: 37.1 C (95.5 F) at Harwarden in northeastern Wales.

At least four people were reported to have drowned across the U.K. in rivers, lakes and reservoirs while trying to cool off.

Flights were suspended at London's Luton Airport as engineers repaired the runway "after high surface temperatures caused a small section to lift." RAF Brize Norton, a major air force base northwest of London, also closed its runway because of the heat. The air force said "aircraft are using alternative airfields in line with a long established plan."

Temperatures are expected to rise further as the warm air moves north on Tuesday, Met Office CEO Penelope Endersby said.

"So it's tomorrow that we're really seeing the higher chance of 40 degrees (104 F) and temperatures

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above that," Endersby told the BBC. "Forty-one isn't off the cards. We've even got some 43s in the model, but we're hoping it won't be as high as that."

Hot weather has gripped southern Europe since last week, triggering wildfires in Spain, Portugal and France. Almost 600 heat-related deaths have been reported in Spain and Portugal, where temperatures reached 47 C (117 F) last week.

Climate experts warn that global warming has increased the frequency of extreme weather events, with studies showing that the likelihood of temperatures in the U.K. reaching 40 C (104 F) is now 10 times higher than in the pre-industrial era. Drought and heat waves tied to climate change have also made wildfires harder to fight.

Officials in southern France's Gironde region announced plans to evacuate an additional 3,500 people from towns threatened by the raging flames. More than 1,500 firefighters and water-bombing planes are trying to douse the flames in the region's tinder-dry pine forests.

In Britain, train operators asked customers not to travel unless absolutely necessary, saying the heat was likely to warp rails and disrupt power supplies, leading to severe delays. Some routes were running at reduced speed or shutting down entirely in the afternoon amid peak temperatures.

Medical appointments were canceled to relieve strains on the National Health Service. Some schools closed while others set up wading pools and water sprays to help children cool off. Most British schools have not yet closed for the summer.

The extreme heat even led Parliament to loosen its strict dress code. The Speaker of the House of Commons said male lawmakers could dispense with jackets and ties for the week.

The high temperatures are even more of a shock since Britain usually has very moderate summer temperatures. Across the U.K., average July temperatures range from a daily high of 21 C (70 F) to a low of 12 C (53 F).

But nightfall on Monday will bring little relief from the heat, with the Met Office forecasting temperatures of 29 C (84 F) at midnight in London. Monday night will be "very oppressive" and it will be difficult to sleep, Chief Meteorologist Paul Davies said.

"Tomorrow is the day where we are really concerned about a good chance now of hitting 40 or 41 C, and with that all the health conditions that come with those higher temperatures," he said.

Artist Claes Oldenburg, maker of huge urban sculptures, dies

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Pop artist Claes Oldenburg, who turned the mundane into the monumental through his outsized sculptures of a baseball bat, a clothespin and other objects, has died at age 93.

Oldenburg died Monday morning in Manhattan, according to his daughter, Maartje Oldenburg. He had been in poor health since falling and breaking his hip a month ago.

The Swedish-born Oldenburg drew on the sculptor's eternal interest in form, the dadaist's breakthrough notion of bringing readymade objects into the realm of art, and the pop artist's ironic, outlaw fascination with lowbrow culture — by reimagining ordinary items in fantastic contexts.

"I want your senses to become very keen to their surroundings," he told the Los Angeles Times in 1963.

"When I am served a plate of food, I see shapes and forms, and I sometimes don't know whether to eat the food or look at it," he said. In May 2009, a 1976 Oldenburg sculpture, "Typewriter Eraser," sold for a record \$2.2 million at an auction of post-war and contemporary art in New York.

Early in his career, he was a key developer of "soft sculpture" made out of vinyl — another way of transforming ordinary objects — and also helped invent the quintessential 1960s art event, the "Happening."

Among his most famous large sculptures are "Clothespin," a 45-foot steel clothespin installed near Philadelphia's City Hall in 1976, and "Batcolumn," a 100-foot lattice-work steel baseball bat installed the following year in front of a federal office building in Chicago.

"It's always a matter of interpretation, but I tend to look at all my works as being completely pure," Oldenburg told the Chicago Tribune in 1977, shortly before "Batcolumn" was dedicated. "That's the adventure

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of it: to take an object that's highly impure and see it as pure. That's the fun."

The placement of those sculptures showed how his monument-sized items — though still provoking much controversy — took their place in front of public and corporate buildings as the establishment ironically championed the once-outsider art.

Many of Oldenburg's later works were produced in collaboration with his second wife, Coosje van Bruggen, a Dutch-born art historian, artist and critic whom he married in 1977. The previous year, she had helped him install his 41-foot "Trowel I" on the grounds of the Kroller-Muller Museum in Otterlo, the Netherlands.

Van Bruggen died in January 2009.

Oldenburg's first wife, Pat, also an artist, helped him out during their marriage in the 1960s, doing the sewing on his soft sculptures.

Oldenburg's first blaze of publicity came in the early '60s, when a type of performance art called the Happening began to crop up in the artier precincts of Manhattan.

A 1962 New York Times article described it as "a far-out entertainment more sophisticated than the twist, more psychological than a séance and twice as exasperating as a game of charades."

One Oldenburg concoction, cited in the 1965 book "Happenings" by Michael Kirby, juxtaposed a man in flippers soundlessly reciting Shakespeare, a trombonist playing "My Country 'Tis of Thee," a young woman laden with tools climbing a ladder, a man shoveling sand from a cot and other oddities, all in one six-minute segment.

"There is no story and the events are seemingly meaningless," Oldenburg told the Times. "But there is a disorganized pattern that acquires definition during a performance." He said the sessions — unscripted but loosely planned in advance — should be a "cathartic experience for us as well as the audience."

Oldenburg's sculpture was also becoming known during this period, particularly ones in which objects such as a telephone or electric mixer were rendered in soft, pliable vinyl. "The telephone is a very sexy shape," Oldenburg told the Los Angeles Times.

One of his early large-scale works was "Lipstick (Ascending) on Caterpillar Tracks," which juxtaposed a large lipstick on tracks resembling those that propel Army tanks. The original — with its undertone suggestion to "make love (lipstick) not war (tanks)" — was commissioned by students and faculty and installed at Yale University in 1969.

The original version deteriorated and was replaced by a steel, aluminum and fiberglass version in another spot on the Yale campus in 1974.

Oldenburg's 45-foot steel "Clothespin" was installed in 1976 outside Philadelphia's City Hall. It evokes Constantin Brancusi's 1908 "The Kiss," a semi-abstract depiction of a nearly identical man and woman embracing eyeball to eyeball. "Clothespin" resembles the ordinary household object, but its two halves face each other in the same way as Brancusi's lovers.

The Chicago "Batcolumn" was funded by the federal government as part of a program to include a budget for artworks whenever a big federal building was put up. It took its place not far from Chicago's famed Picasso sculpture, dedicated in 1967.

"Batcolumn," Oldenburg told the Tribune, "attempts to be as nondecorative as possible — straightforward, structural and direct. This, I think, is also a part of Chicago: a very factual and realistic object. The final thing, though, was to have it against the sky, that's what it was made for."

He had considered making it red, but "color would have simply distracted from the linear effect. Now, the more buildings they tear down around here, the better it will get."

Chicagoans weren't uniformly pleased. At around the same time as the sympathetic Tribune interview, another Tribune writer, architecture critic Paul Gapp, decried the trend toward "idiotic public sculpture" and called Oldenburg "a veteran put-on man and poseur who long ago convinced the Art Establishment that he was to be taken seriously."

Among Oldenburg's other monumental projects: "Crusoe Umbrella," for the Civic Center in Des Moines, Iowa, completed in 1979; "Flashlight," 1981, University of Las Vegas; and "Tumbling Tacks," Oslo, 2009.

Oldenburg was born in 1929 in Stockholm, Sweden, son of a diplomat. But young Claes (pronounced klahs) spent much of his childhood in Chicago, where his father served as Swedish consul general for

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many years. Oldenburg eventually became a U.S. citizen.

As a young man, he studied at Yale and the Art Institute of Chicago and worked for a time at Chicago's City News Bureau. He settled in New York by the late 1950s, but at times has also lived in France and California.

Don McLean looks back at his masterpiece, 'American Pie'

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Don McLean has listened for decades as people belted out his classic song "American Pie" at last call or at karaoke — and applauds you for the effort.

"I've heard whole bars burst into this song when I've been across the room," McLean tells The Associated Press from a tour bus heading to Des Moines, Iowa. "And they're so happy singing it that I realized, 'You don't really have to worry about how well you sing this song anymore. Even sung badly, people are really happy with it.'"

Happy might be a bit of an understatement. "American Pie" is considered a masterpiece, voted among the top five Songs of the Century compiled by the Recording Industry Association of America and the National Endowment for the Arts.

McLean — and his singular tune about "the day the music died" — are now the subject of a full-length feature documentary, "The Day the Music Died: The Story of Don McLean's 'American Pie,'" airing Tuesday on Paramount+.

It's mandatory viewing for McLean fans or anyone who has marveled at his sonic treasure. It also represents an elegant film blueprint for future deep dives into a song and its wider cultural relevance.

For those fans who have wondered about the lyrics they are singing loudly in bars and cars, McLean shares the secrets. "That was the fun of writing the song," he tells the AP. "I was up at night, smiling and thinking about what I'm going to do with this."

The documentary starts when a single-engine plane carrying Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and Jiles P. Richardson, the "Big Bopper," plunged into a cornfield north of Clear Lake, Iowa, on Feb. 3, 1959, killing the three stars and their pilot.

McLean was 13, living in a suburban, middle class home in New Rochelle, New York, when the crash occurred. He had bronchial asthma, prompting the description of him in "American Pie" as "a lonely teenage broncin' buck." The "sacred store" he sings about was the House of Music on Main Street, where he bought records and his first guitar.

Young McLean was a paperboy — "every paper I'd deliver" — and adored Elvis, Gene Vincent, Bo Diddley but especially Holly, whose death deeply affected him. "I was in absolute shock. I may have actually cried," he says in the film. "You can't intellectualize it. It hurt me."

Years later, McLean would plumb that pain in "American Pie," baking in his own grief at his father's passing and writing an eulogy for the American dream. He was creating his second album in 1971 while the nation was racked by assassinations, anti-war protests and civil right marches. He thought he "needed a big song about America." The first verse and melody seemed to just tumble out. "A long, long, time ago..."

It climaxed in the huge sing-along-chorus: "We were singin', 'Bye-bye, Miss American pie'/Drove my Chevy to the levee, but the levee was dry/Them good old boys were drinkin' whiskey 'n rye/And singin', 'This'll be the day that I die.'"

"I said, 'Wow, that is something. I don't know what it is, but it's exactly what I've been wanting to try to get ahold of — that feeling about Buddy Holly — for all these years and that plane crash," McLean tells the AP. "I always feel a tug inside me whenever I think about Buddy."

The 90-minute documentary incorporates news footage of the '70s and uses actors in recreations. Cameras capture McLean visiting the hallowed Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake, the last place Holly and his fellow musicians played before their fatal flight in 1959.

There are interviews with musicians — Garth Brooks, "Weird Al" Yankovich and Brian Wilson, among them — as well as Valens' sister, Connie, and actor Peter Gallagher, whose character's death on "Zoey's

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Extraordinary Playlist” promoted an onscreen performance of “American Pie.” The British singer Jade Bird, Cuban-born producer Rudy Perez and Spanish-language singer Jencarlos Canela speak to how the song has resonated far past America.

The documentary reveals that recording the album was not exactly a smooth process. Producer Ed Freeman was unimpressed with McLean’s clutch of songs and didn’t think McLean was up to playing rhythm guitar on “American Pie.” He eventually relented.

McLean — along with a few session musicians — rehearsed for two weeks without nailing the song, getting increasingly frustrated. The addition of pianist Paul Griffin at the last minute was a “Hail Mary” stroke of genius that made the whole tune click.

But recording the song was just the beginning of trouble ahead. At over 8 minutes, radio stations balked at playing it, and McLean’s record label, Media Arts, went bust just as it was to release the album “American Pie.”

After seeing the documentary, McLean was struck by a common strand in his career: “What I noticed was that I had to fight so many battles to get this thing done, to get everything. I’ve been fighting everybody my whole life,” he says. “I’m not difficult. I just want things the way I want them.”

“American Pie” is packed with cultural references, from Chevrolet to nurse rhymes, while namechecking The Byrds, John Lennon, Charles Manson and James Dean. The lyrics — dreamlike and impressionistic — have been pored over for decades, dissected for meaning.

The documentary answers some questions, but not all. McLean reveals that his oblique references to a king and a jester have nothing to do with Elvis or Bob Dylan, but he’s open to other interpretations. He explains that the “marching band” means the military-industrial complex and “sweet perfume” is tear gas.

The line in the chorus “This’ll be the day that I die” comes from the John Wayne film “The Searchers” and the farewell is a riff off “Bye Bye, My Roseanna,” a song his friend Pete Seeger sang. McLean was going to use “Miss American apple pie” but dropped the fruit.

The end of the song asks for “happy news” — an echo of the first verse — but there is none. The three men McLean admires most — the Father, Son and Holy Ghost — “caught the last train for the coast,” meaning Los Angeles. “Even god has been corrupted,” McLean says in the film.

“He was glad to open up because he and his manager thought it was the time to do it and this was the platform to do it in,” says music producer and songwriter Spencer Proffer, CEO of media production company Meteor 17, which helped make the film. “My hat’s off to Don for writing something this magnificent. My job was to bring it to life.”

For McLean, the song is a blueprint of his mind at the time and a homage to his musical influences, but also a roadmap for future students of history:

“If it starts young people thinking about Buddy Holly, about rock ‘n’ roll and that music, and then it teaches them maybe about what else happened in the country, maybe look at a little history, maybe ask why John Kennedy was shot and who did it, maybe ask why all our leaders were shot in the 1960s and who did it, maybe start to look at war and the stupidity of it — if that can happen, then the song really is serving a wonderful purpose and a positive purpose.”

Pitch clocks, shift limits, larger bases in MLB’s future

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Justin Verlander, Gerrit Cole and the rest of major league pitchers are likely to be looking over their shoulders next season — at a pitch clock.

Clocks have cut the length of minor league games by about a half-hour this year, and baseball officials appear certain to promote the timers to the majors.

“I think it needs it, obviously. And I think it’s coming regardless of opposition of the players. It’s kind of our fault,” the Yankees’ Cole said ahead of Tuesday’s All-Star Game. “We’ve known it’s been an issue and its importance and we don’t seem to clean it up.”

Major League Baseball also is considering shift limits, larger bases, restrictions on pickoff attempts and — perhaps in 2024 — limited use of robot umpires to call balls and strikes. The new collective bargaining

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agreement includes an 11-person competition committee with six management representatives, four players and one umpire, and it is empowered to make changes by majority vote with 45 days' notice.

Average time of nine-inning games increased from 2 hours, 43 minutes in 2003 to 3:13 in 2020 before dropping to 3:02 so far this season through July 12, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. A clock experiment in the minor leagues cut the average this year to 2:37 from 3:04 at a similar point for non-clock games last year.

"At first, I wasn't buying into it. But then we started the season, I was, 'Oh, this is pretty good.' I like it. I think it's more efficient," Brooklyn Cyclones manager Luis Rivera said before a 9-0 win over Greensboro on July 12 that breezed along in 2:27.

Time between pitches with no runners on base ranges from 12.6 seconds for Milwaukee's Brent Suter and San Francisco's Sam Long to 26.6 for St. Louis' Giovanny Gallegos and 26.0 for Atlanta's Kenley Jansen. With runners on, San Diego's Tim Hill leads at 18.1 and Gallegos (32.1) and Jansen (31.1) are the slowest.

MLB's average through Thursday was 20.5 seconds with no runners and 27.3 second with runners. Boston manager Alex Cora notices call-ups are working more quickly than veterans.

"Little by little, everything they're doing in the minor leagues is going to affect their big league game, which is great," he said.

Long the most traditional of U.S. major pro sports, baseball adopted video review for home runs in 2009 and for a broad array of umpire decisions in 2014. All 30 teams are using the electronic pitching signaling device introduced this spring.

A clock is being used this year throughout the minors: 14 seconds with the bases empty and 19 with runners on at Triple-A, and 14/18 at lower levels. The clock starts "when the pitcher has possession of the ball and the catcher is in the dirt circle surrounding home plate." In addition, "the batter must be in the box and alert to the pitcher with at least nine seconds remaining."

"I'm not opposed to a pitch clock, but I think it needs to be a reasonable amount of time to not feel rushed," said Houston's Verlander, a two-time Cy Young Award winner. "Fourteen is quick. I was kind of like on the fence about it, maybe pro pitch clock, but then talking to a couple of the Triple-A guys we've had, they feel in certain situations that they don't even have enough time to shake off pitches. Granted, they don't have PitchCom down there."

Yankees pitcher Ryan Weber, who spent the first two months this season in the minors, favors a clock but with four additional seconds. He pointed to a 3-2 fastball he threw to Norwich's Patrick Dorrian on April 17 that ended a nine-pitch at-bat with a flyout. He feared a violation that would cause ball four.

"If I throw a pitch, catch the ball and then go around to the rosin bag, and then when I get on the mound and I'm looking for the sign, it's running low and I got to say yes to that pitch," Weber recalled. "I just grooved it. I felt that I was forced to throw."

Violations dropped from 1.73 per game during the opening week to 0.52 in Week 11.

MLB's goal is to eliminate dead time, such time-consuming tics such as Nomar Garciaparra tapping toes and adjusting batting gloves between pitches.

"It's something that takes a while to get used to, but I think overall the impact it had on the pace of the game was good," said the Yankees' Matt Carpenter, who spent April at Triple-A with Round Rock.

Minor league pitchers also have been limited to what the regulations call "two disengagements per plate appearance" with runners on — pickoff attempts or stepping off the runner. A third attempt that is unsuccessful results in an automatic balk.

Bases have been increased to 18-inch squares from 15, promoting safety — first basemen are less likely to get stepped on — but also boosting stolen bases and offense with a slightly decreased distance.

Shifts have been limited all season at Double-A and Class A, where teams are required to have four players on the infield, including two on each side of second base. The Florida State League adds an additional restriction starting July 22 by drawing chalk lines in a pie shape from second base to the outfield grass, prohibiting infielders from the marked area pre-pitch.

Use of shifts has exploded in the past decade, from 2,357 times on balls hit in play in 2011 to 28,130 in 2016 and 59,063 last year, according to Sports Info Solutions. Shifts are on pace for 71,000 this year.

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There has been a corresponding drop in the big league batting average from .269 in 2006 to .255 in 2011 to .242 this season, on track to be the lowest since 1967 — before the mound height was cut.

"I like organic primarily," said former Rays, Cubs and Angels manager Joe Maddon. "If we have to legislate our game to become better, I would put the all the infielders on the dirt, but I'd still permit three on the one side."

Shift ban tests are hard to interpret, given there is far less shifting and defensive data in the minors.

MLB also is piloting an Automated Ball-Strike System in the minors, which could reach the majors as soon as 2024. Defining the computer strike zone is still being worked on.

Big league umpers are much criticized in an age of high-speed video cameras analyzing every pitch. Jeremie Rehak and Pat Hoberg have been the most accurate plate umpires this season at 95.6% correct, according to UmpireScorecards.com. Among umpers who have worked more than one game calling balls and strikes, Andy Fletcher (91.4%) and CB Bucknor (91.7%) have been the least accurate.

A test in the Class A Florida State League uses the robot umpers in the first two games of each series, then has a human call ball and strikes in the remaining game with a challenge system. Each team gets three challenges and keeps its challenge if successful. Only the pitcher, catcher or batter may appeal, unlike the MLB replay challenge system, in which a manager generally has 20 seconds to challenge a call — leaving time for the team's video room staff to make a recommendation.

"I love that," Verlander said of the ball/strike challenge system. "These guys get a lot of flak, but they have one of the hardest jobs in the world. We're throwing 100 mph, nicking corners. If I were an umpire, I like that: 'Oh, you think you're better than me? Appeal it and find out.' I think it's a fun back and forth."

Decisions fall to the technical committee, which includes players Jack Flaherty, Tyler Glasnow, Whit Merrifield and Austin Slater, umpire Bill Miller and six team officials.

MLB hopes quicker games will be more appealing to fans as it tries to rebuild attendance following the pandemic. Cyclones general manager Kevin Mahoney said minor league teams haven't experienced a drop in concessions sales.

"We used to notice that at 9:30, fans would get up in like blocks of 10, 12, 14 at a time from different sections and leave. And I used to think, why is everybody leaving in the seventh inning?" Mahoney said. "Now on most nights we're in the ninth inning at 9:30 and they don't leave because the game is almost over."

Climate aid, war fallout feature at Berlin climate talks

By FRANK JORDANS and GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Officials from 40 countries met Monday in Berlin to discuss how to stay focused on fighting the increasing impacts of climate change while the world reels from the economic fallout of the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The U.N. secretary general admonished countries to take action instead of playing a "blame game."

European nations vowed to fulfill their climate targets even as the war in Ukraine prompts some to seek new fossil fuel sources and turn at least temporarily to coal to make up for shortfalls in Russian energy deliveries, something viewed with suspicion by developing countries.

Organizers have billed the two-day gathering in Berlin as an opportunity to rebuild trust between rich and poor nations ahead of November's U.N. climate summit in Egypt, after technical talks last month achieved little progress on key issues such as climate aid for developing nations.

U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned that the global warming limit of 1.5 Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) agreed in the 2015 Paris climate accord was slipping further out of reach even as more people are being hit by extreme floods, droughts, storms and wildfires.

"No nation is immune," he said. "Yet we continue to feed our fossil fuel addiction."

Guterres, appearing by video, criticized countries for continuing "to play the blame game instead of taking responsibility for our collective future," and urged rich nations to keep the promises they have made to the poor.

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Developing countries are still waiting for rich nations to provide \$100 billion in climate aid each year, a target they were meant to reach by 2020.

"At the minimum, stop paying lip service to the \$100 billion a year pledge," Guterres said. "Give clarity through deadlines and timelines and get concrete on its delivery."

The issue of "loss and damage" plays a prominent role in the Berlin meeting, where ministers will break into small groups for discussions in hopes of building trust ahead of the U.N. climate summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November.

Antiguan Environment Minister Molwyn Joseph, speaking for small-island developing nations that are among those most at risk, underlined the urgency of the issue.

"What it is described as crisis, for us it is catastrophe," he told delegates. "There are small islands that are disappearing."

Big polluters, however, have long resisted the idea that they should pay for the destruction their greenhouse gas emissions are causing around the world.

Meanwhile, scientists say the extreme heat slamming large parts of the northern hemisphere in recent weeks could become the new normal in summer if global warming continues.

"As this meeting is taking place, parts of Europe are baking, indeed they're burning. And sadly, it's an experience that is all too familiar to many millions across the globe," said Alok Sharma, the British official who led last year's climate talks in Glasgow. He told delegates: "My plea to you all is, please, let's speed up our work."

His successor for the upcoming climate talks, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, said it's essential to ensure that "the current state of affairs is not taken as a pretext to backtrack or renege on previous commitments, especially those related to supporting developing countries."

The question of energy sources endangered by Russia's war in Ukraine looms over the Berlin meeting — in which China was participating, but Russia wasn't invited.

Environmental activists warn that recent efforts by countries such as Germany to tap new sources of fossil fuels such as gas could undermine countries' already fragile climate actions.

Germany's climate envoy, Jennifer Morgan, acknowledged that "the Russian war of aggression is forcing us to take short-term decisions we don't like, including the increased use of coal for a very limited period of time."

"But we are not only sticking rock-solidly to our climate goals — we are accelerating the energy transition and will phase out the use of fossil energy even faster," she told The Associated Press, citing a newly approved plan to ramp up solar and wind power generation in Germany.

Some appeared skeptical. South African Environment Minister Barbara Creecy said that "we cannot have backtracking" on coal by rich nations.

"Developed countries must continue taking the lead with ambitious action," she said. "The ultimate measure of climate leadership is not what countries do in times of comfort and convenience, but what they do in times of challenge and controversy."

The vice president of the European Union's executive Commission, Frans Timmermans, responded that even if "some of our member states have to increase the use of fossil fuels now ... this will not take us away from the goals we've set."

The U.S. also comes to the talks following setbacks for President Joe Biden in his efforts to regulate pollution and boost renewable energy such as wind and solar power.

Today in History: July 19, Republicans nominate Trump

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, July 19, the 200th day of 2022. There are 165 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 19, 2005, President George W. Bush announced his choice of federal appeals court judge John

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G. Roberts Jr. to replace Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. (Roberts ended up succeeding Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, who died in Sept. 2005; Samuel Alito followed O'Connor.)

On this date:

In 1812, during the War of 1812, the First Battle of Sackets Harbor in Lake Ontario resulted in an American victory as U.S. naval forces repelled a British attack.

In 1969, Apollo 11 and its astronauts, Neil Armstrong, Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin and Michael Collins, went into orbit around the moon.

In 1975, the Apollo and Soyuz space capsules that were linked in orbit for two days separated.

In 1979, the Nicaraguan capital of Managua fell to Sandinista guerrillas, two days after President Anastasio Somoza fled the country.

In 1980, the Moscow Summer Olympics began, minus dozens of nations that were boycotting the games because of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan.

In 1989, 111 people were killed when United Air Lines Flight 232, a DC-10 which sustained the uncontained failure of its tail engine and the loss of hydraulic systems, crashed while making an emergency landing at Sioux City, Iowa; 185 other people survived.

In 1990, baseball's all-time hits leader, Pete Rose, was sentenced in Cincinnati to five months in prison for tax evasion.

In 1993, President Bill Clinton announced a policy allowing homosexuals to serve in the military under a compromise dubbed "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue."

In 2006, prosecutors reported that Chicago police beat, kicked, shocked or otherwise tortured scores of Black suspects from the 1970s to the early 1990s to try to extract confessions from them.

In 2014, a New York City police officer (Daniel Pantaleo) involved in the arrest of Eric Garner, who died in custody two days earlier after being placed in an apparent chokehold, was stripped of his gun and badge and placed on desk duty. (Pantaleo was fired in August 2019.) Actor James Garner, 86, died in Los Angeles.

In 2016, Republicans meeting in Cleveland nominated Donald Trump as their presidential standard-bearer; in brief videotaped remarks, Trump thanked the delegates, saying: "This is a movement, but we have to go all the way."

In 2020, President Donald Trump refused to publicly commit to accepting the results of the upcoming election, telling Chris Wallace on "Fox News Sunday" that it was too early to make any such guarantee.

Ten years ago: A controversy pitting gay rights against religious freedom began as a cake shop owner in Lakewood, Colorado, refused to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple. (The Supreme Court would rule that Colorado's Civil Rights Commission displayed anti-religious bias when it sanctioned the shop owner; the court did not rule on the larger issue of whether businesses can invoke religious objections to refuse service to gays and lesbians.)

Five years ago: Sen. John McCain's office said the 80-year-old Arizona Republican and former presidential nominee had been diagnosed with a brain tumor, glioblastoma. President Donald Trump told The New York Times that he would have chosen someone else to be attorney general if he'd known that Jeff Sessions would recuse himself from the FBI probe into possible ties between Trump's campaign and Russia.

One year ago: A Florida man, Paul Allard Hodgkins, who breached the U.S. Senate chamber on Jan. 6 carrying a Trump campaign flag received an eight-month prison term; it was the first resolution for a felony case in the Capitol insurrection. The Biden administration took a step toward its goal of shutting down the Guantánamo Bay detention center for terror suspects, releasing into the custody of his home country a Moroccan (Abdullatif Nasser) who'd been held without charge almost since the U.S. opened the facility 19 years earlier. Ben & Jerry's said it would stop selling its ice cream in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and contested east Jerusalem, saying sales in the territories sought by the Palestinians were inconsistent with the company's values.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Helen Gallagher is 96. Singer Vikki Carr is 82. Blues singer-musician Little Freddie King is 82. Actor George Dzundza is 77. Rock singer-musician Alan Gorrie (Average White Band) is 76. International Tennis Hall of Famer Ilie Nastase is 76. Rock musician Brian May is 75. Rock musician

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Bernie Leadon is 75. Actor Beverly Archer is 74. Movie director Abel Ferrara is 71. Actor Peter Barton is 66. Rock musician Kevin Haskins (Love and Rockets; Bauhaus) is 62. Movie director Atom Egoyan is 62. Actor Campbell Scott is 61. Actor Anthony Edwards is 60. Actor Clea Lewis is 57. Percussionist Evelyn Glennie is 57. Classical singer Urs Buhler (Il Divo) is 51. Actor Andrew Kavovit is 51. Rock musician Jason McGerr (Death Cab for Cutie) is 48. Actor Benedict Cumberbatch is 46. Actor Erin Cummings is 45. TV chef Marcela Valladolid is 44. Actor Chris Sullivan ("This is Us") is 42. Actor Jared Padalecki is 40. Actor Trai Byers is 39. Actor Kaitlin Doubleday ("Nashville") is 38. Actor/comedian Dustin Ybarra is 36. Actor Steven Anthony Lawrence is 32.

