

# Groton Daily Independent

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There are shortcuts  
to happiness,  
and dancing is  
one of them.



**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

## The Life of Arlene Anderson



Arlene Anderson, 95, of Aberdeen and formerly of Andover passed away December 6, 2021 at Bethesda Home of Aberdeen surrounded by her family. Memorial services will be held 10:00 a.m., Monday, August 1st at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Inurnment will follow in Sunset Memorial Gardens under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Arlene P. was born on December 11, 1925 in Webster to Helmer and Irene (Cavanaugh) Torguson. She attended rural grade school and graduated from Pierpont High School in 1943. She worked at the Peabody Clinic in Webster.

Deciding to further her education, Arlene went to Minneapolis, MN. And after graduation, was employed by radiologists Hanson, Iverson and Nord. On September 20, 1952, she was united in marriage with Robert Anderson of Andover. Their family became complete with the addition of a son, Kevin, and daughter, Karma.

In line with her view on education, Arlene served on the Andover and Groton Boards of Education; worked on the development of the Day County Museum and helped negotiate the service of the Brown County Bookmobile into rural areas of Day County.

Arlene continued her own education at Northern State College, receiving a BS in English and Business and later adding a MS in English. She taught at Langford High School and retired from Webster High School. Arlene and Bob traveled extensively and eventually purchased a home in Yuma, Arizona. Arlene substituted in various Yuma schools.

When Bob's health began to deteriorate, the couple returned to Andover. In 2003, Arlene moved to Groton and her "bridge" life began. In 2013, she moved to Arbor Springs, Aberdeen.

Arlene is survived by her son, Kevin (Donna) Anderson of Andover, daughter, Karma (LeRoy) Smith of Loveland, CO, grandchildren; Amber (Mark) Surls, of Denver, CO, Kory Anderson (Ali Fisher) of Andover, Scott (Jady) Anderson of Turton, Chance Smith of Loveland, CO, great-grandchildren; Drake Anderson, Sofia Surls, Wolfgang and Serena Anderson.

Honorary Urn Bearers will be Arlene's Grandchildren-Amber Surls, Kory Anderson, Scott Anderson and Chance Smith.

Memorials may be directed to St. John's Lutheran Preschool, Groton, James Valley Threshing Association, Andover, Prairie Heart Guest House (Attention Jessica, 4500 West 69th St., Sioux Falls, SD 57108) or Hearts and Horses Therapeutic Riding Center (163 North Co. Road 29, Loveland, CO 80537).

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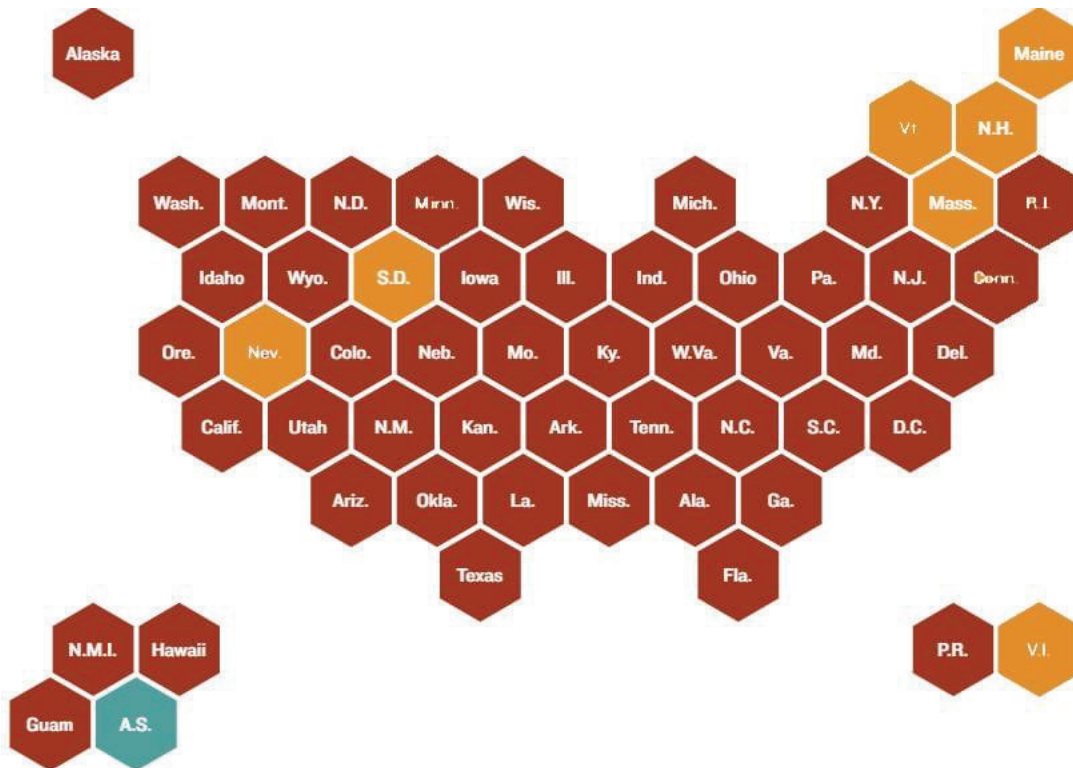
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## COVID-19 Update by Marie Miller

This is going the way of last summer--more states in worse trouble and overall case counts rising. Two states or territories did move from red down to orange; these are Nevada and the US Virgin Islands. Four moved up to red from orange: Minnesota, Michigan, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania.

We now have 48 of the 56 states and territories we're tracking with unchecked transmission, just seven with escalating spread, and one close to containment. Sad state of affairs. I see Vermont with decreasing cases and poised to move to yellow where we've had no one for quite some time and Rhode Island and Utah looking like they'll drop into orange soon. Massachusetts, on the other hand, is looking to go to red.

I'll check back when we have some sort of further movement; but for the moment, we all need to stay vigilant.



## Locke Electric Falls to Northville Merchants Despite Strong Offense

Both Northville Merchants and Locke Electric had their offenses going on Friday, but Locke Electric eventually succumbed 28-12 in the high-scoring affair. Northville will advance to the state tournament.

The Locke Electric struggled to put runs on the board and had a tough time defensively containing Northville Merchants, giving up 28 runs.

Locke Electric took an early lead in the first inning. Carlos Camacho doubled on a 2-2 count, scoring one run.

Northville Merchants took the lead for good with nine runs in the fifth inning. In the fifth Maxfield doubled on a 2-0 count, scoring three runs, Waltman homered on a 1-1 count, scoring three runs, an error scored one run for Northville Merchants, an error scored one run for Northville Merchants, and Chad Simes grounded out, scoring one run.

Locke Electric notched five runs in the third inning. The offensive onslaught by Locke Electric was led by Spencer Locke, Heath Giedt, Cody Jensen, and Tate Larson, all driving in runs in the inning.

Weber toed the rubber for Northville Merchants. The pitcher went one inning, allowing five runs on five hits and walking zero.

Austin Jones was on the hill for Locke Electric. Jones went four innings, allowing 12 runs on six hits and striking out one. Jackson Cogley and Evan Erickson entered the game from the bullpen, throwing three innings and one inning respectively.

Locke Electric saw the ball well today, racking up 16 hits in the game. Jensen, Cogley, Dylan Frey, Jones, Camacho, Larson, and Giedt each managed multiple hits for Locke Electric. Jensen led Locke Electric with three hits in five at bats. Wilson Bonet led Locke Electric with two stolen bases, as they ran wild on the base paths with five stolen bases.

Northville Merchants tallied 16 hits on the day. Heyne, Schipke, Jaragoski, and Maxfield all managed multiple hits for Northville Merchants. Heyne went 5-for-6 at the plate to lead Northville Merchants in hits. Northville Merchants tore up the base paths, as two players stole at least two bases. Sumption led the way with two.

## **S.D. schools get heat stress trackers**

**By Dana Hess**

**For the S.D. Newspaper Association**

PIERRE — Members of the board of directors of the South Dakota High School Activities Association served as delivery drivers Thursday, taking back to their schools new instruments that will help student-athletes stay safe when practicing in hot conditions outdoors.

Thanks to two grants, the association will be able to provide each of its 181 member schools with Kestrel 5400 Wet Bulb Globe Temperature Heat Stress Trackers.

The association received 135 of the trackers through a grant from the National Federation of State High School Associations. Another 46 trackers came to the association through a \$14,000 grant from the South Dakota High School Activities Foundation.

SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos said coaches whose teams practice outside usually rely on just the heat index to tell them if the weather conditions are conducive to causing heat stroke. The Kestrel model tracks 15 separate weather measurements and, through its app, can be set to send its readings to a coach's or activities director's phone.

Each school will get a tracker as well as a tripod to hold it. Schools with football teams will be among the first to get the trackers.

Swartos said last year there were 15 or 16 fatalities of high school athletes nationwide. "Heat played a part in some of them," said Swartos, who noted that the trackers will be "a really good tool for our schools."

The SDHSAA Foundation is separate from the association, though some of the association's board members serve on the foundation committee that awards grants. Information Swartos shared with the board said that the foundation has a fund balance of \$842,476 and made grants totaling \$34,500.28 in July.

In addition to the association's heat stress trackers, the foundation awarded two grants for programs to train officials, one at the University of South Dakota and another in the Black Hills.

The foundation also awarded a grant for a wrestling officials' observation program. SDHSAA has observation programs for football and basketball officials. The programs help in determining which officials will be chosen to work championship games.

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## **Increased sportsmanship among SDHSAA board goals for school year**

**By Dana Hess**

**For the S.D. Newspaper Association**

PIERRE — After discussing the need for better sportsmanship in high school athletics at its past meetings, on Thursday the South Dakota High School Activities Association board of directors made increased sportsmanship one of its goals for the coming school year.

According to SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos, the yearlong study will include looking at fan, coach and player behavior and try to formalize consequences for poor sportsmanship.

Guidance from the association could help local school administrators when they try to deal with unruly fans or undisciplined coaches and players, said board chairman Mark Murphy of Aberdeen.

Trying to figure out when to step in and ask a rowdy fan to leave is a tough call for administrators, said Jeff Danielsen of Watertown. "What's the threshold for unruly behavior?" he asked.

"If we make a concerted effort, it's going to make a big difference," said board member Tom Culver of Avon.

Swartos said he sat at the scorer's table at a basketball game and couldn't believe some of the comments coming from the stands. Fans weren't hesitant about screaming "out something about the official's mother."

Another goal is setting up a calendar committee that will study when state events are held. The last calendar committee did its work in the 2015-16 school year.

There will also be a committee established to look at the association's system for classifying schools.

Currently the membership numbers that determine classifications may change from sport to sport. The committee will study the feasibility of aligning the membership numbers across sports.

Some of the board's goals were held over from the last school year. One is to continue to study management fees and revenue sources for member schools. Swartos said the board had considered studying a bid system that communities would use if they wanted to host state tournaments. Instead of a bid system, in the coming year the board will conduct an economic impact statement that will tally the funds that state events bring into communities. Swartos said the study may entice communities to offer better hotel rates or restaurant discounts.

The board will study the implementation of new sports. The study of E-sports will continue. Swartos noted that a resolution in the Legislature called on the association to consider sanctioning baseball. A formal procedure for studying a new sport will be considered.

The recruiting of officials will be a goal again in the new school year. Swartos said the board would study placing curriculum in high schools so that students could be trained to officiate lower level games.

Two goals from last year were accomplished. The hardship appeals process was changed and a free and reduced lunch count will be used to modify school membership totals when it comes to deciding classifications starting in the 2024 classification cycle.

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## **Aberdeen to host inaugural SDHSAA girls' softball tournament**

**By Dana Hess**

**For the S.D. Newspaper Association**

PIERRE — The first-ever girls' softball tournament sanctioned by the South Dakota High School Activities Association will take place June 1-3 next year in Aberdeen.

At the SDHSAA board meeting on Thursday, assistant executive director Jo Auch said the tournament would be held at Northern State University. She told the board that the first tournament would include all three classes at the same site.

"They've got a beautiful facility," Auch said of the softball fields at Northern. She noted that the only drawback is a lack of lights which may limit the number of championship games that can be played at the main field. There are 55 schools signed up to offer the newly sanctioned sport with teams to be split into AA, A and B classifications.

SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos said that the staff will analyze how the tournament plays out using just one site. Subsequent tournaments could be held at three sites in three communities, he said.

Each classification will offer an eight-team field for the tournament.

"Having everybody in the same city is going to be pretty special," Auch said.

Choosing a site for a state tournament is usually the responsibility of the association's site selection committee. Because girls' softball is a new sport, Auch vetted facilities in Vermillion, Brookings and Rapid City before settling on Aberdeen.

At Thursday's meeting SDHSAA Board Chairman Mark Murphy of Aberdeen appointed new members to the site selection committee for the 2022-23 school year. The committee will be chaired by board member Kelly Messmer of Harding County. Other board members on the committee are Jeff Danielsen of Watertown and Barry Mann of Wakpala.

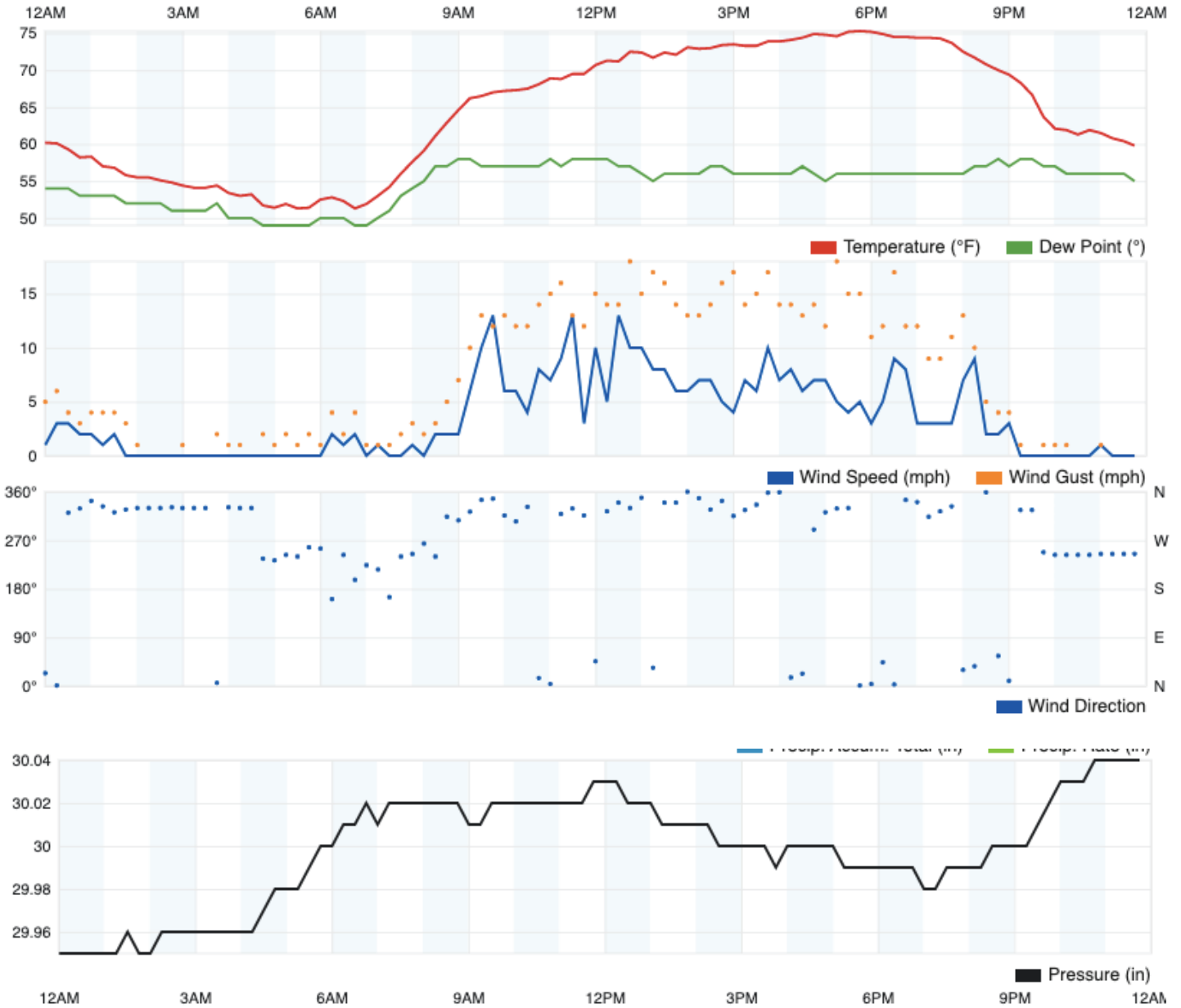
The committee also includes five activities directors: Casey Meile of Sioux Falls Public Schools, Jared Vasquez of Rapid City Area Schools, Dawn Seiler of Aberdeen Central, Terry Rotert of Huron and Mike Jewett of Brookings.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 82 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 62 °F

Saturday



Hot

High: 90 °F

Saturday  
Night



Chance  
T-storms

Low: 68 °F

Sunday



Sunny then  
Slight Chance  
T-storms

High: 93 °F

## Pleasant Weather Today

July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022



**78-88°**

Cooler across the Prairie Coteau,  
warmest across central SD

Temperatures and humidity increase  
noticeably this weekend!



[weather.gov/abardeen](https://weather.gov/abardeen)

High pressure will influence the area with mostly clear skies and relatively light winds once again today, as temperatures climb generally into the 80s for highs (right around normal for late July). Hot conditions will be in place by this weekend however, along with increasing humidity. It'll be mostly dry over the next several days as well, with the best chance for thunderstorms (20 to 40 percent) being across northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota Saturday evening through Sunday afternoon.



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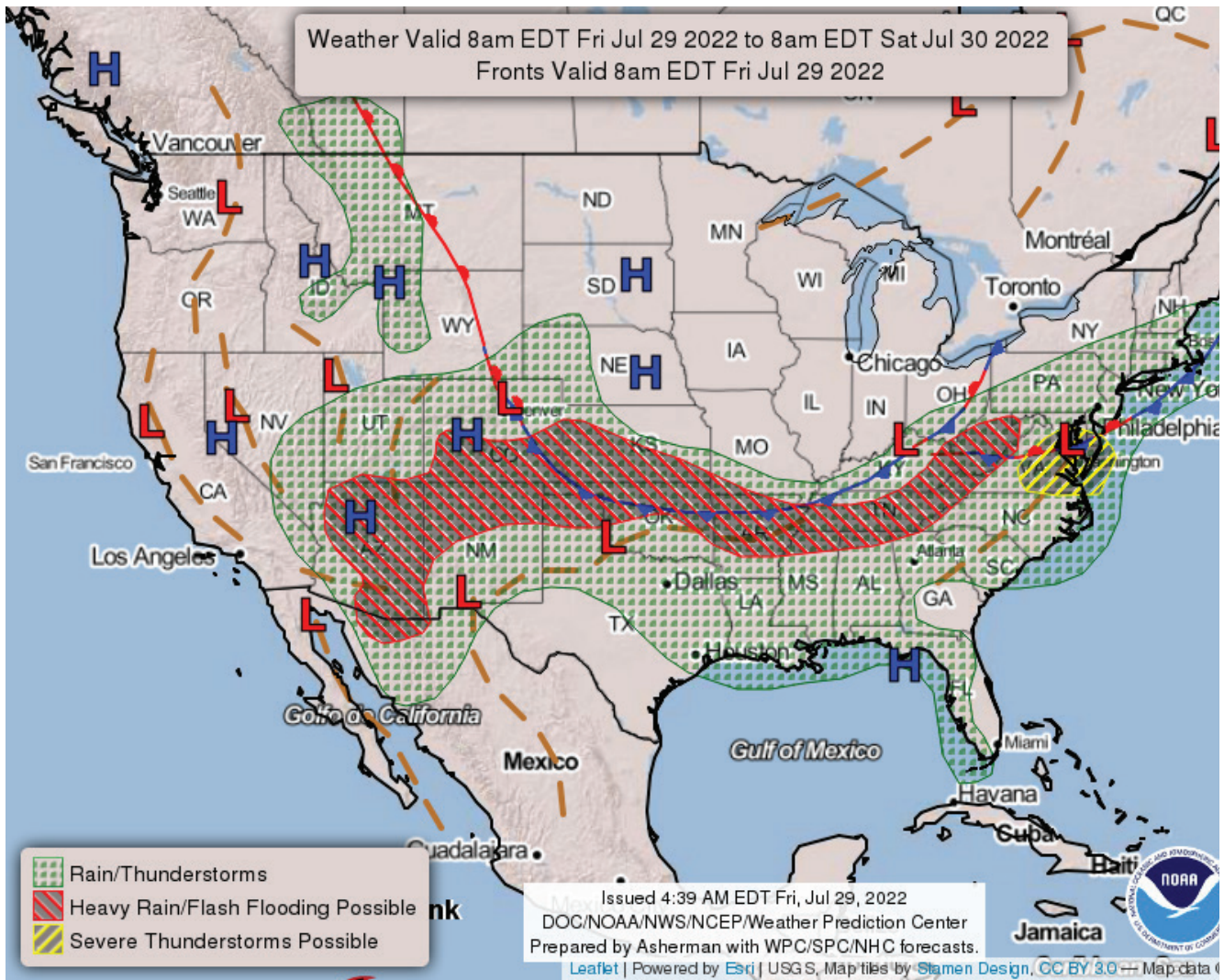
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 76 °F at 5:52 PM**  
**Low Temp: 51 °F at 6:47 AM**  
**Wind: 19 mph at 11:16 AM**  
**Precip: 0.00**

Day length: 14 hours, 54 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 109 in 1933  
Record Low: 42 in 2014  
Average High: 85°F  
Average Low: 60°F  
Average Precip in July.: 2.93  
Precip to date in July.: 2.80  
Average Precip to date: 13.94  
Precip Year to Date: 14.38  
Sunset Tonight: 9:05:57 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:12:57 AM



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## Today in Weather History

July 29, 1896: A destructive hailstorm originated in the central part of Edmunds County near Ipswich, passing southeast. This storm destroyed crops and broke glass in many windows along a path to the eastern portions of Spink County.

July 29, 2003: Winds of 70 mph, to over 100 mph caused damage in and around Redfield east to Frankfort and south to Tulare. The winds and hail damaged many roofs, crops, outbuildings, downed power lines, and poles, and also downed many branches and trees. In Redfield, a trailer home with two occupants was rolled three to four times over 75 feet. The trailer home rolled over a pickup truck and damaged it. Much of the contents in the trailer home were damaged, and the trailer home itself was a total loss. The people inside the home received minor injuries. A garage was also blown apart in Redfield with the car damaged inside. At the grain elevator in Redfield, several vehicle windows were broke out by airborne sand and rocks. A street light was ripped from the concrete in Redfield. East of Redfield, a 70-foot silo of over 70 tons was crumbled to the ground, and a large tractor shed was blown apart with damage to the contents. Wind equipment by Redfield measured winds at 106 mph before the power went out.

July 29, 2006: Record heat and high humidity affected central, north central, and northeast South Dakota for the end of July. Heat indices rose to 105 to 115 degrees across the area. Record high temperatures were set at Pierre, Mobridge, Kennebec, Timber Lake, and Aberdeen. Pierre rose to 111 degrees on each of the three days. Mobridge rose to 111 degrees on the 28th and 112 degrees on the 30th. Several record highs of 108 and 109 degrees were set at Timber Lake and Kennebec in the three-day period. Aberdeen set a record high of 106 on the 30th.

1898 - The temperature at Prineville, OR, soared to 119 degrees to establish a state record, which was tied on the 10th of August at Pendleton. (The Weather Channel)

1905 - Heavy rain in southwestern Connecticut caused a dam break, and the resulting flood caused a quarter of a million dollars damage at Bridgeport. As much as eleven inches of rain fell prior to the flood. (David Ludlum)

1958: The U.S. Congress passes legislation establishing the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), a civilian agency responsible for coordinating America's activities in space.

1960: Severe thunderstorms brought damaging winds, possibly as high as 100 mph to central Oklahoma. Eight planes and several hangars were damaged at Wiley Post Airfield, while two aircraft and additional hangars were damaged at Will Rogers World Airport. The winds caused seven injuries in the area, including two youths who were injured by flying debris.

1981 - Fifty cattle, each weighing 800 pounds, were killed by lightning near Vance, AL. The lightning struck a tree and then spread along the ground killing the cattle. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Minnesota to Indiana and Illinois. A thunderstorm at Janesville, WI, produced wind gusts to 104 mph which flipped over two airplanes, and blew another plane 300 feet down the runway. The northeastern U.S. experienced some relief from the heat. Nine cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Saint Johnsbury, VT, with a reading of 42 degrees. Barnet, VT, reported a morning low of 33 degrees, with frost reported on vegetation. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Hail three inches in diameter was reported south of Saint Cloud, MN. Hot weather prevailed in the western U.S. Fresno, CA reported a record thirteen straight days of 100 degree heat. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Morning thunderstorms in the Upper Midwest produced more than five inches of rain west of Virgil, SD. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms deluged the foothills and adjacent plains of Colorado with heavy rain. Rains of six to seven and a half inches fell in eight hours north of Greeley. Hail and heavy rain caused several million dollars damage in Weld County. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2004: A record-setting flash flood occurred over part of the Greenville, South Carolina, during the morning hours. Six to eight inches of rain fell just east of Berea, a northwestern suburb, which caused the Reedy River through downtown Greenville crested 9 feet above flood stage. This crest was the highest level since 1908.

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## THE PAIN PASSES

Pierre Renoir, the famous French painter, was severely afflicted with arthritis. Over the years, his hands became twisted, and whenever he painted the pain was intense. However, he would not quit.

One day a friend who was watching him paint asked, "How can you paint with the pain that causes you so much torture?"

Thoughtfully he answered, "The pain passes, but the beauty remains."

Job was a godly man who was wealthy and influential. For most of his life, he was prosperous and free from any serious problems. One day his life fell apart. Within a short time, he lost nearly everything he had, suffered greatly, was severely criticized and condemned by his friends. But, he never lost his faith in God.

Though he never learned the reason for his losses and suffering, he never questioned God's judgment. He believed that an all-powerful, all-loving God was acting in his best interests. In the midst of his trials, he said, "When He has tried me I shall come out as gold." That's trust!

Prayer: Lord, may we believe that what You bring into our lives will ultimately work for our best. Give us faith when we are troubled and trust when we doubt Your love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Job 23:10-12 But he knows where I am going. And when he tests me, I will come out as pure as gold. For I have stayed on God's paths; I have followed his ways and not turned aside. I have not departed from his commands, but have treasured his words more than daily food.

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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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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

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- Colored ..... \$79.88/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
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### **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 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,

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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."

## Zelenskyy observes ships loaded with Ukrainian grain exports

ODESA, Ukraine (AP) — President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited one of Ukraine's main Black Sea ports Friday, a week after a deal was struck with Russia, Turkey and the United Nations to create safe corridors for ships to export grains that have been trapped in the country since the war began five months ago.

His visit to a port in the Odesa region comes as workers were seen preparing terminals for grain exports, which are relied on by millions of impoverished people worldwide facing hunger.

"The first vessel, the first ship is being loaded since the beginning of the war," Zelenskyy said.

He said the export of grain will begin with the departure of several ships that were loaded but could not depart the Ukrainian ports after the Russian invasion.

"Our side is fully prepared. We sent all the signals to our partners — the U.N. and Turkey, and our military guarantees the security situation," he said, adding "it is important for us that Ukraine remains the guarantor of global food security."

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The visits to the ports are part of a broader push by Ukraine to show the world they are nearly ready to export millions of tons of grains to the world again after last week's breakthrough agreement.

The complexities of the agreement and concerns about the safety of shipping crews has set the deal off to a slow, cautious start. It's been a week since it was signed, and no grains have yet left ports. But the sides are facing a ticking clock — the deal is only good for 120 days.

It comes a week after Russian missiles struck Odesa, throwing into question Moscow's commitment to the deal signed only hours earlier. The sides agreed to facilitate the shipment of Ukrainian wheat and other grains from Black Sea routes blocked by five months of war, as well as fertilizer and food from Russia.

The goal over the next four months is to get some 20 million tons of grain out of three Ukrainian sea ports blocked since the 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.

"We are ready," Ukraine's minister of infrastructure, Oleksandr Kubrakov, told reporters at the port of Odesa on Friday.

But he said Ukraine is waiting on the U.N. to confirm the safe corridors that will be used by ships navigating the waters, which have been mined with explosives. In the meantime, a ship at the port of Chernomorsk was being loaded with grains, he said.

Martin Griffiths, the U.N. official who mediated the deal, said the first shipment of grains could depart Ukrainian ports as early as Friday but cautioned that work is still being done to finalize the exact coordinates of the safest routes, saying this must be "absolutely nailed down."

Lloyd's List, a global publisher of shipping news, noted Friday that while U.N. officials are pushing for the initial voyage this week to show progress in the deal, continued uncertainty on key details will likely prevent an immediate ramping-up of shipments.

"Until those logistical issues and detailed outlines of safeguarding procedures are disseminated, charters will not be agreed and insurers will not be underwriting shipments," wrote Bridget Diakun and Richard Meade of Lloyd's List.

They note, however, that U.N. agencies, such as the World Food Program, have already arranged to charter much of the grain for urgent humanitarian needs.

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.

Since the deal was signed a week ago, shipping companies have not rushed in because explosive mines are drifting in the waters, ship owners are assessing the risks and many still have questions over how the agreement will unfold.

Ukraine, Turkey and the U.N. have been keen to show the deal is in action since it was signed one week ago. Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar told Al Jazeera on Thursday that "the deal has started in practice" and that the first ship leaving Ukraine with grains is expected to depart "very soon."

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu expressed similar optimism in a press briefing, framing the deal as a significant step forward between the warring sides.

"This is not just a step being taken to lift the hurdles in front of the export of food. If implemented successfully, it will be a serious confidence-building measure for both sides," he said.

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.

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.



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## **Inflation hits record 8.9% in euro area, but economy grows**

By COURTNEY BONNELL and COLLEEN BARRY AP Business Writers

LONDON (AP) — Inflation in the European countries using the euro currency shot up to another record in July, pushed by higher energy prices fueled by Russia's war in Ukraine, but the economy still managed better-than-expected, if meager, growth in the second quarter.

Annual inflation in the eurozone's 19 countries rose to 8.9% in July, an increase from 8.6% in June, according to numbers published Friday by the European Union statistics agency.

For months, inflation has been running at its highest levels since 1997, when record-keeping for the euro began, leading the European Central Bank to raise interest rates last week for the first time in 11 years and signal another boost in September.

Energy prices surged in July by 39.7%, only slightly lower than the previous month due to gas supply concerns. Prices for food, alcohol and tobacco rose by 9.8%, faster than the increase posted last month due to higher transport costs, shortages and uncertainty around Ukrainian supply.

"Another ugly inflation reading for July," said Bert Colijn, senior eurozone economist for ING bank, adding that there was "no imminent sign of relief."

The eurozone's economy, meanwhile, grew from April through June, expanding by 0.7% compared with the previous quarter, despite stagnation in Germany, Europe's traditional economic engine. France avoided fears of a recession by posting modest 0.5% growth, while Italy and Spain exceeded expectations with 1% and 1.1% expansions, respectively.

Economists pointed to the rebound in tourism following the COVID-19 pandemic, with short-staffed airports and airlines packed this summer, leading to travel chaos.

With inflation continuing to rise higher than expected, analysts expect economic growth to be the last glimmer of good news, with inflation, rising interest rates and the worsening energy crisis expected to push the region into recession later this year.

"This is as likely to be as good as it will get for the eurozone for the foreseeable future," Andrew Kenningham, chief Europe economist for Capital Economics, wrote in an analyst note.

Europe's growth contrasts with the United States, whose the economy has contracted for two straight quarters, raising fears of a recession with inflation at 40-year highs. But the job market is even stronger than before the COVID-19 pandemic, and most economists, including Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, have said they don't think the economy is in recession.

Many, however, increasingly expect an economic downturn in the U.S. to begin later this year or next, much like in Europe.

Europe's risk is largely tied to its reliance on Russian energy, with Moscow throttling down flows of natural gas that power factories, generate electricity and heat homes in the winter.

More reductions this week through a major pipeline to Germany, Nord Stream 1, have heightened fears that the Kremlin may cut off supplies completely. That would force rationing for energy-intensive industries and spike already record-high levels of inflation driven by soaring energy prices, threatening to plunge the 27-nation bloc into recession.

While European Union governments approved a measure this week to reduce gas use by 15% and have passed tax cuts and subsidies to ease a cost-of-living crisis, Europe is at the mercy of Russia and the weather.

A cold winter, when natural gas demand soars, could draw down storage levels that governments are now scrambling to fill but has been made infinitely harder by Russia's cuts.

"With the region's gas supply now reduced and inflation set to remain high for some time, the eurozone is likely to fall into recession," Michael Tran, an assistant economist with Capital Economics, said in an analysis this week.

While the European Central Bank has begun raising rates to cool inflation, it had trailed other central banks like the Fed and the Bank of England in making credit more expensive, fearing the outsize impact of soaring energy prices tied to the war.

The impact of the ECB's recent rate hike on inflation was "very limited, although it does add to a further

cooling of demand in the eurozone," wrote ING's Colijn.

"With a recession looming and inflation reaching new highs, the question is how the ECB will respond to an economy which is already cooling down," he said.

## Russia, Ukraine trade blame for shelling of POW prison

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia and Ukraine on Friday accused each other of shelling a prison in a separatist eastern region that reportedly killed dozens of Ukrainian prisoners of war who were captured after the fall of Mariupol in May.

Russia said that Ukraine used U.S.-supplied HIMARS multiple rocket launchers in the attack on the prison in Olenivka, in the Russian-controlled Donetsk region. Officials from Russia and the separatist authorities in Donetsk said the attack killed 53 Ukrainian POWs and wounded 75.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov described the strike as a "bloody provocation" aimed at discouraging Ukrainian soldiers from surrendering. He said that eight prison guards were also wounded by the shelling.

The Ukrainian military denied any rocket or artillery strikes on Olenivka, insisting that it wasn't shelling civilian areas and only strikes Russian military targets.

It accused the Russian forces of deliberately shelling the prison in Olenivka in order to accuse Ukraine of war crimes and also to cover up torture and executions there.

The statement denounced the Russian claims as part of an "information war to accuse the Ukrainian armed forces of shelling civilian infrastructure and the population to cover up their own treacherous action."

Neither claim could be independently verified.

Denis Pushilin, the Moscow-backed separatist leader, said the prison has 193 inmates. He didn't specify how many of them were Ukrainian POWs.

Ukrainian authorities in the Donetsk region said Russia has pressed on with the shelling of civilian targets in Ukrainian-held areas.

"The fighting in the region has been intensifying by the day, and civilians must evacuate while it's still possible," said Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko. "The Russian army doesn't worry about civilian casualties. They are pummeling cities and villages in the region."

The Ukrainian troops in Mariupol were taken prisoner after the fierce fighting for Ukraine's Azov Sea port, where they had been holed up at the giant Azovstal steel mill. Their resistance has become a symbol of Ukrainian struggle against the Russian invasion that started on Feb. 24.

The Azov Regiment and other Ukrainian units defended the steel mill for nearly three months, clinging to its underground maze of tunnels. More than 2,400 surrendered in May under relentless Russian attacks from the ground, sea and air.

Scores of Ukrainian soldiers were taken to prisons in Russian-controlled areas such as the Donetsk region, a breakaway area in eastern Ukraine which is run by Russian-backed separatist authorities. Some have returned to Ukraine as part of prisoner exchanges with Russia, but families of others have no idea whether their loved ones are alive, or if they will ever come home.

In other developments:

— Ukrainian officials said Russian forces shelled the country's second-largest city, Kharkiv.

City mayor Ihor Terekhov said a central part of the northeastern city was hit, including a two-story building and a higher education institution. Terekhov said the strike occurred just after 4 a.m. on Friday.

"The State Emergency Service is already working — they are sorting out the rubble, looking for people under them," Terekhov said in a Telegram update.

— The Ukrainian presidential office said that at least 13 civilians were killed and another 36 were wounded in Russian shelling over the past 24 hours.

In the southern city of Mykolaiv, at least four people were killed and seven others were wounded when Russian shelling hit a bus stop.

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"The Russians have changed their tactics because of the Ukrainian forces' successes in the south. ... They fire near a bus stop," Mykolaiv Gov. Vitaliy Kim said.

The Russian barrage also hit a facility for distribution of humanitarian assistance, where three people were wounded, officials said.

Ukrainian officials also said at least four civilians were killed and another five were wounded in the eastern town of Bakhmut in the Donetsk region, which is the focus of the Russian offensive in the Donbas. More than 30 residential buildings and a kindergarten were damaged.

## Isolation complication? US finds it's hard to shun Russia

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration likes to say Russia has become isolated internationally because of its invasion of Ukraine. Yet Moscow's top officials have hardly been cloistered in the Kremlin. And now, even the U.S. wants to talk.

President Vladimir Putin has been meeting with world leaders, including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose country is a NATO member. Meanwhile, his top diplomat, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, is jetting around the world, smiling, shaking hands and posing for photos with foreign leaders — including some friends of the U.S.

And on Wednesday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he wants to end months of top-level U.S. diplomatic estrangement with Lavrov to discuss the release of American detainees as well as issues related to Ukraine. The call has not been scheduled but is expected in coming days. Updates with hyperlinks.

The handshakes and phone calls cast doubt on a core part of the U.S. strategy aimed at ending the Ukraine war: that diplomatic and economic isolation, along with battlefield setbacks, would ultimately force Russia to send its troops home.

Even as he announced plans for the call, Blinken continued to insist Russia is indeed isolated. He argued the travel of its top officials is purely damage control and a reaction to international criticism Moscow is facing for the Ukraine war.

U.S. officials say Russia is trying to shore up the few alliances it has left — some of which are American adversaries like Iran. But countries that are ostensibly U.S. partners, like Egypt and Uganda, are also warmly welcoming top Russians.

And after making the case since February that there's no point in talking to Russia because Russia is not serious about diplomacy and cannot be trusted, the U.S. has conceded it needs to engage with Moscow as well.

The public outreach to Lavrov combined with the announcement of a "substantial proposal" to Russia to win the release of detained Americans Paul Whelan and Brittney Griner took many by surprise.

A Blinken-Lavrov conversation would be the highest-level contact between the U.S. and Russia since Feb. 15, before the Russian invasion, and could set the stage for possible in-person discussions, although administration officials say there are no plans for that.

The Kremlin presumably reveled in the news that the U.S. is now seeking engagement and will likely delay the process of arranging a call to gain maximum advantage.

"They are going to drag this out and try to humiliate us as much as they can," said Ian Kelly, a retired career diplomat who served as U.S. ambassador to Georgia in the Obama and Trump administrations. "I don't think it goes along with (the administration's) overall policy."

Kelly said the request for a call is "counterproductive to our broader effort to isolate Russia."

"Other countries will look at this and say, 'Why shouldn't we deal with Lavrov or the Russians more broadly?'" he said.

Already, Western appeals to convince Asian, African and Middle Eastern nations to shun Russia appear to have been ignored as Lavrov travels around the world.

Still, Blinken played down the importance of Lavrov's globetrotting. He said it was a response to the cold reception Russia has gotten to Ukraine-related wheat and grain shortages now plaguing large portions

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of the developing world, particularly as a United Nations-backed agreement to free up those supplies has yet to be implemented.

"What I see is a desperate game of defense to try somehow to justify to the world the actions that Russia has taken," Blinken said. "Somehow trying to justify what's unjustifiable."

U.S. and European officials point out that Russia has come under heavy criticism for the Ukraine invasion and the food and energy security shortages that have resulted.

Biden administration officials, including Blinken, have noted with satisfaction that Lavrov chose to leave a recent meeting of G-20 foreign ministers in Indonesia after listening to a litany of complaints from counterparts about the global impact of the war.

Despite that, there is no sign Russia will be excluded from major international events such as the ASEAN Regional Forum next week, the United Nations General Assembly in September, or a trio of leaders' summits in Asia to be held in November.

Russia continues to maintain close ties with China, India and numerous developing countries throughout Asia and Africa. Many depend on Russia for energy and other exports, though they also rely on Ukraine for grain.

India hasn't shunned Russia despite its membership in the so-called "Quad" with the U.S., Australia and Japan. With a longstanding close relationship with Russia, India has boosted energy imports from Russia despite pressure from the U.S. and Europe, which is moving away from Russian gas and oil.

India, for example, has used nearly 60 million barrels of Russian oil in 2022 so far, compared with only 12 million barrels in all of 2021, according to commodity data firm Kpler.

On the other side of the coin, the Philippines, a U.S. treaty ally, this week scrapped a deal to purchase 16 Russian military transport helicopters due to fears of possible U.S. sanctions.

The Russian foreign ministry has gleefully countered the assertions of Russia's isolation by tweeting photographs of Lavrov in various world capitals.

Among the photos: Lavrov at the the G-20 meeting in Bali with the Chinese, Indian and Indonesian foreign ministers; in Uganda with President Yoweri Museveni, a longtime U.S. partner; and in Egypt with President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi, also a U.S. partner, whose country every year receives billions in dollars in American aid.

## Abortion foes downplay complex post-Roe v. Wade realities

By AMANDA SEITZ and JOSH KELETY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When a 10-year-old Ohio girl traveled to Indiana last month to end a pregnancy allegedly forced onto her by a rapist, several conservative politicians and TV pundits called the report a hoax.

After horrific details confirmed the case was real, some tried a new tact: claiming, without evidence, that the child could have still legally obtained an abortion in Ohio under a near-total abortion ban that exempts only mothers whose lives or major bodily functions are at risk once fetal cardiac activity is detected.

Catherine Glenn Foster, president of the anti-abortion Americans United for Life, added another defense for young rape victims: She told the House Judiciary Committee that a 10-year-old's pregnancy "would probably impact her life and so, therefore, it would fall under any exception and would not be an abortion."

In televised statements and interviews, anti-abortion advocates have used misleading rhetoric about abortion access to downplay fallout and complications from restrictive abortion laws as doctors, struggling to interpret laws that have largely been untested in courts, turn away pregnant patients for care.

Those efforts have had an immediate impact, casting a narrative about a post-Roe v. Wade world that overlooks how abortion laws enacted in recent weeks have complicated the way doctors treat rape victims, miscarriages and ectopic pregnancies.

More than half a dozen doctors interviewed by The Associated Press said they feel compromised and uncertain operating in an abortion landscape fundamentally changed by a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that rejected nearly 50 years of precedent that abortion was a protected constitutional right.

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"It's a horrible position for health care providers to be in, to be unsure about what's legal and what's not legal, and to be questioning the care that they know that they should provide," said Dr. Jennifer Kerns, an associate professor in the department of obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive sciences at the University of California, San Francisco.

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, who initially questioned reporting of the 10-year-old girl's rape case, said in a Fox News Channel interview that she did not have to leave Ohio for abortion treatment, citing the state's exemptions. Last week, Ohio Right to Life President Mike Gonidakis repeated the claim during a public forum: "She could have had that abortion here." The law's Republican sponsor said the same in a newspaper column published Thursday.

But it's not as clear cut as they've suggested.

The state's nonpartisan Legislative Service Commission confirmed in an analysis that the age of a mother, alone, would not allow a girl to legally access the procedure in the state. Doctors in Ohio are required to document a medical condition and rationale if they administer an abortion to provide life-saving treatment.

Yost's office did not return a request for additional comment. Gonidakis laid out "different scenarios" to the AP under which the girl might have been able to access the abortion in Ohio, such as if a doctor agreed her life was at risk because of her age, while noting that he had not reviewed her medical records.

Across social media, some conservatives have also minimized concerns about access to treatment for ectopic pregnancies, calling it "still legal in every state." An ectopic pregnancy is defined as one in which a fertilized egg grows outside the uterus, where it has no chance of survival.

Earlier this month, abortion opponent Erin Morrow Hawley told the House Reform and Oversight Committee that ectopic pregnancies had become the subject of "misinformation."

"There have been social media posts suggesting that women won't get treated for an ectopic pregnancy because doctors might be afraid of performing the procedure, but that's absolutely false," said Hawley, an attorney at the religious nonprofit Alliance Defending Freedom. "Treatment for an ectopic pregnancy is not, in fact, an abortion."

State abortion laws, however, have fueled confusion.

Doctors generally agree that the procedure to end an ectopic pregnancy, which typically includes medication or surgery to remove the pregnancy, is not the same as an abortion.

But women reportedly have been declined care in states that have severely restricted abortion access, like Ohio, where an abortion is banned once fetal cardiac activity is detected. Fetal heartbeats can still be present in ectopic pregnancies. In one case, a central Texas hospital told a physician not to treat an ectopic pregnancy until it ruptured, per a letter from the Texas Medical Association.

In an email to the AP, Hawley said that doctors who have turned away ectopic pregnancy patients because of abortion bans are misinterpreting the laws.

Still, before *Roe v. Wade* was even overturned by the Supreme Court in June, some religious hospitals had policies against treating women for ectopic pregnancies.

And many states have not specified in their newly enacted abortion bans that an ectopic pregnancy can be treated as an exception. That's left doctors in some states leery of ending the pregnancy, said Dr. Kate White, an associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Boston University School of Medicine. Lawmakers in West Virginia, for example, are considering an abortion ban that would carve out an exception for ectopic pregnancies.

"Clinicians may be afraid to treat it if the abortion law in their state does not explicitly carve out ectopic pregnancy. You can see their worry, 'Hey, growing pregnancy, can't interrupt it ever,'" White said. "They are afraid that the law is too broad."

## China's Xi warns Biden over Taiwan, calls for cooperation

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — President Xi Jinping warned against meddling in China's dealings with Taiwan during a phone call with his U.S. counterpart, Joe Biden, that gave no indication of progress on trade, technology

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or other irritants, including Beijing's opposition to a top American lawmaker's possible visit to the island that the mainland claims as its own territory.

Xi also warned against splitting the world's two biggest economies, according to a Chinese government summary of Thursday's unusually lengthy, three-hour call. Businesspeople and economists warn such a change, brought on by Chinese industrial policy and U.S. curbs on technology exports, might hurt the global economy by slowing innovation and increasing costs.

Meanwhile, Xi and Biden are looking at the possibility of meeting in person, according to a U.S. official who declined to be identified further. Xi has been invited to Indonesia in November for a meeting of the Group of 20 major economies, making it a potential location for a face-to-face meeting.

The Chinese government gave no indication Xi and Biden discussed possible plans by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to visit Taiwan, which the ruling Communist Party says has no right to conduct foreign relations. But Xi rejected "interference by external forces" that might encourage Taiwan to try to make its decades-old de facto independence permanent.

The tough language from Xi, who usually tries to appear to be above political disputes and makes blandly positive public comments, suggested Chinese leaders might believe Washington didn't understand the seriousness of previous warnings about Taiwan.

"Resolutely safeguarding China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity is the firm will of the more than 1.4 billion Chinese people," foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said Friday. "Those who play with fire will perish by it."

Taiwan and China split in 1949 following a civil war that ended with a communist victory on the mainland. They have no official relations but are linked by billions of dollars of trade and investment. Both sides say they are one country but disagree over which government is entitled to national leadership.

A Ministry of Defense spokesperson said ahead of Thursday's call that Washington "must not arrange for Pelosi to visit Taiwan." He said the ruling party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, would take "strong measures to thwart any external interference."

Xi called on the United States to "honor the one-China principle," according to Zhao, referring to Beijing's position that the mainland and Taiwan are one country. The United States, by contrast, has a "one-China policy" that says Washington takes no position on the question but wants to see it resolved peacefully.

"China's opposition to interactions between the United States and Taiwan is clear and consistent," Zhao said.

A foreign ministry summary of the conversation cited Biden as saying the United States doesn't support independence for Taiwan.

Coverage of the conversation in China's entirely state-controlled media on Friday was limited to repeating government statements.

Pelosi has yet to confirm whether she will go to Taiwan, but if she does, the Democrat from California would be the highest-ranking elected American official to visit since then-Speaker Newt Gingrich in 1997.

Beijing criticized Gingrich for saying the United States would defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese attack but did little else in response to his three-hour visit to the island.

Since then, China's position on Taiwan has hardened as the mainland economy grew to become second-largest after the United States. The ruling party poured hundreds of billions of dollars into developing fighter jets and other high-tech weapons including "carrier killer" missiles that are thought to be intended to block the U.S. Navy from helping to defend the island.

The conflict over a possible Pelosi visit is more sensitive to Beijing in a year when Xi, who took power in 2012, is expected to try to break with tradition and award himself a third five-year term as party leader.

Xi, who wants to be seen as restoring China's rightful historic role as a global leader, has promoted a more assertive policy abroad. The People's Liberation Army has sent growing numbers of fighter planes and bombers to fly near Taiwan in an attempt to intimidate its democratically elected government.

The United States has no official relations with Taiwan but has extensive commercial ties and informal political connections. Washington is obliged by federal law to see that Taiwan has the means to defend itself.

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Xi called for cooperation on reducing the risk of economic recession, coordinating macroeconomic policies, fighting COVID-19 and "de-escalation of regional hot spots," according to the government statement.

He also warned against decoupling, or separating, the U.S. and Chinese economies for strategic reasons.

Businesspeople and industry analysts have warned global industries might be split into separate markets with incompatible products due to China's pressure on its companies to develop their own technology standards and U.S. restrictions on Chinese access to technology that Washington see as a security risk. That might slow innovation and increase costs.

"Attempts at decoupling or severing supply chains in defiance of underlying laws would not help boost the U.S. economy," the statement said. "They would only make the world economy more vulnerable."

## For Taiwan, Pelosi visit is about US, China controlling risk

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — The crisis sparked by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's potential visit to Taiwan misses a key point, experts say: that the real focus should be on how the United States and China manage their differences so the risks of confrontation don't spiral out of control.

News of a possible visit by Pelosi has set off intense speculation about China's potential diplomatic and military responses. But for Taiwan, the visit — if it occurs — would be merely the latest point of strife in an already tense situation that has shadowed the island democracy for decades.

"The main point is not in Pelosi coming to Taiwan, but it's to look at how the U.S. and China effectively control the risks that may arise," said Arthur Zhin-Sheng Wang, a defense studies expert at Taiwan's Central Police University.

Wang said that Thursday's call between U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping was an example of how the two sides can manage their differences through dialogue. The fact that it occurred amid the debate over Pelosi visiting Taiwan was a sign of at least a "basic level of mutual understanding," he said.

Taiwan, meanwhile, has continued to strike a balance between the two superpowers mainly by keeping quiet, even as tensions have risen.

Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen "has done everything possible to avoid unnecessary provocations while maintaining the integrity of Taiwan's democracy," said Vincent Chao, a former director of the political division of Taiwan's representative office in Washington, D.C.

If her trips goes ahead, Pelosi would be the highest-ranking elected U.S. official to visit Taiwan since Newt Gingrich went there more than 25 years ago.

Experts in Taiwan say they do not expect China to respond with direct military confrontation and that it is important to view the potential visit in context.

"This is not an unnecessary provocation. This is keeping with the precedent that has been established with the U.S. and Taiwan," Chao said.

For Taiwan's diplomatically isolated government, any exchange with a foreign political leader is seen as positive.

"We are very grateful to Speaker Pelosi, who has been very supportive and friendly to Taiwan for many years, and we would welcome any friendly foreign guest to visit," Taiwan's premier Su Tseng-chang said Wednesday.

China has continued to silence Taiwan on the global stage, opposing all official exchanges between the island and other governments. It has poached Taiwan's diplomatic allies, including many small island nations, offering them access to Beijing's resources and support. And China threatens governments that send official visitors to Taiwan, as it has done with France, Lithuania and the European Union, among others.

Pelosi's visit is no more threatening than Biden's comments that the U.S. has a military commitment to defend Taiwan, said Natasha Kassam, director of the public opinion and foreign policy program at the Lowy Institute in Australia. Biden has said as much three times, even though U.S. law and policy are more ambiguous. The remarks drew a strong condemnation from Beijing but no military action.

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Experts say just months ahead of China's all-important 20th Party Congress in the fall in which Xi is expected to assume a third term as leader of the Party and country, China is unlikely to make any destabilizing moves.

"China will punish Taiwan primarily through intimidation," said Kuo Yu-jen, a defense studies expert at the Institute for National Policy Research in Taiwan, citing a past instance when China fired missiles at ports on the island during the 1995-1996 Taiwan Straits Crisis.

Not all Taiwanese people support Pelosi's visit, and she is not a household name in the same way that former President Donald Trump or Biden are.

On a balmy Friday morning in the island's capital city, tourists and families strolling around Da'an park said they did not feel any threat of war.

Kelly Chou, a Taichung resident visiting Taipei for a vacation, said she hadn't felt any tensions over the possibility of China attacking Taiwan.

"I saw the news, but I don't think there would actually be any military movement," Chou said. "I think for them to actually invade, there's nothing good to come out of it. It will be bad for both sides."

Chou is not supportive of a Pelosi visit, saying it would "cause more trouble and raise a dispute."

A 76-year-old Taipei resident who gave only his last name, Su, said Pelosi's visit would offer "symbolic support."

"But in actuality, whether Taiwan will derive some good out of this, it's a big question," he said.

China's assertiveness toward Taiwan has increased in recent years, with the People's Liberation Army regularly flying military planes toward the island. China has also sought to punish Taiwan through economic measures, for instance by banning the island's pineapple and grouper exports to China.

A visit by Pelosi would likely cause short term strain, said Wang, the defense studies expert, but he dismissed aggressive threats from China's nationalistic circles, including from Hu Xijin, a former editor at the state newspaper Global Times.

This week, as Taiwan held annual military drills to train for a potential Chinese invasion, Japan's military said it spotted a Chinese reconnaissance drone flying in international waters off Taiwan's eastern coast on Monday.

The military risks are real, experts say, but unlikely to rise to the level of war.

"The intense speculation from everyone is indicative of the way that Taiwan is being tossed around like a political football, and quite unhelpful," said Kassam of the Lowy Institute.

## Economy eclipses other issues in UK Conservative contest

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's next prime minister will take office amid turmoil: galloping inflation, a war in Ukraine, souring relations with China, a changing climate.

But not all those issues are getting equal attention as Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and former Treasury chief Rishi Sunak vie for the votes of about 180,000 Conservative Party members. One of them will be elected Sept. 5 to replace the scandal-tarnished Boris Johnson, who stepped down as party leader this month.

With ballots due to be mailed out next week, polls put Truss in the lead, and she won the endorsement on Friday of Britain's respected Defense Secretary Ben Wallace.

Here is where the candidates stand on key issues:

### ECONOMY

With Britain facing its tightest cost-of-living squeeze for decades amid soaring energy prices and 9.4% inflation, the economy has unsurprisingly dominated the contest — and it's here where the two candidates differ most.

Truss is promising immediate tax cuts, saying she will scrap a 1.25% income tax hike introduced by Sunak to help fund the nation's health and social care, and will cancel a planned corporation tax rise. She says she'll fund the cuts through borrowing.



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Sunak says he would get inflation under control before trimming taxes, although this week he pledged to scrap the sales tax on domestic energy bills for a year.

Both claim the moral high ground. Truss says hiking taxes amid a cost-of-living crisis is "morally wrong," while Sunak says "it's not moral" to pass bills on to future generations.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies, an independent think-tank, notes that "the candidates have been less forthcoming about their intentions for public spending." They have made little mention of Johnson's repeated promises to channel investment into deprived areas of central and northern England that lag behind the wealthier south. The IFS said Truss's plans were likely to bring austerity, because "in the end lower taxes do mean lower spending."

## IMMIGRATION

Both candidates have doubled down on the Johnson government's controversial plan to send some asylum-seekers arriving in the U.K. on a one-way trip to Rwanda.

Under an agreement between the two countries, the migrants will be considered for asylum in the East African nation, rather than the U.K. The British government says the policy will deter people-trafficking gangs who ferry people across the English Channel, but human rights groups say it's immoral, illegal and a waste of taxpayers' money.

The cross-party House of Commons Home Affairs Committee concluded that "the asylum agreement with Rwanda so far shows no evidence of being the deterrent it is intended to be." Small boats keep crossing the Channel, no one has yet been sent to Rwanda, and the policy is being challenged in the British courts.

Nonetheless, Truss has suggested she could expand the program to other countries. Sunak says he will keep the Rwanda policy and might cap the number of refugees admitted to the U.K. each year.

## BREXIT

When Britain voted on whether to leave the European Union in 2016, Sunak and Truss were on opposite sides. Sunak was a "leave" supporter, while Truss argued that the U.K. should remain in the bloc.

Now that Britain has left, both are keen champions of Brexit. They say they will seize the economic opportunities provided by Brexit — but have not given much detail about what those are. Both deny that Brexit was responsible for the hours-long delays faced by travelers and truckers at the port of Dover last week, though many economists say new barriers to trade and travel are clearly a factor.

Truss and Sunak both will push on with a plan to rip up parts of the U.K.-EU Brexit treaty governing trade with Northern Ireland, a move that has triggered legal action by the EU and could escalate to a trade war.

Many Conservatives see Sunak as softer on the issue, because as Treasury chief he was concerned about the potential damage to Britain's economy. The less emollient Truss has the support of hardline Conservative Brexiteers, despite her past as a "remainer."

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Both candidates promise to meet the British government's target of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050, but green issues have featured little in the campaign.

Sunak has talked of using technology and of building more offshore wind farms. Truss says she will remove a "green levy" on energy bills that is used to fund renewable energy projects, something critics say will slow progress toward net zero.

Greenpeace and other environmental groups have railed against the lack of focus on energy and climate issues in the campaign, especially as Britain this month experienced 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) for the first time.

## RUSSIA AND CHINA

Both candidates say they will continue the staunch support for Ukraine that has made Johnson more popular in Kyiv than in London. Britain has given Ukraine 4 billion pounds (\$5 billion) in military and humanitarian aid to help it fight Russia's invasion and is training Ukrainian troops on U.K. soil.

Sunak and Truss promise there will be no lessening of Britain's support if they take over, and both say they will keep defense spending above the 2% of GDP recommended by NATO. Truss has pledged to go farther and raise it to 3% by 2030.

Wallace, the defense secretary, said Truss's international experience and commitment to military spending gave her "the edge."

Both candidates also are hawkish on China, though Truss's criticism is louder. As foreign secretary she has called for a "network of liberty" to counter China's growing political and economic influence, and she opposes Chinese investment in U.K. infrastructure projects like nuclear power plants.

As finance minister, Sunak's past comments on China stressed the importance of maintaining a productive economic relationship. He has hardened his tone, calling China the "biggest-long term threat to Britain." He says that if elected he will close the 30 Beijing-funded Confucius Institutes in Britain.

Beijing is unimpressed by both candidates' rhetoric. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian this week urged British politicians not to "hype the so-called China threat."

"Such irresponsible remarks will not help solve their own problems," he said.

## **New constitution gives some Tunisians hope, others concern**

By FRANCESCA EBEL Associated Press

TUNIS, Tunisia (AP) — Tunisians have overwhelmingly approved a referendum on a new constitution that gives more powers to the country's president. It's a step that brings hope to many in the struggling North African nation, but critics warn it could return Tunisia to autocracy.

Some people interviewed by The Associated Press this week celebrated the result of Monday's referendum and expressed support for President Kais Saied, who spearheaded the project and proposed the text himself.

Others said they worry about what the changes could mean for the future of democracy in the country. The overhauled constitution gives sweeping executive powers to the president and weakens the influence of the legislative and judicial branches of the government.

Adel, a 51-year-old plumber who refused to give his last name due to fear of political reprisals, said that while he supported Saied, he did not participate in Monday's referendum because he thought the proposed changes gave the executive branch too much power.

"This constitution he made was not for the long-term. Those who will come after Saied will do whatever they want without being held accountable," he said.

In 2011, Tunisians rose up against Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the country's strongman president, and kicked off the Arab Spring protests in North Africa and the Middle East. Tunisia was the only nation to emerge from the protests with a democratic government.

Saied won the presidency in 2019 with over 70% of the vote. He continues to enjoy widespread popular support; recent polls put his approval rating at well over 50%.

The referendum took place a year to the day after Saied froze Tunisia's parliament and dismissed his government. Opponents derided the moves as "a coup," but many Tunisians supported the president's actions due to exasperation with political elites and years of economic stagnation.

In the same way, many citizens think the new constitution will end years of political deadlock and reduce the influence of the country's largest political party, Ennahdha. Others saw a "yes" vote as a vote for Saied and a chance to change their fortunes.

Saida Masoudi, 49, a fast-food seller in a Tunis suburb who voted for the revised constitution, said she hoped the changes would pave the way to economic reforms and lower living costs.

"We just want the country to improve and reform. That's why I participated in this referendum, so that the country will return to how it was before" she said, adding that she thinks Tunisians lived better under Ben Ali than they do today.

However, Heba Morayef, Amnesty International's regional director, called the constitution's adoption "deeply worrying." She said in a statement that the revisions were drafted behind closed doors in a process controlled by Saied.

"The new constitution dismantles many of the guarantees to the independence of the judiciary, removes protection for civilians from military trials and grants the authorities the power to restrict human rights or

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renege on international human rights commitments in the name of religion" Morayef said.

Official preliminary results showed about one-third of registered voters cast ballots, with 94.6% giving their approval.

Opposition leaders had called for a boycott of the referendum, saying the process was flawed, and they argue the turnout reflected discomfort with the changes to Tunisia's system of government.

"The referendum was rigged from the start, with no participation threshold provided for," International Commission of Jurists regional director Said Benarbia said. "The low turnout and the opaque, illegal process by which the adoption of the constitution was made possible do not give the president any mandate or legitimacy to change Tunisia's constitutional order."

Several people the Associated Press spoke with said they did not vote in the referendum. Some said they were uninterested in politics, while others said a new constitution would do little to change their quality of life. Several did not understand the changes it would introduce.

"I didn't vote because none of this interests me," Khalil Riahi, a 26-year-old DJ, said. "Whether it's Kais Saied doing this or someone else, it's all the same to me. Nothing will change."

Monica Marks, Professor of Middle East politics at NYU Abu Dhabi, says that many Tunisians have grown tired, disillusioned and cynical in recent years but that they "never called for a complete up-ending of their political system".

"What they've been calling for, for years, is for effective leadership from government that makes a real tangible difference in their everyday lives and solves the economic challenges that they're desperately grappling with" says Marks, explaining that many are attached to the idea that "one man alone can take the system, break it and maybe fix it."

"There are still a lot of Tunisians who believe that Saied is Mr. Fix It... They believe he is the man who will clean up everything, even though he's ruled by powers of personal decree for an entire year, and their situation tangibly hasn't changed."

## In a Nevada county, election conspiracies sow deep distrust

By SAM METZ Associated Press

TONOPAH, Nev. (AP) — The Nye County Commission is used to dealing with all sorts of hot-button controversies.

Water rights, livestock rules and marijuana licenses are among the many local dramas that consume the time of the five commissioners in this vast swath of rural and deeply Republican Nevada. Last spring, it was something new: voting machines.

For months, conspiracy theories fueled on social media by those repeating lies about former President Donald Trump's loss in 2020 inflamed public suspicions about whether election results could be trusted. In response, the commission put a remarkable item on its agenda: Ditch the county's voting machines and instead count every vote on every ballot — more than 20,000 in a typical general election — entirely by hand.

Commissioners called a parade of witnesses, including three from out of state who insisted voting machines could be hacked and votes flipped without leaving a trace. They said no county could be certain their machines weren't accessible via the internet and open to tampering by nefarious actors.

It was all just too much for Sam Merlino, a Republican who has spent more than two decades administering elections as the county's clerk. She simply felt outgunned.

"It just made me feel helpless," she said in a recent interview from her office in Tonopah, an old silver mining town surrounded by hills of rock and sagebrush about halfway between Las Vegas and Reno.

She defended the system's checks and balances that ensure an accurate vote tally, but was bombarded with technical jargon and theories unlike any she'd ever heard. "I couldn't do anything but just sit and listen," she said.

When the county commission voted unanimously to recommend hand-counting ballots — even though there was no evidence of any tampering — she decided she'd had enough and submitted her resignation.

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Merlino will step down next week and leave the administration of elections in a county the size of New Hampshire to a new clerk; the most likely candidate to succeed her is someone who has promoted voting machine conspiracy theories and falsely contends that Trump actually won the 2020 election.

Merlino's departure and Nye County's plans to scrap voting machines and hand-count every ballot open a window into the real-world consequences of unfounded conspiracy theories that have spread across the country since Trump's defeat. The moves also raise questions about how local elections will be run when overseen by people who are skeptical of the process.

A network of people peddling conspiracy theories about the security of voting machines has hop-scotched the country for more than a year, spinning elaborate yarns involving Venezuelan software, the Chinese Communist Party and offshore servers. They have tried to persuade state and local officials to do just what Nye County is attempting.

While no state has taken the same step, their efforts find fertile ground in conservative parts of the U.S. such as Nye County, where suspicions of government run deep. Already this year, some rural county boards have threatened to refuse to certify the results of their primary elections, even without evidence of problems.

Nye County, the country's third largest by area, stretches from the strip malls on the outer margins of Las Vegas through desolate rangelands where cattle graze and the military trains pilots and practices missile-firing and bomb drops.

Conspiracy theories have long found an audience in the county. It's home to part of Area 51, the once-secret U.S. Air Force base that draws alien enthusiasts and UFO hunters. During public comment at county commission meetings, residents reference Infowars' Alex Jones, who has peddled fake conspiracy theories about the Newtown, Connecticut, school massacre. In Pahrump, the county's most populous town, a plaque on a park bench honors the late radio host and conspiracy theorist Art Bell, who lived here until his death in 2018.

Its voters are unrelentingly Republican. In 2018, they chose a Republican brothel owner over a Democrat in a statehouse race — even though the brothel owner had died weeks earlier.

Trump won Nye County by more than 40 percentage points among the 25,427 ballots cast in November 2020. That margin, however, has done nothing to stifle the spread of conspiracy theories about voter fraud and ballot tampering.

At a recent Republican Party event and county commission meeting, many brought up stories they had heard involving QR codes, half-inserted USB drives and foreign hackers infiltrating machines manufactured by Dominion Voting Systems.

No evidence has surfaced to prove any of the theories, yet they continue to spread in Nye County Facebook groups.

Merlino recalled when an error on a sample ballot ballooned on social media into a full-blown corruption conspiracy theory about the printing company's financial ties: "Just like anything, once a rumor starts or once something is out there, people feed on it," she said.

County commissioners say they are obligated to take action as a way to re-establish trust in elections, a concern that fed into their vote to recommend hand-counting ballots in the upcoming November election rather than use tabulating machines.

Election experts are skeptical that hand-counting is doable anywhere except in the tiniest counties; Nye County has about 31,500 registered voters. They say the potential for human error is far greater than running ballots through a tabulator and auditing the results afterward to ensure accuracy.

"It's a very bad idea, and everyone from the most conservative election officials to the most liberal will testify to that," said David Becker, the executive director of the Center for Election Innovation & Research, a nonprofit that works on election procedures.

A lengthy hand-counting process could spark a political crisis in the state, a perennial presidential battleground and one of six states where Trump disputed his 2020 loss. It's not clear what would happen if just one of Nevada's 17 counties fails to finish counting votes within the seven-day timeframe required under

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state law, or declines to certify the results.

The secretary of state's office has said hand-counting could conflict with state law and has scheduled hearings in August to discuss regulations for any county planning to attempt it.

Supporters of the move are undaunted. At a dimly lit Mexican restaurant in Pahrump, an hour's drive from Las Vegas, activists attending a recent Nye County "GOP Unity" event attributed support for hand-counting to what they claimed were unexplained irregularities and suspicions about election tampering.

"You just don't know 100%," said Leo Blundo, a Nye County commissioner who voted against certifying the results from the June primary after he lost his reelection bid.

Pahrump Republican Tina Trenner said cutting voting off from electrical sources could help ease skepticism about election results.

"They could be hacked. Something as simple as a phone with a hotspot in it, sitting up on the counter, can suddenly make those machines available on the internet," she said.

The push to hand-count ballots also has won support from at least one prominent Nevada Republican — Jim Marchant, the GOP nominee for secretary of state, the office that oversees elections. He has participated in rallies and other events around the country promoting the falsehood that Trump actually won the 2020 election.

"If we get out en masse and vote, we'll overwhelm the system so that any mechanisms they have in place to manipulate the system will be negated," he told applauding Republicans in Pahrump, without specifying who he feared would manipulate the election.

Marchant repeated a promise he made to the Nye County Commission months earlier, when the clerk said hand-counting ballots would require a substantial number of people. Marchant told The Associated Press he could provide as many members of his "election integrity" movement from Nevada and elsewhere as necessary to help with the process.

In a stump speech, Marchant said he was eager to work with Mark Kampf, the winner of the Republican Party primary in the Nye County clerk's race. Kampf's platform included replacing voting machines with hand-counting.

In one debate, Kampf, an accountant and corporate auditor, insisted Trump won the 2020 election. He told voters he was concerned that an interstate voter roll maintenance system could be a ploy from billionaire investor and philanthropist George Soros. He warned about the misuse of ballot drop boxes, citing the film "2000 Mules." Experts say it uses flawed analysis of cellphone data and drop box surveillance footage to cast doubt on the results of the 2020 election.

Kampf, who is expected to be appointed to replace Merlino in August, declined to comment for this story. He told the commission at its July meeting that he planned to emphasize voter education to restore trust in elections.

That may prove a tall task in a community that remains spellbound by Trump's ongoing insistence that he was the true winner.

The degree to which distrust has entrenched itself worries Merlino, whose own efforts to educate have done little to sway her neighbors.

After a mostly quiet tenure, the self-described "personal responsibility Republican" said she has been sickened to witness fictions and falsehoods taking root in her county and politicizing the work of her fellow election workers in Nevada.

Merlino's office has been inundated with public records requests from people looking for evidence of fraud or tampering. County residents who deny the results of the 2020 presidential election without evidence yell at her and her staff while in line to vote. Myths of stolen elections have even estranged her from members of her own family, including one to whom she hasn't spoken in over six months.

On top of all that, the commission's move toward hand-counting convinced her it was time to step down.

"I don't think it can be done," she said. "If they want to give it a go, that's why I'm giving them the opportunity to do it."

## Women's soccer energizes England in a league of their own

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Izzy Short, 13, struggles to pick her favorite England player as she anticipates the team's appearance in Sunday's final of the European soccer championships.

There's forward Ellen White. Defender Lucy Bronze. Midfielder Georgia Stanway. Captain Leah Williamson. The whole team basically.

"I just look up to them really," the high school player from Manchester said, excitement filling her voice. "They are all very positive ... they all, like, appreciated one another and how they are such a good team and all of them just working together really. And they're just so kind and so good as well."

The march to Sunday's final against Germany has energized people throughout England, with the team's pinpoint passing and flashy goals attracting record crowds, burgeoning TV ratings and adoring coverage. The Lionesses, as the team is known, have been a welcome distraction from the political turmoil and cost-of-living crisis that dominate the headlines.

The final, set to be played before a sellout crowd of more than 87,000 at historic Wembley Stadium, is seen as a watershed moment for women's sports in England. Although the game, known here as football, is a national passion, female players have often been scoffed at and were once banned from top-level facilities. Now the women's team has a chance to do something the men haven't done since 1966: Win a major international tournament.

Hope Powell played 66 times for England and coached the team from 1998 to 2013.

"I think we have to give thanks to the people that worked really hard before us, that went through all of that, being banned, fighting for the right to play," Powell told the BBC. "I think we have to remember what came before is what got us to the point we are today."

There were 68,871 people in the stands at Old Trafford, the home of Manchester United, when England beat Austria 1-0 in its opening game of this year's European championship. That helped push total tournament attendance so far to 487,683 — more than double the record of 240,055, according to tournament organizer UEFA.

But it's not just the victories that are attracting fans. It is how the team is winning.

With money from sponsorship deals and a new TV contract supporting full-time professional players, there is more flash and polish than many expected. While they don't play like the men's team, that's not a bad thing.

There are fewer players flopping to the ground to draw fouls, less rolling around on the turf dramatically clutching purportedly injured knees or ankles and little shouting at the referees. Instead there is teamwork, artful passes and stunning goals like Stanway's 20-meter (22-yard) screamer in the quarterfinal victory over Spain and the backheel from Alessia Russo in England's 4-0 semifinal win against Sweden.

And here's the thing: People like it.

Naomi Short, Izzy's mom and the goalie for Longford Park Ladies Football Club, said fans are being treated to a "totally different vibe" at the stadium and on the field — one that's more welcoming than the lager-fueled tribalism that has put some people off the men's game.

"It's not just girls watching it — it's families, it's men, women, children. Everybody's watching it. It's brought everybody together," said Short, 44. "Whereas, you know, sometimes when you go to a men's game, there is sometimes (a) slightly different atmosphere."

There is also less distance between fans and the players, who know they have a responsibility to build a game their mothers and grandmothers were excluded from. The players stay after games and sign autographs. They take selfies. There is time for a chat. They know that little kids look up to them.

Coach Sarina Wiegman has made a point of noting that there's more at stake than victory alone.

"We want to inspire the nation," Wiegman said after the team's semifinal victory. "I think that's what we're doing and we want to make a difference — and we hope that we will get everyone so enthusiastic and proud of us and that even more girls and boys start playing football."

The groundswell of support for the team is also being fueled by the country's dismal record in interna-

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tional competition and hopes that they can bring a European championship home to England, which prides itself as the place where modern football was invented.

England's last major international championship, men's or women's, came at the 1966 World Cup — a lifetime ago for most fans. The men's team disappointed fans again last year when they lost to Italy in the final of their European championship.

That leaves it to the women to end the drought.

Women's football has a long and sometimes controversial history in England.

The women's game flourished during and for a few years after World War I, when teams like Dick, Kerr Ladies Football Club filled the sporting gap created as top men's players went off to the trenches to fight. Women's teams, many organized at munitions plants, attracted large crowds and raised money for charity. One match in 1920 attracted 53,000 spectators.

But that popularity triggered a backlash from the men who ran the Football Association, the sport's governing body in England. In 1921, the FA banned women's teams from using its facilities, saying "the game of football is quite unsuitable for females and ought not to be encouraged."

The ban remained in place for the next 50 years.

Women organized their own football association in 1969, and soon after the FA ended its ban on women. The FA took over responsibility for the women's game in 1993, beginning the slow process of improving funding and facilities.

Things accelerated after the 2012 London Olympics, when authorities began to recognize there was a global audience for the women's game, said Gail Newsham, author of "In a League of Their Own!" that tells the story of Dick, Kerr Ladies.

Last year, the FA signed a three-year deal for broadcast rights to the Women's Super League, increasing funding and exposure for the game. Sky Sports will broadcast a minimum of 35 games a year on its pay TV channels, and the BBC will carry another 22 on its free-to-view network.

"It's not that long ago that girls, you know, top players, were paying for their own travel to get to matches and then having to get up to go to work the next day. So all of this is helping," Newsham said of the funding. "You can see the difference now in the professionalism of the girls playing football."

The excitement about Sunday's final has triggered a scramble for tickets.

Tickets that originally sold for 15-50 pounds (\$18-\$61) are now selling for 100-1,000 pounds (\$122-\$1,216) on resale sites.

The Short family has decided to watch the game at the local pub, making an afternoon of it, like fans around the country.

"I don't think it will matter if it's men or women," Naomi Short said. "It's England now. It's coming home. You know, I'd like to think that's what people are getting excited about."

## Senate deal should make it easier to buy electric vehicles

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — The surprise deal by Senate Democrats on a slimmed-down bill to support families, boost infrastructure and fight climate change also is likely to jump-start sales of electric vehicles.

The measure agreed to by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and holdout Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia would give EV buyers a \$7,500 tax credit starting next year, through the end of 2032. There's also a new \$4,000 credit for those buying used EVs, a move to help the middle class go electric.

But as things often go in Washington, there are a bunch of strings and asterisks.

To be eligible, the electric vehicle has to be assembled in North America, and there are limits on annual income for buyers. There also are caps on the sticker prices of new EVs — \$80,000 for pickups, SUVs and vans, and \$55,000 for other vehicles — and a \$25,000 limit on the price of used electric vehicles.

Still, even with the restrictions, the credits should help stimulate electric vehicle sales, which already are rising as automakers introduce more models in different sizes and price ranges, said Jessica Caldwell, an analyst for Edmunds.com.

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"The tax credits for electric vehicles in the bill will benefit consumers and cut costs for low- and middle-income families," the Sierra Club said of the measure, which still must be approved by both chambers. "We're hoping for swift adoption."

For the first half of this year, electric vehicles accounted for about 5% of U.S. new vehicle sales, with 46 models on sale. S&P Global Mobility expects that to hit 8% next year, 15% by 2025, and 37% by 2030.

At present, many new EVs, including two of sales leader Tesla's four models, wouldn't be eligible for the credits because they're priced higher than the bill's limits, Caldwell said. But the number of eligible vehicles will grow as automakers roll out more mainstream EVs during the next few years, she said.

"I would imagine that these price brackets will become a lot more realistic in the coming years when you probably have more vehicles that fall within these parameters," Caldwell said.

Several automakers, including Ford and Hyundai, already have them in the \$40,000s, and General Motors next year plans to start selling a small Chevrolet SUV for about \$30,000 with about 300 miles of range per charge.

Also, there aren't many used EVs priced under \$25,000 yet, and those that are mainly are older, with lower ranges per charge, Caldwell said, noting that a 5-year-old Chevrolet Bolt small electric car — one of the lowest-priced EVs on the road — is likely to cost more than \$25,000.

"It seems like that is something that should potentially be revisited for it to make more sense given today's market," she said.

To get the credit, buyers of new EVs can't have modified adjusted gross incomes of more than \$300,000 per year if filing joint tax returns, \$225,000 for a head of household, and \$150,000 for all taxpayers not in the first two categories.

For used EVs, income limits are \$150,000 if filing a joint return, \$112,500 for a head of household, and \$75,000 for others not in the first two categories.

The bill also removes caps on the number of tax credits each manufacturer can offer. General Motors, Tesla and Toyota all have exceeded the cap and can't offer any credits now under a previous measure. But other manufacturers still offer them.

Also, more than half the value of battery components have to be manufactured or assembled in North America to get the full credit. And at least 40% of the minerals used in batteries must come from either the U.S. or a country with which it has a free trade agreement. Those percentages increase gradually over the years, and minerals recycled from used batteries in North America also qualify.

Credits would also go to buyers of hydrogen fuel cell and plug-in hybrid vehicles. Plug-ins can travel on electric power alone for several miles before the gas-electric hybrid powertrain kicks in.

The EV tax credits are much smaller than several Democratic legislators from automaking states had proposed earlier. Gone are extra credits for EVs made in the U.S. by union workers.

## China backs away from growth goal, sticks to virus controls

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China's leaders effectively acknowledged the struggling economy won't hit its official 5.5% growth target this year and said Thursday they will try to prop up sagging consumer demand but will stick to strict anti-COVID-19 tactics that disrupted manufacturing and trade.

The announcement after a Communist Party planning meeting reflected the high cost President Xi Jinping's government has been willing to incur to stop the virus in a politically sensitive year when Xi is widely expected to try to extend his term in power.

The party promised to "strive to achieve the best results" in the second half. It didn't directly address the growth goal but dropped references in earlier statements about targets, effectively acknowledging the economy will fall short after growing just 2.5% over a year ago in the first half.

"Policymakers implicitly walked back from the original growth target," said Larry Hu of Macquarie Group in a report. "It means that they no longer view 5.5%, or even 5%, as achievable for this year."

Party leaders promised to "actively act in expanding demand" and to make up for lack of consumer and



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business spending.

Retail sales, a major driver of growth, were off 0.7% from a year earlier in the first half after plunging 11% in April following the temporary shutdown of Shanghai and some other major cities to fight virus outbreaks.

Thursday's statement affirmed support for the anti-COVID-19 strategy despite its rising economic cost and social disruption.

"We should resolutely and conscientiously implement the policies and measures for the prevention and control of COVID-19," the statement said. "We should do a good job in tracking virus mutations and developing new vaccines and drugs."

Forecasters don't expect Beijing to ease anti-virus controls until at least after a ruling party congress in October or November, when Xi is expected to try to break with tradition and award himself a third five-year term as party leader.

China rebounded quickly from the pandemic in 2020, but activity weakened as the government tightened controls on use of debt by its vast real estate industry, which supports millions of jobs. Economic growth slid due to a slump in construction and housing sales.

Repeated shutdowns and uncertainty about business conditions have devastated entrepreneurs who generate most of China's new wealth and jobs. Small retailers and restaurants have closed. Others say they are struggling to stay afloat.

## Basement talk, virtual handshake led to Manchin-Schumer deal

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin secreted themselves in a basement room at the Capitol.

The two men had been wrestling for more than a year in long, failed rounds of start-and-stop negotiations over President Joe Biden's big rebuilding America package. But talks had jammed up — again. With the midterm elections near, control of Congress at stake, the president and his party were at the end of the line.

Just four days earlier, Manchin had issued his latest ultimatum: Either scale back the ambitious proposal by dropping the climate change provisions that were so important to Biden and his party, or wait until September to try to pass any bill at all, giving the economy's shocking 9.1% inflation a chance to cool.

With all avenues with his colleague exhausted, Schumer signaled to Biden they needed to do whatever they could before lawmakers left town for the summer break. From the White House, Biden had announced that it was time to make a deal.

And Manchin faced his own political pressures. Outraged colleagues openly criticized his tactics as insincere — whispering, even, that the West Virginia senator should have his gavel taken away as a committee chairman. The coal state conservative was being publicly singled out, shamed even, as the sole figure stopping help for a planet in peril.

Ahead of the basement meeting, Manchin put a new offer on the table.

Details were slim that Monday afternoon 10 days ago, but the size and scope shocked Schumer's team and, most importantly, included the commitment to vote by the August recess. This account is from several people familiar with the private conversations, and granted anonymity to discuss them.

The two men shook hands, and agreed to start talking — again.

"What a beautiful office," Schumer wondered aloud in the Capitol basement room. "Is it mine?"

It was.

What happened next was a weeklong negotiation, largely out of sight, to produce the \$739 billion surprise package now headed for quick votes in Congress.

Biden praised the deal Thursday as a "godsend" for American families.

"This bill is far from perfect," Biden said from the White House. "It's a compromise. But that's often how progress is made."

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He thanked Schumer and Manchin for the “extraordinary effort that it took to reach this result.”

The 725-page “Inflation Reduction Act of 2022” would cap out-of-pocket prescription drug costs for seniors to \$2,000 a year, and help some 13 million families with subsidies to purchase their own health insurance policies. It invests \$369 billion over the decade on tax incentives to fight climate change, including \$4,000 for used electric vehicles and \$7,500 for new ones.

The package is paid for largely by imposing a 15% minimum tax on corporations earning more than \$1 billion a year and by allowing the federal government to negotiate directly with pharmaceutical companies for lower costs. Leftover savings, some \$300 billion, will go to pay down deficits.

With Republicans solidly opposed, Democrats will need every senator in their 50-50 majority to ensure passage, which is what gives Manchin — and every other senator, in fact — such a strong hand in negotiations.

Manchin in a conference call Thursday with reporters called the final product a “win-win.”

It almost didn’t happen.

Biden and Manchin had barely spoken since negotiations abruptly collapsed late last year, a brutal end to the president’s once expansive “Build Back Better” project, a more than \$4 trillion proposal of infrastructure investments and family support.

The two had famously engaged in personal, candid conversations, including once at the president’s family home in Delaware as Biden reached for an achievement on par with Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal, while Manchin always remained cool to such a broad, far-reaching effort.

Despite months of talks, Manchin called it all off shortly before Christmas, enraging colleagues and the White House, which publicly scolded the senator for the collapse of Biden’s signature domestic proposal. Relations between the president and the senator were beyond strained.

Instead, Schumer took over working with Manchin in the new year, as the White House outsourced the negotiations back to Capitol Hill. The Democratic leader from New York had to slow down, steadily trying to rebuild the talks around a smaller but still substantial package Manchin would support.

All along, Manchin has insisted he never walked away from any talks. He was still in touch with the White House, even talking at times with Biden, and simply did not want his Democratic Party to go overboard as he tried to rein in the president’s ambitious initiatives and keep spending down.

“My main concern was inflation,” Manchin said, citing the high price of food, gas. “I hear about it every day.”

Manchin also kept close relations with Republicans, including Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, who has publicly and privately encouraged Manchin to steer away from the Democrats’ agenda. The Republican leader has openly mused about potentially welcoming the conservative senator into the ranks of the GOP.

Just as negotiations appeared to be gaining ground ahead of the summer recess, Manchin again hit pause on July 14, as inflation fears spiked anew.

“I just couldn’t do it,” Manchin told Schumer.

It got “hot and heated,” Manchin acknowledged.

Colleagues were livid, and even Manchin complained about their reaction.

“That’s when they turned the dogs loose -- that night, saying I’m against all this stuff,” he said.

Quietly, one senator after another reached out to Manchin, trying to bring him back to the table.

Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., a Biden ally, paid a visit to Manchin’s office, as did others, according to an aide familiar with the private talks. Lawrence Summers, the former Clinton administration economic adviser, called Manchin to discuss the senator’s inflation worries.

Coons listened, hearing the senator out as Manchin insisted he never walked away from the table, despite the way it was being portrayed.

The best way to show the naysayers he still wanted a deal, Coons counseled, was for Manchin to propose the biggest package he possibly could support.

When Manchin and Schumer passed in the halls that Monday at the Capitol, they acknowledged “our tempers get a little bit ahead of us at times,” Manchin said.

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"Let's recalibrate," Manchin suggested.

The two met that Monday afternoon in the basement conference room, which had no windows but did have a mural of the Capitol building, one of the people familiar with the talks said.

After they emerged with the handshake agreement, they spent the next week and a half working on the package, even when Manchin had to stay in West Virginia after testing positive for COVID.

Upon reaching the final agreement Wednesday afternoon, Schumer and Manchin shook hands again — a "virtual handshake," as they called it — across the miles on a video call.

The senators briefed the White House — Biden and Manchin were speaking again.

The president and the senator, both isolating from COVID, compared symptoms.

Schumer met one-on-one with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in his office and then briefed his fellow senators.

"It's been a momentous 24 hours," Schumer said as he closed out the Senate late Thursday looking ahead to next week's votes.

"If you're doing the right thing and persist, you'll succeed," Schumer said in brief remarks in his office. "We persisted. Hopefully we're going to succeed."

## Invisible ink, coded papers add mystery to ID theft case

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and BRIAN MELLELY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Bobby Edward Fort was 27 when he enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1994 and retired 22 years later with a secret security clearance that allowed him to land a job in Honolulu as a defense contractor.

But in reality, Bobby Fort was long dead. He was just short of 3 months old when he choked and died in a Texas hospital in 1967.

The Bobby Fort who enlisted in the Coast Guard had stolen the dead baby's identity 35 years ago. A false birth certificate helped him get five passports, drivers' licenses and Department of Defense credentials.

The fraud was uncovered last week. On Thursday, the man authorities said had posed as Fort was before a judge, who asked him to state his name: "Walter Glenn Primrose," the 66-year-old said.

Primrose was ordered held without bail by a U.S. District Court judge after a prosecutor provided new details about how he and his wife had been fraudulently living for decades under the stolen identities of two dead Texas infants.

While the hearing further deepened the mystery of why the couple shed their past, it provided little clarity about whether the case against them goes beyond stolen identity, though a prosecutor suggested it could have ties overseas.

"We think the defendant is obviously quite adept at impersonating other people, obtaining government ID documents, fraud, avoiding detection," Assistant U.S. Attorney Wayne Myers said. "He may — we're not saying for sure — but he may have some troubling foreign connections. And if he does, he might be able to use those to enlist help."

A search of the couple's Hawaii home turned up faded Polaroids of the two wearing jackets that appear to be authentic Russian KGB uniforms, Myers said. An expert determined the snapshots were taken in the 1980s.

The search also yielded an invisible ink kit, documents with coded language and maps showing military bases, Myers said.

When the couple were left in a room together, they were recorded saying "things consistent with espionage," Myers said.

Federal defender Craig Jerome said the government only provided "speculation and innuendo" that the couple was involved in something more nefarious than "purely white-collar nonviolent offenses."

"If it wasn't for the speculation that the government's injected into these proceedings without providing any real evidence ... he would certainly be released," Jerome said.

Prosecutors feared Primrose would flee if freed. They noted in court papers that he was an avionics

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electrical technician in the Coast Guard and was highly skilled to communicate secretly if released.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Rom Trader said he based his detention order on the alleged fraud "over multiple occasions spanning a long period of time."

Morrison faces a bail hearing Tuesday.

Her lawyer said the couple — regardless of the names they used — had lived law-abiding lives. Attorney Megan Kau told The Associated Press the couple posed for photos in the purported KGB jacket for fun.

"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."

The couple's story begins in Texas, where Primrose and Gwynn Darle Morrison went to high school and college together and married in 1980, according to court documents.

In the early 1980s, they told family they were going into the witness protection program before abruptly abandoning their house and leaving Texas, Myers said. They handed over the keys to their Nacogdoches home and told family members to take anything they wanted. The house was later foreclosed on.

When they reemerged they had new names and different explanations of what happened.

In 1987, Primrose took on the identity of Fort, an infant who died in 1967 in Burnet, Texas. Morrison took the identity of Julie Lyn Montague, who died in 1968 at the same hospital as Fort. Primrose and Morrison, both born in 1955, were more than a decade older than the birth dates listed on their new IDs.

"The defendant and his wife reportedly told yet other associates that they needed to change their names because of legal and financial reasons," Myers said. "And that going forward they can be contacted using their new names, Fort and Montague."

At some point, Primrose told someone he was a government agent and couldn't share photos of himself.

The couple remarried under their assumed names in 1988, according to court records.

Primrose had a longstanding interest in espionage, Myers said. His wife had anti-government and anti-military sentiments and was said by an associate to live in Romania when it was part of the communist bloc.

Kau denied that Morrison ever lived in Romania.

The couple, who were arrested Friday at their Kapolei home, are charged with conspiracy to commit an offense against the U.S., false statement in passport application and aggravated identity theft. They face up to 17 years in prison if convicted of all charges.

Inside their house, investigators discovered correspondence in which an associate believed Primrose had joined the CIA or had become a terrorist, Myers said.

Morrison used her real name to open a post office box, where she told family to contact her. When her father died, her family couldn't reach her and enlisted local law enforcement to track her down.

"Even the defendant's family cannot find him when they need to," Myers said.

## Drawing nears for \$1.1 billion Mega Millions jackpot

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A \$1.1 billion lottery prize will be on the line Friday night as numbers are drawn for the Mega Millions game.

The giant jackpot is the nation's third-largest prize and is the result of 29 consecutive drawings without anyone matching all of the game's six numbers. That last time someone hit the Mega Millions jackpot was April 15.

Before rushing out to spend \$2 on a ticket, keep in mind that the odds of winning the Mega Millions jackpot are a staggering 1 in 302.5 million.

The \$1.1 billion prize is for players who get their winnings through an annuity, paid annually over 29 years. Nearly all winners take the cash option, which for Friday's drawing is an estimated \$648.2 million.

If no one wins the jackpot Friday night, the prize will grow even larger ahead of the next drawing Tuesday night.

## Flooding in central Appalachia kills at least 8 in Kentucky

By BRUCE SCHREINER and TIMOTHY D. EASLEY Associated Press

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JACKSON, Ky. (AP) — Krystal Holbrook's family started moving possessions to higher ground long before dawn, racing to save them from the rapidly rising floodwaters that were menacing southeastern Kentucky.

Her family scurried in the dark to move vehicles, campers, trailers and equipment. But as the water kept rising Thursday — leaving at least eight people dead and hundreds without homes in Kentucky -- they began to worry that they might run out of higher ground.

"We felt we had most of it moved out of the way," Holbrook said. "But right now, we're still moving vehicles even to higher ground. Higher ground is getting a little bit difficult."

The same was true throughout the region, as another round of rainfall loomed in an area already hammered by days of torrential rainfall. The storm sent water gushing from hillsides and surging out of streambeds in Appalachia, inundating homes, businesses and roads. Rescue crews used helicopters and boats to pick up people trapped by floodwaters. Parts of western Virginia and southern West Virginia were also hit by flooding.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear asked for prayers as the region braced for more rain.

"In a word, this event is devastating," Beshear said Thursday. "And I do believe it will end up being one of the most significant, deadly floods that we have had in Kentucky in at least a very long time."

Beshear warned that property damage in Kentucky would be extensive and opened an online portal for donations that would go to residents affected by the flooding.

In Whitesburg, Kentucky, floodwaters seeped into Appalshop, an arts and education center renowned for promoting and preserving the region's history and culture.

"We're not sure exactly the full damage because we haven't been able to safely go into the building or really get too close to it," said Meredith Scalos, its communications director. "We do know that some of our archival materials have flooded out of the building into Whitesburg streets."

Meanwhile, dangerous conditions and continued rainfall hampered rescue efforts Thursday, the governor said.

"We've got a lot of people that need help that we can't get to at the moment," he said. "We will."

Flash flooding and mudslides were reported across the mountainous region of eastern Kentucky, western Virginia and southern West Virginia, where thunderstorms dumped several inches of rain over the past few days.

With more rain expected in the area, the National Weather Service said additional flooding was possible into Friday in much of West Virginia, eastern Kentucky and southwest Virginia.

Poweroutage.us reported more than 33,000 customers without electricity in eastern Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia, with the bulk of the outages in Kentucky.

Rescue crews worked feverishly to try to reach people trapped by the floodwaters.

"There are a lot of people in eastern Kentucky on top of roofs waiting to be rescued," Beshear said Thursday. "There are a number of people that are unaccounted for, and I'm nearly certain this is a situation where we are going to lose some of them."

In eastern Kentucky's Perry County, Emergency Management Director Jerry Stacy described the widespread flooding as a "catastrophic event."

"Extreme flash flooding and mudslides are just everywhere," Stacy said, speaking with The Associated Press by phone Thursday as he struggled to reach his office in Hazard.

The storms hit an Appalachian mountain region where communities and homes are often perched on steep hillsides or set deep in the hollows between them, where creeks and streams can rise in a hurry. But this one is far worse than a typical flood, said Stacy, 54.

"I've lived here in Perry County all my life and this is by the far the worst event I've ever seen," he said.

Roads in many areas weren't passable after as much as 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain had fallen in some spots by Thursday, and 1 to 3 more inches (2.5 to 7.5 centimeters) could fall, the National Weather Service said.

Beshear said he deployed National Guard soldiers to the hardest-hit areas, and three parks in the region were opened as shelters for displaced people.

The city of Hazard urged people on Facebook to stay off roads and "pray for a break in the rain."

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In West Virginia's Greenbrier County, firefighters pulled people from flooded homes, and five campers who got stranded by high water in Nicholas County were rescued, WCHS-TV reported.

Gov. Jim Justice declared a state of emergency for six counties in West Virginia after severe thunderstorms this week caused significant local flooding, downed trees, power outages and blocked roads.

## Abortion access finds a place even in down-ballot campaigns

By SUSAN HAIGH and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Appearing bare-shouldered in a TV ad, Connecticut Democrat Dita Bhargava looks directly into the camera and promises, if elected, to "lead the crusade" for abortion rights.

Photos of other women flash on the screen, also with no clothes showing. "This is who have freedom over their own bodies stripped away," Bhargava says in the commercial, referring to the U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling overturning the constitutional right to abortion. "This is who the Supreme Court left completely vulnerable."

It would make sense to think Bhargava is running for governor, state legislature or Congress — positions that could play a direct role in future abortion laws. She's not. She's a candidate for state treasurer.

Bhargava, a contender in Connecticut's Aug. 9 primary, is among Democratic candidates in down-ballot races, such as treasurer, auditor or secretary of state, who have seized on the abortion issue, even when the office they seek doesn't have an obvious connection to abortion access.

"Others might say it's not relevant. It's absolutely relevant to the treasurer's office," Bhargava, chief operating officer of a private investment fund, said in an interview, explaining that the state has the power to affect corporate behavior through its pension investment decisions.

"When I'm state treasurer, the state will not invest in companies that don't do the right thing by their employees," she said. "And part of doing that right thing is to support a woman's right to safe, legal abortion."

In Wisconsin, treasurer candidate Gillian Battino, a Democrat and physician, has asked donors to help her "fight to codify Roe." The treasurer in Wisconsin does not set abortion policy or even oversee investments. The job mostly entails signing checks on behalf of the state and chairing a board that handles payments from lands held in trust.

The Supreme Court's decision to return the abortion question to the states steered attention toward governor's races, where winners will play an outsize role in the fate of future restrictions. But candidates for lower state offices also seek to capitalize on a ruling unpopular with a majority of Americans to boost campaign contributions and inspire voter turnout.

Sandy Theis, a Democratic consultant in Ohio, said threats to abortion access have a history of mobilizing Democratic voters.

Following the U.S. Supreme Court's 1989 decision in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, which gave states greater leeway to restrict abortions, Democratic challengers unseated Republican governors in Virginia and Florida, and exit polls showed Democrat Ann Richards captured 60% of the women's vote, including 25% of Republican women, to become governor of Texas.

"The Republican Party doesn't understand the selling power of something like taking away women's reproductive freedom," Theis said. "If the Democrats play this right, and message this right, I think it will help them all over the ticket."

Down-ticket Republican candidates have largely avoided the abortion issue, focusing often on their sought offices' core functions. The exception is attorney general races, in which some GOP candidates have pledged to defend state laws under the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling, help local prosecutors pursue abortion crimes and defend new restrictions in court.

Democratic attorney general candidates in Arizona, California, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada and Ohio pitch themselves as the last line of defense for abortion rights.

Taylor Sappington, the Democratic nominee for state auditor in Ohio, said voters sometimes question his focus on the abortion ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade*, given that the office he seeks would seem to have no bearing on women's health care.

He said he reminds them that Ohio's auditor sits on the state's political mapmaking commission, which

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draws districts for entities that do have a role.

"The truth is that the voters empowered the redistricting commission, and put the auditor on that commission, to draw maps for the Legislature and for Congress," he said. "All of the issues that those bodies handle — including abortion, but also education, health care, and civil liberties for LGBTQ folks like myself, like gay marriage — are affected by those maps."

The current auditor, Republican Keith Faber, has promoted his endorsement by Ohio Right to Life, the Republican-leaning state's oldest and largest anti-abortion group, but otherwise mostly steered clear of social issues. Instead, he is campaigning against high inflation under President Joe Biden.

Races for offices overseeing state elections also have joined the abortion discussion.

State Rep. Bee Nguyen, the Democratic secretary of state nominee in Georgia, said the Supreme Court ruling was "part of a broader assault on our fundamental rights," and sought to link that back to elections.

"We must fight back at the ballot box and wield our most powerful tool: our sacred, most fundamental right to vote," she said in a fundraising solicitation that appears to have worked. She's currently outraising the Republican incumbent.

Democratic Secretaries of State Jocelyn Benson, of Michigan, and Jena Griswold, of Colorado, are also campaigning on the issue. Griswold, who chairs the Democratic Association of Secretaries of State, told would-be donors that, if reelected, she wouldn't apply the state seal to the extradition paperwork of any out-of-state patient seeking an abortion or reproductive health care in Colorado.

Abortion is resonating even further down the ballot.

In New Hampshire, the issue has arisen in campaigns for elected members of an obscure but powerful state body that approves state contracts, judicial nominations and agency heads. Majority Republicans on the state's Executive Council have repeatedly rejected funding for family planning clinics over unfounded concerns that public money is being used for abortions.

The political action fund for Planned Parenthood of Northern New England has gotten involved on the other side, citing the council's "outsized role when it comes to reproductive health in this state."

## **\$1.1B Mega Millions jackpot among largest prizes ever**

By SCOTT McFETRIDGE and CIARAN GILES Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — At over \$1 billion, the Mega Millions jackpot is among the largest lottery prizes ever up for grabs, making it the latest focus of lotteries that have been conducted in the U.S. and around the world for centuries.

Only two prizes have grown larger than the massive jackpot that could be won Friday night. Other lotteries elsewhere around the globe offer smaller payouts, though in other ways they are more integrated into life in their countries.

"There are a ton of lotteries throughout the world," said Bill Coley, president of the Institute of Responsible Gaming, Lotteries and Sports at Miami University. "It's the mystiques of mathematics. You can take a nominal fee and give a chance to build a revenue stream of a billion dollars for potentially one individual. It's pretty exciting."

Lotteries in the U.S. initially mirrored similar games in Europe, and in 1776 one was created to help fund the Revolutionary War.

Lotteries remain popular in Europe. The Eurojackpot game paid a \$120 million euro (\$121.9 million) prize just last week to someone in Denmark, and a player in the United Kingdom recently won a \$230 million euros (\$233.6 million) Euromillions prize.

Arjan van't Veer, the secretary general of the European Lotteries Association, noted there also are numerous national lotteries.

Among the most celebrated is Spain's El Gordo (The Fat One).

Although it isn't held until Dec. 22, a large promotion campaign began July 5. The effort always includes promotional videos, such as one this summer featuring a know-it-all who is exposed as a know-nothing because he doesn't know where tickets are sold.

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The U.S. Mega Millions and Powerball games can offer bigger individual prizes, but El Gordo's 2.4 billion euros (\$2.4 billion) is the biggest game for total prizes. About 70% of the lottery's proceeds pay for prizes, with the remainder going to the government.

The top-prize is 4 million euros (\$4 million). But the standard ticket bought by people is 20-euro "decimo," or one-tenth of a full ticket, so that people with the winning number on their décimo get 400,000 euros (\$406,340), or about 330,000 euros (\$335,268) after taxes.

Spain established the national lottery as a charity in 1763 during the reign of King Carlos III. Despite wars and other political and economic crises, the lottery has never been suspended.

Purchasing and sharing decimos — especially in the run-up to Christmas — is a tradition among families, friends, co-workers and in bars and sports and social clubs. People line up, even in the cold and rain, outside lottery offices, especially those that have sold winning tickets in the past.

After the winning numbers are announced, televised street and bar celebrations follow, with people dancing and singing with uncorked bottles of sparkling wine.

There also are numerous large lotteries in Asia, such as the Japan Jumbo Draw as well as Japan's Loto 6 and Loto 7, and the Ultra Lotto in the Philippines.

David Schwartz, a professor and gaming historian at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, noted that lotteries have long histories throughout the world, in part because they are simple to play and offer rare but potentially huge winnings.

"The driving force behind lotteries is that one ticket isn't that expensive but you have a chance for a huge, huge payoff," Schwartz said. "I think people have an understanding there are pretty slim odds, but on the other hand, somebody has to win."

Visitors to the U.S. are welcome to play lottery games like Mega Millions, and for years residents of Canada and Mexico who live along the borders have made the short trip to buy tickets. There also are options to buy tickets online through private companies, but U.S. lottery officials says people do so at their own risk.

And keep in mind, Ohio Lottery spokesman Michael Bycko said, that people who aren't U.S. residents are still on the hook for federal and possibly state taxes, depending on where they play.

## Defense contractor held without bail in ID theft mystery

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and BRIAN MELLELY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — A U.S. defense contractor and his wife charged with fraudulently living for decades under the stolen identities of two dead infants told family they were going into the witness protection program before abruptly abandoning their house and leaving Texas about 40 years ago, a federal prosecutor said Thursday.

At some point, Walter Glenn Primrose and Gwynn Darle Morrison reemerged with new names and other explanations for lives cloaked in mystery.

The couple told people they were dodging legal and financial trouble, Assistant U.S. Attorney Wayne Myers said. Primrose told someone he was a government agent who couldn't be photographed.

Intriguing details that emerged during a bail hearing in a Honolulu court were enough to get Primrose detained without bail, but provided little clarity why the couple shed their past and whether the criminal case against them is more serious than identity theft.

Myers successfully sought to have Primrose detained because his "life has been a fraud for the last several decades," including more than 20 years in the U.S. Coast Guard where he earned a secret-level security clearance. After retiring in 2016, he used the secret clearance for his defense job.

A search of the couple's Hawaii home turned up Polaroids of the couple wearing jackets that appear to be authentic Russian KGB uniforms, Myers said. An expert determined the snapshots were taken in the 1980s.

The search also yielded an invisible ink kit, documents with coded language and maps showing military bases, Myers said.

When the couple were left in a room together, they were recorded saying "things consistent with espionage," Myers said.



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"We think the defendant is obviously quite adept at impersonating other people, obtaining government ID documents, fraud, avoiding detection," Myers said. "He may — we're not saying for sure — but he may have some troubling foreign connections. And if he does, he might be able to use those to enlist help."

Federal defender Craig Jerome said the government only provided "speculation and innuendo" that the couple was involved in something more nefarious than "purely white-collar nonviolent offenses."

"If it wasn't for the speculation that the government's injected into these proceedings without providing any real evidence ... he would certainly be released," Jerome said.

Morrison faces a bail hearing Tuesday.

Her lawyer said the couple — regardless of their names — had lived law-abiding lives. Attorney Megan Kau told The Associated Press the couple posed for photos in the purported KGB jacket for fun.

"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."

The couple, who were arrested Friday at their Kapolei home, are charged with conspiracy to commit an offense against the U.S., false statement in passport application and aggravated identity theft. They face up to 17 years in prison if convicted of all charges.

Inside their house, investigators discovered correspondence in which an associate believed Primrose had joined the CIA or had become a terrorist, Myers said.

When they left Texas in the early 1980s and claimed they were protected witnesses, they handed over the keys to their Nacogdoches house and told family members to take anything they wanted. The house was later foreclosed on.

In 1987, Primrose took on the identity of Bobby Edward Fort, an infant who died in 1967 in Burnet, Texas. Morrison took the identity of Julie Lyn Montague, who died in 1968 at the same hospital as Fort. Primrose and Morrison, both born in 1955, were more than a decade older than the birth dates listed on their new IDs.

"The defendant and his wife reportedly told yet other associates that they needed to change their names because of legal and financial reasons," Myers said. "And that going forward they can be contacted using their new names, Fort and Montague."

They remarried under their assumed names in 1988, according to court records.

Morrison used her real name to open a post office box, where she told family to contact her. When her father died, her family couldn't reach her and enlisted local law enforcement to track her down.

"Even the defendant's family cannot find him when they need to," Myers said.

Prosecutors feared Primrose would flee if freed. They noted in court papers that he was an avionics electrical technician in the Coast Guard and was highly skilled to communicate secretly if released.

The judge said he based his detention order on the alleged fraud "over multiple occasions spanning a long period of time."

## Unexpected deal would boost Biden pledge on climate change

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An unexpected deal reached by Senate Democrats would be the most ambitious action ever taken by the United States to address global warming and could help President Joe Biden come close to meeting his pledge to cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030, experts said Thursday, as they sifted through a massive bill that revives action on climate change weeks after the legislation appeared dead.

The deal announced late Wednesday would spend nearly \$370 billion over 10 years to boost electric vehicles, jump-start renewable energy such as solar and wind power and develop alternative energy sources like hydrogen. The deal stunned lawmakers and activists who had given up hope that legislation could be enacted after West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin said he could not support the measure because of inflation concerns.

Clean energy tax credits and other provisions in the 725-page bill could "put the U.S. on track to reduc-

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ing emissions by 31-44% below 2005 levels in 2030," according to an analysis released late Thursday by the Rhodium Group, an independent research firm.

Additional action by the Biden administration and Democratic-controlled states could "help close the rest of the gap to (Biden's) target of a 50-52% cut in emissions by 2030," said Ben King, the group's associate director.

But approval of the bill is far from certain in a 50-50 Senate where support from every Democrat will be needed to overcome unanimous Republican opposition. Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., who forced changes in earlier versions of the plan, declined to reveal her stance Thursday.

In the narrowly divided House, Democrats can lose no more than four votes and prevail on a possible party-line vote.

Still, Biden called the bill "historic" and urged quick passage.

"We will improve our energy security and tackle the climate crisis — by providing tax credits and investments for energy projects," he said in a statement, adding that the bill "will create thousands of new jobs and help lower energy costs in the future."

Environmental groups and Democrats also hailed the legislation.

"This is an 11th-hour reprieve for climate action and clean energy jobs, and America's biggest legislative moment for climate and energy policy," said Heather Zichal, CEO of America's Clean Power, a clean energy group.

"Passing this bill sends a message to the world that America is leading on climate and sends a message at home that we will create more great jobs for Americans in this industry," added Zichal, a former energy adviser to President Barack Obama.

Tiernan Sittenfeld, senior vice president of the League of Conservation Voters, summed up her reaction in a single word: "Wow!"

Sen. Tina Smith, D-Minn., tweeted that she was "stunned, but in a good way."

Manchin, who chairs the Senate energy panel, insisted that he had not changed his mind after he told Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer two weeks ago that he could not support the bill because of inflation concerns.

"There should be no surprises. I've never walked away from anything in my life," he told reporters on a Zoom call from West Virginia, where he is recovering from COVID-19.

Manchin said called the bill an opportunity "to really give us an energy policy with security that we need for our nation" while also driving down inflation and high gasoline prices.

The bill, which Manchin dubbed the "Inflation Reduction Act of 2022," includes \$300 billion for deficit reduction, as well as measures to lower prescription drug prices and extend subsidies to help Americans who buy health insurance on their own.

Besides investments in renewable energy like wind and solar power, the bill includes incentives for consumers to buy energy efficient appliances such as heat pumps and water heaters, electric vehicles and rooftop solar panels. The bill creates a \$4,000 tax credit for purchases of used electric vehicles and up to \$7,500 for new EVs.

The tax credit includes income limits for buyers and caps on sticker prices of new EVs — \$80,000 for pickups, SUVs and vans and \$55,000 for smaller vehicles. A \$25,000 limit would be set on used vehicles.

Even with the restrictions, the credits should help stimulate already rising electric vehicle sales, said Jessica Caldwell, senior analyst for Edmunds.com. Electric vehicles accounted for about 5% of new vehicle sales in the U.S. in the first half of the year and are projected to reach up to 37% by 2030.

The bill also invests over \$60 billion in environmental justice priorities, including block grants to address disproportionate environmental and public health harms related to pollution and climate change in poor and disadvantaged communities.

Beverly Wright, executive director of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, called the bill a step forward, but said she was concerned about tax credits for "polluting industries" such as coal, oil and gas. "We need bolder action to achieve environmental and climate justice for ourselves and future

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generations," she said.

The bill would set a fee on excess methane emissions by oil and gas producers, while offering up to \$850 million in grants to industry to monitor and reduce methane.

The bill's mixture of tax incentives, grants and other investments in clean energy, transportation, energy storage, home electrification, agriculture and manufacturing "makes this a real climate bill," said Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii. "The planet is on fire. This is enormous progress. Let's get it done."

But not all environmental groups were celebrating.

The deal includes promises by Schumer and other Democratic leaders to pursue permitting reforms that Manchin called "essential to unlocking domestic energy and transmission projects," including a controversial natural gas pipeline planned in his home state and Virginia. More than 90% of the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline has been completed, but the project has been delayed by court battles and other issues.

The pipeline should be "at the top of the heap" for federal approval, Manchin said, and is a good example of why permitting reform is needed to speed energy project approvals. Manchin, a longtime supporter of coal and other fossil fuels, said environmental reviews of such major projects should be concluded within two years, instead of lasting up to 10 years as under current practice.

"Other countries around around the world — developed nations — do it extremely well, and they do it in a very short period of time. We should be able to do the same," he said.

While permitting reforms would be considered in separate legislation, the budget deal would require the Interior Department to offer at least 2 million acres of public lands and 60 million acres of offshore waters in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska for oil and gas leasing each year. If Interior fails to offer minimum amounts for leasing, the department would not be allowed to grant approvals to any utility-scale renewable energy project on public lands or waters.

That requirement "is a climate suicide pact," said Brett Hartl, government affairs director at the Center for Biological Diversity, an environmental group.

"It's self-defeating to handcuff renewable energy development to massive new oil and gas extraction," Hartl said, adding that new fossil fuel leasing required under the bill would "fan the flames of the climate disasters torching our country."

But an oil industry group blasted the bill as punitive and inflationary.

"We are very concerned about this bill's potential negative impact on energy prices and American competitiveness, especially in the midst of a global energy crisis and record high inflation," said Anne Bradbury, CEO of the American Exploration and Production Council, which represents independent oil and natural gas companies.

## Under fire, US officials say monkeypox can still be stopped

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The country's monkeypox outbreak can still be stopped, U.S. health officials said Thursday, despite rising case numbers and so far limited vaccine supplies.

The Biden administration's top health official pushed back against criticism about the pace of the response and worries that the U.S. has missed the window to contain the virus, which has been declared a global emergency.

"We believe we have done everything we can at the federal level to work with our state and local partners and communities affected to make sure we can stay ahead of this and end this outbreak," Xavier Becerra, head of the Department of Health and Human Services, told reporters on a call.

But he added that local health officials "must do their part. ... We don't have the authority to tell them what to do."

The pushback from federal leaders came as they announced distribution plans for 780,000 shots of the two-dose Jynneos vaccine. The doses will be allocated to states, cities and other localities based on their case numbers and the size of their populations that are considered high-risk for the disease.

Health departments in San Francisco, New York, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere say they still don't

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have enough shots to meet demand and have stopped scheduling appointments for second vaccine doses to stretch supplies.

Becerra said the federal government has done its job and said the onus is now on local officials to use the tools available.

"We've made vaccines, tests and treatments well beyond the numbers that are currently needed available to all jurisdictions," he said.

But one representative for specialty health clinics said Becerra's comments showed a "lack of understanding for the full breadth of this crisis."

"Clinics around the country are pleading with federal health officials for the information, supplies and staffing they need to successfully bring an end to this outbreak," said David C. Harvey, executive director of the National Coalition of STD Directors, in a statement. The group is pressing for \$100 million in emergency funding for local health departments and clinics.

There were more than 4,600 reported monkeypox cases in the U.S. as of late Wednesday, according to the CDC, and federal officials expect those numbers to rise.

More than 99% of reported cases are in men and the vast majority of those are among men who reported sexual contact with other men, though health officials have stressed that anyone can catch the virus.

The U.S. is now capable of testing 60,000 to 80,000 people per day, though Becerra said daily testing numbers are well below that.

The monkeypox virus mainly spreads through skin-on-skin contact, but it can also transmit through touching linens used by someone with the infection. People with monkeypox may experience fever, body aches, chills and fatigue. Many in the outbreak have developed sometimes-painful zit-like bumps.

The U.S. has ordered 5.5 million more vaccine doses for delivery by mid-2023 and has rights to the raw ingredients that could make 11.1 million more doses. U.S. officials said a massive vaccination campaign could still be avoided if communities and individuals take measures to avoid spread.

In San Francisco, Tom Temprano had an appointment to get his second dose next week but was recently notified that it was canceled due to limited supplies. Temprano, who is the political director of San Francisco-based Equality California, said he's frustrated that health authorities have taken so long to respond.

"Especially coming out of, still, two-and-a-half years into a pandemic, it's just a very disappointing response for the first larger-scale public health crisis we're facing coming out of that," he said.

He also sees parallels to the slow government response to AIDS in the 1980s.

"I've heard from many folks ... that this feels similar in the lack of real concern and urgency to a disease that is right now disproportionately impacting the LGBTQ+ community," said Temprano, who is 36.

The CDC estimates about 1.5 million Americans currently meet suggested criteria for vaccination, primarily men who have sex with men.

But officials on Thursday declined to set a figure for how many vaccine doses would be needed to stop the outbreak. Nearly 340,000 vaccine doses have been distributed, but a CDC official acknowledged the federal government doesn't know how many have been administered.

The additional 780,000 shots being sent to states this week were delayed by shipping and regulatory hurdles. They sat for weeks in storage in Denmark as U.S. regulators finished inspecting and certifying the facility where they were manufactured.

California state Sen. Scott Wiener, who belongs to the California Legislative LGBTQ Caucus, called the additional vaccines "significant." But he added: "Of course, it's not enough, and we know that we're going to be getting millions more doses over the remainder of this year and into next year, which is not soon enough in terms of actually containing this outbreak."

Georgia's health department hasn't had to postpone any second doses, but spokeswoman Nancy Nydam said: "Demand is still very high. Every time a health department or other provider opens appointments or slots at an event, they are taken up in a matter of minutes."

**Biden hails economic bill amid signs of broad Dem support**

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By ALAN FRAM and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden hailed a nascent Democratic package of climate, health care and tax initiatives as “a giant step forward” for the country Thursday as congressional leaders began nailing down votes for a campaign-season bill they’ve cast as a boon for voters struggling with inflation.

A day after Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and conservative Sen. Joe Manchin stunned Washington by resurrecting components of a compromise many thought dead, early signs were encouraging for the party.

After Schumer briefed Democratic senators on the 725-page measure, Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., said lawmakers’ reaction has been “uniformly positive.” And Reps. Tom Suozzi, D-N.Y., and Tom Malinowski, D-N.J., suggested they could back the measure even though it lacks higher federal tax deductions for state and local taxes that they’ve championed in the past.

“We’re taking a giant step forward as a nation,” Biden said at the White House. In a message to lawmakers, he called it a compromise that was “the strongest bill you can pass” to address health care, climate, energy and families’ living costs. “Pass it, pass it for the American people.”

The measure’s phoenix-like rebirth came Wednesday, when Manchin unexpectedly agreed to add tax, energy and environment provisions to a plan he’d earlier said he wanted limited, for now, to prescription drug price curbs and health care assistance. He told reporters Thursday that his talks with Schumer had continued and disputed that he’d reversed himself.

“I’ve never been in reverse in my lifetime and I never walked away,” Manchin, who has COVID-19 and has stayed away from the Capitol, said in a conference call. He also described what he said he’s endured during the past year, when he repeatedly forced Biden and top Democrats to whittle down what was initially a \$3.5 trillion proposal.

“No one in their right mind would go through all the protest, harassments” that he faced, Manchin said, after he scuttled a roughly \$2 trillion version that the House had passed after he insisted on cuts. He said Democrats “turned the dogs loose” on him two weeks ago after he told Schumer that he wanted a measure limited to health care this month because of inflation fears.

He said he was now backing the expanded bill “because I know I’m not adding to inflation” with the agreement. And he acknowledged that he wants the Mountain Valley Pipeline, which will deliver natural gas from West Virginia to Virginia, to be at “the top of the heap” under permitting procedures that Biden and congressional leaders have pledged to move through Congress this fall.

Loose ends remain in a 50-50 Senate where support from every Democrat — plus Vice President Kamala Harris’ tie-breaking vote — are needed to overcome unanimous Republican opposition that seems preordained. Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., who last year joined Manchin in forcing cuts and changes in larger versions of the plan, declined to tell reporters her stance.

In the narrowly divided House, Democrats can lose no more than four votes and prevail. Rep. Stephanie Murphy, D-Fla., a leader of the centrist House Blue Dog Coalition, said she wouldn’t yet comment on her views. “I don’t think there’s anybody wildly pleased,” said No. 2 House Democratic leader Steny Hoyer of Maryland. “But I think the overwhelming majority think the things that are in it are good things.”

Overall, the emerging package would raise \$739 billion over a decade from higher taxes on huge corporations and hedge fund owners, beefed up IRS tax collections and lower federal costs from trimming pharmaceutical prices. It would spend \$369 billion on energy and climate change initiatives, what analysts and environmentalists called the largest federal investment ever on clean energy. Another \$64 billion would be to extend health insurance subsidies for three years, leaving \$306 billion for a modest swipe at massive federal deficits.

The measure is markedly less ambitious than the \$3.5 trillion version that stumbled, shrank and ultimately died in Congress last year, largely due to Manchin’s opposition. The new bill lacks many of the party’s initial goals including funds for a more generous child tax credit, paid family leave, expanded Medicare benefits and health care aid for poor families in the dozen states — mostly Republican and in the South — that refused to expand Medicaid under President Barack Obama’s health care law.

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Even so, the surprise agreement moves Biden and Democrats to the edge of claiming victory on top priorities like addressing global warming and easing consumers' health care costs, and boosting levies on the affluent to pay for it.

"It's bigger than nothing," said Rep. Mark Pocan, D-Wis., who with other progressives fought vainly last year against Manchin's efforts to trim the proposal. After Manchin prevailed, "A lot of us thought this was done unless we had more Senate seats, and the fact that we're able to still get something quite substantial done is impressive."

Rep. Kurt Schrader, D-Ore., another of his party's more conservative lawmakers, called the bill's prescription drug provisions "the most important piece of legislation we'll vote on in this Congress" besides last fall's infrastructure measure.

As leaders sold the plan to their members, the government reported that the economy had constricted for a second straight quarter. Worries that a recession was coming only intensified concerns over the nation's worst bout with inflation since the 1980s.

Both parties know inflation and economic anxiety is on top of voters' minds. With Republicans expected to win control of the House and perhaps the Senate too, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., turned his fire on Democrats' measure.

"Our colleagues across the aisle have already completely lost Americans' trust on the economy, before this reckless taxing and spending spree. Apparently they want to see how much farther they can fall," he said.

The bill would create tax credits for low- and middle-income buyers of electric vehicles, plus grants and tax breaks to spur clean energy technology and reduce carbon emissions.

Medicare would begin negotiating for the pharmaceuticals it buys, prescription price increases would be limited and Medicare beneficiaries' out-of-pocket drug costs would be capped at \$2,000 annually.

## **Biden, Xi could meet in person, US official says**

By CHRIS MEGERIAN, ZEKE MILLER and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden and China's Xi Jinping are exploring meeting in person, a senior administration official said after the leaders spent more than two hours Thursday talking through the future of their complicated relationship, with tension over Taiwan once again emerging as a flashpoint.

Biden conducted the telephone call from the Oval Office, where he was joined by top aides, including Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The official declined to be identified to talk about the private conversation.

When Biden was vice president, he spent long hours with Xi in the United States and China, an experience he often recalls as he talks about the two countries' opportunities for conflict and cooperation. However, they have not met in person since Biden became president last year.

Xi has left mainland China only once, to visit Hong Kong, since the COVID-19 pandemic began. However, he's been formally invited to Indonesia in November for the next G20 summit of the world's leading economies, making the conference a potential location for a meeting with Biden.

The latest strain over Taiwan is House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's potential visit to the island, which has governed itself for decades but China asserts as part of its territory.

Xi emphasized those claims during his call with Biden, according to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"Those who play with fire will perish by it," the ministry said. "It is hoped that the U.S. will be clear-eyed about this."

The White House released its own description of the conversation about Taiwan, saying that Biden "underscored that the United States policy has not changed and that the United States strongly opposes unilateral efforts to change the status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait."

The goal of the call, which began at 8:33 a.m. EDT and ended at 10:50 a.m. EDT, was to "responsibly manage our differences and work together where our interests align," the White House said.

As usual, China left no doubt that it blames the U.S. for the deteriorating relationship between the two countries.

"President Xi underscored that to approach and define China-US relations in terms of strategic competi-

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tion and view China as the primary rival and the most serious long-term challenge would be misperceiving China-U.S. relations and misreading China's development, and would mislead the people of the two countries and the international community," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

While Beijing's warning about playing with fire over Taiwan generated attention Thursday, it didn't represent an escalation of Xi's usual diplomatic rhetoric, U.S. analysts said.

"There's a whole lexicon of Chinese threat speech that he hasn't touched yet," said John Culver, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's China Hub.

Yun Sun, director of the China program at the Stimson Center think tank, noted that both countries said the conversation covered a wide range of topics, from the pandemic to climate change. She described that as "more positive than the two leaders informing each other, well, we're going to stick to our positions on Taiwan."

She also suggested that Xi may have an incentive to tamp down tensions as he seeks a third term as president.

"They cannot afford to have the relationship with the United States ruptured," she said.

The call with Xi took place as Biden aims to find new ways to work with China and contain its influence around the world. Differing perspectives on global health, economic policy and human rights have long tested the relationship — with China's refusal to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine adding further strain.

Pelosi's potential visit to Taiwan has created another pressure point. Beijing has said it would view such a trip as a provocation, a threat U.S. officials are taking with heightened seriousness in light of Russia's incursion into Ukraine.

"If the U.S. insists on going its own way and challenging China's bottom line, it will surely be met with forceful responses," Zhao Lijian, a spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry, told reporters earlier this week. "All ensuing consequences shall be borne by the U.S."

Pelosi would be the highest-ranking U.S. elected official to travel to Taiwan since Republican Newt Gingrich visited the island in 1997 when he was House speaker. Biden last week told reporters that U.S. military officials believed it was "not a good idea" for the speaker to visit the island at the moment.

John Kirby, a U.S. national security spokesman, said Wednesday that it was important for Biden and Xi to regularly touch base.

"The president wants to make sure that the lines of communication with President Xi remain open because they need to," Kirby told reporters at a White House briefing. "There are issues where we can cooperate with China on, and there are issues where obviously there are friction and tension."

Biden and Xi last spoke in March, shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"This is one of the most consequential bilateral relationships in the world today, with ramifications well beyond both individual countries," Kirby said.

Biden has moved to shift U.S. reliance off Chinese manufacturing, including final congressional approval Thursday of legislation to encourage semiconductor companies to build more high-tech plants in the U.S.

He also wants to marshal global democracies to support infrastructure investments in low- and middle-income nations as an alternative to China's "Belt and Road Initiative," which aims to boost China's trade with other global markets.

Biden has kept in place Trump-era tariffs on many Chinese-manufactured goods in order to maintain leverage over Beijing. But he is weighing whether to ease at least some of them to lessen the impact of soaring inflation on American households.

U.S. officials have also criticized China's "zero-COVID" policy of mass testing and lockdowns in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19 in its territory, labeling it misguided and fretting that it will further slow global economic growth.

Other points of strain include China's treatment of Uyghur Muslims, which the U.S. has declared a genocide, its militarization in the South China Sea and its global campaign of economic and political espionage.

**Flooding in central Appalachia kills at least 8 in Kentucky**

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By BRUCE SCHREINER, REBECCA REYNOLDS and TIMOTHY D. EASLEY Associated Press  
JACKSON, Ky. (AP) — Torrential rains unleashed devastating floods in Appalachia on Thursday, as fast-rising water killed at least eight people in Kentucky and sent people scurrying to rooftops to be rescued. Water gushed from hillsides and flooded out of streambeds, inundating homes, businesses and roads throughout eastern Kentucky. Parts of western Virginia and southern West Virginia also saw extensive flooding. Rescue crews used helicopters and boats to pick up people trapped by floodwaters.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear tweeted Thursday evening that the state's death toll from flooding had risen to eight. He asked for continued prayers for the region, which was bracing for more rain.

"In a word, this event is devastating," Beshear said earlier in the day. "And I do believe it will end up being one of the most significant, deadly floods that we have had in Kentucky in at least a very long time."

In Breathitt County in Kentucky, Krystal Holbrook's family raced against surging floodwaters in the early morning hours to move possessions to higher ground. Their ordeal began around 4 a.m. Thursday, as they scurried in the dark to move vehicles, campers, trailers and farm equipment. But as the water kept rising throughout the day, the concern was that "higher ground is getting a little bit difficult," she said.

"It looks like a huge lake back here," she said.

Beshear warned that property damage in Kentucky would be widespread. The governor said officials were setting up a site for donations that would go to residents affected by the flooding.

Dangerous conditions and continued rainfall hampered rescue efforts Thursday, the governor said.

"We've got a lot of people that need help that we can't get to at the moment," Beshear said. "We will."

Flash flooding and mudslides were reported across the mountainous region of eastern Kentucky, western Virginia and southern West Virginia, where thunderstorms dumped several inches of rain over the past few days.

With more rain expected in the area, the National Weather Service said additional flooding was possible into Friday in much of West Virginia, eastern Kentucky and southwest Virginia. Forecasters said the highest threat of flash flooding was expected to shift farther east into West Virginia.

Poweroutage.us reported more than 31,000 customers without electricity in eastern Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia, with the bulk of the outages in Kentucky.

"There are a lot of people in eastern Kentucky on top of roofs waiting to be rescued," Beshear said earlier Thursday. "There are a number of people that are unaccounted for and I'm nearly certain this is a situation where we are going to lose some of them."

Rescue crews worked throughout the night helping people stranded by the rising waters in eastern Kentucky's Perry County, where Emergency Management Director Jerry Stacy called it a "catastrophic event."

"We're just in the rescue mode right now," Stacy said, speaking with The Associated Press by phone as he struggled to reach his office in Hazard. "Extreme flash flooding and mudslides are just everywhere."

The storms hit an Appalachian mountain region where communities and homes are perched on steep hillsides or set deep in the hollows between them, where creeks and streams can rise in a hurry. But this one is far worse than a typical flood, said Stacy, 54.

"I've lived here in Perry County all my life and this is by the far the worst event I've ever seen," he said.

Roads in many areas weren't passable after as much as 6 inches (15 centimeters) of rain had fallen in some areas by Thursday, and 1-3 more inches (7.5 centimeters) could fall, the National Weather Service said.

Beshear said he has deployed National Guard soldiers to the hardest-hit areas, and three parks in the region were opened as shelters for displaced people.

Breathitt County's courthouse was opened overnight in Kentucky, and Emergency Management Director Chris Friley said the Old Montessori School would provide more permanent shelter once crews can staff it.

Perry County dispatchers told WKYT-TV that floodwaters washed out roads and bridges and knocked homes off foundations. The city of Hazard said rescue crews were out all night, urging people on Facebook to stay off roads and "pray for a break in the rain."

In West Virginia's Greenbrier County, firefighters pulled people from flooded homes, and five campers who got stranded by high water in Nicholas County were rescued by the Keslers Cross Lanes Volunteer



Fire Department, WCHS-TV reported.

Gov. Jim Justice declared a state of emergency for six counties in West Virginia after severe thunderstorms this week caused significant local flooding, downed trees, power outages and blocked roads.

Communities in southwest Virginia also were flooding, and the National Weather Service office in Blacksburg, Virginia, warned of more showers and storms on Thursday.

## Deal on Capitol Hill could ease seniors' health costs

By MATT SEDENSKY and CARLA K. JOHNSON Associated Press

A deal on Capitol Hill that could cut prescription drug costs for millions of Medicare beneficiaries was cautiously cheered by older Americans and their advocates Thursday even as many worried it might never come to fruition.

The health care and climate agreement struck by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin includes landmark provisions that could help senior citizens, including a cap on out-of-pocket Medicare drug costs and a requirement that the government negotiate prices on some high-cost drugs.

Some of the issues addressed in the deal have been talked about for decades and proved elusive. But Manchin's backing brought new optimism to many who have lobbied and prayed for relief.

"We worry constantly, 'Will we be able to afford this?'" said Becky Miller, a 67-year-old retired teacher from Bradenton, Florida, who spends thousands of dollars each year for drugs to treat epilepsy, heart problems and an inflammatory disease that affects her spine.

She is afraid the powerful pharmaceutical lobby might still thwart the plan, but said, "If this goes through, it will help a lot of people."

Several prongs of the proposal have the potential to bring relief to millions of people:

— It would cap out-of-pocket drug costs at \$2,000 a year for Medicare beneficiaries. No such limit exists today, and some older people on costly drugs can run up bills of tens of thousands of dollars.

— It would give Medicare, for the first time, the ability to directly negotiate with pharmaceutical companies over the price of drugs, though the number of medications subject to the provision would be limited.

— It would create a new "inflation rebate" requiring drug companies to give refunds to Medicare beneficiaries for increases in prescription drug prices that exceed the rate of inflation.

— It would provide coverage of vaccines for senior citizens. Some Medicare beneficiaries have had to pay out of pocket for recommended immunizations, such as the one against shingles.

Earlier proposals were more generous and, along the way, provisions to pay for senior citizens' glasses, hearing aids and dental care were trimmed. But news of a possible deal still drew applause.

"This would nonetheless be transformational, just not as transformational," said David Lipschutz, associate director of the nonpartisan Center for Medicare Advocacy. "It might not have been everything that everyone hoped for from the beginning, but this is nonetheless a huge step."

Tricia Neuman, a Medicare expert with the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation, was likewise optimistic, saying, "Congress is on the cusp of making major changes to the Medicare drug benefit that could provide significant help to people struggling with their drug costs."

If passed, an estimated 4.1 million Medicare beneficiaries would start getting free vaccines as soon as next year, Neuman said. Drug companies would also be required to start giving the rebates next year.

Other proposals would take longer to kick in. The cap on out-of-pocket spending — estimated to help 1.45 million people — would start in 2025. And in 2026, the government would be able to start negotiating prices, beginning with 10 drugs and increasing to 20 by 2029.

Medicare can't currently negotiate drug prices with pharmaceutical companies, leaving taxpayers on the hook to pay for whatever the companies charged, said Bill Sweeney, a senior vice president at AARP.

"Why would we create a situation where we're at the mercy of the drug companies to pay whatever they charge?" he asked.

The Senate is expected to vote on the wide-ranging measure next week, but with the chamber divided

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50-50 and the Republicans staunchly opposed, the Democrats will have no votes to spare. A House vote would follow, perhaps later in August.

One key vote, Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., was still reviewing the agreement, a spokeswoman said. Sinema backed Manchin last year in insisting on making the legislation less expensive but objected to proposals to raise tax rates.

Pamela Stevens, a 69-year-old from San Dimas, California, pays around \$10,000 annually in out-of-pocket expenses for drugs to treat diabetes and other conditions. She is a retired nurse and her husband a retired accountant, and said that while they aren't poor, drug costs leave them little wiggle room. They never go out to eat or on vacation, and she sometimes goes without cholesterol drugs to cut costs.

Passage of the proposal, Stevens said, would give her some freedom and a chance to do more than just sit home watching TV. But she is not convinced it will happen.

"I am not going to hold my breath," she said. "My hopes have been dashed too many times."

In Oakland, California, 67-year-old Gary Cohen will pay \$14,000 this year out of pocket for a generic version of the cancer drug Revlimid. Cohen, who worked on the implementation of the Affordable Care Act in the Obama administration, was diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 2020.

"It's scandalous to pay that much money for something that is literally keeping me alive," Cohen said. The cap on out-of-pocket costs would help him once it kicks in.

He added: "I'm really excited it's happening. I wish it were coming sooner."

## 'Rescind the Doctrine' protest greets pope in Canada

By ROB GILLIES and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ST-ANNE-DE-BEAUPRÉ, Quebec (AP) — Pope Francis celebrated Mass on Thursday at Canada's national shrine and came face-to-face with a long-standing demand from Indigenous peoples: to rescind the papal decrees underpinning the so-called "Doctrine of Discovery" and repudiate the theories that legitimized the colonial-era seizure of Native lands and form the basis of some property law today.

Right before Mass began, two Indigenous women unfurled a banner at the altar of the National Shrine of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré that read: "Rescind the Doctrine" in bright red and black letters. The protesters were escorted away and the Mass proceeded without incident, though the women later marched the banner out of the basilica and draped it on the railing.

The brief protest underscored one of the issues facing the Holy See following Francis' historic apology for the Catholic Church's involvement in Canada's notorious residential schools, where generations of Indigenous peoples were forcibly removed from their families and cultures to assimilate them into Christian, Canadian society. Francis has spent the week in Canada seeking to atone for the legacy and on Thursday added in another request for forgiveness from victims for the "evil" of clergy sexual abuse.

Beyond the apology, Indigenous peoples have called on Francis to formally rescind the 15th century papal bulls, or decrees, that provided the Portuguese and Spanish kingdoms the religious backing to expand their territories in Africa and the Americas for the sake of spreading Christianity. Those decrees underpin the Doctrine of Discovery, a legal concept coined in a 1823 U.S. Supreme Court decision that has come to be understood as meaning that ownership and sovereignty over land passed to Europeans because they "discovered" it. It was cited as recently as a 2005 Supreme Court decision involving the Oneida Indian Nation.

"These colonizing nation states, in particular Canada and the United States, have utilized this doctrine as the basis for their title to land, which ultimately really means the dispossession of land of Indigenous peoples," said Michelle Schenandoah, a member of the Oneida Nation Wolf Clan. She was in Quebec City with a delegation from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy to raise the issue with church leaders.

"It's been a long genocide over 500 years, and it still is valid law to this day," she said.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau cited the need for the Holy See to "address the Doctrine of Discovery," as well as other issues including the return of Indigenous artifacts in the Vatican Museums, in his private talks with Francis on Wednesday, Trudeau's office said.

Several Christian denominations in recent years have formally repudiated the doctrine. The Canadian

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bishops did so in 2016 and the umbrella organization of U.S. female Catholic religious orders, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, formally asked Francis to do so in 2014 saying he should repudiate "the period of Christian history that used religion to justify political and personal violence against Indigenous nations and peoples and their cultural, religious, and territorial identities."

Murray Sinclair, the First Nations chairman of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, cited the doctrine in a statement this week welcoming Francis' apology but calling on him to take responsibility for the full role of the church in the Canadian residential school system.

"Driven by the Doctrine of Discovery and other church beliefs and doctrines, Catholic leaders not only enabled the government of Canada, but pushed it even further in its work to commit cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples," Sinclair said.

Church officials have insisted those papal decrees have long since been rescinded or superseded by other ones fully recognizing the rights of Indigenous peoples to live on their lands, and say the original bulls have no legal or moral bearing today. During the trip, Francis has reasserted repeatedly those rights and rejected the policies of assimilation that drove the residential school system.

But both the Vatican and Canadian trip organizers have confirmed that a new church statement is being prepared to address demands for a current, formal repudiation, though it is not expected to be released during Francis' visit.

"We understand the desire to name these texts, acknowledge their impact and renounce the concepts associated with them," Neil MacCarthy, in charge of communications for the papal visit, told The Associated Press in an email.

Asked about the protest Thursday, MacCarthy said: "We recognize that there are very passionate feelings about a number of issues including the Doctrine of Discovery. The brief peaceful protest did not disrupt the service and the group had a chance to express their concerns."

The Vatican clearly anticipated that the issue would arise during the trip. In an essay in the current issue of the Vatican-vetted Jesuit journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the Rev. Federico Lombardi acknowledged that the issue remains an important one for Indigenous peoples, but stressed that the Holy See's position in repudiating the discovery doctrine is clear.

Lombardi, the retired Vatican spokesman, cited the subsequent 1538 bull "Sublimis Deus" that asserted that Indigenous peoples cannot be deprived of their freedom or possession of their property "nor should they be in any way enslaved."

But Philip Arnold, chair of the department of religion at Syracuse University in New York, which sits on Onondaga Nation territory, said the 1538 bull was effectively "a ruse" since it didn't call for European colonial powers to give back the land they had already claimed, but rather elaborated the "freedom that comes with submission to the Catholic Church and that sponsoring monarch."

"The Vatican's role in justifying the Doctrine of Christian Discovery in the 15th century is the origin story of transatlantic slave trade, land theft, and a settler-colonial extractive economies throughout Africa and the Americas," he said.

Felix Hoehn, a property and administrative law professor at the University of Saskatchewan, said any repudiation of papal bulls or doctrines would have no legal bearing on land claims today, but would have symbolic value.

"The Vatican doesn't make Canadian law. Courts aren't bound by papal bulls or anything of that notion but it would be symbolic," Hoehn said. "It would add moral pressure."

## **Study: Climate change made UK heat wave hotter, more likely**

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Human-caused climate change made last week's deadly heat wave in England and Wales at least 10 times more likely and added a few degrees to how brutally hot it got, a study said.

A team of international scientists found that the heat wave that set a new national record high at 40.3 degrees Celsius (104.5 degrees Fahrenheit) was made stronger and more likely by the buildup of heat-

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trapping gases from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas. They said Thursday that temperatures were 2 to 4 degrees Celsius warmer (3.6 to 7.2 degrees Fahrenheit) in the heat wave than they would have been without climate change, depending on which method scientists used.

The study has not been published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal yet but follows scientifically accepted techniques, and past such studies have been published months later.

"We would not have seen temperatures above 40 degrees in the U.K. without climate change," study senior author Friederike Otto, a climate scientist at Imperial College of London, said in an interview. "The fingerprint is super strong."

World Weather Attribution, a collection of scientists across the globe who do real-time studies of extreme weather to see if climate change played a role in an extreme weather event and if so how much of one, looked at two-day average temperatures for July 18 and 19 in much of England and Wales and the highest temperature reached in that time.

The daily highest temperatures were the most unusual, a one-in-1,000-year event in the current warmer world, but "almost impossible in a world without climate change," the study said. Last week's heat smashed the old national record by 1.6 degrees Celsius (2.9 degrees Fahrenheit). The average over two hot days and nights is a once a century event now but is "nearly impossible" without climate change.

When the scientists used the long history of temperatures in England to determine the impact of global warming, they saw a stronger climate change influence than when they used simulations from climate models. For some reason that scientists aren't quite certain about, climate models have long underestimated extreme weather signals in the summer in Western Europe, Otto said.

With climate models, the scientists simulate a world without the 1.2 degrees Celsius (2.2 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since pre-industrial times and see how likely this heat would have been in that cooler world without fossil fuel-charged warming. With observations they look at history and calculate the chances of such a heat wave that way.

"The methodology seems sound, but candidly, I didn't need a study to tell me this was climate change," said University of Georgia meteorology professor Marshall Shepherd, who wasn't on this study team but was on a U.S. National Academy of Sciences panel that said these types of studies are scientifically valid. "This new era of heat is particularly dangerous because most homes are not equipped for it there."

The World Weather Attribution study refers to another analysis that estimates a heat wave like this would kill at least 800 people in England and Wales, where there is less air conditioning than in warmer climates.

Otto, who had to sleep and work in the basement because of the heat, said as the world warms, these record-smashing heat waves will continue to come more frequently and hotter.

In addition to spurring people to cut greenhouse gas emissions, study co-author Gabe Vecchi, said, "this heat wave and heat waves like it should be a reminder that we have to adapt to a warmer world. We are not living in our parents' world anymore."

## **Biden shrugs off recession talk, talks up fighting inflation**

By JOSH BOAK and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden and his administration went all out Thursday to play down a troubling new economic report that added to the evidence of a recession, trying to pull focus instead to major legislative progress on measures to tame inflation, reduce debt and preserve America's competitive edge.

The desire to accentuate the positive reflected the political tensions that are already playing out in the runup to the midterm elections. Republican lawmakers are sounding the alarm that a downturn has already started, a claim challenged by Biden and his fellow Democrats who wanted the public to instead focus on a pair of likely wins in Congress.

Thursday reflected the constant push-and-pull that has defined the Biden administration, in which any triumph can be overshadowed by a setback and the news cycle moves at a faster pace than victory laps. This created dueling narratives about where the country is.

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Republicans said the report showing the economy shrank for the second consecutive quarter was evidence of a "Biden recession" at a time when inflation is at a four-decade high.

Biden, in turn, cited near-record-low unemployment and signs of continued business investment in the economy. He declared, "That doesn't sound like recession to me."

The president celebrated congressional passage of a \$280 billion bipartisan package to boost the U.S. semiconductor industry and the sudden resurrection of a Democrats-only proposal to lower prescription drug costs, tackle climate change, fund the IRS, establish a minimum corporate tax and cut the deficit.

Other White House officials took Biden's cue and shrugged off the gross domestic product report showing the economy shrank at an annual rate of 0.9%.

"Where we are right now is we're on the cusp of doing really historic things that would help move the ball forward on the economy," Brian Deese, director of the White House National Economic Council, told The Associated Press when asked about the troubling GDP report. "That's our focus."

In a rare press conference, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen allowed that Americans are fundamentally concerned about inflation, not the back-and-forth between Democrats and Republicans about whether the GDP report shows that the economy has slid into a recession.

"We should avoid a semantic battle," Yellen told reporters, adding that Americans' "biggest concern is with inflation" and that they generally feel good about their ability to find a job and stay employed.

Still, the treasury secretary deployed some rhetoric of her own by saying that growth was "slowing," when the GDP report showed that the economy has shrunk in size over the past six months.

The ultimate arbiter of whether the country is in a recession is the National Bureau of Economic Research, which might not make its determination for some time.

Yellen portrayed the slowdown as positive for an economy returning to normal after the pandemic, a contrast to the Republicans' argument that it was an unabashed failure caused by Democratic policies rather than a world's complicated attempt to re-emerge from the coronavirus pandemic.

This debate trickled down to the semiconductor bill now awaiting Biden's signature and new climate and drug pricing legislation that Democrats have dubbed the "Inflation Reduction Act of 2022." The administration says both bills would combat inflation, while Republican opponents argue they will push prices higher.

"This morning the government announced what every American has been feeling for nearly a year — we are in a recession," House Republican Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy said in a floor speech. "Democrat spending caused this inflation. And now, they are doubling down on the same failed strategy."

Other Republicans moved quickly to capitalize on the report, with the Republican National Committee declaring it indicative of "Biden's Recession."

Even the White House acknowledges that the legislative proposals won't have an immediate effect on consumer prices or economic output, but it believes voters will reward Biden and Democrats for being seen as proposing solutions to the challenges affecting households' bottom lines.

Biden told The Associated Press in an interview earlier this year that he sees his mission as giving Americans a renewed sense of confidence, yet the faith he seeks to keep and spread is constantly getting eroded because the losses are lingering in people's memories and the wins are easily forgotten.

Even if a U.S. recession is an open question for economists, the matter of the economy's health is largely settled among voters.

Nearly 8 in 10 Americans described the U.S. economy as poor and roughly 7 in 10 disapproved of Biden's economic leadership, according to a June survey by AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Consumer sentiment as measured by the University of Michigan began to decline as inflation persisted as a threat, with confidence among Democrats relatively weak.

The Federal Reserve, which on Wednesday moved sharply to raise interest rates to further slow the economy in an effort to bring down inflation, signaled that more hikes are on the horizon in a sign that the battle against inflation — and the political skirmishes that follow — could continue well into this year's November elections.

## If monkeypox spreads through sexual contact, is it an STD?

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For most of the six decades that monkeypox has been known to affect people, it was not known as a disease that spreads through sex. Now that has changed.

The current outbreak is by far the biggest involving the virus, and it's been designated a global emergency. So far, officials say, all evidence indicates that the disease has spread mainly through networks of men who have sex with men.

"It clearly is spreading as an STI (sexually transmitted infection) at this point," said Dr. Tom Inglesby, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.

To protect the people at highest risk while trying to contain the spread, public health agencies are focusing their attention on those men — and attacking the virus based on how it's behaving now.

On Wednesday, the head of the World Health Organization advised men at risk for monkeypox to consider reducing their sexual partners "for the moment."

But this is a complicated outbreak that may shift in how it spreads and which population groups are most affected. There is also debate about whether monkeypox should be called a sexually transmitted disease, with some critics complaining that the term creates a stigma and could be used to vilify gay and bisexual men.

Monkeypox can spread in nonsexual ways too, and it's not enough to use condoms or other typical measures for stopping STDs, Inglesby and other experts say.

Here's what we know.

### WHAT MAKES SOMETHING AN STD?

A sexually transmitted disease is commonly defined as one that mainly spreads through sexual contact. But some STDs can be spread in other ways, too. HIV can spread through shared needles. Syphilis can spread through kissing. A common, parasite-caused sexual infection called trichomoniasis has been found to spread through the sharing of damp, moist objects like sponges or towels.

Monkeypox has not usually spread easily among people, and experts are still trying to understand exactly how it moves from person to person. In Africa, where small outbreaks have been common for years, people have been infected through bites from rodents or small animals.

But in May, cases began emerging in Europe, the United States and elsewhere that showed a clear pattern of infection through intimate contact with an infected person, like many other sexually transmitted diseases.

The public health workers who respond to outbreaks play a large role how they are framed. Much of the work on monkeypox has been done by professionals who operate sexual health clinics or specialize in STDs.

Indeed, the U.S. government's response needs to be led by people with that expertise, said David C. Harvey, executive director of the National Coalition of STD Directors.

"The STD field has a wealth of knowledge and expertise in these areas developed over decades fighting various outbreaks and diseases affecting the very communities ... we're seeing monkeypox taking a toll on today," Harvey said in a statement.

### WHO IS GETTING MONKEYPOX?

WHO officials said last week that 99% of all the monkeypox cases beyond Africa were in men and that of those, 98% involved men who have sex with men. Experts suspect that monkeypox outbreaks in Europe and North America were ignited by sex at two raves in Belgium and Spain.

The statistics are the same for cases reported in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As in Europe, cases have emerged in other groups too, including at least 13 people who were female at birth and at least two children.

Last week, the New England Journal of Medicine published a study of hundreds of monkeypox infections in 16 countries. It found that the suspected means of transmission in 95% of the cases was sexual close contact, as reported by doctors. The researchers noted that it was impossible to confirm sexual transmission.

That idea seemed to be further supported by the finding that most of the men had lesions in the genital or anal areas or in the mouth — areas of sexual contact, the researchers said.

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## WHY IS THERE A DEBATE ABOUT CALLING IT AN STD?

While there is broad agreement among health officials that monkeypox is being transmitted during sexual encounters, some experts debate whether it should be called an STD. They worry that the term unfairly stigmatizes and that it could undermine efforts to identify infections and tame the outbreak.

When a disease is defined as a sexually transmitted infection that mainly affects men who have sex with men, many people may begin to think of it as "a gay disease" that poses no risk to them, said Jason Farley, an epidemiologist at the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing.

That's what happened in the early days of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, which contributed to the spread of HIV to other groups. Farley said.

"We learn nothing from our history," said Farley, who is gay.

The WHO recommendation that at-risk men limit their sexual partners is sensible public health advice, he said. But it also amplifies "the message that this is a gay disease," he said.

"This is the fine line between having a public health approach that focuses on the epidemiology of now, compared to the likelihood of the continued emergence of new cases in" the general community, he said.

"Monkeypox is not a sexually transmitted infection," he said. "It is an infection that can be transmitted with sexual contact."

## WHAT IS KNOWN ABOUT TRANSMISSION?

Some researchers have found evidence of the monkeypox virus in semen. A study in Spain found monkeypox virus DNA in the semen of some infected men, as well as in saliva and other body fluids. But the study didn't answer whether the virus actually has spread through semen.

Sorting that out could affect the understanding of not only how men spread the infection, but also how long they might be contagious. Evidence of some other viruses — like Ebola and Zika — has been found in the semen of some men months after they were thought to be fully recovered.

Meanwhile, scientists believe the primary route of transmission during the current outbreak has been skin-to-skin contact during sexual encounters with someone who has symptoms. In that respect, it's similar to herpes, some experts noted.

The virus also may spread through saliva and respiratory droplets during prolonged, face-to-face contact, such as during kissing and cuddling — a kind of spread that can occur outside of sex.

Researchers are exploring how often, and in what situations, that kind of spread might happen, said Christopher Mores, a professor of global health at George Washington University.

"We would do ourselves a disservice to try and exclude anything from the realm of possibility at this point," he said.

Officials also say people can catch monkeypox from touching items that previously touched an infected person's rash or body fluids, such as towels or bedsheets. That is thought to explain the infections of the U.S. children.

## WHY ARE THESE DETAILS IMPORTANT?

It's important to understand exactly how monkeypox spreads in order to give people the information they need to protect themselves, health officials say.

That said, health officials believe those who are currently at the highest risk are gay or bisexual men who have sex with multiple partners. That understanding has shaped much of the work to contain the outbreak, including prioritization of the supply of vaccines and treatments.

The government has been shipping a monkeypox vaccine, but the supply is limited. So far it's only been recommended as a post-exposure treatment or for people who have had multiple sex partners in the past two weeks in a place where monkeypox cases have been reported.

The vaccine is new, and officials are trying to gather data on exactly how well it works.

## **1st Trader Joe's union approved at Massachusetts store**

By MARK PRATT Associated Press

Employees at a Trader Joe's supermarket in Massachusetts on Thursday became the latest workers at

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a major company to approve a labor union.

The store in Hadley, about 80 miles (129 kilometers) west of Boston, is the first Trader Joe's with an employees union, although workers at two other company locations have initiated unionization efforts.

The union vote, counted by National Labor Relations Board agents in front of witnesses from management and employees, passed 45-31 with one void. Eighty-one store workers — called crew members or merchants in company lingo — were eligible to vote.

The union, Trader Joe's United, said in a Twitter post "We won!"

"This victory is historic, but not a surprise," the tweet said. "Since the moment we announced our campaign, a majority of the crew have enthusiastically supported our union, and despite the company's best efforts to bust us, our majority has never wavered."

The company has seven days to file an objection. A company spokesperson did not indicate whether there would be one. The company already has among the best package of pay, benefits, and working conditions in the grocery store business, the spokesperson said.

"We are prepared to immediately begin discussions with union representatives for the employees at this store to negotiate a contract," the statement from Nakia Rohde said. "We are willing to use any current union contract for a multi-state grocery company with stores in the area, selected by the union representatives, as a template to negotiate a new structure for the employees in this store; including pay, retirement, healthcare, and working conditions such as scheduling and job flexibility."

Organizers at the store launched the effort in May in an open letter to company CEO Dan Bane citing concerns about pay, benefits and safety.

Now that the union has been approved, the next step is putting together a negotiating committee to hammer out a contract with the California-based company, which has about 530 stores nationwide.

"We must embrace this challenge head on, together, and negotiate a contract that reflects the values Trader Joe's has long claimed to espouse," the union said in its tweet.

Trader Joe's United is an independent union and not affiliated with a larger existing union, although organizers have received administrative and legal help from established unions, 18-year Trader Joe's employee Maeg Yosef said.

Workers from at least two other Trader Joe's locations have initiated unionization efforts. Employees at a Minneapolis location have a union vote scheduled for Aug. 11 and 12, while the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 7 on Tuesday filed a union election petition with the National Labor Relations Board on behalf of crew members at a Boulder, Colorado store.

The Trader Joe's workers are part of a nationwide wave of employees at major companies who have or are attempting to unionize in an effort to secure a bigger say in their work conditions and compensation.

Workers at multiple Starbucks coffee shop locations across the country, as well as employees at Amazon, Apple and REI are among those who have joined unions in the past year.

During the first nine months of the 2022 fiscal year, from Oct. 1 until June 30, union representation petitions filed at the National Labor Relations Board have increased 58% compared to the first three quarters of the previous fiscal year, the agency said this month.

Before the vote took place, Trader Joe's management engaged in what Yosef called "classic union-busting" tactics, including hiring a law firm specializing in fighting unionization to try and talk employees out of approving a union.

## 4-time F1 champion Vettel felt like retiring for a long time

By JEROME PUGMIRE AP Auto Racing Writer

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Sebastian Vettel considered retiring from Formula One for quite some time before finally announcing Thursday this season will be his last.

The German, who joined Instagram on Wednesday, used the platform one day later to announce he plans to spend more time with his family and work on causes close to his heart.

Vettel won his four F1 titles from 2010 to 2013 with Red Bull, but his last victory was with Ferrari in 2019.



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His best finish this season with Aston Martin is sixth.

"I feel that obviously this decision has been in my head for so long now, and has taken so much energy to be honest, and maybe even at times distracted me," he said Thursday. "There was a lot of thought leading into this. I think it's the right time for me to do other things.

"So much dedication means also a lot of time spent in your head, in your thoughts, but also physically away from home, from kids, family," added the 35-year-old. "I've grown other things, other than the children who are growing, it's other interests and views. I can't ignore these voices."

He has been increasingly outspoken on environmental issues.

"It's one of the one of the factors that definitely played a role," he added. "I understand that part of my passion, my job is coming with things that I'm not a fan of, obviously, travelling the world, racing cars, burning resources. Once you see these things, and once you're aware, then I don't think you can really unsee."

Vettel has won 53 races, the third-highest total in F1 behind Lewis Hamilton (103) and Michael Schumacher (91). He won an F1 record 13 races in 2013.

Vettel became the youngest world champion at 23 in 2010 and later became the third driver to win four consecutive championships after F1 greats Juan Miguel Fangio and Schumacher, his idol. Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton has since won four straight.

Vettel's title bids with Ferrari were unsuccessful after promising starts were undone by driver errors. He led the standings at the midway point in 2017 and was in contention the following year, only to lose both championships to Hamilton. He crashed from pole at the Singapore Grand Prix in 2017 and swerved off track into the barriers when comfortably leading the rain-soaked German Grand Prix the following year.

He was stunned when Ferrari did not renew his contract after he struggled to compete alongside newcomer Charles Leclerc in 2019, and again in 2020.

"It's sad. Obviously it's going to be strange not to see Seb in the paddock," Leclerc said. "I arrived the first year and I was probably very weird to him because I was just shy and didn't know what to say. Now he's a friend and he always texts me."

Along with Hamilton, Vettel has also been increasingly vocal about human rights conditions in countries where F1 races.

"I am tolerant and feel we all have the same rights to love, no matter what we look like, where we come from and who we love," he said.

His stance on protecting the environment has also escalated. At the Austrian GP in Spielberg three weeks ago, he wore a T-shirt with "Save the Bees" written on it. At the Canadian GP in June he had the message, "Stop mining tar sands. Canada's climate crime," written on his race helmet.

"I feel we live in very decisive times and how we all shape these next years will determine our lives. My passion comes with certain aspects that I have learned to dislike," Vettel said. "They might be solved in the future but the will to apply that change has to grow much, much stronger and has to be leading to action."

Vettel's team is sponsored by Saudi state oil firm Aramco.

Red Bull driver Sergio Perez understood Vettel's decision.

"It's extremely personal. It's how you feel and what you want to do," the 32-year-old Mexican driver said. "You put other priorities in place and you are not willing to pay the price of being an F1 driver."

Vettel's former Red Bull teammate Daniel Ricciardo said F1 will miss Vettel.

"You're losing a bit of a legend of the sport," Ricciardo said.

Ferrari driver Carlos Sainz Jr. and George Russell of Mercedes praised Vettel's endearing human side.

"Everyone in the paddock loves him and you will hear anything saying a bad word about Seb," Sainz said. "I hope we will see him back helping the sport in some of the ways he's been very vocal about."

Russell called Vettel "such an inspiration" and will miss the meetings when Vettel spoke up for drivers.

"You do learn how much general knowledge he has, how much F1 knowledge," Russell said. "It is quite inspiring to see. Above all he's just a great bloke, a great human being."

World champion Max Verstappen praised another of Vettel's achievements: growing his new-look, floppy, surfer's hairstyle.

"It grew back magically," Verstappen said. "I wish I had that."

## **Governments ramp up demands for user info, Twitter warns**

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Twitter warned Thursday that governments around the globe are asking the company to remove content or snoop on private details of user accounts at an alarming rate.

The social media company revealed in a new report that it fielded a record number of legal demands — nearly 60,000 during a six-month period last year — from local, state or national governments that wanted Twitter to remove content from accounts or reveal confidential information such as direct messages or user locations.

"We're seeing governments become more aggressive in how they try to use legal tactics to unmask the people using our service, collect information about account owners and also using legal demands as a way to try and silence people," Yoel Roth, the head of Twitter's safety and integrity, said in a conversation broadcast on the site Thursday.

The U.S. makes up the majority of demands for account information, accounting for 20% of the requests. India follows closely behind. Twitter says it complied fully with roughly 40% of all asks for information on user accounts.

Japan, which is also a frequent requestor for account information, makes the most requests of Twitter to take down content from accounts. Japan made more than 23,000 requests — half of all requests — for content to be removed. Russia followed closely behind on its takedown asks.

Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, also reported an increase in government asks for private user data during the same timeframe.

Twitter also reported a huge spike in requests from governments that targeted verified journalists and news outlets during the last half of 2021.

Governments also made a record number of legal demands on 349 accounts of verified journalists or news outlets around the globe between July and December of last year — a 103% increase.

Twitter did not provide a breakdown of which countries made those requests on journalists' accounts or how many of the asks they complied with.

Governments are using the social media companies to silence critics and censor journalists, Rob Mahoney, the executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, said in an emailed statement to The Associated Press.

"This surge in government demands for content takedowns and information on journalists is part of a global trend of increasing censorship and manipulation of information," Mahoney said. "Social media platforms are vital for reporters and they must do more to resist government attempts to silence critical voices."

## **DC requests National Guard help with busloads of migrants**

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The District of Columbia has requested National Guard assistance to help stem a "growing humanitarian crisis" prompted by thousands of migrants that have been sent to Washington by a pair of southern states.

Mayor Muriel Bowser formally asked the White House last week for an open-ended deployment of 150 National Guard members per day as well as "suitable federal location" for a mass housing and processing center, mentioning the D.C. Armory as a logical candidate. She met on July 21 with Liz Sherwood-Randall, assistant to the president for homeland security, and Julie Chavez Rodriguez, director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The crisis began in spring when Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey announced plans to send busloads of migrants to Washington, D.C., in response to President Joe Biden's decision to lift a pandemic-era emergency health order that restricted migrant entry numbers.

Since then the city estimates that nearly 200 buses have arrived, delivering more than 4,000 migrants

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to Union Station, often with no resources and no clue what to do next.

A coalition of local charitable groups has been working to feed and shelter the migrants, aided by a \$1 million grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. But organizers have been warning that both their resources and personnel were nearing exhaustion.

"This reliance on NGOs is not working and is unsustainable — they are overwhelmed and underfunded," Bowser said in her letter. She has repeatedly stated that the influx was stressing her government's ability to care for its own homeless residents and required intervention from Biden's government.

"We know we have a federal issue that demands a federal response," Bowser said at a July 18 press conference.

In her letter, Bowser harshly criticizes Abbott and Ducey, accusing them of "cruel political gamesmanship" and saying the pair had "decided to use desperate people to score political points."

Bowser does not have the authority to personally order a National Guard deployment, an issue that has become emotionally charged in recent years as a symbol of the district's entrenched status as less than a state.

Her limited authority played a role in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the Capitol building by supporters of former President Donald Trump. When it became clear that the U.S. Capitol Police were overmatched by the crowds, Bowser couldn't immediately deploy the district guard. Instead, crucial time was lost while the request was considered inside the Pentagon, and protesters rampaged through the building.

## Q&A: Melissa Barrera survives, on screen and in Hollywood

By SIGAL RATNER-ARIAS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Since her breakthrough role as Vanessa in the film adaptation of "In The Heights," Melissa Barrera has been working non-stop on the big and small screen. Only this year, she appeared in "Scream 5" and is filming a sequel, and stars in the upcoming Benjamin Millepied's reimagining of the opera "Carmen" and Lori Evans Taylor's "Bed Rest," which she also produced.

Starting Thursday, the Mexican actress can be seen in "Keep Breathing," a Netflix miniseries about the lone survivor of a plane crash in the middle of the Canadian wilderness.

Barrera — along with Ana de Armas — is among the few Hispanic actresses given a wide variety of roles, far beyond the characters Latinas have been allowed to play, while the discussion about the lack of representation continues in Hollywood.

"It's so easy for the industry to just keep us in the corner and keep us on a side lane and just give us these certain opportunities that they have designated are for us," Barrera said in a recent interview with The Associated Press from Montreal, where she is shooting "Scream 6." "If we don't fight to come to the center lanes, they're going to keep us on the sidelines the entire time."

"I crave the kind of representation where my identity is not the center and the most important part about the story that we're telling," she added. "I know it's necessary, and we do need the Latino and Latina stories to be getting told, and I want to do that. But I also just want to tell stories."

In "Keep Breathing," Barrera, 32, plays New York lawyer Liv, a cold, work-oriented woman who has to battle an unforgiving wilderness and past personal traumas to survive. It was a very demanding role that got her to the point of exhaustion fast, but the actress says she pushed through and used that in her performance, which she also fueled with traits of her younger self.

Answers have been edited for brevity and clarity.

AP: The series starts with the plane crash. Have you ever had a nerve-racking experience in the air?

BARRERA: I'm pretty chill in planes. Literally, do not have a care in the world. I have never had bad turbulence. I've never had an air pocket where the plane drops. I've never had an experience where the plane like touches and goes back, you know, like those kinds of things that would make your stomach drop. Never had that! So, I'm not scared of planes at all.

AP: How did you handle that scene then?

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BARRERA: I mean, I've had dreams of plane crashes. I have this recurring dream where I'm on a plane and I look out the window and there's another plane that's coming straight towards us, and right before they're going to crash into us, I wake up, every time. It's terrifying. I don't know, you just channel some other fear. I channel the idea of dying and not getting to see my family ever again, and my loved ones. That's usually what I go to. And also it helped that they built this incredible rig, and they put a plane on it. It was like a Disneyland ride. The plane would move and shake, and that helps also.

AP: It looks like a very demanding role, both physically and emotionally. Was it as hard as it seems?

BARRERA: It was harder. (Laughs.) I knew going into it, because of the nature of the show — you're outside, I'm alone most of the time, it's very physical and also the emotional arc is so intense. I feel like it's actually a survival show about surviving your mind, surviving your insecurities, your childhood traumas. It's all about mental survival, and I knew that it was going to be hard, so I prepared myself emotionally, mentally. That normally works in every single thing that I do: I don't get tired, I can do the whole shoot and then, at the end, I need to be in bed for a week. This time, two weeks into the shoot I couldn't get up from bed. I was like, "What did I get myself into? How am I going to survive another two and a half months of this?" And then you just do it! You use the exhaustion and you put it into the character and let it fuel the frustration and the anxiety and the panic and all of that.

AP: Liv is a lawyer, you are an artist. Did you find any common ground between the two of you?

BARRERA: A lot! I found that we were similar in a lot of ways. We're both very work-oriented, we like to keep ourselves busy. I used to be more like Liv in that I have trouble communicating feelings. I'd rather just keep moving and stay distracted so I don't have to deal with emotional stuff, so it was easy for me to revert to how I used to be and put that into her.

AP: What made you change in real life?

BARRERA: My husband (Mexican singer and entrepreneur Paco Zazueta.) My husband taught me a lot about communicating and letting people in and trusting and being expressive and all of that. He's changed me a lot in the time that we've been together, I've learned a lot from him.

AP: By the amount of work you've been doing since "In the Heights," it seems like it opened many doors for you. How do you feel about your career at this point?

BARRERA: I feel good. I feel like every single thing is a step up the ladder. Definitely, "In the Heights" opened a lot of doors for me — that was my first big movie, so that was the first time that a lot of people saw me. I love being able to show different sides of me with different characters. I strive to always move to a project that's going to be completely different, or very different from what I just did. And I feel like I have been lucky that I've been able to do that so far. But I still feel like I'm just starting.

## Russia attacks Kyiv area for the first time in weeks

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces launched a missile attack on the Kyiv area for the first time in weeks Thursday and pounded the northern Chernihiv region as well, in what Ukraine said was revenge for standing up to the Kremlin.

Ukrainian officials, meanwhile, announced a counteroffensive to take back the occupied Kherson region in the country's south, territory seized by Russian President Vladimir Putin's forces early in the war.

Russia attacked the Kyiv region with six missiles launched from the Black Sea, hitting a military unit in the village of Liutizh on the outskirts of the capital, according to Oleksii Hromov, a senior official with Ukraine's General Staff.

He said that the attack ruined one building and damaged two others, and that Ukrainian forces shot down one of the missiles in the town of Bucha.

Fifteen people were wounded in the Russian strikes, five of them civilians, Kyiv regional Gov. Oleksiy Kuleba said.

Kuleba linked the assaults to the Day of Statehood, a commemoration that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy instituted last year and Ukraine marked for the time on Thursday.

"Russia, with the help of missiles, is mounting revenge for the widespread popular resistance, which the

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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 regional Gov. Vyacheslav Chaus reported that the Russians also fired missiles from the territory of Belarus at the village of Honcharivska. The Chernihiv region had not been targeted in weeks.

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

Elsewhere around the country, five people were killed and 25 wounded in a Russian rocket attack on the city of Kropvynytskyi, about 250 kilometers (150 miles) southeast of Kyiv, according to the deputy governor of Ukraine's Kirovohrad region, Andriy Raikovich. He said the attack hit hangars at an air academy, damaging civilian planes.

Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, also came under a barrage of shelling overnight, according to the mayor. Authorities said a police officer was killed in Russian shelling of a power plant in the Kharkiv region.

The southern city of Mykolaiv was fired on as well, with one person reported injured.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian military kept up a counterattack in the Kherson region, knocking out of commission a key bridge over the Dnieper River on Wednesday.

Ukrainian media quoted Ukrainian presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovich as saying the operation to liberate Kherson is underway, with Kyiv's forces planning to isolate Russian troops and leave them with three options — "retreat, if possible, surrender or be destroyed."

Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, said the Russians are concentrating maximum forces in the direction of Kherson, warning: "A very large-scale movement of their troops has begun."

The British military said Ukraine has used its new, Western-supplied long-range artillery to damage at least three of the bridges across the Dnieper that Russia relies on to supply its forces.

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 province, and wounded nine.

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

Ukrainian emergency authorities said two civilians were killed in a Russian bombardment of the town of Toretsk. A missile struck a residential building there early Thursday morning, destroying two floors, officials said.

"Missile terror again. We will not give up. ... We will not be intimidated," Donetsk regional Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said on Telegram.

Military analysts believe Russian forces are focusing their efforts on capturing the cities of Bakhmut and Siversk in Donetsk province.

Zelenskyy instituted the Day of Statehood to remind Ukrainians about the country's history as an independent state. The commemoration honors Prince Vladimir, who made Christianity the official religion of the medieval state of Kyivan Rus more than 1,000 years ago.

"You could say that for us, every day is a statehood day," the president said in a Day of Statehood address.

"We fight every day so that everyone on the planet can finally understand: We are not a colony or enclave or protectorate, not a province, an eyalet, or a crown land, not a part of foreign empires, not a part of a country, not a federal republic, not an autonomy, not a province, but a free, independent, sovereign, indivisible and independent state," Zelenskyy said.

The Kremlin also lays claim to the heritage of the Kyivan Rus. In 2016, Putin erected a monument to Prince Vladimir near the Kremlin.

**US economy shrinks for a 2nd quarter, raising recession fear**

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By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy shrank from April through June for a second straight quarter, contracting at a 0.9% annual pace and raising fears that the nation may be approaching a recession.

The decline that the Commerce Department reported Thursday in the gross domestic product — the broadest gauge of the economy — followed a 1.6% annual drop from January through March. Consecutive quarters of falling GDP constitute one informal, though not definitive, indicator of a recession.

The GDP report for last quarter pointed to weakness across the economy. Consumer spending slowed as Americans bought fewer goods. Business investment fell. Inventories tumbled as businesses slowed their restocking of shelves, shaving 2 percentage points from GDP.

Higher borrowing rates, a consequence of the Federal Reserve's series of rate hikes, clobbered home construction, which shrank at a 14% annual rate. Government spending dropped, too.

The report comes at a critical time. Consumers and businesses have been struggling under the weight of punishing inflation and higher loan costs. On Wednesday, the Fed raised its benchmark 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 hoping to achieve a notoriously difficult "soft landing": An economic slowdown that manages to rein in rocketing prices without triggering a recession.

Apart from the United States, the global economy as a whole is also grappling with high inflation and weakening growth, especially after Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent energy and food prices soaring. Europe, highly dependent on Russian natural gas, appears especially vulnerable to a recession.

In the United States, the inflation surge and fear of a recession have eroded consumer confidence and stirred 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 could increase the likelihood that the Democrats will lose control of the House and Senate.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell and many economists have said that while the economy is showing some weakening, they doubt it's in recession. Many of them 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, isn't here yet.

"The back-to-back contraction of GDP will feed the debate about whether the U.S. is in, or soon headed for, a recession," said Sal Guatieri, senior economist at BMO Capital Markets. "The fact that the economy created 2.7 million payrolls in the first half of the year would seem to argue against an official recession call for now."

Still, Guatieri said, "the economy has quickly lost steam in the face of four-decade high inflation, rapidly rising borrowing costs and a general tightening in financial conditions."

In the meantime, Congress may be moving toward approving action to fight inflation under an agreement announced Wednesday by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Sen. Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat. Among other things, the measure would allow Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices with pharmaceutical companies, and the new revenue would be used to lower costs for seniors on medications.

In the wake of Thursday's government report, Biden dismissed any notion that the data depicted an economy in recession. The administration has stressed that solid job growth and low unemployment show that the U.S. economy is still growing despite two consecutive quarterly declines in GDP. Speaking from the White House, Biden leaned on remarks that Powell and other economic leaders have made.

"Both Chairman Powell and many of the significant banking personnel and economists say we're not in recession," the president said.

The government's first of three estimates of GDP for the April-June quarter marked 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.

But since then, the combination of mounting prices and higher borrowing costs have taken a toll. The Labor

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Department's consumer price index skyrocketed 9.1% in June from a year earlier, a pace not matched since 1981. And despite widespread pay raises, prices are surging faster than wages. In June, average hourly earnings, after adjusting for inflation, slid 3.6% from a year earlier, the 15th straight year-over-year drop.

Americans are still spending, though more tepidly. Thursday's report showed that consumer spending rose at a 1% annual pace from April through June, down from 1.8% in the first quarter and 2.5% in the final three months of 2021.

Spending on goods like appliances and furniture, which had soared while Americans were sheltering at home early in the pandemic, dropped at a 4.4% annual rate last quarter. But spending on services, like airline trips and dinners out, rose at a 4.1% rate, indicating that millions of consumers are venturing out more.

Before accounting for surging prices, the economy actually grew at a 7.8% annual pace in the April-June quarter. But inflation wiped out that gain and then some and produced a negative GDP number.

Against that backdrop, Americans are losing confidence. Their assessment of economic conditions six months from now has reached its lowest point since 2013, according to the Conference Board, a research group.

The Fed's hikes have already led to higher rates on credit cards and auto loans and 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.

Even with the economy recording a second straight quarter of negative GDP, many economists do not regard it as constituting 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.

"If we aren't yet in a recession, we soon will be," said Joshua Shapiro, chief U.S. economist for the economic consulting firm Maria Fiorini Ramirez Inc. "An economy rapidly losing momentum combined with aggressive monetary tightening is not a recipe for a soft landing or any other type of happy ending."

## **No bond for accused rapist of girl who traveled for abortion**

By ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A man accused of raping and impregnating a 9-year-old Ohio girl who traveled to Indiana for an abortion was ordered held without bond Thursday by a judge who cited overwhelming evidence and the fact that he apparently is living in the U.S. illegally.

Gerson Fuentes, 27, faces two counts of raping the girl, who turned 10 before having the abortion in a case that has become a flashpoint in the national discussion about access to the procedure since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. He has pleaded not guilty.

If convicted, Fuentes, who is from Guatemala, faces the possibility of life in prison with no chance of parole. That penalty and "not having any ties to this community that can be proved legally makes it a substantial flight risk," Franklin County Judge Julie Lynch said after a 35-minute hearing.

The girl confirmed that Fuentes attacked her, Fuentes confessed to Columbus police detectives, and DNA testing of the aborted fetus confirmed Fuentes was the father, Franklin County Prosecutor Dan Meyer and detective Jeffrey Huhn said in court Thursday.

Huhn said he was unable, when searching multiple databases, to find any evidence that Fuentes was in the country legally.

In denying bond, Lynch cited that evidence, the violence of the crime and the fact that Fuentes had been living in the same home with the girl and her mother.

"To allow him to return to that home, the traumatic and psychological impact would be undeserving to an alleged victim," Lynch said. She also cited the "physical, and mental and emotional trauma" the girl

suffered from enduring the rapes and the abortion, and finding her case at the center of the country's abortion debate.

The case gained national attention after an Indianapolis physician, Dr. Caitlin Bernard, said the child had to travel to Indiana due to Ohio banning abortions at the first detectable "fetal heartbeat" after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the landmark Roe v. Wade ruling.

President Joe Biden cited the case when he signed an order July 8 trying to protect abortion access. Some conservatives and prominent Republicans, including Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, cast doubt on the story initially, then condemned the attack after Fuentes was arrested.

Fuentes' attorney, Bryan Bowen, argued against a no-bond hearing and unsuccessfully asked Lynch to set a reasonable bond. He said there was no evidence that there was physical abuse outside of the rapes or that the girl had been put under the influence of drugs or alcohol. He also said that Fuentes had family ties in Columbus, that he had a job, and that there was no evidence of a criminal history. Fuentes has lived in the area about seven years.

"We've heard evidence about the nature of the offense, but we have not heard any evidence presented about any danger that Mr. Fuentes would pose to any particular person or to the community," he said. He declined to comment after Lynch's ruling.

Dan Meyer, an assistant Franklin County prosecutor, said Thursday that Fuentes was providing for the girl's family, including her mother.

Columbus police learned about the girl's pregnancy after her mother alerted Franklin County Children Services on June 22. Huhn said Fuentes confessed to raping the girl, who turned 10 on May 28, on two occasions.

The girl saw a Columbus-area doctor in late June with a plan to have an abortion locally, but that wasn't possible due to the gestational age, determined to be six weeks and four days, Huhn testified.

Ohio's "heartbeat" abortion ban includes an exception only for an emergency that is life-threatening or involving a "serious risk of the substantial and irreversible impairment of a major bodily function."

Indiana's Republican Senate leaders proposed a bill this month that would prohibit abortions from the time an egg is implanted in a uterus, with exceptions in cases of rape and incest and to protect the life of the mother. The proposal followed the controversy over the Ohio girl's abortion in Indiana.

## 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



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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 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

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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."

## **EXPLAINER: How do we know when a recession has begun?**

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy has contracted for two straight quarters, intensifying fears that the nation is on the cusp of a recession — if not already in one — barely two years after the pandemic recession officially ended.

Six months of contraction is a long-held informal definition of a recession. Yet nothing is simple in the post-pandemic economy. Its direction has confounded Federal Reserve policymakers and many private economists since growth screeched to a halt in March 2020 as COVID-19 struck and 20 million Americans were suddenly thrown out of work.

Even as the economy shrank over the first half of this year, employers added 2.7 million jobs — more than in most entire years before the pandemic struck. And the unemployment rate has sunk to 3.6%, near a half-century low. Robust hiring and exceedingly low unemployment aren't consistent with a recession.

While most economists — and Fed Chair Jerome Powell — have said they don't think the economy is in recession, many increasingly expect an economic downturn to begin later this year or next.

Either way, with inflation raging at its highest level in four decades, Americans' purchasing power is eroding. The pain is being felt disproportionately by lower-income and Black and Hispanic households, many of whom are struggling to pay for higher-cost essentials like food, gas and rent. Compounding those pressures, the Fed is jacking up interest rates at the fastest pace since the early 1980s, thereby magnifying borrowing costs for homes and cars and credit card purchases.

As a result, regardless of whether a recession has officially begun, Americans have increasingly soured on the economy,

So how, exactly, do we know when an economy is in recession? Here are some answers to such questions:

### **WHO DECIDES WHEN A RECESSION HAS STARTED?**

Recessions are officially declared by the obscure-sounding 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 considers trends in hiring as a key measure in determining recessions. It also assesses many other data points, including gauges of income, employment, inflation-adjusted spending, retail sales and factory output. It puts heavy weight on jobs and a gauge of inflation-adjusted income that excludes government support payments such as Social Security.

Yet the NBER typically doesn't declare a recession until well after one has begun, sometimes for up to a year. Economists consider a half-point rise in the unemployment rate, averaged over several months, as the most historically reliable sign of a downturn.

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## DO TWO STRAIGHT QUARTERS OF ECONOMIC CONTRACTION EQUAL A RECESSION?

That's a common rule of thumb, but it isn't an official definition.

Still, in the past, it has been a useful measure. Michael Strain, an economist at the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute, notes that in each of the past 10 times that the economy shrank for two consecutive quarters, a recession has resulted.

Still, even Strain isn't sure we're in recession now. Like many economists, he notes that the underlying drivers of the economy — consumer spending, business investment, home purchases — all grew in the first quarter.

Overall gross domestic product — the broadest measure of the nation's output — declined at a 1.6% annual rate from January through March because of one-off factors, including a sharp jump in imports and a post-holiday season drop in businesses' inventories. Many economists expect that when GDP is revised later this year, the first quarter may even turn out to be positive.

"The basic story is that the economy is growing but still slowing, and that slowdown really accelerated in the second quarter," Strain said.

## DON'T A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK A RECESSION IS COMING?

Yes, because many people now feel more financially burdened. With wage gains trailing inflation for most people, higher prices for such essentials as gas, food, and rent have eroded Americans' spending power.

This week, Walmart reported that higher gas and food costs have forced its shoppers to reduce their purchases of discretionary spending such as new clothing, a clear sign that consumer spending, a key driver of the economy, is weakening. The nation's largest retailer, Walmart reduced its profit outlook and said it will have to discount more items like furniture and electronics.

And the Fed's rate hikes have caused average mortgage rates to double from a year ago, to 5.5%, causing a sharp fall in home sales and construction.

Higher rates will also likely weigh on businesses' willingness to invest in new buildings, machinery and other equipment. If companies reduce spending and investment, they'll also start to slow hiring. Rising caution among companies about spending freely could lead eventually to layoffs. If the economy were to lose jobs and the public were to grow more fearful, consumers would further reduce spending.

The Fed's rapid rate hikes have raised the likelihood of recession in the next two years to nearly 50%, Goldman Sachs economists have said. And Bank of America economists now forecast a "mild" recession later this year, while Deutsche Bank expects a recession early next year.

## WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS OF AN IMPENDING RECESSION?

The clearest signal that a recession is under way, economists say, would be a steady rise in job losses and a surge in unemployment. In the past, an increase in the unemployment rate of three-tenths of a percentage point, on average over the previous three months, has meant that a recession will soon follow.

Many economists monitor the number of people who seek unemployment benefits each week, which indicates whether layoffs are worsening. Weekly applications for jobless aid, averaged over the past four weeks, have risen for eight straight weeks to nearly 250,000, the highest level since last November. While that is a potentially concerning sign, it is still a low level historically.

## ANY OTHER SIGNALS TO WATCH FOR?

Many economists also monitor changes in the interest payments, or yields, on different bonds for a recession signal known as an "inverted yield curve." This occurs when the yield on the 10-year Treasury falls below the yield on a short-term Treasury, such as the 3-month T-bill. That is unusual. Normally, longer-term bonds pay investors a richer yield in exchange for tying up their money for a longer period.

Inverted yield curves generally mean that investors foresee a recession that will compel the Fed to slash rates. Inverted curves often predate recessions. Still, it can take 18 to 24 months for a downturn to arrive after the yield curve inverts.

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For the past two weeks, the yield on the two-year Treasury has exceeded the 10-year yield, suggesting that markets expect a recession soon. Many analysts say, though, that comparing the 3-month yield to the 10-year has a better recession-forecasting track record. Those rates are not inverted now.

## WILL THE FED KEEP RAISING RATES EVEN AS THE ECONOMY SLOWS?

The economy's flashing signals — slowing growth with strong hiring — have put the Fed in a tough spot. Chair Jerome Powell is aiming for a "soft landing," in which the economy weakens enough to slow hiring and wage growth without causing a recession and brings inflation back to the Fed's 2% target.

But Powell has acknowledged that such an outcome has grown more difficult to achieve. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's COVID-19 lockdowns have driven up prices for energy food, and many manufactured parts in the U.S.

Powell has also indicated that if necessary, the Fed will keep raising rates even amid a weak economy if that's what's needed to tame inflation.

"Is there a risk that we would go too far?" Powell asked last month. "Certainly there's a risk, but I wouldn't agree that's the biggest risk to the economy. The biggest mistake to make...would be to fail to restore price stability."

## Pope ends Canadian visit with stop in small, far-north city

By ROB GILLIES and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

In his extensive papal travels, Pope Francis has never journeyed farther north than Iqaluit, capital city of the Inuit-governed territory of Nunavut. On Friday, it will be the final stop of his somber six-day visit to Canada.

It is a distinctive destination — home to about 7,500 people but not a single traffic light, with no road or rail links to the outside world. Its lone Catholic church serves parishioners from at least five continents; more than 100 of them routinely fill the pews each Sunday.

Iqaluit has welcomed world leaders before. Queen Elizabeth, for example, visited for about two and a half hours in 2002, three years after Nunavut was carved out of the eastern portion of the Northwest Territories to become a territory of its own.

The pope's similarly brief stopover, in contrast, is not intended to be celebratory. He'll be finishing up a Canadian visit focused on in-person apologies for the abuse and disrespect inflicted on many thousands of Indigenous Canadians — including Inuit youths — who attended Catholic-run boarding schools from the late 1800s to the 1970s.

Given the visit's purpose, there are mixed feelings about it in Iqaluit, among Inuit leaders and also on the part of the Rev. Daniel Perreault, who oversees the parish of Our Lady of the Assumption Roman Catholic Church.

He said only a handful of his parishioners are Inuit. Most of the others hail from Africa, South America, Asia and other faraway places, have no links to the past problems of the boarding schools and would like to welcome Pope Francis joyously on Friday, Perreault said.

But the region's Inuit organizations want the visit to be focused on their own community, said the priest. "They do not want it being an occasion of a Catholic feast."

Iqaluit's deputy mayor, Solomon Awa, said the Inuit community — which comprises more than half of the city's population — abounds with swirling emotions. There is gratitude that an apology is forthcoming, and frustration that it took so long to come about.

"It will be very exciting for the people," Awa said. "I hope that this will get us moving forward to lift ourselves as Inuit, to the point where we say, 'Yes, we had many downsides in the past but we must move on.'"

Unlike two of his brothers, Awa was spared from attending a boarding school — his father insisted on keeping him at home as a helping hand.

"There are people still with broken hearts who went to residential schools... some of them still hold grudges with what happened," Awa said. "They are happy that the pope is coming, finally, to say sorry

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for what happened.”

Iqaluit is by far the largest municipality in Nunavut, a vast territory straddling the Arctic Circle. It is roughly the size of Alaska and California combined, with a mostly Inuit population of about 40,000.

For much of the year, the weather can be severe. In February 2010, Iqaluit hosted a meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors from the Group of Seven nations; several of the dignitaries went dog-sledding in sub-zero temperatures.

Pope Francis, however, is expected to encounter cloudy skies and mild temperatures – about 57 F or 14 C. “My gosh, he picked the softest kind of a moment to go,” teased David Phillips, senior climatologist for Environment Canada. “Until he feels what it’s like in February, it’s no badge of courage.”

The mild forecast reflects some serious concerns about the far-north climate. According to Canadian government data, average temperatures in Nunavut have increased far more sharply than in Canada as whole over recent decades.

Francis, in a speech in Quebec City on Wednesday, cited climate change as among “the great challenges of our day.” He is expected to pose for a photo in Iqaluit related to nature and climate change, but the issue is not the focus of this particular visit.

“Climate change is obviously something that is very important to us, but I really hope the attention doesn’t get away from the students who are eagerly awaiting the apology,” said Nunavut’s premier, P.J. Akeeagok.

Akeeagok is pleased and grateful that Iqaluit was chosen as one of the three main stops on the pope’s itinerary.

“When people from around the world think of the north, they often think it’s vast, white and barren, when it’s totally opposite,” he told The Associated Press. “We have so much life, in terms of the resiliency of the people... We have incredible opportunities both culturally and economically.”

Along with opportunities, Iqaluit has its share of problems. Last fall, government officials declared a state of emergency after water in the capital was deemed undrinkable and potentially tainted with petroleum. They issued a do-not-consume order, and potable water was flown in by plane.

In May, the city issued an advisory warning that some local youths were throwing rocks at taxis – the main source of public transportation in Iqaluit.

As for the papal visit, community preparations have been low-key. The city says the main street will be closed to regular traffic for five hours on Friday, and in the run-up to the visit volunteers were invited to join in a clean-up of the downtown area.

Perreault, the Catholic priest, said his parishioners have been pitching in, offering to provide food and lodging to priests and other Catholic personnel traveling to Iqaluit from afar for the pope’s visit.

“Life is not always exciting here,” Perreault said. “But people here are happy and enjoy being in a community, sharing and praying together. It’s a very nice, joyful community.”

## 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

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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.

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

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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."

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.

At a Thursday press conference celebrating the House action, Gump said that "for the first time we have good reason to have hope that our government will see us as just as valuable as those who were in unions."

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,

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as GM did for the unionized workers.

With the bill's fate now in the Senate, Rep. Tim Ryan, D-Ohio, said Thursday: "We've just going to press this thing to the very, very end. ... Let's keep the heat on."

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 had 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?"

## A richer, stronger China warns Pelosi not to visit Taiwan

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Beijing grumbled but swallowed its irritation in 1997 when then-Speaker Newt Gingrich of the U.S. House of Representatives visited Taiwan, the island democracy claimed by the mainland's ruling Communist Party as its own territory.

China had other priorities. President Jiang Zemin's government was preparing to celebrate Hong Kong's return and wanted to lock in Beijing's emergence from diplomatic isolation after its 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square. Gingrich, a booster of closer U.S.-Chinese ties, had just helped that campaign by meeting Jiang in Beijing. China avoided a disruptive clash with Washington.

A quarter-century later, conditions have changed drastically. Chinese President Xi Jinping's government is richer, more heavily armed and less willing to compromise over Taiwan following news reports the current speaker, Nancy Pelosi, might become the most senior U.S. official since Gingrich to visit the island.

Beijing sees any official contact with Taiwan as recognition of its democratically elected government, which the mainland says has no right to conduct foreign relations.

The timing adds to political pressure. Xi is widely expected to try to award himself a third five-year term as party leader at a meeting in the autumn. That could be undercut if rivals can accuse Xi of failing to be tough enough in the face of what they consider American provocation.

Pelosi has yet to confirm whether she might visit, but Beijing is warning of "forceful measures" including military action if she does.

The United States "must not arrange for Pelosi to visit Taiwan," a Chinese Ministry of Defense spokesman, Tan Kefei, said Tuesday.

"If the United States goes ahead with this, the Chinese military will never watch and do nothing," Tan said. "It will take strong measures to thwart any external interference and separatist plans for 'Taiwan independence' and resolutely defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Tan referred to Pelosi as "No. 3 in the U.S. government," after her place in the line of succession to become president. That suggests Beijing sees her as President Joe Biden's subordinate, instead of his equal as head of one of three independent branches of the government.

Biden told reporters the American military thinks a visit is "not a good idea right now." But, possibly in deference to her position, the president hasn't said Pelosi shouldn't go. U.S. officials told The Associated Press that if Pelosi goes, the American military would likely use fighter jets, ships and other forces to provide protection for her flight.

Chinese rhetoric about that is "quite disturbing," the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. "If we're asked, we'll do what is necessary in order to ensure a safe visit."

U.S. officials have said the administration doubts China would take direct action against Pelosi herself or try to sabotage the visit. But they don't rule out the possibility that China could escalate provocative flights of military aircraft in or near Taiwanese airspace and naval patrols in the Taiwan Strait should the



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trip take place. And they don't preclude Chinese actions elsewhere in the region as a show of strength. Taiwan and China split in 1949 after a civil war that ended with a communist victory on the mainland. Both governments say they are one country but disagree about which is the national leader. The two sides have no official relations but are connected by billions of dollars of trade and investment.

The United States switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979 but has extensive commercial and unofficial ties with the island. U.S. law obligates Washington to make sure Taiwan has the means to defend itself.

Beijing hasn't hesitated to try to intimidate Taiwan with shows of force.

The ruling party's military, the People's Liberation Army, fired missiles into the sea near Taiwan to drive voters away from then-President Lee Teng-hui in the island's first direct presidential election in early 1996. That backfired by allowing Lee to talk tough about standing up to Beijing in front of cheering supporters. He was elected with 54% of the vote in a four-way race.

The U.S. responded by dispatching two aircraft carrier battle groups to the area, a move that forced China to acknowledge it couldn't stop Washington from coming to Taiwan's aid, which helped propel Beijing's massive military upgrading in the years since.

The following year, Gingrich led a delegation of American lawmakers to Taiwan following a three-day visit to the mainland. That followed a visit to Beijing the previous week by Vice President Al Gore.

Previously one of Beijing's fiercest critics in Washington on human rights and Taiwan, Gingrich praised China's economic development. He talked sympathetically about the challenges Beijing would face running Hong Kong after 150 years of British rule. He said Congress supported China's claim to Taiwan so long as unification was peaceful. He expressed hope the two sides might evolve to become one state.

Gingrich said he told Chinese leaders that "we will defend Taiwan" but said they responded that Beijing had no intention of attacking.

After Gingrich's comments, China's foreign ministry said it was confused about U.S. policy. "What the U.S. government and the leaders of some government branches say and what they promised are not the same," a ministry spokesman, Shen Guofang, said at the time.

In the quarter-century since then, Beijing's stance toward Taiwan has hardened and its military resources have grown. And the mainland has warned it will invade if talks on uniting the two sides fail to make progress.

China passed Germany and Japan to become the second-largest economy behind the United States. Its military spending also is No. 2 after Washington at \$293 billion in 2021 following a 27-year string of increases, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

The political landscape also has been changed by the rise of Xi, who has amassed more power over the past decade than any Chinese leader since at least the 1980s and wants to be seen as restoring the country to its historic greatness. That includes being more assertive abroad and stepping up pressure on Taiwan.

The ruling party has spent hundreds of billions of dollars to develop fighter planes, submarines, an aircraft carrier and other high-tech weapons. It is working on "carrier killer" missiles that are believed to be meant to block the U.S. Navy from defending Taiwan in the event of an attack. The PLA sends growing numbers of fighters and bombers to fly near Taiwan.

Beijing's bigger economy and global role also give it more diplomatic tools to show its anger to Washington. The Biden administration wants Chinese cooperation on climate, fighting the coronavirus and other global challenges, all of which Beijing could disrupt.

Washington and Beijing already are mired in conflicts over trade, Hong Kong, Beijing's treatment of Muslim minorities and Chinese claims to large sections of the South China and East China Seas.

Pelosi is hardly new to irking Beijing. As a rookie member of Congress in 1991, she unfurled a black-and-white banner on Tiananmen Square that said, "To those who died for democracy." This came two years after the bloody crackdown in which hundreds, perhaps thousands were killed. Diplomatic protocol prevented Chinese police from detaining Pelosi.

A visit to Taiwan could cause long-term harm to U.S.-Chinese relations, said Liu Jiayang, an interna-

tional relations specialist at Tsinghua University.

Allowing a visit to go ahead "will affect the credibility of recent promises the Biden administration has made," Liu said. Dialogue between Biden and Xi about other issues "may all be seriously affected."

## 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 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

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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.

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% 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.

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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 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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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 under-

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reporting.

## 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% of cases, and 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

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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% 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 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."

## Climate migration growing but not fully recognized by world

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

TIJUANA, Mexico (AP) — Worsening climate largely from the burning of coal and gas is uprooting millions of people, with wildfires overrunning towns in California, rising seas overtaking island nations and drought exacerbating conflicts in various parts of the world.

Each year, natural disasters force an average of 21.5 million people from their homes around the world, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. And scientists predict migration will grow as the planet gets hotter. Over the next 30 years, 143 million people are likely to be uprooted by rising seas, drought, searing temperatures and other climate catastrophes, according to the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report published this year.

Still, the world has yet to officially recognize climate migrants or come up with formalized ways to assess their needs and help them. Here's a look at climate migration today.

### WHO ARE CLIMATE MIGRANTS?

Most climate migrants move within the borders of their homelands, usually from rural areas to cities after losing their home or livelihood because of drought, rising seas or another weather calamity. Because cit-

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ies also are facing their own climate-related problems, including soaring temperatures and water scarcity, people are increasingly being forced to flee across international borders to seek refuge.

Yet climate migrants are not afforded refugee status under the 1951 Refugee Convention, which provides legal protection only to people fleeing persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or particular social group.

## DEFINING CLIMATE MIGRATION

Identifying climate migrants is not easy, especially in regions rife with poverty, violence and conflicts.

While worsening weather conditions are exacerbating poverty, crime and political instability, and fueling tensions over dwindling resources from Africa to Latin America, often climate change is overlooked as a contributing factor to people fleeing their homelands. According to the UNHCR, 90% of refugees under its mandate are from countries "on the front lines of the climate emergency."

In El Salvador, for example, scores each year leave villages because of crop failure from drought or flooding, and end up in cities where they become victims of gang violence and ultimately flee their countries because of those attacks.

"It's hard to say that someone moves just because of climate change. Is everyone who leaves Honduras after a hurricane a climate migrant?" Elizabeth Ferris, a research professor at the Institute for the Study of International Migration at Georgetown University, wrote in an email to The Associated Press. "And then there are non-climate related environmental hazards - people flee earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis - should they be treated differently than those displaced by weather-related phenomena?"

Despite the challenges, it's vital that governments identify climate-displaced people, Ferris added.

"The whole definitional issue isn't a trivial question - how can you develop a policy for people if you aren't clear on who it applies to?" she wrote.

## INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

While no nation offers asylum to climate migrants, UNHCR published legal guidance in October 2020 that opens the door for offering protection to people displaced by the effects of global warming. It said that climate change should be taken into consideration in certain scenarios when it intersects with violence, though it stopped short of redefining the 1951 Refugee Convention.

The commission acknowledged that temporary protection may be insufficient if a country cannot remedy the situation from natural disasters, such as rising seas, suggesting that certain climate displaced people could be eligible for resettlement if their place of origin is considered uninhabitable.

An increasing number of countries are laying the groundwork to become safe havens for climate migrants. In May, Argentina created a special humanitarian visa for people from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean displaced by natural disasters to let them stay for three years.

Shortly after taking office, President Joe Biden ordered his national security adviser to conduct a months-long study that included looking at the "options for protection and resettlement of individuals displaced directly or indirectly from climate change." A task force was set up, but so far the administration has not adopted such a program.

Low-lying Bangladesh, which is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, has been among the first to try to adapt to the new reality of migration. Efforts are underway to identify climate-resilient towns where people displaced by sea level rise, river erosion, cyclonic storms and intrusion of saline water can move to work, and in return help their new locations economically.

## TRANSFORMING DEBATES ON MIGRATION

Policy debates on migration have long centered on locking down borders. Climate change is changing that.

With hundreds of millions of people expected to be uprooted by natural disasters, there is growing discussion about how to manage migration flows rather than stop them, as for many people migration will become a survival tool, according to advocates.

"One problem is just the complete lack of understanding as to how climate is forcing people to move," said Amali Tower, founder and executive director of Climate Refugees, an advocacy group focused on raising awareness about people displaced because of climate change. "There is still this idea in the Global North (industrialized nations) that people come here because they are fleeing poverty and seeking a bet-

ter life, the American Dream. In Europe, it's the same spin of the same story. But no one wants to leave their home. We've got to approach climate displacement as a human security issue and not a border security issue."

## Climate Migration: Honduran couple flee amid storms, threats

BY JULIE WATSON Associated Press

TIJUANA, Mexico (AP) — With its cheery unicorn printed case, Ana Morazan's iPhone contains all that's left of what she calls her "other world," referring to her middle-class life before back-to-back hurricanes destroyed her home in Honduras.

There are glam shots of the 42-year-old with blond, salon-styled hair, impeccable makeup and cocktail dresses. And pictures of her as a home health aide in her white medical coat, smiling proudly as a professional who owned her home and was living debt-free.

The comfortable life she built from years of hard work and sacrifice disappeared in a span of two weeks when she became part of the estimated 1.7 million people displaced by the hurricanes Eta and Iota that pummeled Honduras and Guatemala in November 2020.

Morazan and her boyfriend, Fredi Juarez, who moved in with her during the pandemic, say they fell into debt trying to rebuild Morazan's home and then started getting threats. The couple has been on the move ever since and are currently living in a tent at a crowded Tijuana shelter.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This story is part of an ongoing series exploring the lives of people around the world who have been forced to move because of rising seas, drought, searing temperatures and other things caused or exacerbated by climate change.

The photos and videos in Morazan's iPhone both console and torment her. They remind her of who she was and what she had, giving her hope of getting there again, but also serving as evidence of how quickly it was wiped out from the storms that led to her becoming a migrant.

She wipes a tear as she watches a video she recorded of the destruction near San Pedro Sula. In the video, she scans each room of her once spotless home, painted a bright lime color, and now splattered in dirt. Then she stares into the camera and says: "All I have is mud and more mud and more mud."

The couple said since leaving, they have been attacked, kidnapped, and robbed, keeping them on the move. Now she and Juarez are among tens of thousands of Central Americans in Mexican border cities seeking to request asylum in the U.S., but they are blocked by a pandemic-related health order that was invoked by the Trump administration and has continued under President Joe Biden.

While fear of violence keeps them from trying to return to Honduras, even if they did go back, they would have no place to live. If Eta and Iota had not hit, it would not have started a chain reaction of other things that forced them to flee.

"All our problems started with the hurricanes," said Juarez, 48.

No nation offers asylum to people displaced specifically because of climate change, though the Biden administration has studied climate migration to explore options. Each year, storms, drought, wildfires and other natural disasters force an average of 21.5 million people from their homes around the world, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Honduras was among 11 countries identified as being of greatest concern in the U.S. government's first assessment by intelligence agencies on the impact of climate change and its vast rippling effects on the world's stability that was released last year. But identifying climate migrants is not easy, especially in regions rife with violence.

"I just ask that President Biden helps me," Morazan said. "It's not easy for us, given our age. It's been a nightmare. Your life can change in a second. We were living well. Now we don't know what is going to happen day by day."

After Eta hit, Morazan cleaned out buckets of mud from the living room, bedroom, kitchen and bathroom



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and tried to restore her life. With the pandemic hurting the economy, she had already been struggling to pay her bills, including covering the medical expenses of her nephew who has a heart problem.

Then 13 days later, Iota destroyed the little she had managed to salvage. Juarez, a long-haul trucker who had been away on a trip, returned and tried to help. But both ended up getting laid off and they each started borrowing money to get by while trying to repair the home. Morazan borrowed about 340,000 in Honduran lempira (US\$14,000), while Juarez borrowed about 80,000 lempiras (US\$3,200).

They ended up sleeping on the streets in the San Pedro Sula area. Then she and Juarez started receiving threats with demands to fork over money or the home, even though Morazan owned it outright, and it was still nothing but a muddy shell. Not long after that, Morazan was beaten by attackers who stepped on her ankle, and she feared for her life, she said. That is when they decided to flee the country.

Being on the road for the past year has not been easy. In southern Mexico the couple said they were kidnapped by bandits and held for two days in a banana plantation until they gave up the little money they had.

"It was horrible, ugly, ugly, ugly," Morazan said.

They moved on to Guadalajara, where they got work at the airport doing security, but they were approached by drug smugglers there and so they quit and headed north to Tijuana.

They have been sleeping on a blow-up mattress on top of folded up cardboard boxes so they don't get soaked when rain enters through the gaps in the shelter's flimsy roof and soaks the floor. Morazan has been bitten by bed bugs and wears a diaper when the shelter's bathrooms become so fetid they make her want to vomit. The couple worked briefly collecting recyclables at a dump.

"We hope the United States opens its door because we won't last here," Juarez said.

One night a fellow migrant sleeping in a tent at the shelter was struck in the neck by a stray bullet from a shootout that erupted in the ramshackle neighborhood.

"There are cartels here and a lot of crime," Juarez said.

Morazan fights to keep her spirits up. They took in a stray Chihuahua and named him Jabibi. She has tried to dress up with clothing donated to the shelter, but the competition among the migrants has been fierce and often the best stuff is claimed within seconds of being unloaded.

Morazan put on makeup by holding a mirror inside her tent because, "I still like to feel pretty," but she conceded that she has only bathed every two days or so because of the limited number of showers.

"It's very hard," she said. "I've been left with only the memories in my mind. At least those can't be wiped out."

## Fewer Americans applied for jobless benefits last week

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fewer Americans applied for jobless benefits last week, but the previous week's number was revised upward significantly, with claims breaching the 250,000 level in back-to-back weeks for the first time in more than eight months.

Applications for jobless aid for the week ending July 23 declined by 5,000 to 256,000 from the previous week's 261,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. The number of claims for the week of July 16 was revised upward by 10,000 from the previous estimate of 251,000.

First-time applications generally reflect layoffs.

The four-week average for claims, which smooths out some of the week-to-week volatility, rose by 6,250 from the previous week, to 249,500. That number is also at its highest level since November of last year.

The total number of Americans collecting jobless benefits for the week ending July 16 fell by 25,000 from the previous week, to 1,359,000. That figure has been near 50-year lows for months.

Earlier this month, the Labor Department reported that employers added 372,000 jobs in June, a surprisingly robust gain and similar to the pace of the previous two months. Economists had expected job growth to slow sharply last month given the broader signs of economic weakness.

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The unemployment rate remained 3.6% for a fourth straight month, matching a near-50-year low that was reached before the pandemic struck in early 2020.

Earlier in July the government reported that U.S. employers advertised fewer jobs in May amid signs that the economy is weakening, though the overall demand for workers remained strong. There are nearly two job openings for every unemployed person.

Though the labor market is still considered strong, other indicators are pointing to some weakness in the U.S. economy. The government said Thursday that the U.S. economy shrank 0.9% in the second quarter, the second straight quarterly contraction.

Consumer prices are still soaring, up 9.1% in June compared with a year earlier, the biggest yearly increase in four decades. In response, the Federal Reserve raised its main borrowing rate by another three-quarters of a point on Wednesday. That follows last month's three-quarter point hike and a half-point increase in May.

Those higher rates have already sent home sales tumbling, made the prospect of buying a new car more burdensome and pushed credit card rates up.

All of those factors paint a divergent and confusing picture of the post-pandemic economy: Inflation is hammering household budgets, forcing consumers to pull back on spending, and growth is weakening, heightening fears the economy could fall into recession.

Though the labor market is still strong, there have been some high-profile layoffs announced recently by Tesla, Netflix, Carvana, Redfin and Coinbase.

## '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 continent where many countries are suffering drought and hunger, 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.

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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.

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 Multi-choice, 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."

## Today in History: July 29, Charles marries Diana

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, July 29, the 210th day of 2022. There are 155 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 29, 1981, Britain's Prince Charles married Lady Diana Spencer in a glittering ceremony at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. (The couple divorced in 1996.)

On this date:

In 1890, artist Vincent van Gogh, 37, died of an apparently self-inflicted gunshot wound in Auvers-sur-Oise, France.

In 1914, transcontinental telephone service in the U.S. became operational with the first test conversa-

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tion between New York and San Francisco.

In 1921, Adolf Hitler became the leader ("fuehrer") of the National Socialist German Workers Party.

In 1957, the International Atomic Energy Agency was established. Jack Paar made his debut as host of NBC's "Tonight Show."

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act, creating NASA.

In 1967, an accidental rocket launch on the deck of the supercarrier USS Forrestal in the Gulf of Tonkin resulted in a fire and explosions that killed 134 servicemen. (Among the survivors was future Arizona senator John McCain, a U.S. Navy lieutenant commander who narrowly escaped with his life.)

In 1968, Pope Paul the Sixth reaffirmed the Roman Catholic Church's stance against artificial methods of birth control.

In 1980, a state funeral was held in Cairo, Egypt, for the deposed Shah of Iran, who had died two days earlier at age 60.

In 1986, a federal jury in New York found that the National Football League had committed an antitrust violation against the rival United States Football League. But in a hollow victory for the U-S-F-L, the jury ordered the N-F-L to pay token damages of only three dollars.

In 1994, abortion opponent Paul Hill shot and killed Dr. John Bayard Britton and Britton's escort, James H. Barrett, outside the Ladies Center clinic in Pensacola, Florida. (Hill was executed in Sept. 2003.)

In 1999, a former day trader, apparently upset over stock losses, opened fire in two Atlanta brokerage offices, killing nine people and wounding 13 before shooting himself to death; authorities said Mark O. Barton had also killed his wife and two children.

In 2016, former suburban Chicago police officer Drew Peterson was given an additional 40 years in prison for trying to hire someone to kill the prosecutor who put him behind bars for killing his third wife.

Ten years ago: Standing on Israeli soil, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney declared Jerusalem to be the capital of the Jewish state and said the United States had "a solemn duty and a moral imperative" to block Iran from achieving nuclear weapons capability. At the London Olympics, Dana Vollmer of the United States set a world record to win the 100-meter butterfly in 55.98 seconds. Yannick Agnel rallied the French to the gold medal in the 4x100-meter freestyle relay in 3 minutes, 9.93 seconds, pulling ahead of American star Ryan Lochte on the final lap.

Five years ago: U.S. and South Korean forces conducted joint live-fire exercises in response to North Korea's second launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile; experts said the North Korean launch showed that a large portion of the United States was now within range of North Korea's arsenal.

One year ago: With teammate Simone Biles watching from the stands, American Sunisa Lee won the gold medal in women's all-around gymnastics at the Tokyo Games; she was the fifth straight American woman to claim the Olympic title in the event. (Biles withdrew from the event, which she was favored to win, to focus on her mental well-being.) President Joe Biden announced sweeping new pandemic requirements aimed at boosting vaccination rates for millions of federal workers and contractors. Former Sen. Carl Levin, a Democrat who was a powerful voice for the military during his career as Michigan's longest-serving U.S. senator, died at 87. The Detroit Pistons selected Oklahoma State's Cade Cunningham with the No. 1 pick in the NBA draft.

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. Nancy Kassebaum-Baker is 90. Actor Robert Fuller is 89. Former Sen. Elizabeth H. Dole is 86. Actor Roz Kelly is 80. Rock musician Neal Doughty (REO Speedwagon) is 76. Marilyn Tucker Quayle, wife of former Vice President Dan Quayle, is 73. Actor Mike Starr is 72. Documentary maker Ken Burns is 69. Style guru Tim Gunn is 69. Rock singer-musician Geddy Lee (Rush) is 69. Rock singer Patti Scialfa (Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band) is 69. Actor Kevin Chapman is 60. Actor Alexandra Paul is 59. Actor/comedian Dean Haglund is 57. Country singer Martina McBride is 56. Rock musician Chris Gorman is 55. Actor Rodney Allen Rippey is 54. Actor Tim Omundson is 53. Actor Ato Essandoh is 50. Actor Wil Wheaton is 50. R&B singer Wanya Morris (Boyz II Men) is 49. Country singer-songwriter James Otto is 49. Actor Stephen Dorff is 49. Actor Josh Radnor is 48. Hip-hop DJ/music producer Danger Mouse is 45. Actor Rachel Miner is 42. Actor Kaitlyn Black is 39. Actor Matt Prokop is 32. Actor Cait Fairbanks is 29.