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The School/Community Activities Calendar is now available on-line. Look for the Activities Calendar link on the black bar at the home page of 397news.com.

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

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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Help Wanted

Want a fun job with flexible hours? We're looking for 16 year olds and older with smiling faces! Free meals and we'll work around your schedule. Are you a mom wanting some hours while your kids are in school or a teenager wanting to earn some money or an adult looking for work? Daytime – evening – week-end hours are available and we'll make the hours work for you! Stop in for an application. Dairy Queen, 11 East Hwy 12 in Groton.

CLEANER WANTED

SATURDAY CLEANER NEEDED IN FERENY, SD, 830 am to 130 pm. \$15 an hour. Must be dependable and be willing to work around customers coming into the family owned business. Please call Stephanie at 605-381-1758.

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



80th Birthday
Sharon (Raap) Busch
Sharon will celebrate her 80th birthday on August 2nd. The family is requesting a card shower in her honor. Cards can be mailed to:
Sharon Busch
423 Main St. S.
Bristol, SD 57219



Celebration of Life

Arlene Anderson

Monday, Aug. 1, 2022
Paetznick-Garness
Funeral Chapel
112 N. 3rd St., Groton

Lunch served
following celebration

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Groton Jr. Legion is off to state!

The Groton Junior Legion Baseball Team took first place at the regional tournament and will be heading off to state in Clark next week. Pictured in back, left to right, are Assistant Coach Seth Erickson, Braxton Imrie, Ryan Groeblichhoff, Logan Ringgenberg, Kaleb Hoover, Colby Dunker and Head Coach Dalton Locke; in front, left to right, are Brevin Flihs, Dillon Abeln, Kaleb Antonsen, Korbin Kucker and Teylor Diegel; not pictured is Braydin Althoff. (Photo by Mike Imrie)

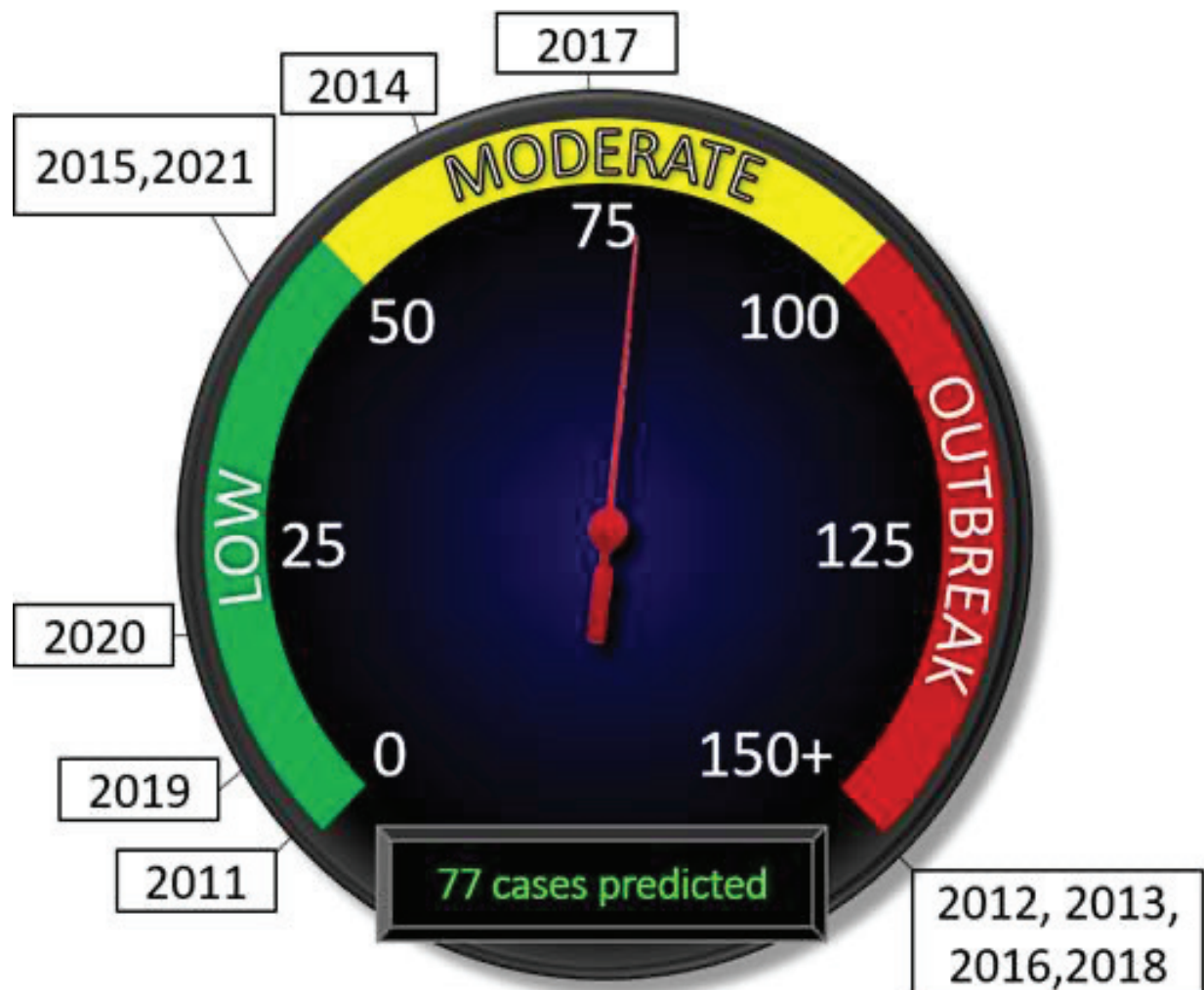
West Nile update – July 27 , 2022

No human WNV cases have been reported at this time.

SD WNV (as of July 27): No human cases reported
5 counties with positive mosquito pools (Beadle, Brookings, Brown, Codington, Minnehaha)

US WNV (as of July 12): 15 cases (AL, AZ, GA, IN, LA, MN, MS, ND, TX) and 1 death

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2022, South Dakota (as of July 27)



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Mega Millions jackpot exceeds \$1 billion

PIERRE, S.D. – The \$1.025 Mega Millions jackpot is generating a buzz throughout the nation.

The jackpot for Friday's Mega Millions drawing has reached rare heights, ranking as the third highest in Mega Millions history and the fourth largest among all U.S. Lottery jackpots.

The largest Mega Millions prize was \$1.537 billion, which was won Oct. 23, 2018 in South Carolina.

While the jackpot creates interest, the South Dakota Lottery reminds players to play responsibly.

"Jackpots like this create a lot of excitement among our players, but the South Dakota Lottery reminds players to keep the fun good," Lottery Executive Director Norm Lingle said. "We ask all of our players to play responsibly and remember that it only takes one ticket to win."

Revenue generated from the sale of Mega Millions goes to the state's General Fund and Capitol Construction Fun. Since the South Dakota Lottery's inception, lotto sales have accounted for more than \$115 million to the state's Capitol Construction Fund and more than \$60 million to the State's General Fund.

Since the Lottery began in 1987, it has provided more than \$3.24 billion back to the State of South Dakota.

For more information on Mega Millions, visit <https://lottery.sd.gov/games/lottogames/megamillions/>.

Top 5 Mega Millions Jackpots

Jackpot	Draw Date	Location Won
\$1.537 billion	10/23/2018	South Carolina
\$1.05 billion	1/22/2021	Michigan
\$1.025 million	7/27/2022	
\$656 million	3/30/2012	Kansas, Illinois, Maryland
\$648 million	12/17/2013	California, Georgia

Gov. Noem and Republican Governors Call on President Biden to Defend Equal Opportunities for Girls and Women

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem led a coalition of 15 Republican Governors urging President Joe Biden to defend equal opportunities for girls and women. In a letter to President Biden, the governors challenge him to reject the rule and policy changes proposed by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which would completely reinterpret Title IX. Title IX was passed 50 years ago to prevent discrimination “on the basis of sex” in education and athletic competition.

“Over the past two years, we have heard calls from many in our society to ‘trust the science’ with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic,” wrote Governor Noem and her colleagues. “We ask your Administration to trust the science on human biology; to realize that there are real, wonderful biological differences between women and men; to understand that those differences impact us in many ways – some subtle, some profound; to recognize that athletic competition is one of the arenas in which these differences are the most striking.”

The Governors took particular issue with the implications of these policy changes for the National School Lunch Program. “To be clear, your Administration would take lunch money away from our kids and grandkids in pursuit of a radical agenda that has no basis in science and which is not supported by the vast majority of the American people,” wrote the governors.

A federal judge recently blocked DOE’s Title IX “guidance” on the grounds that it “directly interferes with and threatens Plaintiff States’ ability to continue enforcing their state laws.” Earlier this year, South Dakota passed the toughest law in the country to defend fairness in girls’ sports.

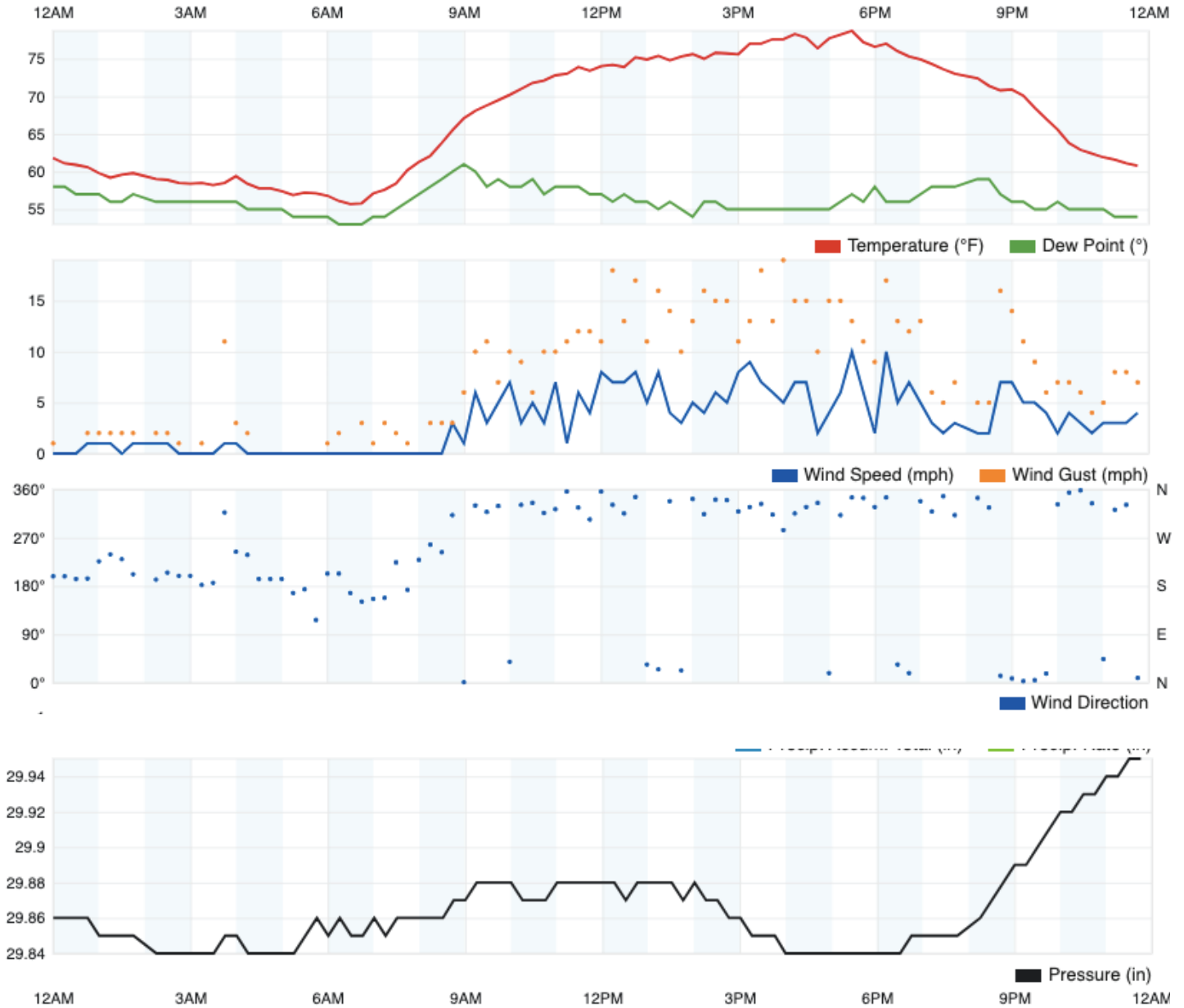
The Governors also echoed arguments made by Republican Attorneys General, pointing out that the proposed policy changes from DOE and USDA impose new and unlawful regulatory measures in violation of the Administrative Procedures Act.

The letter was led by Governor Kristi Noem and co-signed by Arizona Governor Doug Ducey, Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, Idaho Governor Brad Little, Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves, Missouri Governor Mike Parson, Montana Governor Greg Gianforte, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt, South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee, Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin, and Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 76 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 53 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 82 °F

Friday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 61 °F

Saturday



Hot

High: 91 °F

Today

weather.gov/aberdeen



Pleasant with a partly to mostly sunny sky.
Highs 73 to 81°

5 Day Trends

73-81 F

Thu

80-88 F

Fri

87-95 F

Sat

88-97 F

Sun

83-95 F

Mon

92-101 F

Tue

Temperatures

Pleasant

Thu

Pleasant

Fri

Humid

Sat

Muggy

Sun

Humid

Mon

Muggy

Tue

Humidity

A pleasant day today, before we see gradually increasing temperatures and humidity going into the weekend and next week.

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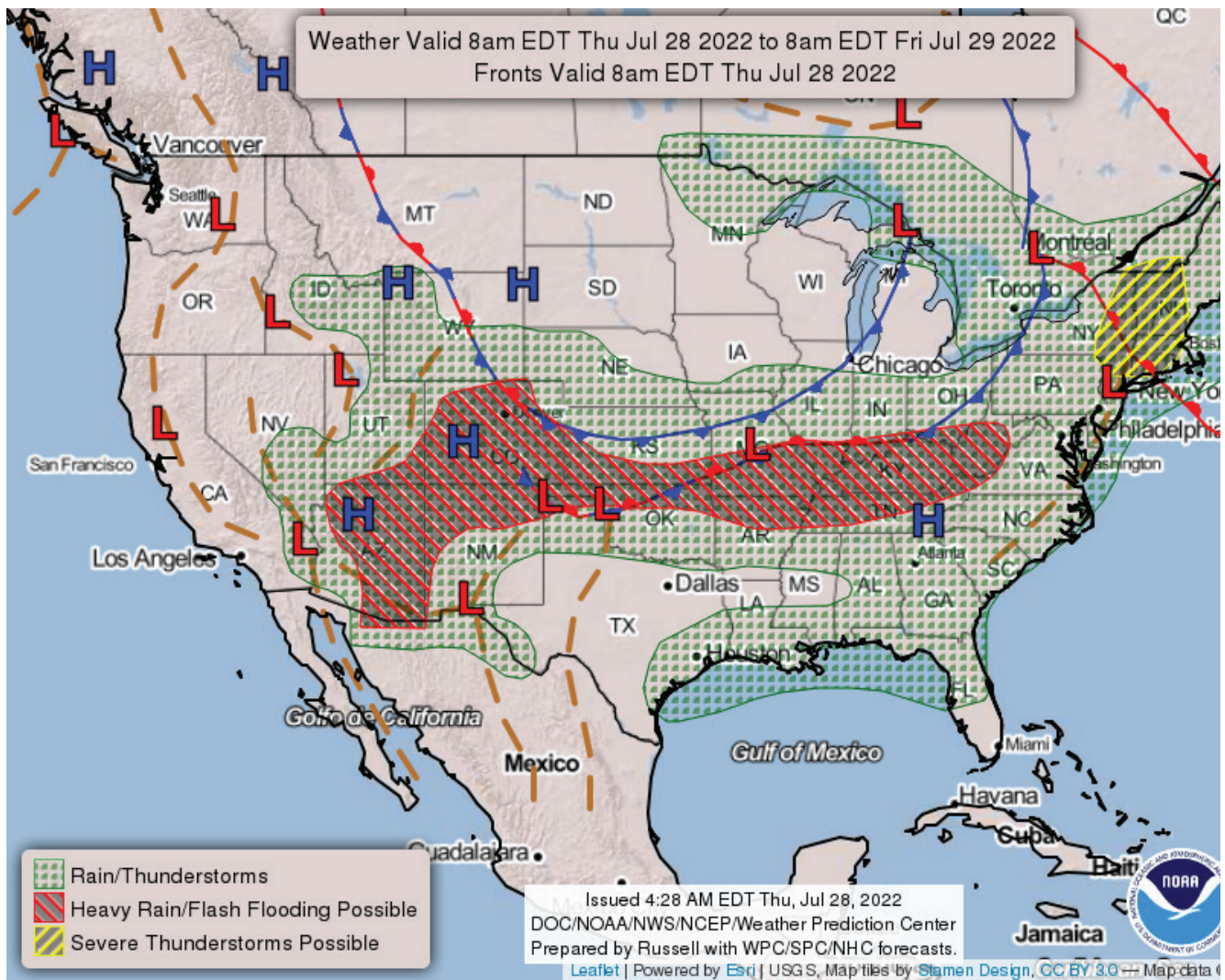
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 79 °F at 5:29 PM
Low Temp: 56 °F at 6:26 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 3:51 PM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 56 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 109 in 1975
Record Low: 40 in 2013
Average High: 85°F
Average Low: 60°F
Average Precip in July.: 2.84
Precip to date in July.: 2.80
Average Precip to date: 13.85
Precip Year to Date: 14.38
Sunset Tonight: 9:07:09 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:11:48 AM



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Today in Weather History

July 28, 1986: Very intense thunderstorms developed in South Dakota and Nebraska and moved into Iowa. The first of these storms produced a tornado that crossed into Iowa south of Sioux City and slammed into a coal-burning power plant. This storm caused between 25 and 50 million dollars damage to the plant. The tornado continued across farmland, then damaged a store and flattened a motel in Sloan before lifting up.

1819 - A small but intense hurricane passed over Bay Saint Louis, MS. The hurricane was considered the worst in fifty years. Few houses were left standing either at Bay Saint Louis or at Pass Christian, and much of the Mississippi coast was desolate following the storm. A U.S. cutter was lost along with its thirty-nine crew members. The storm struck the same area that was hit 150 years later by Hurricane Camille. (David Ludlum)

1898: A severe thunderstorm produced considerable hail (some stones to 11 ounces) in Chicago, Illinois business district. Some people were hurt, not by hail, but by several hundred runaway horses spooked by the hailstones.

1930 - The temperature at Greensburg, KY, soared to 114 degrees to set a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1934 - The temperature at Grofino, ID, climbed to 118 degrees to establish a record for Idaho. (The Weather Channel)

1952 - A severe storm with hail up to an inch and a half in diameter broke windows, ruined roofs, and stripped trees of leaves near Benson, AZ. The temperature dropped to 37 degrees, as hail was three to four inches deep, with drifts 46 inches high. (The Weather Channel)

1976: At 3:42 AM, an earthquake measuring between 7.8 and 8.2 magnitudes on the Richter scale flattens Tangshan, a Chinese industrial city with a population of about one million people. An estimated 242,000 people in Tangshan and surrounding areas were killed, making the earthquake one of the deadliest in recorded history, surpassed only by the 300,000 who died in the Calcutta earthquake in 1737, and the 830,000 thought to have perished in China's Shaanxi province in 1556.

1986 - Severe thunderstorms moving out of South Dakota across Iowa produce high winds which derailed eighteen piggyback trailer cars of a westbound freight train near Boone, IA. Sixteen of the cars fell 187 feet into the Des Moines River. The thunderstorms also spawned a number of tornadoes, including one which caused twenty-five to fifty million dollars damage at Sloan, near Sioux City, IA. (Storm Data)

1987 - Thunderstorms in Nevada produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Searchlight, reducing visibilities to near zero in blowing dust and sand. Thunderstorms in Montana drenched Lonesome Lake with 3.78 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms drenched Wilmington, NC, with 3.33 inches of rain, bringing their monthly total 14.46 inches. Seven cities in Michigan and Minnesota reported record high temperatures for the date. Marquette, MI, hit 99 degrees, and the record high of 94 degrees at Flint MI was their tenth of the month. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Afternoon thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in Massachusetts. Early evening thunderstorms over Florida produced wind gusts to 68 mph at Fort Myers, and evening thunderstorms in South Dakota produced nearly two inches of rain in twenty minutes at Pierpoint. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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THE FOUR "T'S" OF LIFE

Writing in his diary, a young man predicted his future: "Someday I'm going to do something special with my life. I will become famous!"

Years later, an old man said to his family, "I could have done great things with my life, but I didn't. I am so sorry. I wish I had. I am a failure."

What a tragic disclosure! The old man now talking was once the young man dreaming

God gives each of us a limited number of days, a select number of skills, and with them the ability to do something honorable. None of us know the number of our days or the length of our life. Some of us never develop the skills God has given us. Many do not invest the talents God has given them wisely, wasting their lives on the frivolous unaware of God's gifts.

An important question to ask ourselves every day is this: "What am I going to do with the time, the talents and treasures God has given me today?" For this day may be our last.

We have no assurance of tomorrow. We may lose the skills that we have through a tragedy or our treasures may be taken from us without warning. When we attach our lives to God's power and His plan, we will have no regrets. Our lives will honor God and bless others.

Prayer: Teach us, Lord, to be faithful to You and to make the most of all You have given us. May we take Your gifts, invest them wisely, and do what honors You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

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2022-23 Community Events

- 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
07/24/2022: 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
12/10/2022: Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm
01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
07/04/2023 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start (4th of July)
07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
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News from the Associated Press

Canada says pope's apology to Indigenous not enough

NICOLE WINFIELD and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

QUEBEC CITY (AP) — The Canadian government made clear Wednesday that Pope Francis' apology to Indigenous peoples for abuses in the country's church-run residential schools didn't go far enough, suggesting that reconciliation over the fraught history is still very much a work in progress.

The official government reaction came as Francis arrived in Quebec City for meetings with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Governor General Mary Simon at her Quebec residence, the hilltop Citadelle fortress, on the second leg of Francis' week-long visit to Canada.

The government's criticisms echo those of some survivors and concern Francis' omission of any reference to the sexual abuse suffered by Indigenous children in the schools, as well as his original reluctance to name the Catholic Church as an institution bearing responsibility.

Francis has said he is on a "penitential pilgrimage" to atone for the church's role in the residential school system, in which generations of Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their homes and forced to attend church-run, government-funded boarding schools to assimilate them into Christian, Canadian society. The Canadian government has said physical and sexual abuse were rampant at the schools, with students beaten for speaking their native languages.

Francis on Monday apologized for the "evil" of church personnel who worked in the schools and the "catastrophic" effect of the school system on Indigenous families. In a speech before government authorities Wednesday, Francis apologized anew and blasted the school system as "deplorable."

Francis noted that the school system was "promoted by the governmental authorities at the time" as part of a policy of assimilation and enfranchisement. But responding to criticism, he added that "local Catholic institutions had a part" in implementing that policy.

Indigenous peoples have long demanded that the pope assume responsibility not just for abuses committed by individual Catholic priests and religious orders, but for the Catholic Church's institutional support of the assimilation policy and the papacy's 15th century religious justification for European colonial expansion to spread Christianity.

More than 150,000 Native children in Canada were taken from their homes from the 19th century until the 1970s and placed in the schools in an effort to isolate them from the influence of their families and culture.

Trudeau, a Catholic whose father, Pierre Trudeau, was prime minister while the last residential schools were in operation, insisted that the Catholic Church as an institution bore blame and needed to do more to atone.

Speaking before Francis, he noted that Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015 had called for a papal apology to be delivered on Canadian soil, but that Francis' visit "would not have been possible without the courage and perseverance" of survivors of First Nations, Inuit and Metis who travelled to the Vatican last spring to press their case for an apology.

"Apologies for the role that the Roman Catholic Church, as an institution, played in the mistreatment on the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical and sexual abuse that Indigenous children suffered in residential schools run by the church," Trudeau said.

The Canadian government has apologized for its role in the school legacy. Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper issued a formal apology over the residential schools in Parliament in 2008, calling them a sad chapter in Canadian history and saying the policy of forced assimilation caused great harm.

As part of a settlement of a lawsuit involving the government, churches and the approximately 90,000 surviving students, Canada paid reparations that amounted to billions of dollars being transferred to Indigenous communities. The Catholic Church, for its part, has paid over \$50 million and intends to add \$30 million more over the next five years.

Trudeau implied that much more needed to be done by the church, and that while Francis' visit had "an

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enormous impact" on survivors, it was but a first step.

Aside from the content of his speech, Trudeau's remarks broke customary protocol for papal trips. According to diplomatic protocol, only Simon was supposed to address the pope in her capacity as the representative head of state. Simon, an Inuk who is the first Indigenous person to hold the largely ceremonial position governor general, did address Francis.

But the Vatican said Trudeau's office requested the prime minister be allowed to offer some introductory remarks, a request that arrived in the days before Francis left Rome but after the pope's itinerary had been finalized and printed.

A senior Canadian government official said Trudeau typically delivers remarks during visits by foreign leaders and that it was important for him to address Canadians during Francis' visit "particularly given the importance of the matter." It was, however, added in at the last minute.

Before Francis arrived in Quebec City, Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Marc Miller said the "gaps" in Francis' apology could not be ignored.

Echoing criticism from some school survivors, Miller noted that Francis didn't mention sexual abuse in his list of abuses endured by Indigenous children in the schools. Francis on Monday listed instead physical, verbal, psychological and spiritual abuse. In addition, Miller noted that Francis on Monday spoke of "evil" committed by individual Christians "but not the Catholic Church as an institution."

Phil Fontaine, a survivor of sexual abuse at the schools and former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said the additional reference Wednesday to "local Catholic institutions" went beyond Francis' original apology and was significant and the closest he could get to apologizing for the entire Church in Canada.

"It reflects the reality that the Catholic Church in Canada is not one institution. It is made up of about 73 different legal institutions, all of which were defendants in the lawsuits," Fontaine said in a statement.

Francis' visit has stirred mixed emotions among survivors and their relatives, as well as Indigenous leaders and community members. Some have welcomed his apology as genuine and useful in helping them heal. Others have said it was merely the first step in a long process of reconciliation. Still others have said it didn't go far enough in assuming responsibility for institutional wrongs dating back centuries.

Francis himself has acknowledged that the wounds will take time to heal and that his visit and apology were but first steps. On Wednesday he committed himself and the local Canadian church to "move forward on a fraternal and patient journey with all Canadians, in accordance with truth and justice, working for healing and reconciliation, and constantly inspired by hope."

"It is our desire to renew the relationship between the Church and the indigenous peoples of Canada, a relationship marked both by a love that has borne outstanding fruit and, tragically, deep wounds that we are committed to understanding and healing," he said.

But he didn't list any specific actions the Holy See was prepared to take.

Trudeau, too, said the visit was a beginning and that reconciliation was the duty of everyone. "It's our responsibility to see our differences not as an obstacle but as an occasion to learn, to better understand one another and to move to action."

Wounded Knee artifacts highlight slow pace of repatriations

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

BARRE, Mass. (AP) — One by one, items purportedly taken from Native Americans massacred at Wounded Knee Creek emerged from the dark, cluttered display cases where they've sat for more than a century in a museum in rural Massachusetts.

Moccasins, necklaces, clothing, ceremonial pipes, tools and other objects were carefully laid out on white backgrounds as a photographer dutifully snapped pictures under bright studio lights.

It was a key step in returning scores of items displayed at the Founders Museum in Barre to tribes in South Dakota that have sought them since the 1990s.

"This is real personal," said Leola One Feather, of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, as she observed the process as part of a two-person tribal delegation last week. "It may be sad for them to lose these items, but it's even

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sadder for us because we've been looking for them for so long."

Recent efforts to repatriate human remains and other culturally significant items such as those at the Founders Museum represent significant and solemn moments for tribes. But they also underscore the slow pace and the monumental task at hand.

Some 870,000 Native American artifacts — including nearly 110,000 human remains — that should be returned to tribes under federal law are still in the possession of colleges, museums and other institutions across the country, according to an Associated Press review of data maintained by the National Park Service.

The University of California, Berkeley tops the list, followed closely by the Ohio History Connection, the state's historical society. State museums and universities in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Alabama, Illinois and Kansas as well as Harvard University round out the other top institutions.

And that's not even counting items held by private institutions such as the Founders Museum, which maintains it does not receive federal funds and therefore doesn't fall under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, or NAGPRA, the 1990 law governing the return of tribal objects by institutions receiving federal money.

"They've had more than three decades," says Shannon O'Loughlin, chief executive of the Association on American Indian Affairs, a national group that assists tribes with repatriations. "The time for talk is over. Enough reports and studying. It's time to repatriate."

Museum officials say they've stepped up efforts with added funding and staff, but continue to struggle with identifying artifacts collected during archaeology's early years. They also say federal regulations governing repatriations remain time-consuming and cumbersome.

Dan Mogulof, an assistant vice chancellor at UC Berkeley, says the university is committed to repatriating the entire 123,000 artifacts in question "in the coming years at a pace that works for tribes."

In January, the university repatriated the remains of at least 20 victims of the Indian Island Massacre of 1860 to the Wiyot Tribe in Humboldt County, California. But its Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology still holds more than 9,000 sets of ancestral remains, mainly from Bay-area tribes.

"We acknowledge the great harm and pain we have caused Native American people," Mogulof said. "Our work will not be complete until all of the ancestors are home."

At the Ohio History Connection, officials are working to create an inter-tribal burial ground to help bury ancestral remains for tribes forced to move from Ohio as the nation expanded, says Alex Wesaw, the organization's director of American Indian relations.

The institution took similar steps in 2016 when it established a cemetery in northeast Ohio for the Delaware tribes of Oklahoma to re-bury nearly 90 ancestors who had been stored for centuries in museums in Pennsylvania.

Complicating matters, some of its more than 7,000 ancestral remains and 110,000 objects are thousands of years old, making it difficult to determine which modern-day tribe or tribes they should be returned to, Wesaw said.

At the Founders Museum, some 70 miles (112 kilometers) west of Boston, among the challenges has been determining what's truly from the Wounded Knee Massacre, says Ann Meilus, the museum's board president.

Some tribe members maintain as many as 200 items are from massacre victims, but Meilus said museum officials believe its less than a dozen, based on discussions with a tribe member more than a decade ago.

The collection was donated by Barre native Frank Root, a 19th century traveling showman who claimed he'd acquired the objects from a man tasked with digging mass graves following the massacre.

Among the macabre collection was a lock of hair reportedly cut from the scalp of Chief Spotted Elk, which the museum returned to one of the Lakota Sioux leader's descendants in 1999. It also includes a "ghost shirt," a sacred garment that some tribe members tragically believed could make them bulletproof.

"He sort of exaggerated things," Meilus said of Root. "In reality, we're not sure if any of the items were from Wounded Knee."

More than 200 men, women, children and elderly people were killed on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in 1890 in one of the country's worst massacres of Native Americans. The killings marked a seminal moment

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in the frontier battles the U.S. Army waged against tribes.

The U.S. Department of Interior recently proposed changes to the federal repatriation process that lay out more precise deadlines, clearer definitions and heftier penalties for noncompliance.

Tribe leaders say those steps are long overdue, but don't address other fundamental problems, such as inadequate federal funding for tribes to do repatriation work.

Many tribes also still object to requirements that they explain the cultural significance of an item sought for repatriation, including how they're used in tribal ceremonies, says Brian Vallo, a former governor of the Pueblo of Acoma in New Mexico who was involved in the 2020 repatriation of 20 ancestors from the National Museum of Finland and their re-burial at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado.

"That knowledge is only for us," he said. "It's not ever shared."

Stacy Laravie, the historic preservation officer for the Ponca Tribe in Nebraska, is optimistic museum leaders are sincere in seeking to rectify the past, in the wake of the national reckoning on racism that's reverberated through the country in recent years.

Last month, she traveled with a tribal delegation to Harvard to receive the tomahawk of her ancestor, the Native American civil rights leader Chief Standing Bear. She's also working with the university's Peabody Museum to potentially repatriate other items significant to her tribe.

"We're playing catch up from decades of things getting thrown under the rug," Laravie said. "But I do believe their hearts are in the right place."

Back at the Founders Museum, Jeffrey Not Help Him, an Oglala Sioux member whose family survived the Wounded Knee Massacre, hopes the items could return home this fall, as the museum has suggested.

"We look forward to putting them in a good place," Not Help Him said. "A place of honor."

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

06-13-17-23-27

(six, thirteen, seventeen, twenty-three, twenty-seven)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

15-23-27-30-44, Star Ball: 5, ASB: 2

(fifteen, twenty-three, twenty-seven, thirty, forty-four; Star Ball: five; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$17,410,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 1,025,000,000

Powerball

01-25-44-55-57, Powerball: 26, Power Play: 2

(one, twenty-five, forty-four, fifty-five, fifty-seven; Powerball: twenty-six; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$170,000,000

Judge puts hold on North Dakota trigger law banning abortion

By DAVE KOLPACK Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — A North Dakota judge on Wednesday put on hold the state's trigger law banning abortion while a lawsuit moves forward that argues it violates the state constitution, ruling that the attorney general had prematurely calculated the date when the ban should take effect.

Burleigh County District Judge Bruce Romanick sided with the state's only abortion clinic, the Red River Women's Clinic in Fargo, that Attorney General Drew Wrigley "prematurely attempted to execute" the trigger language. The clinic had argued that a 30-day clock should not have started until the U.S. Supreme Court issued its certified judgment on Tuesday.

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"Therefore the Court finds a temporary restraining order appropriate at this time," Romanick wrote.

The ban had been set to take effect on Thursday. Shortly after the ruling, Wrigley said he was heading to the North Dakota Legislative Council's office to drop off another certification of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that reversed Roe vs. Wade. He did not comment about the judge's order.

The ruling, which comes as various states grapple with potential bans and other restrictions often backed by Republican lawmakers, will give the Red River clinic more time to relocate a few miles away to Moorhead, Minnesota, where abortion remains legal. Clinic owner Tammi Kromenaker has said she will move there if litigation doesn't block the North Dakota ban.

Kromenaker has declined to say when the new clinic will be ready, and did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Planned Parenthood, which at one point had said it would step in if needed, has since said that Kromenaker has assured them that there would be no interruption in service due to the clinic's relocation.

Attorney Tom Dickson said the clinic was gratified by the court's ruling and looks forward to the next hearing.

Destini Spaeth, the volunteer leader of an independent group that helps fund abortions in North Dakota, said it was an "emotional day" with the prospect of Wednesday being the last day for medical procedures at the clinic. She said she screamed when she heard about the order.

"More time is what we need, in terms of getting all our ducks in a row," Spaeth said. "I'm not going to speculate on the rest of the lawsuit. We can't really depend on North Dakota in terms of legislation and the judicial branch. But this is a blessing."

Meetra Mehdizadeh, attorney for the Center for Reproductive Rights, which is helping the clinic with the suit, said the plaintiffs "will do everything in our power to fight this ban and keep abortion accessible in North Dakota for as long as possible."

As for the larger question in the suit, the clinic argues in its lawsuit that the North Dakota Constitution guarantees the rights of life, liberty, safety, and happiness, all of which protect the right to abortion. The judge did not address that part of the complaint in his order.

North Dakota's law would make abortion illegal in the state except in cases of rape, incest and the life of the mother.

Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

Black Hills Pioneer. July 23, 2022.

Editorial: 'Don't get stuck on stupid' — good news literacy critical more than ever

"Don't get stuck on stupid."

That was from Lt. Gen. Russel Honore to a reporter during a Sept. 20, 2005 press conference following Hurricane Katrina. "Don't confuse the people, please. You're a part of the public message. So help us get the message straight. And if you don't understand it, it may be confusing to the people."

That was before social media – the Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and Instagrams of the world, for the large part, gave the masses instant communication to large swaths of the country and world for that matter. It was up to professional reporters from various news outlets to disseminate accurate information to the public.

Now, with a click of a button, you can share a social media post, fact or fiction, to millions.

Let's look at one of the more recent FALSE social media posts that has people up in arms.

A satirical website, "The Kokomo press," posted a story and shared a screenshot of a fake email informing Kokomo High School staff about a new policy for students who identify as part animal, with the subject line 'OtherKin Policy.' Otherkin are people who identify as not entirely human. They may identify as animals or fictional or mythical characters."

Along with litter boxes, the faked email also alleged that dietary consideration would be implemented in accordance with cafeteria guidelines, extra time would be allotted between classes for students traveling on all fours, and that students requiring owners would be assigned volunteers to "leash them and help."

Kokomo School District Superintendent Mike Sargent was quoted in the article, stating that the ordeal was

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a non-issue among the students who knew immediately that the post was not true.

To be clear, the satirical piece was FALSE.

So then, how did do fabricated stories like this spread across the country rapidly?

While some people shared the story acknowledging it as a joke, others share it because of a lack of news literacy.

A large part of the blame comes from the deluge of information that comes into our email and social media accounts.

But the bulk of it comes from not reading or viewing the information in a thoughtful manner.

Practicing good news literacy is easy, but it does take a little effort.

- Pause. Don't let your emotions take over.

You read the headline of the story and it got your attention. That's what headlines are intended to do, and they are required to do so in very few words.

In those few words they need to gain your attention and give you a very brief synopsis of what the story is about.

After you read the headline, did it gain an emotional response? If you are upset by what you just read, that is a red flag that the story may be fake.

- Read more than just the first few paragraphs lower in the story.

Stories are designed to place the most important information at the top. We all have a limited amount of time in the day, and the critical material needs to be read first. However, many questions you may have after reading the first paragraph or two are likely answered later.

- Glance through the comments on the story.

Did someone reply with a fact check? Did numerous people say the information was malarkey?

- Get a different source.

Do a quick internet search. Can you find a difference news outlet publishing the same material, or are there sites out there stating the material was fake.

Getting your news from numerous sources is a good way of gaining a well-rounded picture of the story.

- Check the source.

If you got the information from the internet, go to the site's "About us" page. Some sites, such as The Kokomo Press, which published the litter box story, is clearly a site that publishes spoofs. In fact its "About us" portion of its Facebook page states, "Where Local Comedy and Satire Converge". Even when you do a quick Google search for The Kokomo Press, the second item on the list is "The Kokomo Press satire". If that's not a telltale sign that the info is not true, what is?

- Ask the source.

Go directly to the horse's mouth. Reply to the person who shared the post asking them for the original source or other evidence supporting the claim. How many times have we heard, "lots of people are saying" but the person who is telling us the information cannot name a single person they can attribute the information to. This is another red-flag that the story isn't accurate.

- If in doubt of a story's accuracy, don't share it.

We all love a good joke or a whopper of a tale, but make sure you label it as such before you send it on. And please don't blindly share stories, especially if you are upset at the story and haven't done your fact-checking homework.

With social media widely available to the masses, and for free, you have the responsibility to ensure the information you share is accurate, so you too, "Don't get stuck on stupid."

Yankton Press & Dakotan. July 26, 2022.

Editorial: Giago's Passing A Loss For South Dakota

South Dakotans needed Tim Giago's voice.

The award-winning Native American journalist passed away in Rapid City Sunday at age 88. With that, an extraordinary life journey came to an end.

It was not always an easy life, and the path was sometimes contentious and combative, which was exactly

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the point of Giago's journey.

He spent more than four decades as a South Dakota journalist, founding several newspapers that gave what he saw as an under-served Native American population coverage of the issues that directly impacted their lives.

He also served as a voice for Native Americans in this state and well beyond. His words and writings were born from experience.

For example, he wrote often of his time growing up in a Catholic boarding school on the Pine Ridge Reservation. It reflected a broader issue in Indian Country that remains unresolved to this day. By coincidence, at the moment Giago passed away, Pope Francis was in Canada to address that very same issue with indigenous tribes in that country and offering a formal apology. It was an issue Giago was dedicated to and was still addressing up to his death.

He also broke the mold for journalism in this state. According to a story in the Rapid City Journal, Giago wrote that he had been a reporter at the Journal when he got into the business and was frustrated by the limitations. "I was bothered by the fact that although I had been born and raised on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, I was seldom given an opportunity to do news stories about the people of the reservation," he recalled in a 2005 article.

That led to the founding of The Lakota Times in 1981, the first independent, non-tribal affiliated, Native newspaper in the country, according to the Black Hills Pioneer. The Times morphed into Indian Country Today in 1992. He later founded the Lakota Journal and Native Sun News Today.

Rapid City Mayor Steve Allender said Sunday, "Tim was the first to provide newspapers where Native Americans could express and share their opinions, to provide stories on important events and issues, and to feature Native traditions, culture and ideas."

Giago was also a syndicated columnist who reached a national audience, and he was an author and poet.

In so many ways, he opened minds and opened eyes.

Besides providing a Native American voice to the generally white palette of South Dakota journalism, Giago also trained Native Americans for the journalism field. Through this, he broadened the journalistic vision in this state.

For some, Giago was not always an easy read. His views could be passionate and at times controversial, in more ways than one. Some white readers may have been put off by his frank views on race relations in this state. Meanwhile, when Giago wrote, years after the event, that the American Indian Movement was to blame for the violence during the 1973 Wounded Knee occupation, his newspaper office was vandalized and firebombed, according to The Associated Press.

During his journey, he also challenged the state to forego Columbus Day and instead celebrate Native American Day, he criticized the use of Native American imagery as team mascots, he exposed the practice by banks bordering on Native land of "redlining" — charging Native Americans much higher interest rates than non-Natives were charged — and on and on.

A crusader to the last, Giago brought a perspective to South Dakota journalism that will never be forgotten. Neither will his impact on the Native American population he served or the state he influenced. His passing is a deep loss, but his legacy will stay with us for a long time to come.

END

Federal court denies Noem's Mount Rushmore fireworks appeal

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A federal appeals court on Wednesday dismissed an appeal from South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem in her lawsuit that attempted to overturn the National Park Service's denial of the state's application to hold a fireworks display at Mount Rushmore to celebrate 2021's Independence Day.

The Eighth Circuit of Appeals found that South Dakota's objections to the Park Service's decision were moot because it was in the past and the federal government was within its rights to deny the state from shooting off fireworks at the national memorial.

"The bottom line is that we cannot change what happened last year, and South Dakota has not demonstrated that deciding this otherwise moot case will impact any future permitting decision," Judge David Stras wrote in the court's opinion. "Any controversy has, in other words, fizzled out."

The Republican governor, who has positioned herself for a 2021 White House bid, has used the fireworks celebration as a political rallying point. She hosted former President Donald Trump at the 2020 celebration, and the patriotic display, held during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, figured largely in her rise to national prominence. It was also the first time fireworks had been held at Mount Rushmore in nearly a decade.

Noem blamed President Joe Biden for the permit denial and insisted that the court erred in its ruling.

"Unfortunately, the Biden Administration ran out the clock, blocking both our celebration and any serious judicial review," she said in a statement. "The Court should have ruled on the merits to set a standard for future fireworks celebrations."

South Dakota has paid nearly \$230,000 to Consovoy McCarthy, a Virginia-based law firm that has taken up Republican causes across the country, including working for Trump, to represent the state in court.

The court's decision left open the possibility of the Park Service allowing a pyrotechnic display in the future, and Noem has already applied for a permit for next year. The Park Service denied Noem's 2022 application for fireworks, citing objections from Native American tribes, wildfire risks and other environmental concerns.

The Park Service declined to comment on the ruling.

The National Parks Conservation Association, an independent organization that had filed an amicus brief in the case to support the Park Service, praised the ruling.

"The adverse effects from previous firework displays are well-documented, including threats to water quality and public health and safety, and to the very resources the park was designated to celebrate and protect," Christine Goepfert, the association's Midwest Associate Director, said in a statement.

Noem had also argued that the Park Service's decision was politically motivated as well as one that should only be made by Congress.

But Stras and the two other judges who issued the opinion disagreed: "Nobody has a right to shoot off fireworks on someone else's land, whether it be a neighbor; an area business; or as is the case here, a national park."

Rapid City police fatally shoot man outside casino

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Rapid City officers have fatally shot a man with a gun outside a casino, police officials said.

According to Rapid City Police Chief Don Hedrick, the shooting happened shortly after 10:30 p.m. MDT Tuesday after officers responded to reports of someone firing a gun in the casino's parking lot.

Hedrick says the man fired at officers when they arrived, KELO-TV reported.

"Our officers returned fire on the subject, and he is deceased. This appears to be an attack on police officers at this time," Hedrick said.

Officials say a patrol car was struck by gunfire, but no officers were hurt.

The South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation is leading the investigation with assistance from the Pennington County Sheriff's Office.

JetBlue agrees to buy Spirit for \$3.8 billion

Associated Press undefined

JetBlue has agreed to buy Spirit Airlines for \$3.8 billion in a deal that would create the nation's fifth largest airline if approved by U.S. regulators.

The agreement Thursday comes a day after Spirit's attempt to merge with Frontier Airlines fell apart. Spirit had recommended its shareholders approve a lower offer from Frontier, saying that antitrust regulators are more likely to reject the bid from JetBlue.

"This combination is an exciting opportunity to diversify and expand our network, add jobs and new possibilities for crewmembers, and expand our platform for profitable growth." JetBlue CEO Robin Hayes said

in a statement.

The combined airline, which will be based in New York and led by Hayes, would have a fleet of 458 aircraft. The airlines will continue to operate independently until after the transaction closes.

JetBlue said Thursday that it would pay \$33.50 per share in cash for Spirit, including a prepayment of \$2.50 per share in cash payable once Spirit stockholders approve the transaction. There's also a ticking fee of 10 cents per month starting in January 2023 through closing.

If the transaction is completed before December 2023, the deal will be for \$33.50 per share, increasing over time to up to \$34.15 per share, in the event the transaction closes at the outside date in July 2024.

If the deal doesn't close due to antitrust reasons, JetBlue will pay Spirit a reverse break-up fee of \$70 million and stockholders of Spirit a reverse break-up fee of \$400 million less any amounts paid to stockholders of Spirit prior to termination.

JetBlue anticipates \$600-700 million in annual savings once the transaction is complete. Annual revenue for the combined company is anticipated to be about \$11.9 billion, based on 2019 revenues.

The deal still needs the required regulatory approvals and approval from Spirit's stockholders. The companies expect to conclude the regulatory process and close the transaction no later than the first half of 2024.

US economy likely grew modestly, if at all, last quarter

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — After going backward from January through March, the U.S. economy probably didn't do much better in the spring.

On Thursday morning, the government will reveal just how weak economic growth was in the April-June quarter — and perhaps offer clues about whether the United States may be approaching a recession.

The report comes at a critical time: On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve raised its benchmark interest rate by a sizable three-quarters of a point for a second straight time in its push to conquer the worst inflation outbreak in four decades. The Fed is aiming for a notoriously difficult "soft landing": An economic slowdown that manages to rein in rocketing prices without triggering a recession.

Forecasters surveyed by the data firm FactSet have estimated that the nation's gross domestic product — the broadest measure of economic output — eked out a tepid annual gain of 0.8% last quarter. Modest as it would be, that would amount to a sharp improvement over the economy's 1.6% contraction in the January-March quarter.

Still, quarterly growth that sluggish would represent a drastic weakening from the 5.7% growth the economy achieved last year. That was the fastest calendar-year expansion since 1984, reflecting how vigorously the economy roared back from the brief but brutal pandemic recession of 2020.

Some economists fear that GDP actually shrank again from April through June, delivering the back-to-back negative quarters that constitute an informal definition of recession. The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's running estimate of GDP growth, based on available economic data, is signaling a 1.2% second quarter decline.

Most economists, though, point, in particular, to a still-robust labor market, with 11 million job openings and an uncommonly low 3.6% unemployment rate, to suggest that a recession, if one does occur, is still a ways off.

For one thing, the first-quarter economic contraction wasn't as alarming as it looked. It was caused mainly by factors that don't reflect the economy's underlying health: A wider trade deficit, a consequence of Americans' keen appetite for foreign-made goods, slashed 3.2 percentage points from first-quarter growth. And a post-holiday-season drop in company inventories lopped off an additional 0.4 percentage point.

The strength of America's job market, Fed Chair Jerome Powell said at a news conference Wednesday, "makes you question the GDP data."

The economy posted some encouraging news Wednesday: June reports on the trade deficit (narrower), inventories (higher) and orders for high-priced factory goods (better than expected) suggested that second quarter GDP might turn out to be stronger than previously feared. Economists at JP Morgan have doubled

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their forecast for April-June growth to an annual pace of 1.4%.

Even so, recession risks are growing as the Fed's policymakers pursue an aggressive course of rate hikes that, while they may ease in the months ahead, will likely extend into 2023. The Fed's hikes have already led to a doubling of the average rate on a 30-year fixed mortgage in the past year, to 5.5%. Home sales, which are especially sensitive to interest rate changes, have tumbled.

Some economists have echoed an observation Powell made at his news conference Wednesday: That the economy, looked at as a whole, does not appear to be in the grip of recession.

"We do not think the economy is in recession at present," Tim Quinlan and Shannon Seery, economists at Wells Fargo, wrote this week.

Quinlan and Seery estimated that GDP expanded at a glacial 0.2% annual pace in the April-June quarter — "a harbinger of worse to come as we are forecasting the economy to enter a mild recession early next year."

Even if the economy does record a second straight quarter of negative GDP, most economists would not regard it as signaling a recession. The definition of recession that is most widely accepted is the one determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research, a group of economists whose Business Cycle Dating Committee defines a recession as "a significant decline in economic activity that is spread across the economy and lasts more than a few months."

The committee assesses a range of factors before publicly declaring the death of an economic expansion and the birth of a recession — and it often does so well after the fact.

US not yet in recession and 4 other takeaways from the Fed

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Jerome Powell delivered a tough message at the start of a news conference Wednesday: Inflation is way too high, and the Federal Reserve is laser-focused on taming it with higher borrowing costs.

Yet despite his resolute words, the Fed chair also said for the first time that the central bank's actions are already having an effect on the economy in ways that could slow the worst inflation the nation has endured in four decades.

With the Fed's benchmark interest rate now at a level that's believed to neither stimulate nor restrain growth, Powell said the pace of rate hikes could slow in the coming months. And he pointed to signs that many businesses are having an easier time filling jobs, a trend that would limit pay increases and potentially slow inflation.

"There were some hints that we're closer to the end than the beginning" of the Fed's efforts to tighten credit, said Michael Feroli, an economist at JPMorgan Chase and a former Fed staffer.

Powell's suggestion that the Fed could moderate its future rate hikes after it announced a three-quarter-point hike Wednesday — its second in a row of that substantial size — helped touch off a celebratory rally in the stock market, with the S&P 500 jumping 2.6% and the tech-heavy Nasdaq rocketing 4.1%, its biggest gain in more than two years.

Some economists didn't share the market's optimism. They noted that Powell kept the door open to another big rate increase when the Fed next meets in September. The Fed chair also indicated that even if the economy were to fall into a recession, the central bank would keep raising rates if it deemed that necessary to curb still-high inflation.

When asked at his news conference whether a recession would alter the Fed's course of rate hikes, Powell said simply, "We're going to be focused on getting inflation back down."

Here are five takeaways from the Fed's interest-rate setting policy meeting and Powell news conference:

POWELL: U.S. NOT IN RECESSION

A slew of recent data has signaled the economy is weakening. Economists are increasingly forecasting a recession for later this year or in 2023. Powell, though, pointed Wednesday to the robust labor market as evidence the economy isn't in recession, at least not yet.

Employers, he noted, added 2.7 million jobs in the first half of the year, the 3.6% U.S. unemployment rate

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is near a 50-year low and wage growth is strong.

"It doesn't make sense that the economy could be in recession with this kind of thing happening," the Fed chair said.

JOBS OVER GDP

On Thursday, the government will estimate second-quarter gross domestic product, the broadest measure of the nation's output of goods and services. Some economists think the GDP report will show that the economy contracted for a second straight quarter, which would meet an informal definition of recession.

But even if it does, the definition of recession that is most widely accepted is the one determined by the National Bureau of Economic Research, a group of economists whose Business Cycle Dating Committee defines a recession as "a significant decline in economic activity that is spread across the economy and lasts more than a few months."

Powell also noted that the government's estimate of quarterly GDP is often significantly revised later and that the initial reports on economic growth should be taken with "a grain of salt."

The Fed chair did sound a cautionary note, pointing out that there are signs that momentum in the job market is easing. Job openings have declined modestly, more people are seeking unemployment aid and hiring is lower than it was at the start of the year.

SLOWER GROWTH, HIRING GOOD

But even those signs of a slightly weaker job market are not all bad news, at least from the Fed's perspective.

The Fed wants to cool the economy through its rate hikes, which make home mortgages, auto loans and business borrowing more expensive. As consumers and businesses spend less, the resulting pullback in demand can bring inflation down closer to the Fed's 2% annual target.

"We think it's necessary to have growth slow down, and growth is going to be slowing this year," Powell said.

HOW HIGH WILL RATES GO?

Since early this year, the Fed has steadily ratcheted up its forecasts for how fast and how high it would have to raise rates to conquer inflation. On Wednesday, though, Powell said that estimates that Fed policymakers made a month ago for where rates would go next was still the best guide.

In June officials projected that the Fed's key rate would reach between 3.25% and 3.5% at the end of this year, which Powell said was a "moderately restrictive" level. And at least two additional rate hikes were forecast for next year.

For the Fed to meet that year-end target would involve a half-point increase in September, and two quarter-point hikes in November and December. Such increases would represent a much more modest pace than the 2.25 percentage points of hikes the Fed has now carried out in just the past four meetings, the fastest pace since the early 1980s.

THE FED ISN'T ALONE

Other major central banks around the world have also been imposing big rate increases to combat inflation, which has spiked in nearly all advanced economies.

The European Union raised its short-term rate by a half-point last week. Canada's central bank announced a full percentage point increase earlier this month. Last month, the Swiss National Bank implemented a half-point hike, its first increase in 15 years.

Although higher rates around the world could help throttle inflation, they also carry the threat of causing a global economic slowdown.

This week, the International Monetary Fund downgraded its outlook for world economic growth to 3.2% this year. That was down from a 3.6% estimate in April and much slower than last year's 6.1% pace.

What's in, and out, of Democrats' inflation-fighting package

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By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — What started as a \$4 trillion effort during President Joe Biden's first months in office to rebuild America's public infrastructure and family support systems has ended up a much slimmer, but not unsubstantial, compromise package of inflation-fighting health care, climate change and deficit reduction strategies that appears headed toward quick votes in Congress.

Lawmakers are poring over the \$739 billion proposal struck by two top negotiators, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and holdout Sen. Joe Manchin, the conservative West Virginia Democrat who rejected Biden's earlier drafts but surprised colleagues late Wednesday with a new one.

What's in, and out, of the Democrats' 725-page "Inflation Reduction Act of 2022" as it stands now:

LOWER PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Launching a long-sought goal, the bill would allow the Medicare program to negotiate prescription drug prices with pharmaceutical companies, saving the federal government some \$288 billion over the 10-year budget window.

Those new revenues would be put back into lower costs for seniors on medications, including a \$2,000 out-of-pocket cap for older adults buying prescriptions from pharmacies.

Money would also be used to provide free vaccinations for seniors, who now are among the few not guaranteed free access, according to a summary document.

HELP PAY FOR HEALTH INSURANCE

The bill would extend the subsidies provided during the COVID-19 pandemic to help some Americans who buy health insurance on their own.

Under earlier pandemic relief, the extra help was set to expire this year. But the bill would allow the assistance to keep going for three more years, lowering insurance premiums for people who are purchasing their own health care policies.

'SINGLE BIGGEST INVESTMENT IN CLIMATE CHANGE IN U.S. HISTORY'

The bill would invest \$369 billion over the decade in climate change-fighting strategies including investments in renewable energy production and tax rebates for consumers to buy new or used electric vehicles.

It's broken down to include \$60 billion for a clean energy manufacturing tax credit and \$30 billion for a production tax credit for wind and solar, seen as ways to boost and support the industries that can help curb the country's dependence on fossil fuels.

For consumers, there are tax breaks as incentives to go green. One is a 10-year consumer tax credit for renewable energy investments in wind and solar. There are tax breaks for buying electric vehicles, including a \$4,000 tax credit for purchase of used electric vehicles and \$7,500 for new ones.

In all, Democrats believe the strategy could put the country on a path to cut greenhouse gas emissions 40% by 2030, and "would represent the single biggest climate investment in U.S. history, by far."

HOW TO PAY FOR ALL OF THIS?

The biggest revenue-raiser in the bill is a new 15% minimum tax on corporations that earn more than \$1 billion in annual profits.

It's a way to clamp down on some 200 U.S. companies that avoid paying the standard 21% corporate tax rate, including some that end up paying no taxes at all.

The new corporate minimum tax would kick in after the 2022 tax year and raise some \$313 billion over the decade.

Money is also raised by boosting the IRS to go after tax cheats. The bill proposes an \$80 billion investment in taxpayer services, enforcement and modernization, which is projected to raise \$203 billion in new revenue — a net gain of \$124 billion over the decade.

The bill sticks with Biden's original pledge not to raise taxes on families or businesses making less than \$400,000 a year.

The lower drug prices for seniors are paid for with savings from Medicare's negotiations with the drug companies.

EXTRA MONEY TO PAY DOWN DEFICITS

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With \$739 billion in new revenue and some \$433 billion in new investments, the bill promises to put the difference toward deficit reduction.

Federal deficits have spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic when federal spending soared and tax revenues fell as the nation's economy churned through shutdowns, closed offices and other massive changes.

The nation has seen deficits rise and fall in recent years. But overall federal budgeting is on an unsustainable path, according to the Congressional Budget Office, which put out a new report this week on long-term projections.

WHAT'S LEFT BEHIND

This latest package after 18 months of start-stop negotiations leaves behind many of Biden's more ambitious goals.

While Congress did pass a \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill of highway, broadband and other investments that Biden signed into law last year, the president's and the party's other priorities have slipped away.

Among them, a continuation of a \$300 monthly child tax credit that was sending money directly to families during the pandemic and is believed to have widely reduced child poverty.

Also gone, for now, are plans for free pre-kindergarten and free community college, as well as the nation's first paid family leave program that would have provided up to \$4,000 a month for births, deaths and other pivotal needs.

Rejected by courts, retirees take last shot to save pensions

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dave Muffley thought he had it made when it came to a solid retirement. The Indiana man spent roughly 30 years as a salaried maintenance technician for Delphi Corp., a subsidiary of General Motors Corp., and expected to retire with a comfortable income by the time he hit 62.

But when GM plunged into the biggest industrial bankruptcy proceeding in history in 2009, and the federal government negotiated its restructuring, Muffley's expected retirement package was slashed, and his life's trajectory would spiral.

The Russiaville resident, now 68, lost 30% of his retirement savings, his promised health care coverage and his faith in government.

Muffley is one of an estimated 20,000 Delphi workers hurt by the GM bankruptcy, and many have spent the past 13 years fighting to get back what they lost. After taking the issue all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declined to hear their case this year, the retirees were cut off from their last legal remedy.

Now, they're looking to Congress to do for them what the courts would not. Legislation to restore the pension savings of the workers has gained support from the left and the right in Congress. It passed the House on Wednesday and supporters are hopeful the Senate will follow suit.

It's named the Susan Muffley Act, after Dave's wife, who became sick and died while they were grappling with the hit to his retirement fund.

The retirees allege that they were discriminated against as salaried employees, compared with union-covered workers whose pensions were preserved through the bankruptcy. The salaried workers are the engineers, technicians and mid-level swath of employees who stood between the well-paid executives and the union-covered workers at the company.

After taking a buyout from Delphi at age 55 to avoid a potential layoff, Muffley says, he took one job after another to tide him over until he could retire at 62. It was in that time that his wife was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and died within three years.

"Things fell apart, and things fell apart in a big way," Muffley says. He estimated he's lost at least \$130,000 in savings due to the pension cuts over the years, and he's not alone.

Despite the bipartisan support, there is some resistance in Congress to spending tax dollars to bail out pension funds.

For the retirees, the struggle to get the legislation into law is the latest and perhaps last battle in an ordeal that started when the workers got swept up in macroeconomic crosscurrents of the recession.

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Muffley and others in 2009 established the Delphi Salaried Retirees Association — something of a support group for workers at the auto parts company who had to get through not only job losses, but retirement cuts and the loss of health plans.

Retirees tell stories of loss, severe depression, divorce and altered courses of their lives. Some retirees' children put off going to college, other workers faced health difficulties from the stress of the cuts.

The salaried retirees have gotten support from every corner of local government, state legislatures, attorneys general and even sympathetic words from this president and the last.

Presidential candidate Joe Biden in September 2020 said he would work with senators to help restore Delphi workers' retirement savings. The next month, President Donald Trump issued a memo calling on the Treasury Department and other agencies to act on the issue.

But those words didn't translate into action. Nothing came of Trump's memo. Nor did anything happen in the first 18 months of the Biden administration.

A number of legislative proposals to help the Delphi workers have come and gone over the years without becoming law. The latest bill, which cleared the House on a 254-175 vote, would restore the workers' benefits and retroactively make up for what they've lost since 2009.

Members of Congress from both parties, mostly from Michigan, Indiana and Ohio, have sponsored the legislation. Reps. Dan Kildee, D-Mich., and Mike Turner, R-Ohio, and Ohio Sens. Sherrod Brown, a Democrat, and Rob Portman, a Republican, are among those backing it.

Co-sponsors span the spectrum, from Rep. Mo Brooks of Alabama, a founder of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, to Rep. Andy Levin of Michigan, a member of the progressive caucus.

The White House on Friday issued its own a statement in support of the bill, saying the administration "supports a secure retirement for affected workers."

Muffley points to other legislative saves for pension plans, like the bipartisan Butch Lewis Act that was included in the American Rescue Plan. That provision stalled the insolvency of roughly 200 multi-employer pension plans for 30 years, saving the benefits of roughly 3 million workers. Biden spotlighted the measure in a recent visit to Ohio.

But there are skeptics. During House debate on Wednesday, Rep. Bob Good, R-Va., called the measure another "Democrat bailout bill by the sponsors of the nanny state."

"Why should the constituents of my Virginia 5th District pay for someone else's retirement plan?" he said.

HOW IT GOT HERE

When GM went through bankruptcy in June 2009 due to massive losses during the Great Recession, the company said it would not assume pension liabilities for the Delphi unit's salaried workers — largely because it didn't have an agreement with them, as it had negotiated with unions for hourly workers.

The government's Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. then assumed responsibility for the 20,000 salaried workers' pension plan, and cut workers' and retirees' monthly benefits if they were larger than the statutory maximum benefit that the agency was guaranteed to pay. As a result, some retirees' pensions were cut by as much as 70%. But GM did step in to cover pension losses for union workers.

Those who lost benefits were 4,044 workers in Indiana, 5,181 in Ohio, 5,859 in Michigan and thousands of others around the country.

While cutbacks in bankruptcies aren't uncommon, the Delphi workers argued it was unfair that union workers' pensions were protected by GM while salaried workers were left with permanent cuts to their retirement fund as well as permanent cuts to their health benefits.

The arrangement played out in conjunction with a deal negotiated by then-Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner and then-National Economic Council Director Larry Summers, who led a task force that sank millions of dollars into saving GM.

Part of the rationale at the time was the need to keep union workers from striking, while salaried workers were seen as more expendable.

A 2013 inspector general's report said that while the union workers had leverage "to prolong Delphi's bankruptcy or strike, which GM believed would significantly impact its ability to survive, Delphi's salaried retirees had no leverage, other than what they hoped would be political leverage."

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The report estimated the salaried retirees had lost \$440 million in pension benefits. In today's dollars, the retirees would need \$900 million to be made whole.

In a 2011 op-ed in The Washington Post, Geithner said the bankruptcy "meant sacrifices across the board — from managers, unions, stockholders, creditors and dealers." But the intent was "to stop the American automobile industry from unraveling" and causing a deeper recession that could have cost tens of thousands of additional jobs.

Geithner declined to comment for this story. Summers did not respond to a request for comment.

In January, the Supreme Court denied Delphi retirees' efforts to review their case. The court effectively upheld a federal court's ruling that the law allows for distressed pension plans to be closed without court approval.

Kildee, one of the bill's sponsors, told The Associated Press the case was "particularly egregious because it was the federal government that engineered the bankruptcy."

Turner said during the House debate that legislation was necessary because "no one else has had the White House pick winners and losers and take away their pensions. It is our responsibility as members of Congress to address this injustice."

WHAT THE WORKERS SAY

"The reality is that salaried workers were singled out and it's the government that caused this," said Bruce Gump, who lost 40% of his pension and serves as chairman of the Delphi Salaried Retirees Association.

"I was 57 when this happened to me and it was a tough time, for this to happen at the bottom of the recession," he said. "The fact that we're finally getting the attention of the secretary of treasury and Congress creates some hope in us."

Julie Naylor, a 68-year-old former nurse who lives in a suburb of Greenville, South Carolina, says restoring her husband's pension and health care would mean she could afford basic necessities for her family. Her husband, Bruce Naylor, suffered a stroke after a routine outpatient surgery, caused by an undiscovered brain tumor. With her husband now paralyzed on his right side and with limited speech abilities, Julie Naylor says without the health care promised to him, the medical bills have piled up.

Bruce Naylor is 6 feet, 6 inches and too tall for his wheelchair. Julie Naylor says if her family had the money owed to them through his pension, "I wouldn't have to wait for Medicare" to be approved for a chair that fits. "We could've just bought it with what is owed us," she said.

"We live a very austere life and a very uncertain life," she said. "I never thought he could lose half of his pension and half of his life savings."

WHAT'S NEXT

The legislation would require the government to "top up" the pensions of the salaried Delphi workers, as GM did for the unionized workers.

Bill Kadereit, president of the National Retiree Legislative Network, said the Delphi workers' fight highlights the archaic nature of corporate bankruptcy law, and how it can harm workers.

"In many ways the federal government basically threw them under the bus and made the sacrifice of these people to make a deal," he said.

To Muffley, that's what made the deal so painful.

"I can't believe our government would do something like this," he said in advance of the House vote.

And Muffley has a warning for others who may think their own promised benefits are secure: "If the government could do this to us, what else could they do to you?"

Russia steps up strikes on Ukraine amid counterattacks

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces on Thursday launched massive missile strikes on Ukraine's Kyiv and Chernihiv regions, areas that haven't been targeted in weeks, while Ukrainian officials announced an operation to liberate an occupied region in the country's south.

Kyiv regional governor Oleksiy Kuleba said on Telegram that a settlement in the Vyshgorod district of the

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region was targeted early on Thursday morning; an "infrastructure object" was hit. It wasn't immediately clear if there were any casualties.

Vyshhgorod is located 20 kilometers (about 12 miles) north of downtown Kyiv. Kuleba linked the strikes with the Day of Statehood, which Ukraine was marking for the first time on Thursday.

"Russia, with the help of missiles, is mounting revenge for the widespread popular resistance, which the Ukrainians were able to organize precisely because of their statehood," Kuleba told Ukrainian television. "Ukraine has already broken Russia's plans and will continue to defend itself."

Chernihiv governor Vyacheslav Chaus reported that multiple missiles were fired from the territory of Belarus at the village of Honcharivska.

Russian troops withdrew from the Kyiv and Chernihiv regions months ago after failing to capture either. The renewed strikes on the areas come a day after the leader of pro-Kremlin separatists in the east, Denis Pushilin, publicly called on the Russian forces to "liberate Russian cities founded by the Russian people — Kyiv, Chernihiv, Poltava, Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Lutsk."

Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, also came under a barrage of shelling overnight, its mayor Ihor Terkhov said. The southern city of Mykolaiv was fired at as well, with one person sustaining injuries.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian military continued to counterattack in the occupied southern region of Kherson, striking a key bridge over the Dnieper River on Wednesday.

Ukrainian media on Thursday quoted Ukraine's presidential adviser, Oleksiy Arestovich, as saying that the operation to liberate Kherson "has already begun." Arestovich said Kyiv's forces were planning to isolate Russian troops there and leave them with three options — to "retreat, if possible, surrender or be destroyed."

Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, in televised remarks on Wednesday said he was "cautious" in assessing the timeline of the possible counteroffensive. "I would really like it to be much faster," he said, adding that "the enemy is now concentrating the maximum number (of forces) precisely in the Kherson direction."

"A very large-scale movement of their troops has begun, they are gathering additional forces," Danilov warned.

The British military estimated Thursday that Ukraine's counteroffensive in Kherson is "gathering momentum".

"Their forces have highly likely established a bridgehead south of the Ingulets River, which forms the northern boundary of Russian-occupied Kherson," the British Defense Ministry said on Thursday.

It added that Ukraine has used its new long-range artillery to damage at least three of the bridges across the Dnieper River, "which Russia relies upon to supply the areas under its control." The 1,000-meter-long Antonivsky bridge, which Ukrainian forces struck on Wednesday, is likely to be "unusable," the British Defense Ministry concluded.

Ukraine's presidential office said Thursday morning that Russian shelling of cities and villages over the past 24 hours killed at least five civilians, all of them in the eastern Donetsk region, and wounded nine more.

Fighting in recent weeks has focused on the Donetsk region. It has intensified in recent days as Russian forces appeared to emerge from a reported "operational pause" after capturing the neighboring Luhansk region.

A missile struck a residential building in Toretsk early Thursday morning, destroying two floors. "Missile terror again. We will not give up... We will not be intimidated," Donetsk regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said on Telegram.

Analysts with the Institute for the Study of War believe that Russian forces are focusing their efforts on capturing the cities of Bakhmut and Siversk in Donetsk province.

"Russian forces have committed enough resources to conduct near-daily ground assaults and to seize territory on these two axes but have been unable to sustain a similar offensive operational tempo or to make similar territorial gains elsewhere in Ukraine," the Institute said.

Kim threatens to use nukes amid tensions with US, S. Korea

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

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SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un warned he's ready to use his nuclear weapons in potential military conflicts with the United States and South Korea, state media said Thursday, as he unleashed fiery rhetoric against rivals he says are pushing the Korean Peninsula to the brink of war.

Kim's speech to war veterans on the 69th anniversary of the end of the 1950-53 Korean War was apparently meant to boost internal unity in the impoverished country amid pandemic-related economic difficulties. While Kim has increasingly threatened his rivals with nuclear weapons, it's unlikely that he would use them first against the superior militaries of the U.S. and its allies, observers say.

"Our armed forces are completely prepared to respond to any crisis, and our country's nuclear war deterrent is also ready to mobilize its absolute power dutifully, exactly and swiftly in accordance with its mission," Kim said in Wednesday's speech, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

He accused the United States of "demonizing" North Korea to justify its hostile policies. Kim said regular U.S.-South Korea military drills that he claimed target the North highlight U.S. "double standards" and "gangster-like" aspects because it brands North Korea's routine military activities — an apparent reference to its missile tests — as provocations or threats.

Kim also alleged the new South Korean government of President Yoon Suk Yeol is led by "confrontation maniacs" and "gangsters" who have gone further than previous South Korean conservative governments. Since taking office in May, the Yoon government has moved to strengthen Seoul's military alliance with the United States and bolster its own capacity to neutralize North Korean nuclear threats including a preemptive strike capability.

"Talking about military action against our nation, which possesses absolute weapons that they fear the most, is preposterous and is very dangerous suicidal action," Kim said. "Such a dangerous attempt will be immediately punished by our powerful strength and the Yoon Suk Yeol government and his military will be annihilated."

South Korea expressed "deep regret" over Kim's threat and said it maintains a readiness to cope with any provocation by North Korea in "a powerful, effective manner."

In a statement read by spokesperson Kang In-sun, Yoon's presidential national security office said South Korea will safeguard its national security and citizens' safety based on a solid alliance with the United States. It urged North Korea to return to talks to take steps toward denuclearization.

Earlier Thursday, South Korea's Defense Ministry repeated its earlier position that it's been boosting its military capacity and joint defense posture with the United States to cope with escalating North Korean nuclear threats.

In April, Kim said North Korea could preemptively use nuclear weapons if threatened, saying they would "never be confined to the single mission of war deterrent." Kim's military has also test-launched nuclear-capable missiles that place both the U.S. mainland and South Korea within striking distance. U.S. and South Korean officials have repeatedly said in the past few months that North Korea is ready to conduct its first nuclear test in five years.

Kim is seeking greater public support as his country's economy has been battered by pandemic-related border shutdowns, U.S.-led sanctions and his own mismanagement. In May, North Korea also admitted to its first COVID-19 outbreak, though the scale of illness and death is widely disputed in a country that lacks the modern medical capacity to handle it.

"Kim's rhetoric inflates external threats to justify his militarily focused and economically struggling regime," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. "North Korea's nuclear and missile programs are in violation of international law, but Kim tries to depict his destabilizing arms buildup as a righteous effort at self-defense."

Experts say North Korea will likely intensify its threats against the U.S. and South Korea as the allies prepare to expand summertime exercises. In recent years, the South Korean and U.S. militaries have canceled or downsized some of their regular exercises due to concerns about COVID-19 and to support now-stalled U.S.-led diplomacy aimed at convincing North Korea to give up its nuclear program in return for economic and political benefits.

During Wednesday's speech, Kim said his government recently set tasks to improve its military capability more speedily to respond to military pressure campaigns by its enemies, suggesting that he intends to go

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ahead with an expected nuclear test.

But Cheong Seong-Chang at the private Sejong Institute in South Korea said North Korea won't likely conduct its nuclear test before China, its major ally and biggest aid benefactor, holds its Communist Party convention in the autumn. He said China worries that a North Korean nuclear test could give the United States a justification to boost its security partnerships with its allies that it could use to check Chinese influence in the region.

North Korea recently said it is moving to overcome the COVID-19 outbreak amid plummeting fever cases, but experts say it's unclear if the country can lift its strict restrictions soon because it could face a viral resurgence later this year. During Wednesday's event, Kim, veterans and others didn't wear masks, state media photos showed. On Thursday, North Korea reported 11 fever cases, a huge drop from the peak of about 400,000 a day in May.

North Korea has rejected U.S. and South Korean offers for medical relief items. It has also said it won't return to talks with the United States unless it first abandons its hostile policies on the North, in an apparent reference to U.S.-led sanctions and U.S.-South Korean military drills.

'New Cold War': Russia and West vie for influence in Africa

By ANDREW MELDRUM and MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Russian, French and American leaders are crisscrossing Africa to win support for their positions on the war in Ukraine, waging what some say is the most intense competition for influence on the continent since the Cold War.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and French President Emmanuel Macron are each visiting several African countries this week. Samantha Power, head of the U.S. Agency for International Development, went to Kenya and Somalia last week. The U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Linda Thomas-Greenfield, will go to Ghana and Uganda next week.

"It's like a new Cold War is playing out in Africa, where the rival sides are trying to gain influence," said William Gumede, director of Democracy Works, a foundation promoting good governance.

Lavrov, in his travels across the drought- and hunger-stricken continent, has sought to portray the West as the villain, blaming it for rising food prices, while the Western leaders have accused the Kremlin of cynically using food as a weapon and waging an imperial-style war of conquest — words calculated to appeal to listeners in post-colonial Africa.

Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has been working to win support in Africa for several years, reinvigorating friendships that date back a half-century, when the Soviet Union backed many African movements fighting to end colonial rule.

"Now that campaign has gone into high gear," Gumede said.

Moscow's influence in Africa was on display in March during the U.N. vote to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While 28 African nations voted in favor of the resolution, a significant minority of countries on the continent — 25 — either voted to abstain or did not vote at all.

Russia's top diplomat this week visited Egypt, Congo, Uganda and Ethiopia, pledging friendship and charging the U.S. and European countries with driving up food prices by pursuing "reckless" environmental policies. He also accused them of hoarding food during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The situation in Ukraine did additionally negatively affect food markets, but not due to the Russian special operation, rather due to the absolutely inadequate reaction of the West, which announced sanctions," Lavrov said in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital.

Lavrov was warmly received in Uganda by President Yoweri Museveni, who for years has been a U.S. ally but has refused to criticize Russia over the invasion. Museveni even suggested at the outbreak of the war that Putin's actions might be understandable because Ukraine is in Russia's sphere of influence.

Lavrov voiced support for reform of the U.N. Security Council to give African countries permanent seats and greater influence.

Appearing with Lavrov, the Ugandan leader spoke fondly of old ties with Russia, asking how he could spurn Moscow when he has good relations with countries that participated in slavery.

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Museveni, an opinion leader on the continent who has held power for three decades, is an obvious choice for Russia as someone to strengthen ties with, said Ugandan political analyst Asuman Bisiika.

"Uganda is the center of gravity in East Africa," Bisiika said.

Museveni, 77, has been strictly wearing a mask in public since the COVID-19 outbreak. But he did not have one on when greeting Lavrov in front of photographers, apparently wanting to show warmth to the Russian. Museveni had a mask back on in his next public appearance a day later.

Russia is also courting African public opinion through its state television network, RT, formerly known as Russia Today. RT has announced that it will open a new bureau in Johannesburg.

RT was abruptly removed from Africa's biggest pay-TV platform in Africa, Johannesburg-based Multichoice, in March after the European Union and Britain imposed sanctions against Russia. It is not clear whether establishing the new bureau will enable RT to resume broadcasts to Africa through Multichoice, which claims nearly 22 million subscribers on the continent.

"For Russia, it is the battle to be heard in Africa. It is not important for the actual war effort but for their long-term political influence," Anton Harber, professor of journalism at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. "They see it as fertile ground to cultivate their influence, and, of course, votes in the U.N. are important."

On his tour of Africa, France's Macron accused the Kremlin of using TV channels like RT to spread propaganda in support of the war. And he charged the Kremlin with blackmailing the world by thwarting the export of grain from Ukraine.

"They are blackmailing because they are the ones who blocked cereals in Ukraine. They are the ones who regulate their cereals," he said in Benin. His itinerary also included Cameroon and Guinea-Bissau.

Macron appealed to Africans to side against Russia.

"I'm telling you here in Africa, a continent that has suffered from colonial imperialism: Russia is one of the last colonial, imperial powers. She decides to invade a neighboring country to defend her interests," he said. "That's the reality."

Power, the top U.S. AID official, was in East Africa to pledge aid to help the region's fight against hunger amid a devastating multi-year drought. She did not hold back in criticizing Russia.

"By blockading Ukraine's grain exports and restricting the trade of Russia's own fertilizer, Putin's actions have had the consequence of inflicting pain on the people of Kenya and on other countries throughout the world," Power said in Nairobi. "He is hurting the people of Kenya in order to benefit his own situation."

Hidden Menace: Massive methane leaks speed up climate change

By MICHAEL BIESECKER and HELEN WIEFFERING Associated Press

LENORAH, Texas (AP) — To the naked eye, the Mako Compressor Station outside the dusty West Texas crossroads of Lenorah appears unremarkable, similar to tens of thousands of oil and gas operations scattered throughout the oil-rich Permian Basin.

What's not visible through the chain-link fence is the plume of invisible gas, primarily methane, billowing from the gleaming white storage tanks up into the cloudless blue sky.

The Mako station, owned by a subsidiary of West Texas Gas Inc., was observed releasing an estimated 870 kilograms of methane — an extraordinarily potent greenhouse gas — into the atmosphere each hour. That's the equivalent impact on the climate of burning seven tanker trucks full of gasoline every day.

But Mako's outsized emissions aren't illegal, or even regulated. And it was only one of 533 methane "super emitters" detected during a 2021 aerial survey of the Permian conducted by Carbon Mapper, a partnership of university researchers and NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

The group documented massive amounts of methane venting into the atmosphere from oil and gas operations across the Permian, a 250-mile-wide bone-dry expanse along the Texas-New Mexico border that a billion years ago was the bottom of a shallow sea. Hundreds of those sites were seen spewing the gas over and over again. Ongoing leaks, gushers, going unfixed.

"We see the same sites active from year to year. It's not just month to month or season to season," said

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Riley Duren, a research scientist at the University of Arizona who leads Carbon Mapper.

Carbon Mapper identified the spewing sites only by their GPS coordinates. The Associated Press took the coordinates of the 533 "super-emitting" sites and cross-referenced them with state drilling permits, air quality permits, pipeline maps, land records and other public documents to piece together the corporations most likely responsible.

Just 10 companies owned at least 164 of those sites, according to an AP analysis of Carbon Mapper's data. West Texas Gas owned 11.

The methane released by these companies will be disrupting the climate for decades, contributing to more heat waves, hurricanes, wildfires and floods. There's now nearly three times as much methane in the air than there was before industrial times. The year 2021 saw the worst single increase ever.

Methane's earth-warming power is some 83 times stronger over 20 years than the carbon dioxide that comes from car tailpipes and power plant smokestacks. Congress and the Environmental Protection Agency have largely failed to regulate the invisible gas. That leaves it up to oil and gas producers — in some cases the very companies who have been fighting regulations — to cut methane emissions on their own.

"Methane is a super pollutant," said Kassie Siegel, director of the Climate Law Institute at the Center for Biological Diversity, an environmental group. "If carbon dioxide is the fossil-fuel broiler of our heating planet, methane is a blowtorch."

PERSISTENT, NOT JUST INTERMITTENT EMISSIONS

Methane emissions are notoriously hard to track because they are intermittent. An old well may be wafting methane one day, but not the next.

But last October, AP journalists visited more than two dozen sites flagged as persistent methane super emitters by Carbon Mapper with a FLIR infrared camera and recorded video of large plumes of hydrocarbon gas containing methane escaping from pipeline compressors, tank batteries, flare stacks and other production infrastructure. The Carbon Mapper data and the AP's camera work show many of the worst emitters are steadily charging the Earth's atmosphere with this extra gas.

In addition to West Texas Gas's Mako site, AP observed a large plume of gas escaping from tanks at a WTG compressor station about 15 miles away in the Sale Ranch oil field. Carbon Mapper estimated that emissions from that site averaged about 410 kilos of methane an hour.

AP found Targa Resources, a Houston-based natural gas storage, processing and distribution company, was the closest operator to 30 sites that were emitting a combined 3,000 kilograms of methane per hour, with plumes escaping from pipelines, wells, tanks and compressor stations across the company's sprawling Texas footprint.

Targa did not respond to a detailed list of questions from the AP.

Another 21 super-emitting sources were detected at facilities owned by Navitas Midstream, a pipeline company based north of Houston, that has since been sold to Enterprise Products Partners. Equipment belonging to Navitas was estimated to be releasing a combined 3,525 kilos of methane an hour.

WASTING A MARKETABLE PRODUCT

One of the unusual things about this kind of climate pollution is that operators are wasting the very product they are working to extract. Methane gas is not a waste product; it is the target gas that operators drill for, process and sell all over the world.

But fracking has unlocked such massive amounts of natural gas from the Permian's shale deposits that the basin's ever-expanding web of pipelines don't have enough capacity to gather and transport it all. As a result, natural gas is still routinely burned off even as billions have been invested into new terminals along the Gulf Coast to ship the glut of American gas to overseas markets.

Still, companies say they're doing better.

Houston-based Enterprise Products, which owns the former Navitas assets, said it was cracking down. "We are in the process of integrating the acquired assets and are committed to ensuring they are operated safely and responsibly," said spokesman Rick Rainey.

He did not answer specific questions about what the company would do to reduce methane emissions.

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In a statement, Midland-based West Texas Gas said it routinely conducts its own overflights with gas detection equipment and within the last six months had either "repaired or upgraded" nine of the super emitting sites that AP asked about, including Mako. The company was "actively addressing" another site, though it declined to provide specifics about what improvements were made and when. WTG said it inspected the last site and found no leak.

"West Texas Gas is deeply committed to environmental stewardship and continuously strengthens company processes and procedures to ensure we operate in a manner that is consistent with that commitment," the statement said.

YEARS OF INACTION

In May 2016, President Barack Obama announced a Climate Action Plan that included new federal rules requiring the oil and gas sector to slash methane emissions by 40 percent by 2025.

But President Donald Trump, who derided climate change as a Chinese-perpetrated hoax, scrapped those policies before they took effect.

Trump's climate denial and die-hard support for fossil fuels attracted campaign contributions from the industry. It also won him widespread support in the Permian's Republican-dominated cities and towns, where pumping oil and gas is considered both lifeblood and birthright.

At Big John's Feedlot, a burger and barbecue hut in Big Spring, the parking lot one day last fall was filled at lunchtime with gas-guzzling American-made pickup trucks. Inside, multiple portraits of John Wayne and a mounted deer wearing a cowboy hat preside over diners eating sauce-slathered beef ribs and krack poppers, a house specialty of cream cheese stuffed peppers wrapped in bacon.

"Can you imagine anyone in here driving an electric car?" asked Brenda Stansel, the owner, who insisted Trump was still the rightful commander in chief. Asked if she believed in climate change, Stansel responded: "I believe in God."

On the first day of his administration, President Joe Biden ordered EPA to write new rules to reduce the oil and gas industry's methane emissions, and Congress reinstated some Obama-era restrictions on methane from new oil and gas facilities. Proposed rules to address emissions from the hundreds of thousands of existing sites are still under review.

Tomás Carbonell, EPA's deputy assistant administrator for stationary sources, told AP that reducing methane emissions is urgent.

"Reducing air emissions from the oil and natural gas sector is a top priority for the administration and for EPA," Carbonell said. Methane, he added, is "helping drive impacts that communities across the country are already seeing every day, including heat waves and wildfires and sea level rise."

AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY

To track the problem, the U.S. government keeps an inventory of methane released into the atmosphere. Those figures are used by policy makers and scientists to help calculate how much the planet will warm in the coming decades.

But AP found the government database often fails to account for the true rate of emissions observed in the Permian.

The EPA requires companies to report to its Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program emissions above the equivalent of 25,000 tons of carbon dioxide per year. Only a few dozen sites in the Permian say they exceed that threshold for methane.

AP's analysis, however, found that more than 140 of the super-emitting facilities identified by Carbon Mapper were on track to exceed the reporting limit.

For example, Carbon Mapper estimated that Mako emitted an average 870 kilos of methane per hour over each of the four times it was measured. Over the course of a year, that would be 7.6 times the federal reporting threshold.

In 2020, the most recent year that data is available, the West Texas Gas subsidiary that operates Mako reported that methane emissions from all of its boosting and gathering operations combined were just one-twelfth of what Carbon Mapper documented billowing from the Mako site alone.

Other companies also reported methane emissions at levels far lower than what Carbon Mapper's aircraft

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observed, even when adjusted to take into account overflights where no emissions were recorded.

Devon Energy reported releasing methane equivalent to 42,000 metric tons of CO₂ for a year of operations in the Permian Basin. AP's analysis, using the detected emissions, shows they would likely emit that much in just 46 days.

If Lucid Energy Group's observed emissions continued unabated, the company would surpass what it reported to EPA in just three months.

A spokesperson for Devon said the company is committed to reducing its methane emissions and being transparent about its progress. The company has joined a U.N. partnership for oil and gas companies to report methane.

In a statement to AP, Lucid said it had a "best-in-class" leak detection program and that any emissions at its plants "are typically non-methane." The company also questioned the science behind how Carbon Mapper measured its methane emissions rates, claiming "no camera image can provide an accurate concentration of a pollutant."

The NASA AVIRIS instrument used by Carbon Mapper is not a camera. It is an airborne infrared spectrometer that measures wavelengths in light to detect and quantify the unique chemical fingerprint of methane in the atmosphere. The instrument then measures the mass of the methane in the air and the length of the plume. Carbon Mapper takes into account the wind speed at the site to estimate the hourly emissions rate, averaged over multiple overflights.

This estimation method is well established and common practice with emissions monitoring systems, Duren said, and has been used in multiple prior peer-reviewed studies.

Vaquero Permian Gathering reported emitting methane equivalent to 19,000 metric tons of CO₂ for the company as a whole, yet AP found just a single Vaquero site was spewing methane at a rate of 53,000 tons per year.

A spokesperson for Vaquero said the company did not have any comment.

Though the Clean Air Act requires companies to accurately report greenhouse gas emissions, the EPA could not provide AP with a single example of a polluter being fined or cited for failing to report, or underreporting.

TEXAS' NON-ENFORCEMENT

If the federal government is behind the curve on how much methane emissions have escalated with the fracking boom, Texas is even more hands off.

Tim Doty retired from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality in 2018 because, he said, the agency's leadership had little interest in monitoring, documenting or addressing airborne emissions, not even the toxic chemicals such as hydrogen sulfide, sulfur dioxide and benzene that can come from oil and gas operations.

"They don't go look for anything," said Doty, who now works as a private consultant for clients that include environmental groups.

The Mako site, for example, was built in 2018, and no one from TCEQ has ever visited the site, spokesman Gary Rasp told AP.

Doty, who served as a senior manager for the state's mobile air quality program, said that starting under the administration of then-Texas Gov. Rick Perry in 2000, the agency discouraged staff from enforcing air quality violations against the oil and gas industry.

A champion of the fossil fuels industry, Perry served a record three terms as Texas governor before becoming President Donald Trump's energy secretary. He is now a partner and board member at Energy Transfer, one of the nation's largest oil and gas pipeline companies.

Doty said the Texas environmental agency has cameras capable of detecting air pollutants leaking from oil and gas facilities, but after he and other staff began documenting huge methane plumes about a decade ago they were told to keep the cameras locked away.

"Even though they have 20 infrared cameras, they don't actively take them out in the field," said Doty, who was charged with training staff members to use them. "And the TCEQ still hasn't really recognized methane (as a problem). You can't really openly talk about climate change within that agency."

TCEQ's own fiscal year 2021 enforcement report appears to bear out Doty's critiques. Of 5,362 reported "excess emissions events" statewide that year, TCEQ issued no findings in 4,486, or 84 percent of cases, and

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asked for corrective action in only 19 cases.

TCEQ has issued upwards of \$10 million in annual fines for violations of air, water or waste standards, but the median fine — less than \$4,000 — is pocket change for most oil and gas companies.

Enterprise Products, which acquired the Navitas pipelines underlying more than a dozen methane plumes in AP's analysis, was fined \$46,000 last year for flares and valve malfunctions at its Texas facilities. The company is valued at more than \$50 billion. Targa faced state fines of \$100,000 for carbon monoxide and nitrous oxide emissions. Neither company was cited for emitting methane. Both denied the state's allegations and offset their financial penalties by helping school districts purchase new buses.

Across the border in New Mexico, regulators are taking a much different approach.

New regulations enacted last year by the administration of Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham regulates methane not as a greenhouse gas, but as a wasted industrial resource that when released into the atmosphere deprives the state of tax revenue.

The new rules require producers to report the amount of gas they produce and track what was lost. Routine flaring and venting are forbidden, and producers have to provide an explanation each time gas is burned off.

TWO OPPOSITE TRENDS

Even as nations seek to lower their carbon footprints, global demand for natural gas continues to grow. This year alone, U.S. gas shipments to Europe have tripled since the beginning of the war in Ukraine.

On any given day, about 500 rigs are drilling new wells in the Permian basin to boost production. They tower over the landscape, hulking steel goliaths that seem to spring up as spontaneously as desert flowers after a thunderstorm, moving on to somewhere else after a couple weeks.

Most rigs run day and night, with crews of roughnecks rotating in 12-hour shifts. They often sleep on site in nearby "man camps," rows and rows of bunk house trailers where weekly rents for a room are comparable to big city apartments. The constant need for skilled workers drives blue-collar incomes that can easily reach six figures a year, supporting spouses and children who often live hundreds of miles away.

More than 5,000 new well-drilling permits were issued in the Texas portion of the Permian in 2021. Numbers from the first quarter of 2022 show the industry on pace to eclipse that figure.

Each new well, which takes about two weeks to drill, represents millions in capital investment — corporate bets that demand for oil and gas will continue for decades to come.

The frenetic search for more gas and oil is happening just as Biden and other world leaders are promising to cut methane emissions across the globe.

Scientists warn that we are in a decisive decade for the Earth's climate, with sharp reductions in greenhouse gas emissions needed immediately to avoid the most catastrophic droughts and superstorms and prevent coastal cities from being swamped by rising seas.

This summer is on pace to be among the hottest on record, with wide swathes of the Earth shattering temperature records and billions of people struggling to cope with weeks-long heat waves. Even in energy-rich Texas, the primary electricity provider had to take emergency conservation measures to keep the state's grid from failing because of soaring demand for air conditioning.

Biden said last week the Earth is running out of time, calling the climate crisis a "code red for humanity." "I will do everything in my power to clean our air and water, protect our people's health, to win the clean energy future," the president said. "Our children and grandchildren are counting on us."

At an international climate summit in November, the United States signed on to a Global Methane Pledge to reduce methane emissions by 30 percent by 2030. More than 100 countries agreed to the target, though Russia and some other major methane emitters refused.

To meet that deadline, the American oil and gas industry would have to reduce emissions at a rate far beyond anything currently seen.

The industry says it is working toward that goal.

"To be able to capture more methane emissions makes sense from a business perspective," said Frank Macchiarola, the senior vice president of policy, economics and regulatory affairs at the American Petroleum Institute, an industry trade group. "It's the product that we ultimately want to bring to market. And it also

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obviously makes sense from an environmental standpoint.”

But climate scientists and environmentalists warn the industry’s incremental efforts are nowhere near enough to avoid dire consequences for humanity.

“Methane is responsible for 25% of today’s global warming, and we can’t limit future warming to 2 degrees Celsius if we don’t drastically cut those emissions,” said Ilissa Ocko, a senior climate scientist at the Environmental Defense Fund, a group that campaigns for climate action. “We have the tools to cut methane in half and the faster we do that, the better off our climate and communities will be.”

Black family sues Sesame Place, alleging discrimination

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A Baltimore family is suing a Sesame Street-themed amusement park for \$25 million over claims of racial discrimination, alleging multiple costumed characters ignored a 5-year-old Black girl during a meet-and-greet event last month.

The lawsuit comes in the wake of a video, shared widely on social media, showing two other Black girls apparently being snubbed by a costumed employee during a parade at the park in Langhorne, outside Philadelphia. Sesame Place apologized in a statement and promised more training for its employees after the video went viral earlier this month.

The suit, which seeks class action status, was filed in a federal court in Philadelphia against SeaWorld Parks, the owner of the Sesame Place, for “pervasive and appalling race discrimination.”

The lawsuit alleges four employees dressed as Sesame Street characters ignored Quinton Burns, his daughter Kennedy Burns and other Black guests during the meet-and-greet on June 18. The lawsuit says “SeaWorld’s performers readily engaged with numerous similarly situated white customers.”

During a press conference held Wednesday, one of the family’s attorneys, Malcolm Ruff, called for transparency from SeaWorld and for the company to compensate the Burns family. The suit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Oil block auction in DRC punctures Africa’s climate goals

By WANJOHI KABUKURU Associated Press

MAPUTO, Mozambique (AP) — Sections of a renowned peatland tropical forest in the Congo Basin that plays a crucial role in Africa’s climate system go up for oil and gas auction in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on Thursday.

The DRC government will auction 30 oil and gas blocks in the Cuvette-Centrale Peatlands in the Congo Basin forest — the world’s largest tropical peatland. Peatland soils are known as ‘carbon sinks’ because packed into them are immense stores of carbon that get released into the atmosphere when the ecosystem is disturbed.

Some of the areas, or blocs, marked for oil leasing lie within Africa’s iconic first conservation area, the Virunga National Park, created in 1925 and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, home to the last bastion of mountain gorillas.

The Congo basin covers 530 million hectares (1.3 billion acres) in central Africa and represents 70% of the continent’s forested land. It hosts over a thousand bird species and more primates than any other place in the world, including the great apes: gorillas, chimpanzees and Bonobos.

People are at risk, too. Members of the Mbuti and Baka people could be displaced or evicted.

The move by the Congo-Kinshasa Ministry of Hydrocarbons has angered environmentalists and climate activists who say that oil drilling will pose significant risks to a continent already inundated by harsh climate effects. The Centre for International Forest Research puts the massive Cuvette-Centrale carbon sink at 145,000 square kilometers (56,000 square miles) and said it stores up to 20 years’ equivalent of the carbon emissions emitted by the United States.

Other blocs the DRC plans to auction include some located on Lake Kivu, Lake Tanganyika, and one in a coastal region alongside the Albertine-Grabben region, the western side of the Eastern African Rift Valley system.

“These are the last refuges of nature biodiversity,” and our last carbon sinks, said Ken Mwathe, of BirdLife

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International in Africa. "We must not sacrifice these valuable natural assets for damaging development."

The auction of part of the Congo Basin rainforest, which represents 5% of the global tropical forests, comes barely a week after the International Union for the Conservation of Nature hosted the inaugural Africa Protected Areas Congress in Kigali, Rwanda. There, attendees resolved to strengthen protection of Africa's key biodiversity hotspots.

The DRC is one of 17 nations in the world classified as "megadiverse." In September last year, at the World Conservation Congress meeting in France, 137 resolutions dubbed the "Marseille Manifesto" highlighted the significant role the Congo Basin is expected to play in the global commitment to protect 30% of the Earth by 2030.

Last year at the U.N. climate conference COP26, a dozen donors dubbed the Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forests and Land Use, pledged some \$1.5 billion "to working collectively to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030."

The Democratic Republic's carbon sponge is also at risk from large-scale logging, expansion of agriculture and the planned diversion of the Congo River's waters into the shrinking Lake Chad.

Seeking new funds, Hamas raises taxes in impoverished Gaza

By FARES AKRAM Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Gaza's Hamas rulers have imposed a slew of new taxes on imported clothes and office supplies just ahead of the new school year, sparking limited but rare protests in the impoverished coastal strip.

The move by the militant group comes at a time when Gaza's 2.3 million people are suffering not only from a 15-year Israeli-Egyptian blockade, but also from a new jump in prices caused by global supply-chain issues and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"This is a wrong, oppressive decision that destroys the national economy," said Nahed al-Sawada, who imports clothes from China and Turkey.

A list by the Ministry of Economy includes planned taxes on items like packaged nuts, with an import tariff of 2,000 shekels (nearly \$600) per ton. In the past, nuts were imported tax free. The tariff on a ton of toilet paper rose from \$90 to \$580. The taxes are set to go into effect on Aug. 1.

The list also includes a tax of about \$3 on pair of jeans, and \$230 on a ton of plastic folders used to store papers. Demand for these items increases ahead of the school year.

Emad Abdelhadi, a representative for Gaza's union of clothes' merchants, said a new pair of jeans sells for \$3 to \$10, and the new tax will pose an unfair burden on struggling consumers.

In a territory suffering from rampant poverty and unemployment approaching 50%, he said many Gazans already look for used clothes. The new taxes, he said, "will deprive them of the ability to buy."

Gaza's economy has been hit hard by the Israeli-Egyptian blockade, imposed when Hamas seized power in 2007. Israel says the blockade is needed to prevent Hamas from arming, but critics say the restrictions, which include tight limits on exports, amount to collective punishment.

Hamas' government is not internationally recognized and Israel and its Western allies consider the group, which opposes Israel's existence and has in the past staged deadly suicide bombings against Israelis, a terrorist organization.

Israel and Hamas have fought four wars since the Hamas takeover, further straining the territory's rundown infrastructure. Electricity is in short supply, tap water undrinkable and the health care system is in shambles.

With tens of thousands of civil servants to support, as well as its heavy spending on its military wing, it is no surprise that Hamas is seeking new sources of revenue. Still, the timing is questionable, coming at a time when the Russian invasion of Ukraine has driven up consumer prices worldwide.

Hamas authorities say the new taxes are meant to protect the local industries. But experts and business people challenge this argument, since badly needed raw materials are now being taxed.

Mohammed Abu Jayyab, an economist, said the taxes have failed to protect local manufacturers because the government still taxes raw materials and production lines.

A spokesman for the Economy Ministry did not return requests for comment.

Hamas doesn't release figures on its funding resources or budgets, but the latest steps are part of a series of taxes targeting a wide array of sectors, from street vendors selling hot drinks to restaurants, home building and cars.

The government offers few services in exchange, and most aid and relief projects are covered by the international community. The funds help Hamas operate a government and powerful armed wing.

Protests against Hamas are rare and often met by force. But earlier this month, about two dozen members of the clothes merchants' union expressed their frustration in public. They stood inside the building housing their union in Gaza City and held new pairs of jeans, with the price tags still on them, in the air for about half an hour.

Two days later, the merchants gathered outside the offices of Hamas lawmakers. Police prevented the media from filming and ordered the protest to stop after allowing representatives of the union inside to talk to the lawmakers. The protest ended peacefully.

"The lawmakers acknowledged the taxes were high, and said they will look into it," said Abdelhadi, the union representative.

But he said he did not expect a positive outcome. "By these decisions, they have issued a death sentence against the industry."

Wounded Knee artifacts highlight slow pace of repatriations

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

BARRE, Mass. (AP) — One by one, items purportedly taken from Native Americans massacred at Wounded Knee Creek emerged from the dark, cluttered display cases where they've sat for more than a century in a museum in rural Massachusetts.

Moccasins, necklaces, clothing, ceremonial pipes, tools and other objects were carefully laid out on white backgrounds as a photographer dutifully snapped pictures under bright studio lights.

It was a key step in returning scores of items displayed at the Founders Museum in Barre to tribes in South Dakota that have sought them since the 1990s.

"This is real personal," said Leola One Feather, of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, as she observed the process as part of a two-person tribal delegation last week. "It may be sad for them to lose these items, but it's even sadder for us because we've been looking for them for so long."

Recent efforts to repatriate human remains and other culturally significant items such as those at the Founders Museum represent significant and solemn moments for tribes. But they also underscore the slow pace and the monumental task at hand.

Some 870,000 Native American artifacts — including nearly 110,000 human remains — that should be returned to tribes under federal law are still in the possession of colleges, museums and other institutions across the country, according to an Associated Press review of data maintained by the National Park Service.

The University of California, Berkeley tops the list, followed closely by the Ohio History Connection, the state's historical society. State museums and universities in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Alabama, Illinois and Kansas as well as Harvard University round out the other top institutions.

And that's not even counting items held by private institutions such as the Founders Museum, which maintains it does not receive federal funds and therefore doesn't fall under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, or NAGPRA, the 1990 law governing the return of tribal objects by institutions receiving federal money.

"They've had more than three decades," says Shannon O'Loughlin, chief executive of the Association on American Indian Affairs, a national group that assists tribes with repatriations. "The time for talk is over. Enough reports and studying. It's time to repatriate."

Museum officials say they've stepped up efforts with added funding and staff, but continue to struggle with identifying artifacts collected during archaeology's early years. They also say federal regulations governing repatriations remain time-consuming and cumbersome.

Dan Mogulof, an assistant vice chancellor at UC Berkeley, says the university is committed to repatriating

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the entire 123,000 artifacts in question "in the coming years at a pace that works for tribes."

In January, the university repatriated the remains of at least 20 victims of the Indian Island Massacre of 1860 to the Wiyot Tribe in Humboldt County, California. But its Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology still holds more than 9,000 sets of ancestral remains, mainly from Bay-area tribes.

"We acknowledge the great harm and pain we have caused Native American people," Mogulof said. "Our work will not be complete until all of the ancestors are home."

At the Ohio History Connection, officials are working to create an inter-tribal burial ground to help bury ancestral remains for tribes forced to move from Ohio as the nation expanded, says Alex Wesaw, the organization's director of American Indian relations.

The institution took similar steps in 2016 when it established a cemetery in northeast Ohio for the Delaware tribes of Oklahoma to re-bury nearly 90 ancestors who had been stored for centuries in museums in Pennsylvania.

Complicating matters, some of its more than 7,000 ancestral remains and 110,000 objects are thousands of years old, making it difficult to determine which modern-day tribe or tribes they should be returned to, Wesaw said.

At the Founders Museum, some 70 miles (112 kilometers) west of Boston, among the challenges has been determining what's truly from the Wounded Knee Massacre, says Ann Meilus, the museum's board president.

Some tribe members maintain as many as 200 items are from massacre victims, but Meilus said museum officials believe its less than a dozen, based on discussions with a tribe member more than a decade ago.

The collection was donated by Barre native Frank Root, a 19th century traveling showman who claimed he'd acquired the objects from a man tasked with digging mass graves following the massacre.

Among the macabre collection was a lock of hair reportedly cut from the scalp of Chief Spotted Elk, which the museum returned to one of the Lakota Sioux leader's descendants in 1999. It also includes a "ghost shirt," a sacred garment that some tribe members tragically believed could make them bulletproof.

"He sort of exaggerated things," Meilus said of Root. "In reality, we're not sure if any of the items were from Wounded Knee."

More than 200 men, women, children and elderly people were killed on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in 1890 in one of the country's worst massacres of Native Americans. The killings marked a seminal moment in the frontier battles the U.S. Army waged against tribes.

The U.S. Department of Interior recently proposed changes to the federal repatriation process that lay out more precise deadlines, clearer definitions and heftier penalties for noncompliance.

Tribe leaders say those steps are long overdue, but don't address other fundamental problems, such as inadequate federal funding for tribes to do repatriation work.

Many tribes also still object to requirements that they explain the cultural significance of an item sought for repatriation, including how they're used in tribal ceremonies, says Brian Vallo, a former governor of the Pueblo of Acoma in New Mexico who was involved in the 2020 repatriation of 20 ancestors from the National Museum of Finland and their re-burial at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado.

"That knowledge is only for us," he said. "It's not ever shared."

Stacy Laravie, the historic preservation officer for the Ponca Tribe in Nebraska, is optimistic museum leaders are sincere in seeking to rectify the past, in the wake of the national reckoning on racism that's reverberated through the country in recent years.

Last month, she traveled with a tribal delegation to Harvard to receive the tomahawk of her ancestor, the Native American civil rights leader Chief Standing Bear. She's also working with the university's Peabody Museum to potentially repatriate other items significant to her tribe.

"We're playing catch up from decades of things getting thrown under the rug," Laravie said. "But I do believe their hearts are in the right place."

Back at the Founders Museum, Jeffrey Not Help Him, an Oglala Sioux member whose family survived the Wounded Knee Massacre, hopes the items could return home this fall, as the museum has suggested.

"We look forward to putting them in a good place," Not Help Him said. "A place of honor."

Temperatures could hit triple digits again in Northwest

By CLAIRE RUSH and GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Heat wave duration records could be broken in the Pacific Northwest this week and authorities are expanding capacity at some cooling centers as temperatures near triple digits are forecast to extend into the weekend.

“For the next several days through Saturday we’re going to be within a few degrees of 100 every day,” said Colby Neuman, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Portland, Oregon.

Temperatures in Oregon’s largest city are forecast to soar to 101 degrees Fahrenheit (38.3 Celsius) again on Friday. On Tuesday, Portland set daily record 102 F (38.9 C).

Seattle on Tuesday also reported a new record daily high of 94 F (34.4 C). The heat spell was forecast to last into Saturday in western Washington as well.

The National Weather Service has extended the excessive heat warnings from Thursday through Saturday evening.

The duration of the heat wave puts Portland “in the running” for tying its longest streak of six consecutive days of 95 F (35 C) or higher, Neuman said.

Climate change is fueling longer heat waves in the Pacific Northwest, a region where weeklong heat spells were historically rare, according to climate experts.

On Wednesday, the Oregon State Medical Examiner’s Office said at least two people have died from suspected hyperthermia during the heat wave, KGW reported. One death occurred in Portland on Monday, the Multnomah County Medical Examiner’s Office said. The state medical examiner’s office said the heat-related death designation is preliminary and could change after further investigation.

Heat-related 911 calls in Portland have tripled in recent days, from an estimated eight calls on Sunday to 28 calls on Tuesday, said Dan Douthit, a spokesperson for the city’s Bureau of Emergency Management. Most calls involved a medical response, Douthit added.

Multnomah County said more people have been visiting emergency departments for heat-related symptoms.

Emergency department visits “have remained elevated since Sunday,” the county said in a statement. “In the past three days, hospitals have treated 13 people for heat illness, when they would normally expect to see two or three.”

People working or exercising outside, along with older people, were among those taken to emergency departments, the statement added.

People in Portland’s iconic food cart industry are among those who work outside. Many food trucks have shut down as sidewalks sizzle.

Rico Loverde, the chef and owner of the food cart Monster Smash Burgers, said the temperature inside his cart is generally 20 degrees hotter than the outdoor temperature, making it 120 F (48.9 C) inside his tiny business this week.

Loverde said he closes down if it reaches above 95 F (35 C) because his refrigerators overheat and shut down. Last week, even with slightly cooler temperatures in the mid-90s, Loverde got heat stroke from working in his cart for hours, he said.

“It hurts; it definitely hurts. I still pay my employees when we’re closed like this because they have to pay the bills too, but for a small business it’s not good,” he said Tuesday.

Multnomah County said its four emergency overnight cooling shelters were at half capacity on Tuesday with 130 people spending the night. But anticipating more demand, officials decided to expand capacity at the four sites to accommodate nearly 300 people.

William Nonluecha, who lives in a tent in Portland, sought out shade with some friends as the temperature soared Wednesday afternoon. Nonluecha was less than a minute’s walk from a cooling shelter set up by local authorities but wasn’t aware it was open. He said the heat in his tent was almost unbearable.

His friend Mel Taylor, who was homeless last year but now has transitional housing, said during a record-breaking heat wave last summer a man in a tent near his died from heat exhaustion and no one realized it.

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He's afraid the same thing might happen this summer.

"He was in his tent for like a week and the smell, that's how they figured out that he was dead," Taylor said. "It's sad."

Residents and officials in the Northwest have been trying to adjust to the likely reality of longer, hotter heat waves following last summer's deadly "heat dome" weather phenomenon that prompted record temperatures and deaths.

About 800 people died in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia during that heat wave, which hit in late June and early July. The temperature at the time soared to an all-time high of 116 F (46.7 C) in Portland and smashed heat records in cities and towns across the region. Many of those who died were older and lived alone.

Other regions of the U.S. often experience temperatures of 100 degrees. But in regions like the Pacific Northwest, people are not as acclimated to the heat and are more susceptible to it, said Craig Crandall, a professor of internal medicine at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

"There's a much greater risk for individuals in areas such as the Northwest to have higher instances of heat-related injuries and death," Crandall said.

Officials in Seattle and Portland on Tuesday issued air quality advisories expected to last through Saturday, warning that smog may reach levels that could be unhealthy for sensitive groups.

Farther south, the National Weather Service issued a heat advisory on Wednesday for western Nevada and northeast California that is set to last from the late Thursday morning until Saturday night. Across the region, near record daytime high temperatures will range from 99 to 104 degrees F (37.22 to 40 C).

Judges block abortion bans in Wyoming, North Dakota

By MEAD GRUVER and LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — Abortion bans set to take effect this week in Wyoming and North Dakota have been temporarily blocked by judges in those states amid lawsuits arguing that the bans violate their state constitutions.

A judge in Wyoming on Wednesday sided with a firebombed women's health clinic and others who argued the ban would harm health care workers and their patients, while a North Dakota judge sided with the state's only abortion clinic, Red River Women's Clinic in Fargo.

The Wyoming law was set to take effect Wednesday. The North Dakota law was set to take effect Thursday.

Meanwhile, West Virginia lawmakers moved ahead with a ban amid protests and dozens speaking against the measure.

During hours of debate leading up to the 69-23 vote in the Republican-dominated House of Delegates in West Virginia, the sound of screams and chants from protesters standing outside the chamber rang through the room.

"Face us," the crowd yelled.

The latest court action in North Dakota and Wyoming put them among several states including Kentucky, Louisiana and Utah where judges have temporarily blocked implementation of "trigger laws" while lawsuits play out.

Attorneys arguing before Teton County District Judge Melissa Owens, in Jackson, Wyoming, disagreed over whether the state constitution provided a right to abortion that would nullify the state's abortion "trigger" law that took effect Wednesday.

Owens proved most sympathetic, though, with arguments that the ban left pregnant patients with dangerous complications and their doctors in a difficult position as they balanced serious medical risks against the possibility of prosecution.

"That is a possible irreparable injury to the plaintiffs. They are left with no guidance," Owens said.

Several states including Wyoming recently passed abortion "trigger" bans should the U.S. Supreme Court overturn *Roe v. Wade*, which happened June 24. The U.S. Supreme Court formally issued its judgment Tuesday.

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After a more than three-week review, Gov. Mark Gordon, a Republican, last week gave the go-ahead for the Wyoming abortion ban he signed into law in March to take effect Wednesday but it is instead on hold after the ruling.

The Wyoming law would outlaw abortions except in cases of rape or incest or to protect the mother's life or health, not including psychological conditions. Doctors and others who provide illegal abortions under Wyoming's new law could get up to 14 years in prison.

The four Wyoming women and two nonprofits that sued Monday to contest the new law claim it violates several rights guaranteed by the state constitution. Wyoming Special Assistant Attorney General Jay Jerde was skeptical, saying the state constitution neither explicitly nor implicitly allowed abortion.

"No such right exists. You can't infringe what isn't there," Jerde told Owens.

The lawsuit claims the abortion ban will harm the women — two obstetricians, a pregnant nurse and a University of Wyoming law student — by outlawing potentially life-saving treatment options for their patients or themselves.

Those suing include a nonprofit opening a Casper women's and LGBTQ health clinic, Wellspring Health Access, that would have offered abortions. A May arson attack has set back the clinic's opening from mid-June until at least the end of this year.

In North Dakota, Burleigh County District Judge Bruce Romanick sided with the state's only abortion clinic that the state had moved fast to let the law take effect. The clinic had argued that a 30-day clock should not have started until the U.S. Supreme Court issued its certified judgment on Tuesday.

The ruling will give the Red River clinic more time to relocate a few miles away to Moorhead, Minnesota, where abortion remains legal. North Dakota's law would make abortion illegal in the state except in cases of rape, incest and the life of the mother.

Meetra Mehdizadeh, attorney for the Center for Reproductive Rights, which is helping the clinic with the suit, said the plaintiffs "will do everything in our power to fight this ban and keep abortion accessible in North Dakota for as long as possible."

In West Virginia, meanwhile, lawmakers on Wednesday debated a sweeping abortion ban bill on the House floor that would make providing the procedure a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison. The bill makes exceptions for rape or incest up to 14 weeks of gestation and for certain medical complications.

"What's ringing in my ears is not the noise of the people here," said one of the bill's supporters, Republican Del. Brandon Steele of Raleigh County. "It's the cries of the unborn, tens of thousands of unborn children that are dead today."

The bill now heads to the Senate for consideration.

After the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey said a 19th century law banned abortion in the state. Last week, a state judge barred the state from enforcing that ban, saying it was superseded by conflicting, newer laws.

Hundreds of people descended on the state Capitol for the debate. Many stood outside the House chamber and Speaker Roger Hanshaw's office chanting and holding signs reading "we will not go quietly" and "stop stealing our health care." Security officers escorted some from the House chambers.

Dozens spoke against the bill on the House floor including Katie Quiñonez, executive director of the Women's Health Center of West Virginia, who was cut off and asked to step down as she started to talk about the abortion she got when she was 17.

"I chose life," she said, raising her voice to speak over the interruption. "I chose my life, because my life is sacred."

Scorching heat wave in US Northwest forecast to last longer

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The scorching heat spell in the Pacific Northwest is now expected to last longer than forecasters had initially predicted, setting parts of the normally temperate region on course to break heat wave duration records.

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"We warmed up the forecast for the latter part of this week," said David Bishop, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Portland, Oregon. His office is now forecasting up to 101 degrees Fahrenheit (38.3 Celsius) for Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Portland already hit 102 F (38.9 C) on Tuesday, a new record daily high, prompting the National Weather Service to extend the excessive heat warning for the city from Thursday through Saturday evening.

Seattle on Tuesday also reported a new record daily high of 94 F (34.4 C).

The duration of the heat wave puts Oregon's biggest city on course to tie its longest streak of six consecutive days of 95 F (35 C) or higher.

Climate change is fueling longer heat waves in the Pacific Northwest, a region where weeklong heat spells were historically rare, according to climate experts.

Heat-related 911 calls in Portland have tripled in recent days, from an estimated eight calls on Sunday to 28 calls on Tuesday, said Dan Douthit, a spokesperson for the city's Bureau of Emergency Management. Most calls involved a medical response, Douthit added.

Multnomah County, which includes Portland, said there has been an uptick in the number of people visiting emergency departments for heat-related symptoms.

Emergency department visits "have remained elevated since Sunday," the county said in a statement. "In the past three days, hospitals have treated 13 people for heat illness, when they would normally expect to see two or three."

People working or exercising outside, along with older people, were among those taken to emergency departments, the statement added.

On Wednesday, the Oregon State Medical Examiner's Office said at least two people have died from suspected hyperthermia during the heat wave. One death occurred in Portland on Monday, the Multnomah County Medical Examiner's Office said.

The state medical examiner's office said the heat-related death designation is preliminary and could change after further investigation. The official cause of death may not be confirmed until several months later.

People in Portland's iconic food cart industry are among those who work outside. Many food trucks have shut down as sidewalks sizzle.

Rico Loverde, the chef and owner of the food cart Monster Smash Burgers, said the temperature inside his cart is generally 20 degrees hotter than the outdoor temperature, making it 120 F (48.9 C) inside his business this week.

Loverde said he closes down if it reaches above 95 F (35 C) because his refrigerators overheat and shut down. Last week, even with slightly cooler temperatures in the mid-90s, Loverde got heat stroke from working in his cart for hours, he said.

"It hurts, it definitely hurts. I still pay my employees when we're closed like this because they have to pay the bills too, but for a small business it's not good," he said Tuesday.

Multnomah County said its four emergency overnight cooling shelters were at half capacity on Tuesday with 130 people spending the night. But anticipating more demand, officials have decided to expand capacity at the four sites to accommodate nearly 300 people. The overnight shelters will remain open at least through Friday morning.

William Nonluecha, who lives in a tent in Portland, sought out shade with some friends as the temperature soared on Wednesday afternoon. Nonluecha was less than a minute's walk from a cooling shelter set up by local authorities but wasn't aware it was open. He said the heat in his tent was almost unbearable.

His friend Mel Taylor, who was homeless last year but now has transitional housing, said during last summer's record-breaking heat wave a man in a tent near his died from heat exhaustion and no one realized it. He's afraid the same thing might happen this summer.

"He was in his tent for like a week and the smell, that's how they figured out that he was dead," Taylor said. "It's sad."

Residents and officials in the Northwest have been trying to adjust to the likely reality of longer, hotter heat waves following last summer's deadly "heat dome" weather phenomenon that prompted record

temperatures and deaths.

About 800 people died in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia during a 2021 heat wave that hit in late June and early July. The temperature at the time soared to an all-time high of 116 F (46.7 C) in Portland and smashed heat records in cities and towns across the region. Many of those who died were older and lived alone.

Other regions of the U.S. often experience temperatures of 100 degrees. But in regions like the Pacific Northwest, people are not as acclimated to the heat and are more susceptible to it, said Craig Crandall, a professor of internal medicine at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

"There's a much greater risk for individuals in areas such as the Northwest to have higher instances of heat-related injuries and death," Crandall said.

Crandall said people who are continually exposed to heat have certain bodily adaptations allowing them to cool off more efficiently. A main acclimation response is an increase in the amount of sweat released from sweat glands.

"The combination of lack of air conditioning and not being exposed to the heat and not having those adaptations" can put people in the Northwest more at risk during heat waves compared to warmer parts of the country, he said.

Portland officials have opened cooling centers in public buildings and installed misting stations in parks. TriMet, which operates public transportation in the Portland metro area, is offering free rides to cooling centers for passengers who cannot afford to pay.

Officials in Seattle and Portland on Tuesday issued air quality advisories expected to last through Saturday.

Further south, the National Weather Service issued a heat advisory on Wednesday for western Nevada and northeast California that is set to last from the late Thursday morning until Saturday night. Across the region, near record daytime high temperatures will range from 99 to 104 degrees F (37.22 to 40 C).

Hawaii couple charged with stealing IDs of dead Texas kids

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and BRIAN MELLELY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — A U.S. defense contractor and his wife who lived for decades under the identities of two dead Texas children have been charged with identity theft and conspiring against the government, according to federal court records unsealed in Honolulu.

Walter Glenn Primrose and Gwynn Darle Morrison, both in their 60s, who allegedly lived for decades under the names Bobby Edward Fort and Julie Lyn Montague, respectively, were arrested Friday in Kapolei on the island of Oahu.

Prosecutors are seeking to have the couple held without bail, which could indicate the case is about more than fraudulently obtaining drivers' licenses, passports and Defense Department credentials.

Those documents helped Primrose get secret security clearance with the U.S. Coast Guard and as a defense contractor and old photos show the couple wearing uniforms of the KGB, the former Russian spy agency, Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Muehleck said in court papers. Faded Polaroids of each in uniform were included in the motion to have them held.

A "close associate" said Morrison lived in Romania while it was a Soviet bloc country, Muehleck said.

Morrison's attorney said her client never lived in Romania and that she and Primrose tried the same jacket on as a joke and posed for photos in it. Even if the couple used new identities, attorney Megan Kau told The Associated Press, they have lived law-abiding lives for three decades.

"She wants everyone to know she's not a spy," Kau said. "This has all been blown way out of proportion. It's government overreaching."

Prosecutors said there is a high risk the couple would flee if freed. They also suggested that Primrose, who was an avionics electrical technician in the Coast Guard, was highly skilled to communicate secretly if released. The couple is also believed to have other aliases, Muehleck said.

A lawyer for Primrose declined comment. A bail hearing was scheduled for Thursday in U.S. District Court.

The secret clearance Primrose had provides access to information that is "enormously valuable to our

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enemies," said Kevin O'Grady, a Honolulu defense attorney not involved in the case.

The Coast Guard works closely with the Army and Navy, helps with counterintelligence and serves as the country's maritime border patrol, said O'Grady, an Army reservist and lieutenant colonel judge advocate.

"The Coast Guard has a unique perspective on our vulnerabilities," he said, including how to infiltrate the country through water ports. Hawaii, a major military center, "is a prime target for a lot of espionage and such," he said.

For one family whose deceased child's name was stolen, the news Wednesday came as a shock.

John Montague, who lost his daughter Julie in 1968 at 3 weeks of age, was stunned to learn someone had been living under her name for so long.

"I still can't believe it happened," Montague, 91, told AP. "The odds are like one-in-a-trillion that they found her and used her name. People stoop to do anything nowadays. Let kids rest in peace."

Primrose and Morrison were born in 1955 and they attended high school together in Port Lavaca, Texas, and then went to Stephen F. Austin University, according to court records. They married in 1980.

There is no indication in court papers why the couple in 1987 assumed the identities of deceased children who would have been more than a decade younger than them. But an affidavit filed by Special Agent Dennis Thomas of the State Department's Diplomatic Security Service noted that the couple lost their home in Nacogdoches, Texas, to foreclosure that year.

They remarried under their assumed names in 1988, Thomas said.

Court records don't provide any information about what happened from the time they assumed their new identities until 1994, when Primrose, then about 39, enlisted in the Coast Guard as Fort, who would have been about 27.

If there was an obvious age discrepancy between what Primrose looked like and the birth certificate he presented, "that's an abject failure," O'Grady said.

"That's something if they can figure it out now, they should have caught it then," he said.

Montague said that "somebody's not doing their jobs."

Primrose and Morrison applied for and received multiple passports under their assumed names, according to court records. But in 1999 Primrose also applied for and was issued a passport under his legal name while also holding a passport in Fort's name.

Primrose was in the service until 2016, when he began work for an unnamed defense contractor at the U.S. Coast Guard Air station at Barbers Point.

"While he held that secret clearance with the U.S. Coast Guard, defendant Primrose was required to report any foreign travel," prosecutors wrote. "Investigation has revealed that defendant Primrose did not report several trips to Canada while he did report other foreign travel."

The couple lived in a Honolulu suburb in a modest two-bedroom bungalow beneath palm trees. They owned a neighboring house they rented to military personnel, said Mai Ly Schara, who lived next door.

She knew them as Bob and Lynn, with Morrison apparently Julie Lyn Montague's middle name.

Primrose did yard work for Schara for \$50 a month, she said. Morrison took in, fed and spayed and neutered cats. She also had several rabbits and dedicated a room to the pets.

"They kept to themselves, but they were friendly," Schara said. "They just kind of were, like, a little nerdy."

Schara wasn't sure what Primrose did for a living, but thought it was military related. Morrison once worked as a parking attendant at a Waikiki hotel but had been tutoring neighborhood children.

The FBI created a scene in the quiet neighborhood when they searched the house and took photos.

"It was just shocking, like, oh my gosh," Schara said. "It was pretty crazy."

The State Department declined to comment on the arrests.

The couple is charged with conspiracy to commit an offense against the U.S., false statement in passport application and aggravated identity theft.

Fort, who lived fewer than three months, died in October 1967 at the same hospital where Julie Montague passed away about three months later in January 1968. They are buried 14 miles (23 kilometers) apart.

When Tonda Ferguson learned from her father that Morrison had used her late sister's birth certificate to

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create an alias, she thought of her mother, who died in 2003, and how many years had gone by.

"For all the mothers who are living and have to know this happened to their babies, I can't even begin to imagine," Ferguson said. "I'm glad my mama's with the Lord. This would be so traumatic for her."

Ferguson was in eighth grade when her sister died. She never got to see her little sister or hold her. She was buried in Burnet, Texas, the small town where they lived at the time outside of Austin.

"She came from a place of love, deep love," Ferguson said. "For someone to turn around to steal her identity for evil, it's tough. It's hurtful. ... I hope they rot."

Manchin, Schumer in surprise deal on health, energy, taxes

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a startling turnabout, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Sen. Joe Manchin announced an expansive agreement Wednesday that had eluded them for months addressing health care and climate, raising taxes on high earners and large corporations and reducing federal debt.

The two Democrats said the Senate would vote on the wide-ranging measure next week, setting up President Joe Biden and Democrats for an unexpected victory in the runup to November elections in which their congressional control is in peril. A House vote would follow, perhaps later in August, with unanimous Republican opposition in both chambers seemingly certain.

Just hours earlier, Schumer, D-N.Y., and Manchin, D-W.Va., seemed at loggerheads and headed toward a far narrower package limited — at Manchin's insistence — to curbing pharmaceutical prices and extending federal health care subsidies. Earlier Wednesday, numerous Democrats said they were all but resigned to the more modest legislation.

The reversal was stunning, and there was no immediate explanation for Manchin's abrupt willingness to back a bolder, broader measure. Since last year, he has used his pivotal vote in the 50-50 Senate to force Biden and Democrats to abandon far more ambitious, expensive versions. He dragged them through months of negotiations in which leaders' concessions to shrink the legislation proved fruitless, antagonizing the White House and most congressional Democrats.

"This is the action the American people have been waiting for. This addresses the problems of today — high health care costs and overall inflation — as well as investments in our energy security for the future," Biden said in a statement. He urged lawmakers to approve the legislation quickly.

Tellingly, Democrats called the 725-page measure "The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022" because of provisions aimed at helping Americans cope with this year's dramatically rising consumer costs. Polls show that inflation, embodied by gasoline prices that surpassed \$5 per gallon before easing, has been voters' chief concern. For months, Manchin's opposition to larger proposals has been partly premised on his worry that they would fuel inflation.

Besides inflation, the measure seemed to offer something for many Democratic voters.

It dangled tax hikes on the wealthy and big corporations and environmental initiatives for progressives. And Manchin, an advocate for the fossil fuels his state produces, said the bill would invest in technologies for carbon-based and clean energy while also reducing methane and carbon emissions.

"Rather than risking more inflation with trillions in new spending, this bill will cut the inflation taxes Americans are paying, lower the cost of health insurance and prescription drugs, and ensure our country invests in the energy security and climate change solutions we need to remain a global superpower through innovation rather than elimination," Manchin said.

Schumer called the bill Congress' "greatest pro-climate legislation." He said it would also cut pharmaceutical prices and "ensure the wealthiest corporations and individuals pay their fair share in taxes."

The measure would reduce carbon emissions by around 40% by 2030, Schumer and Manchin said. While that would miss Biden's 50% goal, that reduction, the measure's climate spending and the jobs it would create are "a big deal," said Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., an environmental advocate who had been upset with the absence of those provisions until now.

The overall proposal is far less aspirational than the \$3.5 trillion package Biden asked Democrats to push

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through Congress last year, and the pared-down, roughly \$2 trillion version the House approved last November after Manchin insisted on shrinking it. Even then, Manchin shot down that smaller measure the following month, asserting it would fuel inflation and was loaded with budget gimmicks.

In summaries that provided scant detail, Democrats said their proposal would raise \$739 billion over the decade in new revenue, including \$313 billion from a 15% corporate minimum tax. They said that would affect around 200 of the country's largest corporations, with profits exceeding \$1 billion, that currently pay under the current 21% corporate rate.

The agreement also contains \$288 billion the government would save from curbing pharmaceutical prices. Those provisions would also require Medicare to begin negotiating prices on a modest number of drugs, pay rebates to Medicare if their price increases exceed inflation and limit that program's beneficiaries to \$2,000 annual out-of-pocket expenses.

The deal also claims to gain \$124 billion from beefing up IRS tax enforcement, and \$14 billion from taxing some "carried interest" profits earned by partners in entities like private equity or hedge funds.

The measure would spend \$369 billion on energy and climate change initiatives. These include consumer tax credits and rebates for buying clean-energy vehicles and encouraging home energy efficiency; tax credits for solar panel manufacturers; \$30 billion in grants and loans for utilities and states to gradually convert to clean energy; and \$27 billion to reduce emissions, especially in lower-income areas.

It would also aim \$64 billion at extending federal subsidies for three more years for some people buying private health insurance. Those subsidies, which lower people's premiums, would otherwise expire at year's end.

That would leave \$306 billion for debt reduction, an effort Manchin has demanded. While a substantial sum, that's a small fraction of the trillions in cumulative deficits the government is projected to amass over the coming decade.

Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., was still reviewing the agreement, said spokeswoman Hannah Hurley. Sinema backed Manchin last year in insisting on making the legislation less expensive but objected to proposals to raise tax rates, and the spokeswoman referred a reporter to her comments last year supporting a corporate minimum tax.

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said the Democratic agreement would be "devastating to American families and small businesses. Raising taxes on job creators, crushing energy producers with new regulations, and stifling innovators looking for new cures will only make this recession worse, not better."

But if Democrats can hold their troops together, GOP opposition would not matter. Democrats can prevail if they lose no more than four votes in the House and remain solidly united in the 50-50 Senate, where Vice President Kamala Harris can cast the tie-breaking vote.

"This agreement is a victory for America's families and for protecting our planet," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. "In light of the discussions of the past year, this agreement is a remarkable achievement."

The bill lacks increased tax deductions for state and local taxes, which some Democrats from high-tax states have demanded as the price for their support. A spokesperson for Rep. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., a leader of that group, did not immediately return a message seeking comment.

In the Senate, Democrats are using a special process that will let them pass the bill without reaching the 60 votes required for most legislation there. To use that, the chamber's parliamentarian must verify that the bill doesn't violate the chamber's budget procedures, a review now underway.

Schumer and Manchin said leaders committed to revamp permitting procedures this fall to help infrastructure like pipelines and export facilities "be efficiently and responsibly built to deliver energy safely around the country and to our allies."

Sierra Club Legislative Director Melinda Pierce said her group wanted to read the agreement's details but was glad Biden and Schumer "remained resolute in finding a path to pass once-in-a-generation investments in our communities, our economy, and our future."

Manchin just last week said he would only agree to far more limited legislation this month on prescription drugs and health care subsidies. He said he was open to considering a broader compromise on environment

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and tax issues after Congress returned from a summer recess in September, an offer that many Democrats considered dubious because of lawmakers' abbreviated pre-election schedule.

Fed unleashes another big rate hike in bid to curb inflation

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve on Wednesday raised its benchmark interest rate by a hefty three-quarters of a point for a second straight time in its most aggressive drive in more than three decades to tame high inflation.

The Fed's move will raise its key rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, to a range of 2.25% to 2.5%, its highest level since 2018.

Speaking at a news conference after the Fed's latest policy meeting, Chair Jerome Powell offered mixed signals about the central bank's likely next moves. He stressed that the Fed remains committed to defeating chronically high inflation, while holding out the possibility that it may soon downshift to smaller rate hikes.

And even as worries grow that the Fed's efforts could eventually cause a recession, Powell passed up several opportunities to say the central bank would slow its hikes if a recession occurred while inflation was still high.

Roberto Perli, an economist at Piper Sandler, an investment bank, said the Fed chair emphasized that "even if it caused a recession, bringing down inflation is important."

But Powell's suggestion that rate hikes could slow now that its key rate is roughly at a level that is believed to neither support nor restrict growth helped ignite a powerful rally on Wall Street, with the S&P 500 stock market index surging 2.6%. The prospect of lower interest rates generally fuel stock market gains.

At the same time, Powell was careful during his news conference not to rule out another three-quarter-point hike when the Fed's policymakers next meet in September. He said that rate decision will depend upon what emerges from the many economic reports that will be released between now and then.

"I do not think the U.S. is currently in a recession," Powell said at his news conference in which he suggested that the Fed's rate hikes have already had some success in slowing the economy and possibly easing inflationary pressures.

The central bank's decision follows a jump in inflation to 9.1%, the fastest annual rate in 41 years, and reflects its strenuous efforts to slow price gains across the economy. By raising borrowing rates, the Fed makes it costlier to take out a mortgage or an auto or business loan. Consumers and businesses then presumably borrow and spend less, cooling the economy and slowing inflation.

The surge in inflation and fear of a recession have eroded consumer confidence and stirred public anxiety about the economy, which is sending frustratingly mixed signals. And with the November midterm elections nearing, Americans' discontent has diminished President Joe Biden's public approval ratings and increased the likelihood that the Democrats will lose control of the House and Senate.

The Fed's moves to sharply tighten credit have torpedoed the housing market, which is especially sensitive to interest rate changes. The average rate on a 30-year fixed mortgage has roughly doubled in the past year, to 5.5%, and home sales have tumbled.

Consumers are showing signs of cutting spending in the face of high prices. And business surveys suggest that sales are slowing. The central bank is betting that it can slow growth just enough to tame inflation yet not so much as to trigger a recession — a risk that many analysts fear may end badly.

At his news conference, Powell suggested that with the economy slowing, demand for workers easing modestly and wage growth possibly peaking, the economy is evolving in a way that should help reduce inflation.

"Are we seeing the slowdown in economic activity that we think we need?" he asked. "There's some evidence that we are."

The Fed chair also pointed to measures that suggest that investors expect inflation to fall back to the central bank's 2% target over time as a sign of confidence in its policies.

Powell also stood by a forecast Fed officials made last month that their benchmark rate will reach a range of 3.25% to 3.5 % by year's end and roughly a half-percentage point more in 2023. That forecast, if it holds, would mean a slowdown in the Fed's hikes. The central bank would reach its year-end target if it were to

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raise its key rate by a half-point when it meets in September and by a quarter-point at each of its meetings in November and December.

With the Fed having now imposed two straight substantial rate hikes, "I do think they're going to tiptoe from here," said Thomas Garretson, senior portfolio strategist at RBC Wealth Management.

On Thursday, when the government estimates the gross domestic product for the April-June period, some economists think it may show that the economy shrank for a second straight quarter. That would meet one longstanding assumption for when a recession has begun.

But economists say that wouldn't necessarily mean a recession had started. During those same six months when the overall economy might have contracted, employers added 2.7 million jobs — more than in most entire years before the pandemic. Wages are also rising at a healthy pace, with many employers still struggling to attract and retain enough workers.

Still, slowing growth puts the Fed's policymakers in a high-risk quandary: How high should they raise borrowing rates if the economy is decelerating? Weaker growth, if it causes layoffs and raises unemployment, often reduces inflation on its own.

That dilemma could become an even more consequential one for the Fed next year, when the economy may be in worse shape and inflation will likely still exceed the central bank's 2% target.

"How much recession risk are you willing to bear to get (inflation) back to 2%, quickly, versus over the course of several years?" asked Nathan Sheets, a former Fed economist who is global chief economist at Citi. "Those are the kinds of issues they're going to have to wrestle with."

Economists at Bank of America foresee a "mild" recession later this year. Goldman Sachs analysts estimate a 50-50 likelihood of a recession within two years.

Pelosi to Taiwan would be career capstone, despite warnings

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Nancy Pelosi launched her political career being tough on China -- a new congresswoman who dared to unfurl a pro-democracy banner in Beijing's Tiananmen Square during a 1991 visit with other U.S. lawmakers shortly after the student massacre.

More than 30 years later, her interest in traveling to Taiwan presents a powerful diplomatic capstone. It has also contributed to tensions at the highest levels in Washington and Beijing among officials who worry a trip could prove provocative.

As the U.S. balances its high-stakes relations with China, whether Pelosi will lead a delegation trip to Taiwan remains unknown. But what is certain is that Pelosi's decision will be a defining foreign policy and human rights moment for the U.S. and its highest-ranking lawmaker with a long tenure leading the House.

"This is part of who the speaker is," said Samuel Chu, president of The Campaign for Hong Kong, a Washington-based advocacy organization.

"This is not a one-time, one-off publicity stunt," said Chu, whose father was among those who met with Pelosi and the U.S. lawmakers three decades ago in Hong Kong. "Thirty years later, she's still connected."

Pelosi declined to disclose Wednesday any update on her plans for Taiwan, reiterating that she does not discuss travel plans, as is the norm, for security reasons. The top Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas, confirmed that he was invited to be a part of Pelosi's bipartisan delegation but is unable to join, though his office said he believes the speaker and other Americans should be able to visit Taiwan.

The Biden administration has declined to publicly weigh in on the rumored visit, though the military is making plans to bolster its security forces in the region to protect her potential travel against any reaction from China. While U.S. officials say they have little fear that Beijing would attack Pelosi's plane, they are aware that a mishap, misstep or misunderstanding could endanger her safety.

It all comes as President Joe Biden is set to speak Thursday with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping for the first time in four months, and the potential Pelosi trip is looming over the conversation.

"There's always issues of security," said John Kirby, a spokesman for the National Security Council, declining Wednesday to talk directly about the speaker's potential travel.

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Not since Republican Newt Gingrich led a delegation to Taiwan 25 years ago has a U.S. House speaker, third in line to the presidency, visited the self-ruling region, which China claims as part of its own and has threatened to forcibly annex in a move the West would view unfavorably.

More than just a visit overseas, Pelosi's trip would signify a foreign policy thru-line to her long career in Congress as she has increasingly pointed the speaker's gavel outward expanding her job description to include the role of U.S. emissary abroad.

Particularly during the Trump administration, when the former president challenged America's commitments to its allies, and now alongside Biden, the Democrat Pelosi has presented herself as a world leader on the global stage — visiting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv, Pope Francis at the Vatican, and heads of state around the world.

"She absolutely has to go," Gingrich told The Associated Press in an interview Wednesday about Pelosi's potential trip.

"She has always had a very tough position going back to Tiananmen Square. And this is one of those places where she and I actually sort of agreed," Gingrich said. "I think for Nancy to back down would be an enormous blow to Taiwan, and it would be a very dangerous signal, trying to appease the Chinese Communists."

Pelosi has indicated the value she sees in her potential visit leading a delegation of lawmakers from the U.S.

"It's important for us to show support for Taiwan," Pelosi told reporters at her news conference last week.

"None of us has ever said we're for independence, when it comes to Taiwan. That's up to Taiwan to decide."

Pelosi was newly elected to Congress when the tanks rolled in to Tiananmen Square in 1989 against the pro-democracy student protests.

Two years later she joined more veteran lawmakers on the trip when they were briefly detained by police after unfurling the pro-democracy banner that read "To those who died for democracy in China," trailed by news cameras.

"We've been told for two days now that there's freedom of speech in China," she said in one video clip at the time.

The trip had a "deep and abiding" impact on Pelosi and became foundational to her style of leadership, Chu said.

Pelosi advocated for human rights in China by working against Beijing in 1993 as it eyed hosting the summer Olympics and she opposed its bid for the 2008 games. Pelosi sought over the years to link China's trade status with its human rights record, working to ensure China's entry to the World Trade Organization come with oversight.

Pelosi has often made physical gestures challenging China, including in 2009 when she hand-delivered a letter to then-President Hu Jintao calling for the release of political prisoners.

"China is a very important country," she said upon her return days later recognizing the 20th anniversary of Tiananmen Square in a speech in Congress, and outlining the significance of the country's relationship "in every way" to the U.S.

"But the size of the economy, the size of the country, and the size of the relationship doesn't mean that we shouldn't speak out," Pelosi said. "I have said that if we don't speak out about our concerns regarding human rights in China and Tibet, then we lose all moral authority to discuss it about any other country in the world."

In Congress, lawmakers of both parties have rallied around Pelosi's potential visit to Taiwan, viewing the delegation's trip as an important diplomatic mission as well as an expression of a co-equal branch of the U.S. government.

"I understand all the sensitivities in the world, here's the one stark fact: If we allow the Chinese to basically tell us who can and cannot visit Taiwan, then Taiwan will be isolated," said Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "We can't let the Chinese do that. Now, she'll have to judge whether or not it makes the best sense at this time."

Facebook parent Meta posts first revenue decline in history

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

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Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, posted its first revenue decline in history Thursday, dragged down by a drop in ad spending as the economy falters — and as competition from rival TikTok intensifies.

The results largely followed a broader decline in the digital advertising market that is dinging Meta rivals such as Google, Twitter — which also posted a revenue decline — and Snap. Google's parent company Alphabet reported its slowest quarterly growth in two years on Tuesday.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg said Meta is slowing its pace of investments and plans to "steadily reduce" employee growth after a hiring blitz earlier this year.

"This is a period that demands more intensity," he said in a conference call with analysts. "Expect us to get more done with fewer resources."

Beyond the economic downturn, Meta faces some unique challenges, including the looming departure of its chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg, the chief architect of the company's massive advertising business.

In addition to TikTok, the decline in ad spending among the downturn and Apple's privacy changes, "questions about Meta's leadership" — including Sandberg's exit and negative sentiment about the company as a whole — also contributed to the decline, said Raj Shah, a managing partner at digital consultancy Publicis Sapient.

Meta earned profits of \$6.69 billion, or \$2.46 per share, in the April-June period. That's down 36% from \$10.39 billion, or \$3.61 per share, in the same period a year ago.

Revenue was \$28.82 billion, down 1% from \$29.08 billion a year earlier.

Analysts, on average, were expecting earnings of \$2.54 per share on revenue of \$28.91 billion, according to a poll by FactSet.

"The year-over-year drop in quarterly revenue signifies just how quickly Meta's business has deteriorated," said Insider Intelligence analyst Debra Aho Williamson in an email. "Prior to these results, we had forecasted that Meta's worldwide ad revenue would increase 12.4% this year, to nearly \$130 billion. Now, it's unlikely to reach that figure."

She added that the good news — if it could be called that — is that Meta's competitors are also experiencing slowdowns.

Meta is in the midst of a corporate transformation that it says will take years to complete. It wants to evolve from a provider of social platforms to a dominant power in a nascent virtual reality construct it calls the "metaverse" — sort of like the internet brought to life, or at least rendered in 3D. CEO Mark Zuckerberg has described it as an immersive virtual environment, a place people can virtually "enter" rather than just staring at a screen. The company is investing billions in its metaverse plans that will likely take years to pay off — and as part of its plan renamed itself Meta last fall.

"Expect Meta's decline to continue until Meta can monetize the metaverse, and begin another Meta-reverse," Shah said.

Meta forecasts revenue of \$26 billion to \$28.5 billion for the current quarter, which is below Wall Street's expectations.

"This outlook reflects a continuation of the weak advertising demand environment we experienced throughout the second quarter, which we believe is being driven by broader macroeconomic uncertainty," finance chief David Wehner said in a statement. Meta said Wehner is being promoted to chief strategy officer, where he will oversee the company's strategy and corporate development. Susan Li, currently vice president of finance, will replace him as CFO.

Shares of Meta Platforms Inc. fell \$6.88, or 4.1%, to \$162.70 in after-hours trading. The stock had closed up \$10.43, or 6.6%, at \$169.58 on Wednesday in the regular trading session. Meta's stock has lost more than half its value since the start of this year.

Ex-cops Kueng, Thao sentenced for violating Floyd's rights

By AMY FORLITI Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — A federal judge on Wednesday sentenced two former Minneapolis police officers who were convicted of violating George Floyd's civil rights to lighter terms than recommended in sentencing

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guidelines, calling one “truly a rookie officer” and describing the other as “a good police officer, father and husband.”

U.S. District Judge Paul Magnuson sentenced J. Alexander Kueng to three years in prison and Tou Thao to 3½ years for violating Floyd’s rights in the May 25, 2020, killing in which then-Officer Derek Chauvin pinned Floyd’s neck with his knee for more than nine minutes as the 46-year-old Black man said he couldn’t breathe and eventually grew still. The killing, captured in bystander video, sparked protests worldwide and a reckoning of racial injustice.

Kueng pinned Floyd’s back, Thao held back concerned bystanders, and a fourth officer, Thomas Lane, held Floyd’s feet. Lane was sentenced last week to two years — also below guidelines and a sentence that Floyd’s brother Philonise called “insulting” — while Chauvin was sentenced earlier to 21 years. Floyd’s immediate family members did not attend Wednesday’s hearings in person or comment afterward.

Floyd’s girlfriend, Courteney Ross, made statements at both men’s sentencing hearings and said afterward that she was disappointed, particularly with Thao’s sentence. It “didn’t really seem to match the crime to me. I was asking for the maximum sentence,” she said.

The lower sentences for Kueng, who is Black, and Thao, who is Hmong American, raise questions about whether they would consider a plea deal or risk a state court trial on Oct. 24, when they face counts of aiding and abetting second-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. Lane, who is white, pleaded guilty to a state charge of aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter and is awaiting sentencing in that case.

Federal sentencing guidelines — which judges do not have to follow — recommended 4¼ to 5¼ years for Kueng and 5 ¼ to 6 ½ years for Thao. For both men, prosecutors argued for sentences higher than that. Prosecutor Manda Sertich argued that Kueng “didn’t say a word” as Floyd lay dying. Prosecutor LeeAnn Bell said Thao had “a bird’s-eye view of what was going on” with Floyd, and had “years on the force” that meant he should have known better.

The federal government brought the civil rights charges against all four officers in May 2021, a month after Chauvin was convicted of murder and manslaughter in state court. They were seen as an affirmation of the Justice Department’s priorities to address racial inequities in policing, a promise made by President Joe Biden before his election. They came a week after federal prosecutors brought hate crimes charges in the killing of 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia and announced sweeping probes into policing in Minneapolis and Louisville, Kentucky.

Magnuson said there was no question that Kueng violated Floyd’s rights by failing to get off him when Floyd became unresponsive. But he also mentioned what he called “an incredible number” of letters from other officers supporting Kueng.

“You were truly a rookie officer,” Magnuson told Kueng.

At his subsequent hearing, Thao spoke for more than 20 minutes, frequently quoting from the Bible as he said his arrest and time in jail led him to turn toward God, but did not directly address his actions or offer any words to Floyd’s family. Thao — like Lane and Kueng — remains free on bond, but spent several weeks in jail after his 2020 arrest on the state charges.

Magnuson again acknowledged letters supporting the former officer, including one with 744 signatures, and cited what he called Thao’s “completely clean record.”

“You had a difficult childhood and have done well to become a good police officer, father and husband,” the judge said.

Nekima Levy Armstrong, a civil rights attorney and activist, said the sentences were “especially light.”

“This little punishment signals to other law enforcement officers that they could receive a slap on the wrist if they violate people’s rights and engage in extreme abuse towards defenseless people,” she said.

But Mark Osler, a professor at the University of St. Thomas School of Law and former federal prosecutor, called the sentences “groundbreaking” and noted that it’s rare for officers to be held accountable for killings they didn’t directly commit.

“We should hope that it has the impact of changing behavior and prodding them to intervene when a life can be saved,” he said.

Osler said it’s likely that Kueng and Thao will seek a plea deal on the state charges that would not exceed

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the federal sentence and would let them serve the sentences concurrently.

Both men are due to report to federal prison on Oct. 4, though Magnuson noted that could change because of their state trial. Magnuson said he would recommend that they be allowed to serve their time at minimum-security federal facilities in Duluth or in Yankton, South Dakota, to be near family. The final decision is up to the Bureau of Prisons.

Chauvin, who is white, was the most senior officer at the scene and was sentenced to a 22 1/2-year state sentence that he's serving concurrently with his federal sentence. He's been held in solitary confinement in the state's maximum security prison at Oak Park Heights for his own safety since his murder conviction and will eventually be transferred to federal prison.

AR-15 style guns sold as a sign of manhood as shootings rise

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Gun makers have taken in more than \$1 billion from selling AR-15-style guns over the past decade, at times marketing them as a way for young men to prove their masculinity, even as the number of mass shootings increases, according to a House investigation unveiled Wednesday.

The weapons have been used in massacres that have horrified the nation, including one that left 10 people dead at a grocery store in Buffalo and another where 19 children and two teachers were shot to death in Uvalde, Texas.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform said some ads mimic popular first-person shooter video games or tout the weapons' military pedigree while others claim the guns will put buyers "at the top of the testosterone food chain."

Those sales tactics are "deeply disturbing, exploitative and reckless," said Democratic Rep. Carolyn Maloney of New York. "In short, the gun industry is profiting off the blood of innocent Americans."

Gun makers, on the other hand, said AR-15-style rifles are responsible for a small portion of gun homicides and the blame must go to the shooters rather than their weapons.

"What we saw in Uvalde, Buffalo and Highland Park was pure evil," said Marty Daniels, the CEO of Daniel Defense, the company that made the weapon used in Texas. "The cruelty of the murderers who committed these acts is unfathomable and deeply disturbs me, my family, my employees and millions of Americans across this country."

However, he added later in testimony before the committee, "I believe that these murders are local problems that have to be solved locally."

Gun violence overall spiked in 2020, but recent statistics indicate it is coming down this year in many cities.

The House panel's investigation focused on five major gunmakers, and found they took in a combined total of more than \$1 billion in revenue over the past 10 years from the sale of AR-15-style firearms. The revenue numbers were released for the committee hearing focused on the marketing and sales of the firearms that have gained notoriety because of their use in the mass killings.

Two of the companies approximately tripled their revenue from the weapons over the past three years, the committee found. Daniel Defense, based near Savannah, Georgia, raised that revenue from \$40 million in 2019 to more than \$120 million last year. The company sells weapons like the one used in Uvalde on credit and advertises that financing can be approved "in seconds."

Salvador Ramos, accused in the Uvalde shootings, began purchasing firearms and ammunition when he turned 18, eventually spending more than \$5,000 on two AR-style rifles, ammunition and other gear in the days before the massacre, authorities have said.

Sturm, Ruger & Co.'s gross revenue, meanwhile, has nearly tripled from \$39 million to \$103 million since 2019, and Smith and Wesson reported that its revenues from all long guns doubled from 2019 to 2021. Gun manufacturers, the committee said, don't gather or analyze safety data related to firearms.

The increases are against a backdrop of a record-setting overall increase in gun sales that began around the start of the coronavirus pandemic. About 8.5 million people bought guns for the first time in 2020, said Republican Rep. Jody Hice of Georgia. He added that, "American people have a right to own guns."

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The hearing comes amid a push by House Democrats to get legislation passed that would ban certain semi-automatic weapons. It's the lawmakers' most far-reaching response yet to this summer's mass shootings.

While AR-15-style firearms aren't necessarily the main drivers of U.S. gun violence overall, their design allows shooters to harm more people from a greater distance, said Kelly Sampson, senior counsel and director of racial justice with Brady, a group pressing to end gun violence that generally supports restrictions.

"If we renew the assault weapons ban, that would take away a key piece of what allows mass shooters to kill more people in less time without having to stop to reload," she said.

There have been 15 mass killings this year, according to the Associated Press/USA TODAY/Northeastern University Mass Killing Database. According to that research, those incidents have left 86 dead and 63 injured. Guns were used in all of them, and in at least seven instances they were AR-15-style weapons. Mass killings are defined as incidents where at least four people are killed.

But the AR-15 and similar weapons are also popular with people who buy guns for self defense, said Antonia Okafor, the national director of outreach for the group Gun Owners of America. Such rifles allow people, including women, to shoot a larger gun without having to absorb as much recoil.

"The AR-15 makes it easier for those who have a physical disadvantage to the attacker to have an upper hand," she said.

Wednesday's hearing marked the first time in 20 years that CEOs of leading gun manufacturers testified about their businesses, Maloney said.

How the Federal Reserve's rate hikes affect your finances

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Higher mortgage rates have sent home sales tumbling. Credit card rates have grown more burdensome, and so have auto loans. Savers are finally receiving yields that are actually visible, while crypto assets are reeling.

The Federal Reserve's move Wednesday to further tighten credit raised its benchmark interest rate by a sizable 0.75 percentage point for a second straight time. The Fed's latest hike, its fourth since March, will further magnify borrowing costs for homes, cars and credit cards, though many borrowers may not feel the impact immediately.

The central bank is aggressively raising borrowing costs to try to slow spending, cool the economy and defeat the worst outbreak of inflation in two generations.

The Fed's actions have ended, for now, an era of ultra-low rates that arose from the 2008-2009 Great Recession to help rescue the economy — and then re-emerged during the brutal pandemic recession, when the Fed slashed its benchmark rate back to near zero.

Chair Jerome Powell hopes that by making borrowing more expensive, the Fed will succeed in slowing demand for homes, cars and other goods and services. Reduced spending could then help bring inflation, most recently measured at a four-decade high of 9.1%, back to the Fed's 2% target.

Yet the risks are high. A series of higher rates could tip the U.S. economy into recession. That would mean higher unemployment, rising layoffs and further downward pressure on stock prices.

How will it all affect your finances? Here are some of the most common questions being asked about the impact of the rate hike:

I'M CONSIDERING BUYING A HOUSE. WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH MORTGAGE RATES?

Higher interest rates have torpedoed the housing market. Rates on home loans have nearly doubled from a year ago to 5.5%, though they've leveled off in recent weeks even as the Fed has signaled that more credit tightening is likely.

That's because mortgage rates don't necessarily move in tandem with the Fed's increases. Sometimes, they even move in the opposite direction. Long-term mortgages tend to track the yield on the 10-year Treasury note, which, in turn, is influenced by a variety of factors. These factors include investors' expectations for future inflation and global demand for U.S. Treasuries.

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Investors expect a recession to hit the U.S. economy later this year or early next year. This would force the Fed to eventually cut its benchmark rate in response. The expectation that the Fed will have to reverse some of its hikes next year has helped reduce the 10-year yield, from 3.5% in mid-June to roughly 2.8%.

WILL IT BE EASIER TO FIND A HOUSE?

Sales of existing homes have dropped for five straight months, while new home sales plunged in June. If you're financially able to go ahead with a home purchase, you're likely to have more choices than you did a few months ago.

In many cities, the options are few. But the number of available houses nationwide has started to rise after falling to rock-bottom levels at the end of last year. There are now 1.26 million homes for sale, according to the National Association of Realtors, up 2.4% from a year ago.

I NEED A NEW CAR. SHOULD I BUY ONE NOW?

The Fed's rate hikes typically make auto loans more expensive. But other factors also affect these rates, including competition among car makers, which can sometimes lower borrowing costs.

Wednesday's rate hike won't likely affect new-vehicle sales much because those buyers are mainly affluent customers who won't be squeezed by a relatively small uptick in monthly payments, said Jonathan Smoke, chief economist for Cox Automotive. By contrast, he said, used-car buyers with weaker credit who pay higher loan rates could be hurt.

"Many used-vehicle buyers are already acutely feeling the impacts of higher prices for energy, food and rent," Smoke said.

Used vehicle prices have begun to fall, he noted, and vehicle availability is beginning to return to normal levels.

The full amount of a Fed rate hike doesn't always pass through to auto loans, according to Bankrate.com. New 60-month loans for new vehicles have risen about a percentage point this year to an average of 4.86%, Bankrate.com says, while a 48-month used-vehicle rate rose just under 1 point to 5.38%.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY CREDIT CARD?

For users of credit cards, home equity lines of credit and other variable-interest debt, rates would rise by roughly the same amount as the Fed hike, usually within one or two billing cycles. That's because those rates are based in part on banks' prime rate, which moves in tandem with the Fed.

Those who don't qualify for low-rate credit cards might be stuck paying higher interest on their balances. The rates on their cards would rise as the prime rate does.

The Fed's rate increases have already sent credit card borrowing rates above 20% for the first time in at least four years, according to LendingTree, which has tracked the data since 2018.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT MY SAVINGS?

You can now earn more on bonds, CDs, and other fixed income investments. And it depends on where your savings, if you have any, are parked.

Savings, certificates of deposit and money market accounts don't typically track the Fed's changes. Instead, banks tend to capitalize on a higher-rate environment to try to boost their profits. They do so by imposing higher rates on borrowers, without necessarily offering any juicier rates to savers.

But online banks and others with high-yield savings accounts are often an exception. These accounts are known for aggressively competing for depositors. The only catch is that they typically require significant deposits.

HOW HAVE THE RATE HIKES INFLUENCED CRYPTO?

Like many highly valued technology stocks, cryptocurrencies like bitcoin have sunk in value since the Fed began raising rates. Bitcoin has plunged from a peak at about \$68,000 to \$21,000.

Higher rates mean that safe assets like bonds and Treasuries become more attractive to investors because their yields are now higher. That, in turn, makes risky assets like technology stocks and cryptocurrencies less attractive.

All that said, bitcoin is suffering from its own problems that are separate from economic policy. Two major crypto firms have failed. The shaken confidence of crypto investors is not being helped by the fact that the safest place you can park money now — bonds — seems like a safer move.

WILL MY STUDENT LOAN PAYMENT GO UP?

Right now, payments on federal student loans are suspended until Aug. 31 as part of an emergency measure that was put in place early in the pandemic. Inflation means that loan-holders have less disposable income to make payments. Still, a slowed economy that reduces inflation could bring some relief by fall.

Depending on the state of the economy, the government may choose at the end of summer to extend the emergency measure that's deferring the loan payments. President Joe Biden is also considering some form of loan forgiveness. Borrowers who take out new private student loans should prepare to pay more. Rates vary by lender but are expected to increase.

Study casts more doubt on use of high-dose vitamin D pills

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

More research suggests it's time to abandon the craze over vitamin D.

Taking high doses of "the sunshine vitamin" doesn't reduce the risk of broken bones in generally healthy older Americans, researchers reported Wednesday.

It's the latest in a string of disappointments about a nutrient once hoped to have wide-ranging protective effects. That same study of nearly 26,000 people already had found that popping lots of vitamin D pills didn't prevent heart disease, cancer or memory loss either.

And while getting enough vitamin D is important for strong bones, "more is not better," said Dr. Meryl LeBoff of Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital, the study's lead author.

An estimated third of Americans 60 and older take the supplements and more than 10 million blood tests for vitamin D levels are performed annually -- despite years of controversy over whether the average older adult needs either.

The newest findings -- added to other trials with similar results -- should end that debate, wrote Drs. Steven Cummings of California Pacific Medical Center and Clifford Rosen of Maine Medical Center Research Institute in a commentary in the medical journal.

"People should stop taking vitamin D supplements to prevent major diseases" -- and doctors should stop the routine screenings that fuel concern, the pair concluded. They weren't involved in the latest study.

Just how much vitamin D should people get? The U.S. recommends 600 to 800 international units a day to ensure that everyone, young and old, gets enough. While our skin makes vitamin D from sun exposure, that can be tougher in winter. Milk and certain other foods are fortified with the nutrient to help.

The bigger question was whether more than that recommended amount might be better, to prevent fractures or maybe other disorders, too. To address conflicting scientific reports, Brigham and Woman's preventive medicine chief Dr. JoAnn Manson started the largest study of its type to track a variety of health outcomes in nearly 26,000 generally healthy Americans in their 50s or older. The latest results compare bone fractures in those who took either a high dose -- 2,000 international units of the most active form of vitamin D, called D-3 -- or dummy pills every day for five years.

The supplements didn't reduce the risk of broken hips or other bones, LeBoff reported in the New England Journal of Medicine. While vitamin D and calcium work best together, she said even the 20% of study participants who also took a calcium supplement didn't benefit. Nor did the small number of study participants who had low blood levels of vitamin D.

Still, LeBoff cautioned that the study didn't include people who may require supplements because of bone-thinning osteoporosis or other disorders, or those with severe vitamin D deficiencies. And Manson said more research is needed to tell if there are additional high-risk groups who might benefit.

Overall, "these findings overturn dogma and cast doubt on the value of routine screening for vitamin D blood levels and blanket recommendations for supplementation," Manson said. "Spending time outdoors, being physically active and having a heart-healthy diet will lead to greater gains in health" for most people.

Popp powers Germany past France, into Euro 2022 final

MILTON KEYNES, England (AP) — Alexandra Popp scored twice to power Germany to a 2-1 win over France

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on Wednesday and into the final of the European Championship against England.

With the game level at 1-1 and both teams missing chances to score, Germany captain Popp leaped above the French defense in the 76th minute to send a bouncing header into the French goal.

Popp scored the opening goal for Germany in the 40th but the lead lasted less than five minutes before France equalized. Popp has scored in all five of Germany's games so far — a new record — after missing the last two European Championships in 2013 and 2017 because of injuries.

Germany plays host nation England in Sunday's final at Wembley Stadium. Popp and England's Beth Mead are the joint top scorers with six goals each.

"I can't find any words. We played a crazy game, we threw in everything we had," Popp told German broadcaster ZDF. "We're now in the final against England in front of 90,000 at Wembley. To be honest, there's nothing better."

A late surge wasn't enough as France fell short of reaching what would have been a first major tournament final and has now lost in the semifinal stage once in each of the World Cup, Olympics and European Championship.

Before the game, Germany's players posed holding the No. 19 shirt of winger Klara Bühl, who had started all four previous games but missed the semifinal following a positive test for COVID-19 on Tuesday. In a video message, Bühl predicted her teammates would set off a "firework" without her.

Popp came closest to fireworks early on when her free kick in the 22nd produced a diving save from goalkeeper Pauline Peyraud-Magnin.

Popp extended her scoring streak when she burst past defender Ève Périsset and blasted Germany into the lead in the 40th minute with a powerful shot off Svenja Huth's low cross.

Soon after, Germany conceded for the first time in the tournament in unfortunate style, Kadidiatou Diani hitting a shot which bounced off the post and then off goalkeeper Merle Frohms' back and in. It was recorded as an own goal for Frohms, who had no time to react to the bounce.

France was left ruing chances to take control of the game when Selma Bacha had a shot blocked by German defender Kathrin Hendrich, before captain Wendie Renard had a powerful header saved by Frohms soon after. France's key player at set pieces, Renard had another header in a dangerous position as her team chased a second equalizer late on, but it too was saved as Germany held on to win.

DOJ: Buffett company discriminated against Black homebuyers

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A Pennsylvania mortgage company owned by billionaire businessman Warren Buffett's company discriminated against potential Black and Latino homebuyers in Philadelphia, New Jersey and Delaware, the Department of Justice said Wednesday, in what is being called the second-largest redlining settlement in history.

Trident Mortgage Co., a division of Berkshire Hathaway's HomeServices of America, deliberately avoided writing mortgages in minority-majority neighborhoods in West Philadelphia like Malcolm X Park; Camden, New Jersey; and in Wilmington, Delaware, the Justice Department and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau said in their settlement with Trident.

As part of the agreement with the government, Trident will have to set aside \$20 million to make loans in underserved neighborhoods.

"Trident's unlawful redlining activity denied communities of color equal access to residential mortgages, stripped them of the opportunity to build wealth, and devalued properties in their neighborhoods," said Kristen Clarke, an assistant Attorney General of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, in a prepared statement.

Sen. Vincent Hughes, a Philadelphia Democrat, grew up a few blocks from the West Philadelphia park where a news conference on the settlement was held Wednesday. Hughes said portions of his life have been framed by the discriminatory lending practices that prevent Black and brown communities from building wealth.

Hughes' father worked for one of the oldest Black-owned savings and loans, a company name Berean that would finance mortgages for Black families when they were turned away by other banks and lenders.

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"I've had people come up to me and say, 'Vince, your dad gave me a mortgage for my first home when I was turned down everywhere else. If it wasn't for Berean and your dad, I wouldn't have been able to buy my home,'" Hughes said. "We witnessed that discrimination in real time."

Redlining is a term used to describe when banks deliberately avoid making loans to non-white communities. Banks and the U.S. government used to draw on maps in red marker those neighborhoods that were deemed undesirable to make home loans. The neighborhoods were almost always areas where racial minorities lived, and even included other historically discriminated-against communities such as Jewish neighborhoods.

The practice effectively cut off entire communities from the primary pathway for wealth generation in the U.S.: homeownership. To this day, Black and Latino households are far less likely to own their home compared to their white counterparts.

The alleged redlining activity happened between 2015 and 2019 — Trident stopped writing mortgages in 2020. Along with avoiding making mortgages in minority neighborhoods, the Trident employees made racist comments about making loans to Black homebuyers, calling certain neighborhoods "ghettos." One manager of Trident was photographed posing in front of the Confederate Flag. The marketing materials used by Trident involved exclusively white individuals, and nearly all of the company's staff were white.

Josh Shapiro, Pennsylvania's attorney general who is running for governor, called the behavior by Trident "systematic racism, pure and simple."

Philadelphia has a long history of racism toward Black homebuyers. The Philadelphia City Council released a report Wednesday that found that 95% of all of the city's home appraisers were white and a racial gap remains between how homes owned by Black homeowners are valued versus homes owned by white owners.

Hughes said he and other legislators were furious about revelations of the redlining by Trident and others in a 2018 investigation by Reveal into Buffett's mortgage companies. They pressed Shapiro during an appropriations hearing, and the Attorney General responded by setting up a hotline to gather personal stories.

As part of the settlement, Trident agreed to hire mortgage loan officers in impacted neighborhoods as well as pay a \$4 million fine. Since Trident no longer operates a lending business, a separate company will be contracted to provide the \$20 million in loan subsidies, the Justice Department said.

The largest redlining case involved Wisconsin-based Associated Bank, which was charged with discriminatory practices between the years 2008 and 2011. The bank settled with regulators in 2015 for \$200 million.

The Trident settlement also involves the first redlining case against a nonbank mortgage lender. Since the Great Recession, roughly half of all mortgages in the country are underwritten by companies that immediately sell off the mortgage to investors. These nonbank lenders include firms like Quicken Loans, Rocket Mortgage and Loan Depot, among many others.

"Credit discrimination is illegal regardless of whether the lawbreaking company is a traditional bank or a nonbank lender," said Rohit Chopra, director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

In a statement, HomeServices of America said they "strongly disagree" with the Justice Department's and CFPB's findings in the settlement, noting that Trident did not have to admit to wrongdoing as part of the case. Buffett himself did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but historically has deferred any comment to Berkshire's subsidiary companies.

Hughes said he did not have personal experience with Trident, but he said he was not surprised to learn the company's statement after the settlement was announced denied there was wrongdoing.

"That's what these companies do, right? None of them admit it, they just wind up paying the money," he said.

US rocket system enables Ukraine to pummel key supply bridge

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian troops used American-supplied precision rocket launchers to knock out a strategic bridge used by Russia to supply its forces in southern Ukraine's occupied Kherson region, officials said Wednesday.

Ukraine also claimed to have destroyed an enemy ammunition depot, artillery pieces and other military

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equipment in the region, killing 51 members of the Russian army. There was no immediate confirmation from the Russian side.

The Antonivskiy Bridge over the Dnieper River was attacked late Tuesday, according to Kirill Stremousov, deputy head of the Moscow-appointed administration for the Kherson region. The bridge was left standing, but holes in its deck prevented vehicles from crossing the 1.4-kilometer (0.9-mile) span, he said.

After previous Ukrainian attacks damaged the bridge last week, it was closed to trucks, but it had remained open for passenger vehicles until the latest strike.

Russian forces in recent days have intensified their shelling of cities and villages in eastern Ukraine while also stepping up airstrikes in the south. At the same time, the Kremlin's troops are facing mounting counterattacks from the Ukrainians in the Kherson region, which was captured by Moscow early in the war.

Ukrainian forces used U.S.-supplied HIMARS multiple rocket launchers to target the bridge, Stremousov said. A Ukrainian military spokesperson, Nataliya Gumenyuk, told Ukrainian TV that "surgical strikes" were carried out on the bridge.

The HIMARS has greater range, much more precision and a faster rate of fire than the Soviet-designed Smerch, Uragan and Tornado rocket launchers used by both Russia and Ukraine. The weapons were among the billions of dollars in Western military aid that has helped Ukraine fight off the Russians since the Feb. 24 invasion.

In other developments:

— Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy claimed that Russia has lost nearly 40,000 soldiers in the war and that tens of thousands more were wounded. His claim could not be independently verified. The Russian military last reported its losses in March, when it said 1,351 troops had been killed.

— Turkey's defense minister said preparations were underway for the resumption of grain shipments from Ukraine's Black Sea ports. Russia and Ukraine signed agreements last week to free up millions of tons of grain trapped by the fighting, potentially easing the global food crisis.

— At least two civilians were killed and three wounded when Russian forces shelled a hotel in the eastern city of Bakhmut, Ukrainian emergency authorities said. Bakhmut has been a focus of the Russian offensive in the region.

While halting traffic across the Dnieper River bridge makes only a slight dent in the overall Russian military operation, the attack was a morale-boosting victory for the Ukrainians.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said on Twitter that the "occupiers should learn how to swim across" the Dnieper or "leave Kherson while it is still possible." "There may not be a third warning," he tweeted.

The bridge is the main crossing over the Dnieper in the Kherson region. The only other option is a dam at a hydroelectric plant in Kakhovka, which also came under Ukrainian fire last week but has remained open.

Knocking the crossings out would make it hard for the Russian military to keep supplying its forces in the region.

"We are doing all we can so that the occupiers have no logistical capabilities remaining on our land." Ukraine's president said during his nightly video address, noting the attack on the Antonivskiy bridge and other crossings in the region.

"Of course, they will all be rebuilt, but it will be us rebuilding them," Zelenskyy added.

The accurate targeting of the bridge contrasted with Russia's indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas since the invasion five months ago.

The governor of Dnipropetrovsk, in the east-central part of the country, said Wednesday that Russian forces struck two regions with artillery. Gov. Valentyn Reznichenko said a woman was wounded in the town of Marhanets and several apartment buildings, a hospital and a school were damaged by the shelling.

"Chaotic shelling has no other goal but to sow panic and fear among the civilian population," he said.

The bulk of the Russian forces are fighting in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, known as the Donbas, where they have made slow gains in the face of ferocious Ukrainian resistance.

They have taken some ground northeast of Bakhmut, according to the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank. But it said Russian forces are unlikely to occupy significant additional territory in

Ukraine before early autumn.

Parade attack suspect indicted for murder, attempted murder

By KATHLEEN FOODY and CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The man accused of opening fire on an Independence Day parade in suburban Chicago has been indicted by a grand jury on 21 first-degree murder counts, 48 counts of attempted murder and 48 counts of aggravated battery, representing the seven people killed and dozens wounded in the attack on a beloved holiday event.

Prosecutors previously filed seven murder charges against Robert E. Crimo III. They announced the grand jury's decision to indict him on 117 felony charges on Wednesday.

Attorneys for Crimo have not made a formal response yet to any of the charges he faces in the July Fourth shooting in downtown Highland Park, Illinois. A representative for the county public defenders office, which is representing Crimo, said Wednesday that it does not comment publicly on any cases.

Prosecutors have said Crimo, 21, admitted to the shooting when police arrested him following an hourslong search on July 4.

Under Illinois law, prosecutors can ask a grand jury to determine whether there is probable cause to proceed to trial. Grand jury proceedings aren't open to the public and defense attorneys cannot cross-examine witnesses.

The multiple first-degree murder charges allege Crimo intended to kill, caused death or great bodily harm and took action with a strong probability of causing death or great bodily harm on the seven people who died.

Prosecutors said Wednesday that the 48 attempted murder counts and 48 counts of aggravated battery with a firearm represent "each victim who was struck by a bullet, bullet fragment, or shrapnel."

"I want to thank law enforcement and the prosecutors who presented evidence to the grand jury today," Lake County State's Attorney Eric Rinehart said in a statement. "Our investigation continues, and our victim specialists are working around the clock to support all those affected by this crime that led to 117 felony counts being filed."

Authorities have said the wounded range in age from 8 to their 80s, including an 8-year-old boy who was paralyzed from the waist down when the shooting severed his spine.

In her first public comments since the shooting, the boy's mother said in a video and written statement released Wednesday that the violence her family and others experienced has taught them "to see the unbelievably generous, caring, good and kind spirit that makes up the vast majority of our world."

Keely Roberts described her son, Cooper Roberts, as "athletic" and "fun-loving" but said he has a long road ahead. Cooper was shot in the back. The bullet tore through his body, severely damaging his aorta, liver, esophagus and spinal cord before exiting through his chest.

Cooper has undergone multiple surgeries and is paralyzed from the waist down.

Cooper's twin brother, Luke, sustained minor injuries from shrapnel, but his mom worries about the impact of seeing his twin so violently injured. She also was wounded in the leg.

Roberts said she still sees a bright future ahead for Cooper and thanked parade-goers who helped the family in the aftermath of the shooting, along with health care providers and other first responders.

"He's gonna teach a whole lot of people that the lesson in this is not that one person did this horrible thing," she said. "The lesson in this is that thousands of people did great things, kind things, and continue to do kind things."

During a court hearing presenting the murder charges, prosecutors said police found more than 80 spent shell casings on the rooftop of a building along the parade route and the semi-automatic rifle used in the attack on the ground nearby.

Investigators believe Crimo blended in with the fleeing crowd to get away from the scene, then borrowed his mother's car and briefly contemplated a second attack on a celebration in Madison, Wisconsin, before returning to Illinois where police arrested him.

Crimo is due to appear in court Aug. 3.

Global AIDS fight at crossroads after setbacks during COVID

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Hard-won progress against HIV has stalled, putting millions of lives at risk, according to an alarming report Wednesday on how the COVID-19 pandemic and other global crises are jeopardizing efforts to end AIDS.

Worldwide, the years-long decline in new HIV infections is leveling off. Worse, cases began climbing in parts of Asia and the Pacific where they previously had been falling, according to the United Nations agency leading the global AIDS fight.

The number of people on lifesaving HIV treatments grew more slowly last year than it has in a decade. Inequities are widening. Every two minutes last year, a teen girl or young woman was newly infected — and in sub-Saharan Africa, they're three times as likely to get HIV as boys and men the same age. And 650,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses last year, the report found.

"This is an alarm to the world to say that COVID-19 has blown the AIDS response significantly off track," said Matthew Kavanagh, deputy executive director of UNAIDS.

The U.N. set a goal of fewer than 370,000 new HIV infections by 2025. Last year, there were about 1.5 million — meaning it would take a major turnaround to get anywhere near that target. Yet low- and middle-income countries are \$8 billion short of the funding needed, as international aid also has dropped, the report found.

Things might be even worse considering that HIV testing slowed or even stopped in many places when COVID-19 hit, potentially leaving even more virus spread uncounted.

"People are exhausted with epidemics and pandemics," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's leading AIDS expert. "We have to fight twice as hard to get HIV back on the radar screen where it belongs."

The sobering news comes as the International AIDS Conference begins this week in Montreal — where some promising science is being reported. Among the highlights:

— A man who had lived with HIV for about 30 years is in long-term remission and just might be one of only a handful of people worldwide ever considered cured, thanks to a special bone marrow-like transplant.

That rigorous treatment is only an option for HIV patients who also develop leukemia and need transplanted blood stem cells to fight the cancer. This man's donor happened to carry a rare gene mutation that makes the newly transplanted cells resistant to HIV.

The man, now 66, underwent the transplant in 2019. Soon after, the COVID-19 pandemic began and he decided to stay on HIV medication until he could get vaccinated. He's now been off anti-AIDS medication for 17 months with no signs of HIV, Dr. Jana Dickter of City of Hope, a California cancer research center, said Wednesday.

That makes him the oldest and longest-living person with HIV to undergo this potentially curative transplant. Scientists hope these rare cases might offer clues that eventually lead to better care for more people.

Also Wednesday, University of Barcelona researchers reported that a woman's own immune system seems to have kept her HIV tamped down to an undetectable level for 15 years. The woman was part of a research study in 2006 that included some immune-boosting treatments but it's not clear why she's faring so well.

— Another study presented Wednesday found that taking an antibiotic after unprotected sex could reduce the chances of getting gonorrhea, chlamydia or syphilis.

Those sexually transmitted diseases are caused by different types of bacteria. They are a rising threat, especially among people who also have — or are at high risk for — HIV.

In Seattle and San Francisco, researchers gave study participants — gay men, bisexual men and transgender women — the antibiotic doxycycline with instructions to take a single dose within 72 hours whenever they had sex without using a condom. Those who did saw their risk of infection drop more than 60%, said Dr. Annie Luetkemeyer of the University of California, San Francisco.

Before experts recommend that strategy, they'll need to know if it could worsen antibiotic resistance, making either the STDs themselves or other bacteria people encounter harder to treat. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said it will examine that carefully, but it posted online some cautions for anyone considering this use of doxycycline in the meantime.

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— The UNAIDS report showed the public health fight against HIV is getting harder, but there are a few bright spots. Researchers reported Wednesday that Botswana, which is hard-hit by HIV, already has achieved a key 2025 goal: 95% of HIV-infected people know their status, more than 95% of those who know are getting treated, and more than 95% getting treated show signs their virus is being suppressed.

Kavanagh praised Botswana for strong policy changes that “helped more and more people into care,” including free HIV medications, pushing home HIV testing and decriminalizing same-sex relationships.

UNAIDS executive director Winnie Byanyima said it’s not too late to get back on track despite the continued COVID-19 and economic crises.

“Ending AIDS would cost much less money than not ending AIDS,” she said. “The actions needed to end AIDS are also key for overcoming other pandemics.”

No. 1 pick Holliday gets \$8.19 million bonus from Orioles

By DAVID GINSBURG Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — Jackson Holliday slipped on a Baltimore Orioles jersey, jammed the team’s cap over his long, sandy blond hair and grinned broadly as the cameramen clicked away.

And boy, did he have reason to smile. The 18-year-old high schooler and No. 1 overall pick in the 2022 amateur draft signed a contract Wednesday with an \$8.19 million signing bonus.

Holliday, a slick fielding shortstop with a potent swing from the left side, is a son of former All-Star Matt Holliday. He had visited Camden Yards only once previously — many years ago, he shagged fly balls during batting practice while accompanied his father, then an outfielder for the St. Louis Cardinals.

If Jackson has his way, it won’t be long before he makes a return trip as a member of the Orioles.

“I want to be up here as fast as possible,” Holliday said. “I would love to come out hot and continue to play well. Hopefully, two years or less would be my goal. I know it’s a big goal, but I think I can do it.”

If his gene pool counts for something, then Holliday just might have a shot. Matt Holliday was drafted in the seventh round out of high school in 1998 and needed six years to make the rise to the big leagues, but his experience and guidance can only help Jackson in his ascent from the minor leagues.

“When you enter into the professional baseball pool of players, the separator is all the little things,” Matt Holliday said. “We just talked about the work that it takes, the sacrifice that it takes to get to where you want to go.”

Agent Scott Boras, who negotiated the deal for Jackson, said, “It’s a rare library that the Holliday library gives Jackson, and I can tell you he’s read all the books.”

Holliday batted .685 with 29 doubles, six triples, 17 home runs and 79 RBIs as a senior for Stillwater High in Oklahoma. He also stole 30 bases and scored 74 runs.

All that convinced Baltimore general manager Mike Elias to make Holliday — whom he labeled a “five-tool shortstop” — the third top overall pick in Orioles history behind Ben McDonald (1989) and Adley Rutschman (2019). The pick had a slot value of \$8,846,900.

“This is a exciting and historic moment for this franchise and for Jackson personally,” Elias said. “I couldn’t be more confident and more optimistic about the partnership of Jackson Holliday and the Baltimore Orioles.”

Holliday took batting practice with the Orioles before their game against Tampa Bay, then prepared for a trip to the team’s training complex in Sarasota, Florida.

“It’s been a little bit since I’ve been able to compete on the baseball field, so I’m very excited to get going and get down there to Florida,” Holliday said.

Perhaps one day soon Holliday will become the starting shortstop of the Orioles. That position was once manned by another highly touted high school kid drafted by the Orioles who made it all the way to the majors: Cal Ripken, Jr.

“It’s an honor to be in this organization and to play a position that he played for so long,” Holliday said. “I hope that I can get here and play shortstop for a very long time.”

Confused by huge Mega Millions prize? Here are some answers

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By SCOTT McFETRIDGE Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Now that the Mega Millions lottery jackpot has topped \$1 billion — only the fourth time a lottery game has reached such heights — plenty of people who rarely play the game are considering risking \$2 or joining an office pool in hopes of an immense payoff.

Buying a ticket is easy, but it's also easy to be confused about the odds, how the prizes are set and how the winnings will eventually be paid out.

DO YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING RISE OR FALL AS THE JACKPOT GROWS?

Your chances of winning the jackpot always remain one in 302.5 million, regardless of whether the big prize is \$20 million or the current \$1.02 billion. You do increase your odds of winning if you buy more tickets but before laying down \$100 at the Quicky Mart for 50 tries, keep in mind that in the big scheme of things, 50 chances out of 302.5 million isn't much better than one. Also realize that the \$1.02 billion amount is for the annuity option, paid annually over 29 years. The cash option would pay \$602.5 million.

IS THIS A GOOD TIME TO PLAY OTHER LOTTERY GAMES?

Just like the Mega Millions odds don't change, the odds of winning a prize in Powerball, the other big nationwide game, and other smaller state games are fixed, too. Given that, you have no better odds now than at any other time. However, with fewer people buying tickets in those games, there is less of a chance that multiple players could win the jackpot, forcing you to share your winnings.

WHAT STATES HAVE THE MOST MEGA MILLIONS JACKPOT WINNERS?

Time for a road trip to a lottery nirvana? Probably not.

Since 2016, players have won 40 Mega Millions jackpots, with the fortuitous few scattered through 22 states. And not surprisingly, there have been more winners in states with greater populations and thus more players.

California takes the prize for the most Mega Millions jackpot winners during that span, with six lucky players. That's followed by five winners in New York, four in New Jersey and three in Illinois.

Notably, population heavyweights Texas and Florida have had few Mega Millions winners since 2016. Texas had two and Florida had one.

WHERE DO THE DRAWINGS TAKE PLACE?

The drawings happen at 11 p.m. Eastern time on Tuesday and Friday and are held at the WSB-TV studios in Atlanta.

DO RETAILERS GET ANYTHING OUT OF THIS?

Rules vary by state but retailers usually get a reward for selling a ticket that wins a jackpot. In Ohio, for example, retailers get \$1,000 for every million dollars of a jackpot, with a cap of \$100,000.

WHAT IF I CHOOSE AN ANNUITY BUT DIE BEFORE RECEIVING ALL THE PAYMENTS?

Most jackpot winners opt for cash but receiving your winnings through an annuity, with 30 payments over 29 years, can help people slightly reduce their tax burden. If winners die before receiving all their winnings, the future payments would go to their estate.

WHO RUNS MEGA MILLIONS AND HOW DO THEY DECIDE JACKPOT AMOUNTS?

The lottery game is overseen by 45 state lotteries as well as game officials in Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands. A group comprising representatives from the lotteries meets twice a week to determine the estimated jackpots.

NASA to launch 2 more choppers to Mars to help return rocks

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA is launching two more mini helicopters to Mars in its effort to return Martian rocks and soil samples to Earth.

Under the plan announced Wednesday, NASA's Perseverance rover will do double duty and transport the cache to the rocket that will launch them off the red planet a decade from now.

Perseverance already has gathered 11 samples with more rock drilling planned. The most recent sample, a sedimentary rock, holds the greatest promise of containing possible evidence of ancient Martian life, said Arizona State University's Meenakshi Wadhwa, chief scientist for the retrieval effort.

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There's "a diversity of materials already in the bag, so to speak, and really excited about the potential for bringing these back," she said.

If Perseverance breaks down, the two helicopters being built and launched later this decade would load the samples onto the rocket instead.

The helicopters will be modeled after NASA's successful Ingenuity, which has made 29 flights since arriving with Perseverance at Mars early last year. The chopper weighs just 4 pounds (1.8 kilograms). The new versions would have wheels and grappling arms.

NASA officials said Perseverance's impressive performance at Mars prompted them to ditch their plan to launch a separate fetch rover.

Jeff Gramling, director of NASA's Mars sample return program, said the revised path forward is simpler. Each helicopter will be designed to lift one sample tube at a time, making multiple trips back and forth.

"We have confidence that we can count on Perseverance to bring the samples back and we've added the helicopters as a backup means," Gramling said.

NASA is collaborating with the European Space Agency on the retrieval mission. If all goes as planned, as many as 30 samples would blast off from Mars in 2031 and arrive at Earth in 2033. Lab analysis is needed to see whether any sample holds signs of microbial life that may have existed on Mars billions of years ago when water flowed on the planet.

As for the grounded ExoMars rover, it cannot be refashioned to help retrieve these samples, said David Parker, director of human and robotic exploration for ESA. It was returned to storage after Russia and Europe cut ties with the project because of the war in Ukraine. Russia was supposed to provide the rocket ride.

A decision on when the rover still can launch to Mars later this decade won't come until late fall, Parker said.

Ukraine's grain is ready to go. But ships aren't. Why? Risk

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

Shipping companies are not rushing to export millions of tons of grain trapped in Ukraine, despite a breakthrough deal to provide safe corridors through the Black Sea. That is because explosive mines are drifting in the waters, ship owners are assessing the risks and many still have questions over how the deal will unfold.

The complexities of the agreement have set off a slow, cautious start, but it's only good for 120 days — and the clock began ticking last week.

The goal over the next four months is to get some 20 million tons of grain out of three Ukrainian sea ports blocked since Russia's Feb. 24 invasion. That provides time for about four to five large bulk carriers per day to transport grain from the ports to millions of impoverished people worldwide facing hunger.

It also provides ample time for things to go awry. Only hours after the signing Friday, Russian missiles struck Ukraine's port of Odesa — one of those included in the agreement.

Another key element of the deal offers assurances that shipping and insurers carrying Russian grain and fertilizer will not get caught in the wider net of Western sanctions. But the agreement brokered by Turkey and the U.N. is running up against the reality of how difficult and risky the pact will be to carry out.

"We have to work very hard to now understand the detail of how this is going to work practically," said Guy Platten, secretary-general of the International Chamber of Shipping, representing national shipowners associations that account for about 80% of the world's merchant fleet.

"Can we make sure and guarantee the safety of the crews? What's going to happen with the mines and the minefields, as well? So lots of uncertainty and unknowns at the moment," he said.

Getting wheat and other food out is critical to farmers in Ukraine, who are running out of storage capacity amid a new harvest. Those grains are vital to millions of people in Africa, parts of the Middle East and South Asia, who are already facing food shortages and, in some cases, famine.

Ukraine and Russia are key global suppliers of wheat, barley, corn and sunflower oil, with fighting in the Black Sea region, known as the "breadbasket of the world," pushing up food prices, threatening political stability in developing nations and leading countries to ban some food exports, worsening the crisis.

U.N. humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths says work at the newly opened Joint Coordination Center in Istanbul

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overseeing the export deal is "nonstop with the aim of seeing the shipments heading out of Ukrainian ports quickly, safely and effectively."

He said Frederick Kenney, Jr., director of legal and external affairs at the International Maritime Organization and a retired U.S. Coast Guard rear admiral and judge advocate, is leading the U.N.'s efforts to get the grain deal up and running.

The deal stipulates that Russia and Ukraine will provide "maximum assurances" for ships that brave the journey through the Black Sea to the Ukrainian ports of Odesa, Chernomorsk and Yuzhny.

"The primary risk that's faced is obviously going to be mines," said Munro Anderson, head of intelligence and a founding partner at Dryad. The maritime security advisory company is working with insurers and brokers to assess the risks that ships could face along the route as sea mines laid by Ukraine to deter Russia are drifting.

Turkey's defense minister on Wednesday said demining the waters was not immediately required but that could change.

Ukrainian officials have expressed hope that exports could resume from one port within days, but they also have said it could take two weeks for all three to become operational again. Experts in Ukraine are working on determining safe routes for ships.

Shipowners, charterers and insurance firms, meanwhile, are trying to understand how the deal will play out.

"I think it's going to come (down) to the position of the marine insurers that provide war risk and how much they are going to be adding in additional charges for vessels to go into that area," said Michelle Wiese Bockmann, shipping and commodities analyst at Lloyd's List, a global shipping news publication.

Bockmann said vessels carrying this kind of load typically have between 20 to 25 seafarers on board.

"You can't risk those lives without something concrete and acceptable to the shipowners and to their charterers to move grain," she said.

Oleksiy Melnyk, an analyst with the Kyiv-based Razumkov Center think tank, said safety issues are largely unresolved because Russian rockets can hit warehouses storing grain and ports.

"Shipowners and insurance companies are scared, they haven't received any reliable security guarantees," Melnyk said. "We're seeing just words and promises, which are worth little at a time of war."

Marine insurers reached by AP declined to comment on whether they would provide coverage for these ships.

The war has wreaked havoc on global trade, stranding over 100 ships in Ukraine's many ports.

At the three ports in the export agreement, 13 bulk carriers and cargo ships have been stuck at Chornomorsk, six in Odesa and three at Yuzhny, data from Lloyd's List Intelligence shows. Some of those ships might still have crews aboard that could be mobilized to start exporting grains.

Ukrainian traders have been able to send some grain through the Danube River, which helped buoy exports to about 1.5 million tons in May and up to 2 million tons in June, though that is still less than half the monthly grain shipments of 4 to 5 million tons prior to the war, according to Svetlana Malysh, a Black Sea agriculture markets analyst with Refinitiv.

Over the 2021-2022 marketing year, Russia exported about 30 million tons of wheat, according to Refinitiv trade flows. That is the lowest level since 2017, in part because of the chilling effect of sanctions. Russian fertilizer exports also dropped 25% in the first quarter of the year compared with the same period last year, Malysh said.

For ships heading to Ukraine's three ports, smaller Ukrainian pilot boats will guide the vessels through approved corridors. The entire operation will be overseen by a Joint Coordination Center in Istanbul staffed by officials from Ukraine, Russia, Turkey and the United Nations.

Once ships reach port, they will be loaded with tens of thousands of tons of grains before departing back to the Bosphorus Strait, where they will be boarded to inspect them for weapons. There will likely be inspections for ships embarking to Ukraine as well.

Because the process is so complex and slow-moving, it's unlikely to have a significant impact on the price of grain worldwide.

"The balance of power on this agreement still sits with Russia," said Anderson, Dryad's head of intelligence.

Any Ukrainian ports outside the agreement face increased risk of attack, he said.

"I think what Russia wants ... is to be seen as the state that controls the narrative within the Black Sea," Anderson said.

James Lovelock, creator of Gaia ecology theory, dies at 103

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — James Lovelock, the British environmental scientist whose influential Gaia theory sees the Earth as a living organism gravely imperiled by human activity, has died on his 103rd birthday.

Lovelock's family said Wednesday that he died the previous evening at his home in southwest England "surrounded by his family." The family said his health had deteriorated after a bad fall but that until six months ago Lovelock "was still able to walk along the coast near his home in Dorset and take part in interviews."

Born in 1919 and raised in London, Lovelock studied chemistry, medicine and biophysics in the U.K. and the U.S.

In the 1940s and 1950s, he worked at the National Institute for Medical Research in London. Some of his experiments looked at the effect of temperature on living organisms and involved freezing hamsters and then thawing them. The animals survived.

Lovelock worked during the 1960s on NASA's moon and Mars programs at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. But he spent much of his career as an independent scientist outside of large academic institutions.

Lovelock's contributions to environmental science included developing a highly sensitive electron capture detector to measure ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons in the atmosphere and pollutants in air, soil and water.

The Gaia hypothesis, developed by Lovelock and American microbiologist Lynn Margulis and first proposed in the 1970s, saw the Earth itself as a complex, self-regulating system that created and maintained the conditions for life on the planet. The scientists said human activity had thrown the system dangerously off-kilter.

A powerful communicator, Lovelock used books, speeches and interviews to warn of the desertification, agricultural devastation and mass migrations that climate change would bring.

"The biosphere and I are both in the last 1% of our lives," Lovelock told The Guardian newspaper in 2020.

Initially dismissed by many scientists, the Gaia theory became influential as concern about humanity's impact on the planet grew, not least because of its power as a metaphor. Gaia is the Greek goddess of the Earth.

Lovelock did not mind being an outsider. He outraged many environmentalists by supporting nuclear energy, saying it was the only way to stop global warming.

"Opposition to nuclear energy is based on irrational fear fed by Hollywood-style fiction, the Green lobbies and the media," he wrote in 2004. "These fears are unjustified, and nuclear energy from its start in 1952 has proved to be the safest of all energy sources."

Lovelock's final book "Novacene," published as he turned 100 in 2019, proposed that humans will be replaced on Earth by cyborgs.

Although Lovelock was sometimes at odds with sections of the environmental movement, Britain's only Green lawmaker, Caroline Lucas, tweeted that "the Green movement has lost a huge champion & intellect."

Roger Highfield, science director at Britain's Science Museum, said Lovelock "was a nonconformist who had a unique vantage point that came from being, as he put it, half scientist and half inventor."

"Endless ideas bubbled forth from this synergy between making and thinking," Highfield said, citing Lovelock's "extraordinary range of research, from freezing hamsters to detecting life on Mars."

Lovelock is survived by his wife Sally and children Christine, Jane, Andrew and John.

"To the world, he was best known as a scientific pioneer, climate prophet and conceiver of the Gaia theory," they said in a statement. "To us, he was a loving husband and wonderful father with a boundless sense of curiosity, a mischievous sense of humor and a passion for nature."

The family said there would be a private funeral, followed by a public memorial service at a later date.

Biden emerges from COVID isolation, tells public: Get shots

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden ended his COVID-19 isolation on Wednesday, telling Americans they can “live without fear” of the pandemic if they take advantage of booster shots and treatments, the protections he credited with his swift recovery.

“You don’t need to be president to get these tools to be used for your defense,” he said in the Rose Garden. “In fact, the same booster shots, the same at-home test, the same treatment that I got is available to you.”

The pandemic has killed more than 1 million people in the U.S. and it continues to disrupt daily life more than two years after it began. But Biden emphasized that people are far less likely to die from the disease despite a wave of new infections caused by a contagious variant known as BA.5, which is believed to have sickened the president as well.

“You can live without fear by doing what I did,” he said. “Get boosted, get tested and get treatment.”

He talked more about treatment than prevention, a sign of how the pandemic and his approach has evolved.

“Grandparents are hugging their kids and grandkids again. Weddings, birthdays, celebrations are happening in person again,” Biden said. “Let’s keep emerging from one of the darkest moments in our history.”

Biden drew a contrast to when President Donald Trump contracted COVID-19 and was treated at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

“He was severely ill. Thankfully, he recovered,” Biden said. “When I got COVID, I worked from upstairs in the White House.”

The difference, Biden said, is the availability of vaccines, treatments and home tests for catching infections early.

It was Biden’s first public appearance in person since he tested positive for COVID-19 on July 21. He walked out of the White House on Wednesday wearing his trademark aviator glasses and a dark face mask, which his doctor said he’ll continue wearing when in proximity to others for five more days.

White House staff assembled in the Rose Garden applauded Biden, who thanked them for their support as he finished his remarks.

“God bless you all, and now I get to go back to the Oval Office,” he said.

Biden tested negative for the virus on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, allowing him to end his isolation.

The variant that likely infected the president, BA.5, is an offshoot of the omicron strain that was first detected last year. It’s now responsible for 82% of cases in the country, with its cousin BA.4 contributing another 13%.

The summer wave of infections continues to disrupt society, particularly for people at high risk for severe disease who are encouraged to avoid exposure in places where transmission is high. The majority of people in the U.S. live in counties with high levels of spread and in those places the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends masks in indoor public spaces for everyone.

However, mask mandates have largely faded. In Los Angeles County, where face coverings are required on trains and buses, a slight slowing in cases may spare authorities from imposing an expanded mask order.

The latest variants are able to evade protection offered by vaccination, but the combination of vaccines and booster shots still lower the risk of hospitalization and death. More than 43,000 people in the U.S. are currently hospitalized with COVID-19 and about 430 die each day.

Paxlovid, an antiviral drug used to treat COVID-19, has also helped prevent more severe illness. Biden completed a five-day course of the pills.

Dr. Kevin O’Connor, Biden’s physician, wrote in Wednesday’s update that the president remains free of fever and had not used Tylenol in the past 36 hours.

Biden’s symptoms were almost “completely resolved,” O’Connor reported.

“Given these reassuring factors, the president will discontinue his strict isolation measures,” the doctor wrote.

By all accounts, Biden had a mild bout with the virus. O’Connor consistently wrote in his updates that Biden’s vital signs remained strong, and his temperature only became briefly elevated. He suffered from a runny nose, cough, sore throat and some body aches.

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However, the infection was disruptive. Biden cancelled a trip to Pennsylvania, where he was going to detail his crime prevention plans and speak at a Democratic National Committee fundraiser, and skipped a long weekend at his family home in Delaware.

First lady Jill Biden went without him, and Biden isolated in the White House residence. With voters already concerned about Biden's age — he turns 80 in November — his aides emphasized that he was working despite his illness.

They released photos of him talking on the phone, and Biden participated in virtual meetings with advisers. His voice was hoarse and he coughed through a conversation on Friday, but he had significantly improved after the weekend.

"I'm not keeping the same hours, but I'm meeting all my requirements that have come before me," Biden said Monday.

Although presidents benefit from household attendants, Biden's infection brought a few unglamorous glimpses of life with COVID-19.

Shortly before 7 a.m. on Monday, he said, he felt "the nuzzle of my dog's nose against my chest."

"My wife's not here, she usually takes him out," he said.

Then, during another meeting on Tuesday, the dog interrupted the conversation by barking in the background.

Hungary's leader rebuked for opposing 'mixed race' society

By The Associated Press undefined

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — One of Viktor Orban's closest associates has resigned in protest over what she called a "pure Nazi" speech given by the Hungarian prime minister in which he railed against Europe becoming a "mixed race" society.

It was a rare rebuke from within the governing ranks of the Hungarian leader, who has long been accused by the European Union of eroding democratic institutions and norms.

In her resignation letter, published Tuesday by Hungarian media, longstanding adviser Zsuzsa Hegedus compared Orban's rhetoric to the language used in Nazi Germany.

"I am sincerely sorry that I have to end a relationship due to such a shameful position," said Hegedus, who worked with Orban for 20 years. "I was left with no other choice."

While Orban's anti-migration stance and criticism of Western liberal values have long prompted backlash, Saturday's speech sparked a fresh wave of outrage throughout Europe and from the opposition in Hungary.

In it, Orban declared that countries with largescale migration from outside of Europe "are no longer nations."

"There is a world in which European peoples are mixed together with those arriving from outside Europe," he said in the speech in Baile Tusnad, a majority ethnic Hungarian city in Romania. "Now, that is a mixed-race world."

In what he described as "our world," Orban said "people from within Europe mix with one another."

"We are willing to mix with one another, but we do not want to become peoples of mixed-race," he said, adding: "Migration has split Europe in two — or I could say that it has split the West in two."

"One half is a world where European and non-European peoples live together. These countries are no longer nations: they are nothing more than a conglomeration of peoples."

Hegedus' resignation was a rare criticism from within Orban's closest circle. The Hungarian prime minister and his conservative Fidesz party hold a comfortable majority and have sought to curb critical voices.

Hegedus told Orban that his comments were unacceptable even by the standards of "the most bloodthirsty racist."

"I don't know how you didn't notice that you were presenting a pure Nazi text worthy of Goebbels," she wrote, referring to Joseph Goebbels, the chief Nazi propagandist under Adolf Hitler.

"I cannot dispense with it this time, even for the sake of our nearly 20-year friendship," she added.

Hungary's hvg.hu news portal said Hegedus also sent a copy of her resignation letter to Hungary's chief rabbi, Robert Frolich, who also criticized Orban's remarks.

Orban accepted Hegedus' resignation but dismissed her criticism in a response letter.

"You can't be serious about accusing me of racism after 20 years of working together," he said. "You know best that my government follows a policy of zero tolerance when it comes to antisemitism and racism in Hungary."

Orban will travel to the U.S. next week to address a gathering of conservative activists. Orban has become a hero to many on the American right for his push against immigration and LGBTQ rights.

You didn't win Mega Millions. Here's when you can go for \$1B

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A giant Mega Millions lottery jackpot ballooned to \$1.02 billion after no one matched all six numbers Tuesday night and won the top prize.

The new estimated jackpot for Friday's drawing will be the nation's fourth-largest lottery prize.

The jackpot has grown so large because no one has matched the game's six selected numbers since April 15. That's 29 consecutive drawings without a big winner.

Tuesday's numbers were: 07-29-60-63-66, Mega Ball: 15.

The \$1.02 billion prize is for winners who choose the annuity option, paid annually over 30 years. Most winners opt for the cash option, which for the next drawing Friday night is an estimated \$602.5 million.

The odds of winning the jackpot are 1 in 302.5 million.

Mega Millions is played in 45 states as well as Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The game is co-ordinated by state lotteries.

Climate change and vanishing islands threaten brown pelicans

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer

CHAUVIN, La. (AP) — Sliding off the side of her small boat, seabird biologist Bonnie Slaton wades through waist-high water, brown pelicans soaring overhead, until she reaches Raccoon Island.

During seabird breeding season, the place is a symphony of noise and motion — one of the few remaining refuges for the iconic pelicans.

The crescent-shaped island is a sliver of land separating Louisiana from the Gulf of Mexico — a speed bump against storms that roll in from the sea. An hour's boat ride, the barrier island's remoteness allows birds to nest on mangroves and sandy beaches a safe distance from most predators.

A dozen years ago, there were 15 low-lying islands with nesting colonies of Louisiana's state bird. But today, only about six islands in southeastern Louisiana harbor brown pelican nests — the rest have disappeared underwater.

"Louisiana is rapidly losing land," said Slaton, a researcher at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. "Subsidence and sea level rise are a double whammy."

The vanishing islands threaten one of last century's most celebrated conservation success stories — the decades-long effort to bring the pelicans back from the edge of extinction.

On land, brown pelicans are clumsy-looking birds, their huge beaks and wings lending them what Slaton calls a "goofy" air. But soaring low over the ocean, pelicans are majestic.

The same forces swallowing up coastal islands are also causing southern Louisiana's saltwater marshes to disappear faster than anywhere else in the country. Scientists estimate Louisiana loses one football field worth of ground every 60 to 90 minutes.

"We're on the front lines of climate change. It's all happening here," said University of Louisiana at Lafayette ecologist Jimmy Nelson.

As Slaton and two other biologists walk Raccoon Island's shoreline, the birds alight in a swirling, swooping cacophony that announces the intruders. The calls of a thousand laughing gulls are loud enough to drown out human thought.

Slaton changes out batteries and memory cards for 10 motion-activated trail cameras set up to observe pelican nests in varied habitats. Some circular nests of smooth cordgrass are built atop mangrove stands,

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others on grassy hillocks.

Camera data has shown that in recent years the main threat is flooding — which can wash away entire nests, as happened in April 2021.

Passing one ground nest, Slaton bends to watch as two tiny gray and pink pelican chicks squirm, eyes still closed. Within a week, chicks are covered in downy white and gray feathers.

Watching a seabird colony reveals at once the promise and fragility of new life. Then suddenly the biologists are wiping white dribbles from their foreheads.

The copious bird droppings act as natural fertilizer that helps shrubs and grass grow from the island's sand and stones. Their roots slow erosion.

When Mike Carloss was a child in Louisiana in the 1960s, he never saw brown pelicans.

Like bald eagles, their populations had been decimated by widespread DDT pesticide use that thinned eggshells and prevented healthy chicks from hatching.

The beloved pelicans were completely gone from Louisiana, their likeness only on the state flag. But a long-running effort to save them led to an inspiring comeback story.

After the U.S. DDT ban in 1972, biologists brought pelican chicks from Florida to repopulate empty islands across the Gulf of Mexico. More than 1,200 were released in southeastern Louisiana over 13 years.

One location was Raccoon Island, where Carloss, then a teenage field assistant at the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, tossed fish from the beach to feed chicks.

"I babysat these young pelicans out on a remote island," he recalled. "Somebody had to hand-feed them essentially."

As a state wildlife biologist for more than two decades, Carloss later oversaw restoration projects on the island. But now he fears that if islands keep disappearing, "we would be back to the days of the sixties, and not because of poisoning."

Protecting what's left depends on continuous human intervention.

Today one side of Raccoon Island is ringed by granite breakwaters that divert tides.

Erosion is a natural process, and over the course of thousands of years, most barrier islands rise and fall. Unlike volcanic islands, there is no bedrock here, only layers of silt washed down the Mississippi Delta.

But rising seas and increased storm frequency and intensity with climate change accelerate the pace. And the islands have been starved of new Mississippi sediment because the river's course has been controlled since the 1940s by levees to prevent flooding and aid shipping.

Every few years, government agencies work to restore and maintain some barrier islands. The money comes from a legal settlement after the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. But it won't last forever — and many sinking islands aren't restored at all.

On another day, the biologists steer their aluminum boat past an unrestored island called Philo Brice. Mangroves grow on inundated land, and pelicans nest in the upper branches.

It's still a decent breeding habitat, as long as the soil holds and plants remain above water. "In five or 10 years, it may or may not be here. It's that rapid," said Slaton.

When the biologist Juita Martinez conducted research in coastal Louisiana between 2018 and 2021, she found the number of pelicans on another unrestored and flooded island, Felicity, dropped from 500 to about 20.

Brown pelicans can live more than 20 years, so the impact of breeding troubles takes time to become clear.

For now, pelicans are still common in coastal Louisiana, and their likenesses are everywhere — license plates, restaurant signs and university seals.

The brown pelican "is a symbol of Louisiana, just like the eagle is a symbol of America," said Rue McNeil, executive director of the Northlake Nature Center in Mandeville, Louisiana.

But the future is uncertain.

Flying in a small plane low enough to see the heads of pelicans poking from mangroves, the difference between Raccoon Island and unrestored Philo Brice is stark: One is solid land, the other like soft bread dis-

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solving in a soup of blue.

Today in History: July 28, World War I begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, July 28, the 209th day of 2022. There are 156 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On July 28, 1945, the U.S. Senate ratified the United Nations Charter by a vote of 89-2. A U.S. Army bomber crashed into the 79th floor of New York's Empire State Building, killing 14 people.

On this date:

In 1609, the English ship Sea Venture, commanded by Adm. Sir George Somers, ran ashore on Bermuda, where the passengers and crew founded a colony.

In 1914, World War I began as Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

In 1932, federal troops forcibly dispersed the so-called "Bonus Army" of World War I veterans who had gathered in Washington to demand payments they weren't scheduled to receive until 1945.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced the end of coffee rationing, which had limited people to one pound of coffee every five weeks since it began in Nov. 1942.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson announced he was increasing the number of American troops in South Vietnam from 75,000 to 125,000 "almost immediately."

In 1976, an earthquake devastated northern China, killing at least 242,000 people, according to an official estimate.

In 1984, the Los Angeles Summer Olympics opened.

In 1995, a jury in Union, South Carolina, rejected the death penalty for Susan Smith, sentencing her to life in prison for drowning her two young sons (Smith will be eligible for parole in 2024).

In 2015, it was announced that Jonathan Pollard, the former U.S. Naval intelligence analyst who had spent nearly three decades in prison for spying for Israel, had been granted parole.

In 2016, Hillary Clinton accepted the Democratic presidential nomination at the party's convention in Philadelphia, where she cast herself as a unifier for divided times as well as an experienced leader steered for a volatile world while aggressively challenging Republican Donald Trump's ability to lead.

In 2019, a gunman opened fire at a popular garlic festival in Gilroy, California, killing three people, including a six-year-old boy and a 13-year-old girl, and wounding 17 others before taking his own life.

In 2020, President Donald Trump issued a stout defense of the disproved use of a malaria drug, hydroxychloroquine, to treat COVID-19, hours after social media companies took down videos shared by Trump, his son and others promoting its use; Trump also retweeted several attacks on the credibility of Dr. Anthony Fauci, a leading member of the White House coronavirus task force.

Ten years ago: Syria's government launched an offensive to retake rebel-held neighborhoods in the nation's commercial hub of Aleppo. At the London Olympics, Chinese swimmer Ye Shiwen set the first world record, winning the women's 400-meter individual medley in 4:28.43. Ryan Lochte of the U.S. won the men's 400-meter individual medley in 4:05.18.

Five years ago: The Senate voted 51-49 to reject Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's last-ditch effort to dismantle President Barack Obama's health care overhaul with a trimmed-down bill; John McCain, who was about to begin treatments for a brain tumor, joined two other GOP senators in voting against the repeal effort. President Donald Trump announced he was appointing Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly to be his chief of staff. Defrocked priest Paul Shanley, who was at the center of Boston's Roman Catholic clergy sex abuse scandal, was released from prison at the age of 86.

One year ago: The Senate voted to begin work on a nearly \$1 trillion national infrastructure plan after the White House and a bipartisan group of senators agreed on major provisions of the package, a key part of President Joe Biden's agenda. New guidance from the federal government calling for even vaccinated people to wear masks indoors in parts of the country set off a cascade of mask rules across the nation as cities, states,

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schools and businesses raced to restore mandates and others pushed back against the guidelines. The Texas blues rock trio ZZ Top announced that long-bearded bassist Dusty Hill had died at age 72.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Darryl Hickman is 91. Musical conductor Riccardo Muti is 81. Former Senator and NBA Hall of Famer Bill Bradley is 79. "Garfield" creator Jim Davis is 77. Singer Jonathan Edwards is 76. Actor Linda Kelsey is 76. TV producer Dick Ebersol is 75. Actor Sally Struthers is 75. Rock musician Simon Kirke (Bad Company) is 73. Rock musician Steve Morse (Deep Purple) is 68. Former CBS anchorman Scott Pelley is 65. Alt-country-rock musician Marc Perlman is 61. Actor Michael Hayden is 59. Actor Lori Loughlin is 58. Jazz musician-producer Delfeayo Marsalis is 57. Former hockey player Garth Snow is 53. Actor Elizabeth Berkley is 50. Singer Afroman is 48. Rock singer Jacoby Shaddix (Papa Roach) is 46. Actor John David Washington is 38. Actor Jon Michael Hill is 37. Actor Dustin Milligan is 37. Actor Nolan Gerard Funk is 36. Rapper Soulja Boy is 32. Pop/rock singer Cher Lloyd (TV: "The X Factor") is 29. Golfer Nelly Korda is 24.