

Groton Daily Independent

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When you're always trying to conform to the norm, you lose your uniqueness, which can be the foundation for your greatness.

DALE ARCHER



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 FERNEY, 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**

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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Thats Life/Tony Bender

Those records are yours

It's ironic that one of the friends to journalists, the general public, and North Dakota Sunshine Laws, should fall under suspicion after his death. After his sudden passing in January, Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem's e-mails were ordered scrubbed by his spokesperson Liz Brocker.

Did I say Stenehjem's e-mails were deleted? I meant yours—your e-mails were deleted. Those were public records, and, well, you're the public. They work for you. You elected them. You pay their salaries.

It was no accident, no misunderstanding. Brocker told an IT director, "We want to make sure no one has an opportunity to make an Open Record request for his emails, especially as he (Stenehjem) kept EVERYTHING." Stenehjem's account was wiped on Jan. 31, three days after his death. After her actions came to light, Brocker resigned.

The obvious question is what did they have to hide? It's the same question one might ask about North Dakota State Sen. Ray Holmberg, whose series of text messages with a man jailed on child pornography charges somehow went missing. And, then, of course, there are the deleted messages between Donald Trump's Secret Service agents on Jan. 6.

In each case, it's obvious that whatever was deleted was deemed more harmful than any heat the deletions might bring. In Stenehjem's case, Brocker read the tea leaves correctly. Stenehjem's replacement, Drew Wrigley, has chosen to simply look the other way. One columnist even went so far as to suggest that Wrigley is some kind of hero whistleblower. Oh, please. He was covering his rear end. Knowing what he knew, he was obligated to reveal it. But apparently, that's where his sense of obligation stops. Move along, folks. Nothing to see here.

So, Stenehjem exits under a cloud.

I imagine that most folks who met Stenehjem liked him—I did—but I didn't always agree with him. He once ruled that he, personally, hadn't violated open meeting laws by meeting with Trump's EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt behind closed doors in Fargo. Which is akin to a judge facing charges and making himself the jury. It'd be hilarious if it wasn't so blatantly self-serving.

Make no mistake, Stenehjem was a political animal, and for all the openness he demanded of governing bodies in North Dakota, he was loathe to do interviews with the media. Brocker blocked them

like a tackle for the Green Bay Packers. He didn't want to answer hard questions from people like KFGO's Joel Heitkamp, who was rebuffed time and time again when he asked Stenehjem to explain why he'd signed on to any number of dubious lawsuits, including one that would have hurt North Dakotans on the Affordable Care Act. He was looking out for his party, not for them.

Now, North Dakota lawmakers are investigating a \$1.8 million cost overrun on a building leased by the attorney general's office under Stenehjem. By the way, that's your money, taxpayers. Your records, your money.

How many times do we see this from people like Stenehjem, Brocker, Wrigley, and Holmberg? They assume public office and begin to think they're too important to be held accountable. They forget that they work for you, that you're the boss. However, they've read the tea leaves correctly. As long as they run for office under the Republican banner, they'll keep getting elected. When you vote for them, they'll hear this message—"Keep doing what you're doing."

In the cases I've mentioned, wrongdoing is glaringly obvious. It's not a Democrat-Republican thing, it's an illustration of the reality that when one party becomes omni-powerful, they arrogantly begin to believe that that they're untouchable. So far, it looks like they are. And the more arrogant they become, the dumber they seem to become. In an effort to protect Stenehjem's legacy, Brocker tarnished it—unless of course, what she sought to hide is much worse than the stain of a coverup. Someone needs to add a question mark to Stenehjem's tombstone.

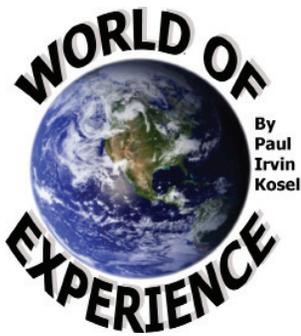
The reasons for Holmberg's suspicious behavior will likely play out in court. The Secret Service may be able to dodge accountability under the guise of national security even though it's undeniable that what took place on Jan. 6 was a planned coup. It seems like they're trying to protect the ringleader.

I hate to see people like Stenehjem and Holmberg's reputations tarnished—overall, I believe they've served the public interest well—but they made their beds, and God knows what happened there. Drew Wrigley may not bow to public pressure, but ethically—remember ethics?—he's become, at the very least, a willing bystander to a coverup. It's an ignominious beginning for the top law officer in the state.

Ladies and gentlemen, that's your government. Yours. Embarrassing, isn't it?

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As I'm on my way to seminary school for the week, I seen several God-related signs, but this one took me back a few years. It reminded me of the movie, "Oh God" starring George Burns and John Denver. The message was "Think God!" and it was plastered all over the world. It was refreshing to see the sign. Luckily, I was not on the interstate so I was able to get the picture.

So what is it that I'm doing at seminary school. I have been the pastor at Buffalo Lake Lutheran Church. If you draw a line from Eden, Roslyn and Sisseton, we'd be right about in the center. I've been over there for several years. They are members of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. It's not a synod, but rather, an association. Each year, I have to attend the Summer Institute of Theology in Plymouth, Minn. That is the headquarters for the association as

well and home of the Free Lutheran Bible College. It basically gives training and allows us that go the certification to do all of the things that an ordained pastor does. They offer several electives which we can choose from. Some professors do have a little home work that need to be turned in. The association wants an overall report of the week.

Think God! It's something we should be doing every day and just on Sunday's. After all, there is Heaven and hell, and we will be going to one of those places.

Weekly Vikings Recap

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

The Vikings opened training camp this week in anticipation of their 62nd NFL season. In two weeks, the team will be heading out to Las Vegas to play the Raiders in their first preseason game of 2022. Like every year, preseason football will not offer much insight into what the regular season will be like for the Vikings. For example, the Vikings' offense looked like a complete mess in last year's preseason games, failing to score one single touchdown until the second half of the third and final preseason game. As we are all aware, the Vikings' abysmal offense did not carry over into the regular season as the team's offense was the only thing that kept the Vikings from having a disastrous season.

Moreover, if head coach Kevin O'Connell is anything like his former boss Sean McVay, there is a likely chance that none of the Vikings' starters will see a single snap in a preseason game. Originally, McVay's idea of resting his entire team throughout the entire preseason was met with the skepticism that the Rams would start their regular season slow with the need to knock off the rust. However, that skepticism has quickly vanished as the Rams have continuously started strong every year of McVay's tenure, starting either 4-0 or 3-1 in their first four games of every season. If O'Connell were to choose the route of resting the Vikings' starters, fans should not be worried that it will have any effect on the team's success to start the regular season.

The preseason is not a total waste of time, however, as it gives us our first opportunity to see the rookies play a game against NFL caliber opponents. Lewis Cine will be the most talked about rookie during preseason given his draft status. However, I think the most exciting rookies to watch will be Ty Chandler and Jalen Nailor, two skill position players that were taken in the later rounds of the 2022 NFL draft. Both these players have a real chance to impress as they will likely receive a large majority of the offensive plays during preseason. Also, it might be their only chance as they will be deep down on the depth chart when the regular season comes around.

The preseason might also be the last time we see some players in a Vikings uniform. Although I do not expect any vastly surprising cuts to be made, some players might be on thin ice to make the final roster. The big name that is circulating in this regard is offensive lineman, Wyatt Davis. Davis, who was taken in the third round of the 2021 NFL Draft, was expected by many experts to be the future starting guard for the Vikings. Rarely does a team give up on a player drafted in one of the first three rounds this early. However, given Davis's inability to move up the depth chart in any way, many believe that his days as a Viking are numbered.

The next few weeks will be important building blocks for the Vikings' regular season success. Not only will both the offense and defense need to learn a new system, but the team will also hope that no major injuries occur to any of their key players. If all things go smoothly, the Vikings could start the regular season with a much-needed win against their rival Green Bay Packers.

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West Nile, the key is prevention

One late summer day, fresh out of residency and seeing patients for the first time as a full-fledged family physician, I examined a young man who had a fever, fatigue, and a bad headache. Considering the time of year, influenza was low on the list of possibilities, and COVID-19 did not yet exist. After a physical exam and listening to his story, I ordered some tests, which resulted in a diagnosis of West Nile virus.



Andrew Ellsworth, MD

Now that we are entering the later half of the summer, the weather and environment are prime for West Nile virus. When the weather becomes hotter and drier, the mosquito species *Culex* thrives and has the potential to harbor West Nile virus in its saliva.

The first reported case of West Nile virus in the United States was in 1999. Now, it's here to stay. There is no vaccine for West Nile virus for humans. The treatment is largely supportive, rest, fluids, and time.

Thankfully, most people who become infected with West Nile virus have mild or no symptoms. About one in five of those infected develop a fever, headache, rash, muscle aches, joint pains, vomiting, or diarrhea. About one in 150 may develop a severe case that affects the central nervous system, resulting in encephalitis which is inflammation of the brain, or meningitis known to cause inflammation of the membranes around the brain and spinal cord. Some of those cases can be fatal, which equates to an average of 130 deaths in the United States from West Nile virus each year.

You cannot get West Nile virus from another person. The key to prevention is to avoid getting bitten by a mosquito. This late summer and early fall, remember the mosquito repellent, avoid going outside at dawn or dusk, consider wearing pants and long-sleeved shirts, and consider treating your clothes with permethrin which can kill or repel mosquitos. Avoid having areas or containers outside that can collect water and create spaces for mosquitoes to lay eggs.

It took a couple of weeks, but thankfully my patient fully recovered. Nowadays, if it is late summer or early fall, and someone has a fever, headache, and fatigue, there is a good chance it is COVID-19. However, one must remember other causes, and West Nile virus is certainly a possibility.

Andrew Ellsworth, M.D. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show celebrating its twentieth season of truthful, tested, and timely medical information, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



New, more contagious COVID-19 variant pushing infection rates back up in South Dakota

Stu Whitney

South Dakota News Watch



South Dakota hospital systems, such as Sioux Falls-based Avera Health, monitor COVID-19 admissions and community transmission rates to ensure they can treat patients effectively and maintain adequate staffing levels, said chief medical officer Kevin Post. Photo: Courtesy of Avera Health

The emergence of the latest COVID-19 variant, which makes up nearly 80% of new cases nationally, is raising additional health concerns due to its ability to infect people even if they are vaccinated or have had a prior infection, and health officials are increasingly recommending precautions such as masking indoors and staying up to date on booster shots.

But those concerns are not likely to sway South Dakota government, health care and school officials to move away from an official stance of "living with the virus" rather than pursuing active interventions this fall.

The BA.5 variant, first detected in the United States at the end of April, is a subvariant of Omicron with molecular spike mutations that make it more contagious than previous variants. This means high case counts are likely, but that might not necessarily mean a drastic spike in hospitalizations and deaths because vaccines and other forms of immunity, while not impenetrable, can still blunt the impact of infection.

"The good news is that the virus is evolving the way that we expect viruses to evolve," said Dr. Jeremy Cauwels, chief physician at Sanford Health in Sioux Falls. "They get better at spreading and they get worse at killing their

host."

As of July 27, the South Dakota Department of Health reported 4,390 active cases, up from 4,176 the previous week. State data shows 56 of 66 counties as having high community spread, defined as 100 cases or greater per 100,000 or a 10% or greater PCR test positivity rate. The overall state positivity rate over the 7-day period leading up to July 27 was 23.9%.

State Epidemiologist Josh Clayton told News Watch, in response to written questions, that the state will continue its policy of weekly rather than daily COVID data updates, a practice that began in March. He added that the DOH monitors hospitalization rates to determine the level of threat from the virus. There are 82 people currently hospitalized with COVID-19, according to DOH data, down slightly from 86 the week of July 20. The state reported nine new deaths of people with COVID-19 during the week leading up to July 27, bringing the total during the pandemic to 2,956.

"The number of people currently hospitalized is still far below the peak of 423 during the Omicron variant wave in early 2022 and the 607 during the initial wave in November 2020," said Clayton.

But he made it clear he is not dismissing the potential threat of BA.5, which infected President Joe Biden recently and features symptoms similar to previous variants, including congestion, headaches, cough, fever and fatigue. The CDC has also studied and cited the potential for some individuals to suffer from

"long COVID," post-infection conditions that can include "a wide range of ongoing health problems that last weeks, months, or years."

"Each new variant means the virus has an opportunity to further evade the community-wide immunity that has developed (through vaccination or previous infection)," according to Clayton. "The BA.5 subvariant appears to better evade the human immune response, which will likely result in more COVID-19 infections. This is because people will have a harder time fighting off the virus, even though they have been infected or vaccinated. The BA.5 variant may also result in more people becoming hospitalized or dying if they become infected with COVID-19."



Kevin Post

Kevin Post, chief medical officer for Avera Health, said the hospital system constantly monitors its ability to serve the community during the ebbs and flows of a pandemic, which means having enough medical personnel in position to help those in need.

"Access to healthcare is a key measurement," said Post. "Some of that will be hospitalization rates of COVID itself, but a complicating factor is the workforce shortage in health care, like we're seeing everywhere else, and how that affects access to hospital beds. It all comes back to capacity."

Vaccines still seen as important

South Dakota's rate of fully vaccinated residents is 63.2%, below the national average of 67.7%. Among those fully vaccinated, only 43.3% have received a booster shot, which ranks 39th among all states, according to CDC data. That puts the state behind CDC recommendations that anyone 50 and older (12 and older for those immunocompromised) should get a "second booster dose at least 4 months after their first."

Post said that when someone gets vaccinated or has an active infection, there are three to four months when that individual has "active circulating antibodies" that work quickly to respond to exposure (with some memory immunity as well). As the antibodies wane, he said, boosters become crucial to provide protection against severe illness – a message that doesn't always cut through political posturing on the topic of vaccines.

"I do think there's a responsibility for health systems to continue to be the voice of what is up to date on unbiased research to provide trusted medical information to patients," said Post, who has worked as a family and emergency physician. "We live in a world, and not just South Dakota, where there is so much information and misinformation, I do think it's up to health organizations to be that trusted resource when it's difficult at times to know who you can trust."

Clayton, the state epidemiologist, told News Watch that he agrees with the CDC guidance regarding getting vaccinated and boosted. There are also CDC-approved therapeutics such as the oral antiviral Paxlovid that can be used when prescribed once someone is known to be infected.

"Data available for both South Dakota and nationally have shown that staying up to date with your COVID-19 vaccination reduces the risk of infection, emergency department visits, hospitalization, and death for persons of all ages, including young children," Clayton said.

That message was echoed by Cauwels, who doesn't dismiss prior infection as a factor but points to unpredictability based on when the infection occurred, how robust the immune response and what variant triggered the illness.

"Our public message remains the same, and that is that a vaccinated person has a lower risk of ending up in the hospital than the same person next to them who is unvaccinated," said Cauwels. "In individual wellness, if I was just talking to you, or from a population wellness standpoint, if I was talking to all of South Dakota, in both cases I can say that the right answer is to be vaccinated."

In response to a question from News Watch, a representative of the office of Gov. Kristi Noem wrote: "Governor Noem supports the recommendations of her Department of Health. Talk to your doctor about if COVID vaccinations and boosters are the right course of action for you and your family."



Changing public strategies

Nearly two-and-a-half years into the COVID-19 pandemic, Cauwels knows that trying to dictate people's day-to-day behavior is difficult anywhere, and certainly in conservative states such as South Dakota. Private or public mitigation measures used in the early stages, with no vaccine available, and the increased urgency due to hospitalizations during the onslaught of the Delta wave in 2021, aren't necessarily best practices for the fall of 2022, he said.

"Our goal was always to provide excellent care to anybody who came through the doors," Cauwels noted. "There was a period of time where it was difficult because of the hundreds of people who were hospitalized with COVID all at once. Thankfully now that number is consistently below 50 people in our system, and that's a number we can deal with and treat comfortably on a regular basis."

"Our public message remains the same, and that is that a vaccinated person has a lower risk of ending up in the hospital than the same person next to them who is unvaccinated."

-- Dr. Jeremy Cauwels, Sanford Health

If the number of hospitalized people remains manageable, Noem's early reliance on the concept of "personal responsibility" could become the norm, with the caveat that responsibility as defined by the medical and scientific community involves keeping up to date with vaccinations.

"The messaging used to be that the safest thing you can do is limit your contact with anybody you might possibly run into," said Cauwels. "The messaging now is that there are certain people that should still limit their contact because they have chronic illnesses that make them otherwise unhealthy or very easy to make horribly sick. But for most of us, we have an immune system, we have a vaccine, and we have medications available that we can take by pill to limit the severity of the illness. Those are really the jumping-off points that we need to start treating this like a part of day-to-day life and not a global pandemic."

That quest for normalcy extends to the state's largest school district, with Sioux Falls approving a Continue to Learn Plan for 2022-23 that eliminates the district's Virtual Academy option for families uncomfortable with in-person classes during the height of the pandemic. Face coverings, which were "encouraged" last year for all students in pre-K through fifth grade and for unvaccinated students and staff in sixth through 12th grades, are now simply "available upon request," though the policy can change if circumstances warrant.

The district shares information about the benefits of COVID-19 vaccines but does not mandate them for students or staff, calling it "a personal choice you should discuss with your healthcare provider." Students who test positive must stay out of school "for five days from symptom onset, or if asymptomatic, five days from the test date." There is no in-school contact tracing that keeps close contacts out of class. Sports and fine arts activities will begin the school year in Tier 4, which means they operate as normal.

"As always," said district spokesperson Carly Uthe, "if our community experiences changing Covid conditions, the plan will be revised in consultation with local medical partners and any changes would come before the school board for approval."

Finding the right path forward

Jim Buchanan, a retired doctor in Rapid City who built a loyal Twitter following during the pandemic with data updates and analysis, still wears a KN-95 mask in public and avoids indoor dining in most cases. But the intensity of his unease about others not taking the same precautions has lessened in recent months, giving way to a sense of resignation about the lack of urgency surrounding the virus in South Dakota.

"I think it's too late," said Buchanan, an internal medicine specialist who spent much of his career serving veterans. "We're at a point in the pandemic where we are very unlikely to see any major changes, and people have moved on. For a while, it frustrated me that so many in the general population were so ignorant or uncurious about what was going on with this pandemic. At this point, though, I expect it. I'm no longer frustrated. People always sort of shy away from things they don't understand."

Buchanan concedes that he's not an infectious disease expert. He was looking for things to do in retire-

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ment and found sharing state COVID data and trends to be a useful undertaking, gaining attention on social media along the way. With the prevalence of home tests and positive results that go unreported, he knows the actual number of cases in South Dakota is likely much higher than the data suggests, and he hopes that vaccines and prior infections provide a buffer against surges in severe illness.

"The chance of randomly bumping into someone who is contagious is pretty high right now," said Buchanan, who plans to vacation away from South Dakota during the annual motorcycle rally in Sturgis, which draws as many as 500,000 visitors to the Black Hills in early August. "I'll continue to wear my mask indoors in enclosed spaces, and no one has ever said anything about me wearing a mask. I guess in a way that's sort of their ethic, to live and let live. It's sort of like, 'Don't tell me to take a vaccine or wear a mask and I won't tell you not to.'"



Bonnie Specker

Longtime South Dakota State University Epidemiologist Bonnie Specker, who retired to emeritus status last year, maintained a blog during the pandemic to counter what she perceived as muddled public health information that put people at risk. She successfully ran for Brookings City Council and began serving her term in May, sharing expertise about the importance of being vaccinated and boosted to avoid severe illness.

"Initially, the state Department of Health posted CDC recommendations, and there continue to be CDC infographics regarding the benefits of vaccination posted on the DOH Facebook page," said Specker. "But I'm concerned that this messaging does not reach most of the South Dakota population, and it would be helpful to see a broader public health campaign. The longer this virus is prevalent in the population, the more likely new variants will arise. Because the benefit of the vaccines wanes over time, it is important that people get boosters when they qualify for them. Now would be the time to do that."

Specker noted that the virus is "evolving to become more fit," but the medical community and scientific communities have adapted as well. So too have many community members, who know when to self-isolate and not infect others.

So is it possible to feel optimistic at this stage of the pandemic, with vaccines and therapeutics at our disposal and a greater understanding of the threat? Post, the chief medical officer at Avera, said that as long as public officials, health systems and citizens are willing to continue to adapt as necessary, normalcy is within our grasp.

"In the larger picture, I would say that we have made excellent progress," he said. "There are a lot more outpatient and preventative and therapeutic measures that we can take, and we're much better armed for this than we were two years ago. I think it would be fair to say that what we're seeing is the natural progression of a pandemic, and we're moving in the right direction."

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit news organization online at sdnews-watch.org.



Medical officials across South Dakota continue to stress the importance of COVID-19 vaccination and booster shots, which may do less to prevent the new COVID variant but still help keep those infected from requiring hospitalization. Photo:

News Watch file



ABOUT STU WHITNEY

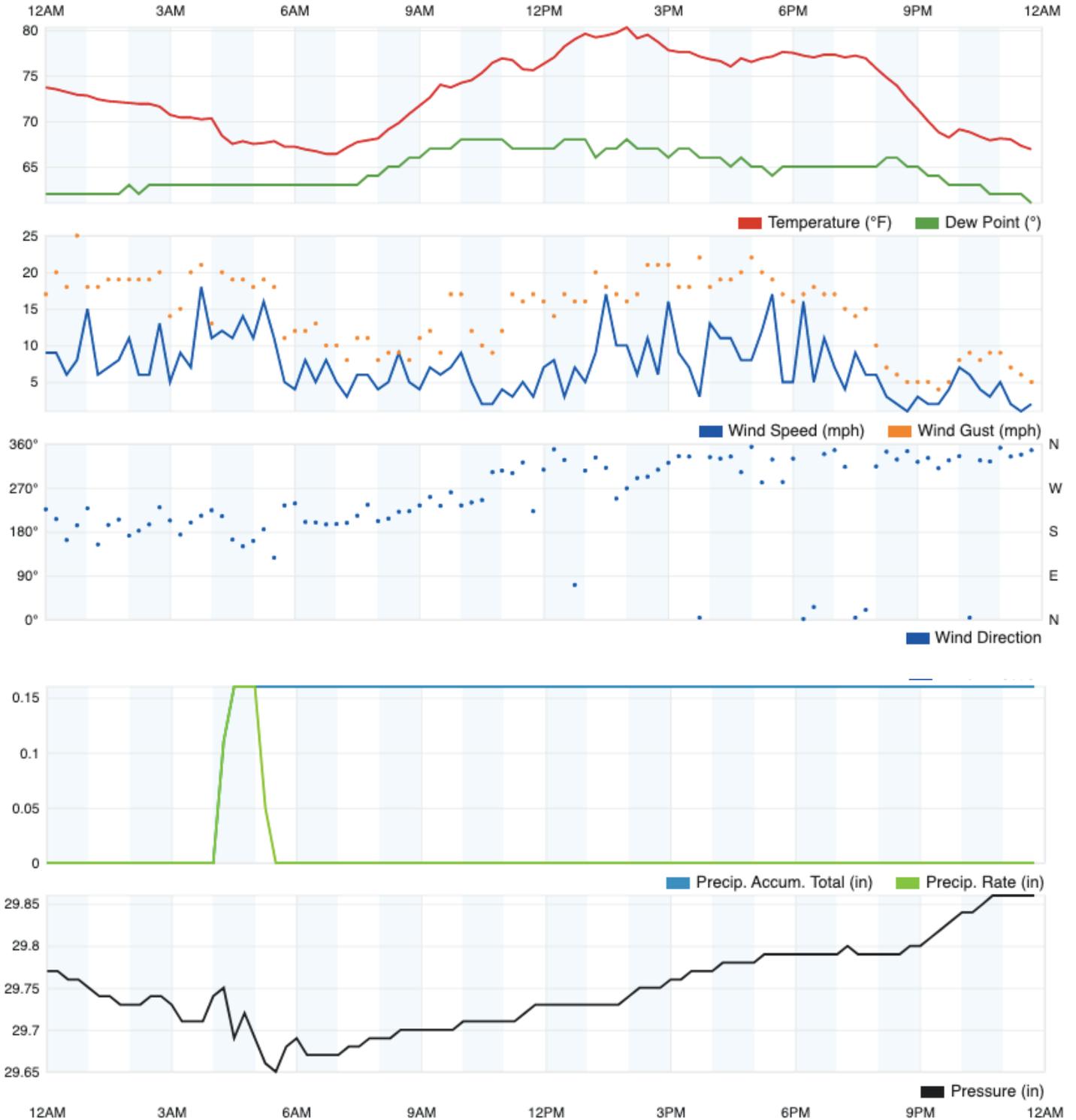
Stu Whitney is an investigative reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A resident of Sioux Falls, Whitney is an award-winning reporter, edi-

tor and novelist with more than 30 years of experience in journalism.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 88 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 67 °F

Tuesday



Hot

High: 98 °F

Tuesday
Night



Chance
T-storms

Low: 69 °F

Wednesday



Sunny

High: 86 °F

Early Week Outlook

July 31, 2022
2:02 PM

Tonight: *Mostly Clear, Lows in the 50s*

Monday: *Mostly Sunny, Highs 80s east, 90s west*

Tuesday: *Hot! Highs 95-105°*



Wednesday: *Partly Cloudy, Highs 80s to lower 90s*

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A very warm to hot early work week is on tap for the area. The hottest temperatures will occur on Tuesday. The only chance for rain comes Tuesday night. #sdwx #mnwx

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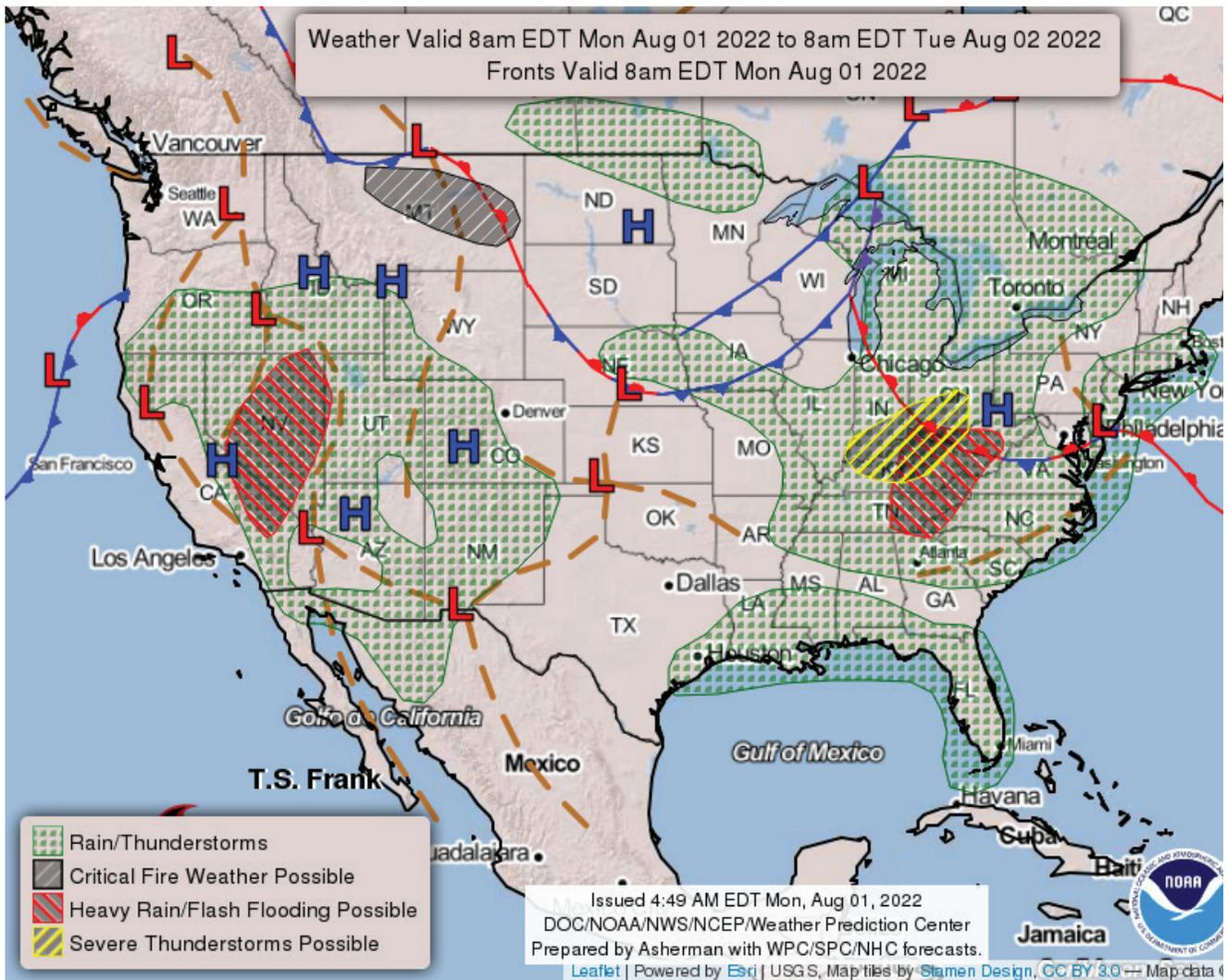
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 80.3 °F at 2:00 PM
Low Temp: 66.4 °F at 6:45 AM
Wind: 25 mph at 12:45 AM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 46 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 111 in 1900
Record Low: 44 in 1948
Average High: 85°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 0.08
Precip to date in Aug.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 14.18
Precip Year to Date: 14.54
Sunset Tonight: 9:02:11 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:16:26 AM



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Today in Weather History

August 1, 1978: A severe thunderstorm developed in west-central Beadle County during the afternoon hours and moved southeast. High winds near 80 mph and hail up to golf ball size pelted several counties along the storm path. Hail piled up to six inches deep and up to three feet in ditches. Hail remained visible in some areas up to thirty-six hours after the storm passed. Approximately 480,000 acres of crops were severely damaged or destroyed. Damage to crops and personal property were estimated to be nearly four million dollars.

August 1, 2000: A severe thunderstorm produced large hail up to golf ball size and damaging winds estimated at 90 to 110 mph across northeastern Wyoming and western South Dakota during the evening hours. The northern foothills of the Black Hills and the communities of Spearfish and Sturgis received the brunt of the storm. Considerable F0 and F1 wind damage (90 to 110 mph) occurred in and around Spearfish. The strong winds blew down trees, business and road signs, and damaged tents for the 60th Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, destroying vendor merchandise and mobile homes.

1954 - Mount Rainier in Washington State was still covered with sixteen inches of snow at the 5500 foot level following a big snow season. (David Ludlum)

1983: During the early afternoon hours, a strong microburst swept across Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, D.C. Although the base anemometer was not calibrated at extreme wind speeds, the peak gust hit 149 mph. It was reported that Air Force One, with President Reagan on board, landed less than 10 minutes before the peak gust.

1985 - A nearly stationary thunderstorm deluged Cheyenne, WY, with rain and hail. Six inches of rain fell in six hours producing the most damaging flash flood of record for the state. Two to five feet of hail covered the ground following the storm, which claimed twelve lives, and caused 65 million dollars property damage. (Storm Data)

1986 - A powerful thunderstorm produced 100 mph winds and large hail in eastern Kansas and southwestern Missouri causing 71 million dollars damage, and injuring nineteen persons. It was one of the worst thunderstorms of record for Kansas. Crops were mowed to the ground in places and roofs blown off buildings along its path, 150 miles long and 30 miles wide, from near Abilene to southeast of Pittsburg. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Record heat gripped parts of the Midwest. A dozen cities reported record high temperatures for the date, including Lincoln, NE, with a reading of 105 degrees, Moline, IL, with an afternoon high of 103 degrees, and Burlington, IA, with a reading of 102 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Two dozen cities in the Upper Midwest reported record high temperatures for the date, including La Crosse WI with a reading of 105 degrees. Highs of 103 degrees at Milwaukee, WI, and South Bend, IN, were records for the month of August. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Hurricane Chantal made landfall along the Upper Texas coast about sunrise. Chantal deluged parts of Galveston Island and southeastern Texas with 8 to 12 inches of rain. Unofficial totals ranged up to twenty inches. Winds gusted to 82 mph at Galveston, and reached 76 mph in the Houston area. Tides were 5 to 7 feet high. The hurricane claimed two lives, and caused 100 million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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KNOWING AND DOING

Two men were enjoying the annual church golf tournament. While waiting for their turn, one said to the other, "There are times when I would like to ask God why He allows hunger and poverty to exist. If He is all-powerful, why doesn't He do something about it?"

"Well," asked his friend, "why don't you ask Him?"

"Because," he answered, "I'm afraid He might ask me the same question."

Many believe that we only sin when we do what we know is wrong: by not obeying the Word of God, its commands, and teachings. Not so, writes James. Listen carefully...

"Sin," said James, "is also not doing what we know to be the right thing to do." We would all agree that it is a sin to disregard and break the Ten Commandments. But it is also a sin if someone speaks evil of a brother or sister and remain silent. We sin if we do not speak up on behalf of others when they are being harmed by gossip and greed. God also expects us to do kind acts, serve those in need, be good stewards of His gifts, and protect others the way He protects us. Someday we will be judged by our standard of giving not our standard of living.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to do what we know is right, to avoid what we know is wrong, and always honor You as Your son honored us. May we follow His example each day. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: James 4:17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

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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)
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News from the Associated Press

1st ship carrying Ukrainian grain leaves the port of Odesa

By SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — The first ship carrying Ukrainian grain set off from the port of Odesa on Monday under a deal brokered by the United Nations and Turkey that is expected to release large stores of Ukrainian crops to foreign markets and ease a growing food crisis.

The Sierra Leone-flagged cargo ship Razoni left Odesa carrying over 26,000 tons of corn destined for Lebanon.

"The first grain ship since Russian aggression has left port," said Ukraine's Minister of Infrastructure Oleksandr Kubrakov on Twitter, posting a video of the long vessel sounding its horn as it slowly headed out to sea.

Posting separately on Facebook, Kubrakov said Ukraine is the fourth-largest corn exporter in the world, "so the possibility of exporting it via ports is a colossal success in ensuring global food security."

"Today Ukraine, together with partners, takes another step to prevent world hunger," he added.

In Moscow, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov hailed the ship's departure as "very positive," saying it would help test the "efficiency of the mechanisms that were agreed during the talks in Istanbul."

Turkey's defense minister, Hulusi Akar, said the Razoni was expected to dock Tuesday afternoon in Istanbul at the entrance of the Bosphorus, where joint teams of Russian, Ukrainian, Turkish and U.N. officials would board it for inspections.

In an interview with Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency, Akar warned that the global food crisis threatened to trigger "a serious wave of migration from Africa to Europe and to Turkey."

The corn will then head to Lebanon, a Mideast nation in the grips of what the World Bank has described as one of the world's worst financial crises in more than 150 years. A 2020 explosion at its main port in Beirut shattered its capital city and destroyed grain silos there, a part of which collapsed following a weekslong fire just Sunday.

The Turkish defense ministry said other ships would also depart Ukraine's ports through the safe corridors in line with deals signed in Istanbul on July 22, but did not provide further details.

Russia and Ukraine signed separate agreements with Turkey and the U.N. clearing the way for Ukraine — one of the world's key breadbaskets — to export 22 million tons of grain and other agricultural goods that have been stuck in Black Sea ports because of Russia's invasion.

The deals also allow Russia to exports grain and fertilizers.

Turkey's defense minister praised a joint coordination center staffed by Russian, Ukrainian, Turkish and U.N. officials as a venue where opposing sides can engage with each other.

"The problems they have are obvious, there is a war. But it is the only place where the two sides are able to come together," Akar said. "Despite the ups and downs, there is a good environment for dialogue."

Ukraine's infrastructure ministry said that 16 more ships, all blocked since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, were waiting their turn in the ports of Odesa.

Kubrakov said the shipments would also help Ukraine's war-shattered economy.

"Unlocking ports will provide at least \$1 billion in foreign exchange revenue to the economy and an opportunity for the agricultural sector to plan for next year," Kubrakov said.

The United Nations welcomed the development, saying in a statement that Secretary-General Antonio Guterres hopes the shipments would "bring much-needed stability and relief to global food security especially in the most fragile humanitarian contexts."

The resumption of the grain shipments came as fighting raged elsewhere in Ukraine.

Ukraine's presidential office said that at least three civilians were killed and another 16 wounded by Russian shelling in the Donetsk region over the past 24 hours.

Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko repeated a call for all residents to evacuate. He particularly emphasized

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the need to evacuate about 52,000 children still left in the region.

In Kharkiv, two people were wounded by a Russian strike in the morning. One was wounded while waiting for a bus, and another was hurt when a Russian shell exploded near an apartment building.

The southern city of Mykolaiv also faced repeated shelling, which triggered fires near a medical facility, destroying a shipment of humanitarian aid containing medicines and food.

Soon after the deal was signed on July 22, a Russian missile targeted Odessa. Analysts warned that the continuing fighting could threaten the grain deal.

"The danger remains: The Odesa region has faced constant shelling and only regular supplies could prove the viability of the agreements signed," said Volodymyr Sidenko, an expert with the Kyiv-based Razumkov Center think-tank.

"The departure of the first vessel doesn't solve the food crisis, it's just the first step that could also be the last if Russia decides to continue attacks in the south."

Threat of protests, violent escalation stirs panic in Iraq

By SAMYA KULLAB and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraqi security forces erected concrete barriers as panic took hold of the Iraqi street Monday ahead of counter-protests planned by Shiite political rivals that many feared could escalate to civil strife.

Calls for the counter-protest came from a political alliance of Iran-backed groups opposed to the open-ended sit-in inside Iraq's parliament by followers of Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. The prospect of opposing demonstrations stirred fears of a deepening political crisis. Iraq's political sphere has been a vacuum since federal elections in October.

The counter-protest was called for by the Coordination Framework, an alliance lead by Shiite parties close to Iran, and is slated to take place Monday afternoon. The alliance instructed participants to gather around Baghdad's July 14th Bridge, which leads to the heavily fortified Green Zone where the parliament is housed.

The alliance forbade participants from entering the zone, directing them to "wait for instructions." That signaled to protesters not to clash with al-Sadr's followers, but opened the possibility of drawn-out demonstrations in a standoff against al-Sadr.

The alliance also called for its supporters to respect the state security forces and carry Iraqi flags. Security forces erected concrete walls blocking off the passage from the bridge to the Green Zone.

The announcement came after al-Sadr issued a statement late Sunday calling for "revolution" and to change the political system and the constitution and abolish his rivals while encouraging Iraqi tribes to join him. His opponents perceived that message as a call to a coup.

Fractures appeared within the leadership of the Framework, with some members unwilling to take part and calling for restraint. Others pushed for escalation.

Al-Sadr's chief rival, former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the head of the Framework alliance, and Shiite leader Qais al-Khazali, appear to be leading the push for protests. Meanwhile, Fatah Alliance head Hadi al-Ameri is urging control and moderation, two Shiite political officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Kataib Hezbollah, another Iran-backed militia group, has also suggested it will not participate.

If the protests escalate, it would be the closest followers of al-Sadr and al-Maliki will come to a confrontation since 2008, when the former prime minister lead Iraq's army to drive the cleric's previous militia, the Mahdi Army, out of the southern city of Basra.

The two men, both powerful in their own right, have been bitter enemies ever since.

Al-Sadr's loyalists continued their sit-in for a third day. Thousands among them stormed the parliament on Saturday, for the second time in the span of a week. This time, they did not disperse peacefully.

Harris to announce \$1B to states for floods, extreme heat

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By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House is making more than \$1 billion available to states to address flooding and extreme heat exacerbated by climate change.

Vice President Kamala Harris is set to announce the grant programs Monday at an event in Miami with the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other officials. The competitive grants will help communities across the nation prepare for and respond to climate-related disasters.

"We know that the impacts of the climate crisis are here, and that we must invest in building resilience to protect our communities, infrastructure and economy," the White House said in a statement.

The announcement comes as the death toll from massive flooding in Kentucky continued to climb on Sunday amid a renewed threat of more heavy rains. In the West, wildfires in California and Montana exploded in size amid windy, hot conditions, encroaching on neighborhoods and forcing evacuation orders.

Multiple Western states continued heat advisories amid a prolonged drought that has dried reservoirs and threatened communities across the region.

Harris will visit the National Hurricane Center for a briefing by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and FEMA. She also will visit Florida International University, where she is expected to address extreme weather events across the country, including the flooding in Kentucky and Missouri and the wildfires in California.

President Joe Biden announced last month that the administration will spend \$2.3 billion to help communities cope with soaring temperatures through programs administered by FEMA, the Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies. The move doubles spending on the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities, or BRIC, program, which supports states, local communities, tribes and territories on projects to reduce climate-related hazards and prepare for natural disasters such as floods and wildfires.

"Communities across our nation are experiencing first-hand the devastating impacts of the climate change and the related extreme weather events that follow — more energized hurricanes with deadlier storm surges, increased flooding and a wildfire season that's become a year-long threat," FEMA head Deanne Criswell said.

The funding to be announced Monday will "help to ensure that our most vulnerable communities are not left behind, with hundreds of millions of dollars ultimately going directly to the communities that need it most," Criswell said.

A total of \$1 billion will be made available through the BRIC program, with another \$160 million to be offered for flood mitigation assistance, officials said.

Jacksonville, Florida, was among cities that received money under the BRIC program last year. The city was awarded \$23 million for flood mitigation and stormwater infrastructure. Jacksonville, the largest city in Florida, sits in a humid, subtropical region along the St. Johns River and Atlantic Ocean, making it vulnerable to flooding when stormwater basins reach capacity. The city experiences frequent flooding and is at risk for increased major storms.

The South Florida Water Management District in Miami-Dade County received \$50 million for flood mitigation and pump station repairs. Real estate development along the city's fast-growing waterfront has created a high-risk flood zone for communities in the city and put pressure on existing systems, making repairs to existing structures an urgent need, officials said.

The Biden administration has launched a series of actions intended to reduce heat-related illness and protect public health, including a proposed workplace heat standard.

Pelosi meets Singapore leaders at start of Asia tour

By EILEEN NG and ZEN SOO Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi held talks with officials in Singapore on Monday at the start of her Asian tour, as questions swirled over a possible stop in Taiwan that has fueled tension with Beijing.

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Pelosi met with Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, President Halimah Yacob and other Cabinet members, the Foreign Ministry said.

Lee welcomed a U.S. commitment to strong engagement with the region, and the two sides discussed ways to deepen U.S. economic engagement through initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, the ministry said in a statement.

Lee and Pelosi also discussed the war in Ukraine, tensions surrounding Taiwan and mainland China, and climate change, it said. Lee "highlighted the importance of stable U.S.-China relations for regional peace and security," it added, in an apparent allusion to reports that Pelosi may visit Taiwan.

In a statement over the weekend, Pelosi said she will visit Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and Japan to discuss trade, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, security and "democratic governance."

She didn't confirm news reports that she might visit Taiwan, which is claimed by Beijing as its own territory. Chinese President Xi Jinping warned against meddling in Beijing's dealings with the island in a phone call last week with U.S. President Joe Biden.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian reiterated the earlier warnings on Monday, saying "there will be serious consequences if she insists on making the visit."

He did not spell out any specific consequences. "We are fully prepared for any eventuality," he said. "The People's Liberation Army will never sit by idly. China will take strong and resolute measures to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Pelosi was to attend a cocktail reception later Monday with the American Chamber of Commerce in Singapore. There is no media access to her visit, which has been kept under tight wraps.

She is scheduled to be in Malaysia on Tuesday. A Parliament official, who was not authorized to speak to the media and declined to be identified by name, said Pelosi will call on Malaysian lower house speaker Azhar Azizan Harun. No further details were immediately available.

On Thursday, Pelosi is to meet with South Korean National Assembly Speaker Kim Jin Pyo in Seoul for talks on security in the Indo-Pacific region, economic cooperation and the climate crisis, Kim's office said in a statement.

It declined to provide further details about her itinerary, including when she is arriving in South Korea and how long she'll stay.

Pelosi's schedule for Wednesday remains unclear and there were no details on when she will head to Japan.

Beijing sees official American contact with Taiwan as encouragement to make the island's decades-old de facto independence permanent, a step U.S. leaders say they don't support. Pelosi, head of one of three branches of the U.S. government, would be the highest-ranking elected American official to visit Taiwan since then-Speaker Newt Gingrich in 1997.

The Biden administration has tried to assure Beijing there was no reason to "come to blows" and that if such a visit occurred, it would signal no change in U.S. policy.

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

The United States switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979, but maintains informal relations with the island. Washington is obligated by federal law to see that Taiwan has the means to defend itself.

Washington's "One China policy" says it takes no position on the status of the two sides but wants their dispute resolved peacefully. Beijing promotes an alternative "One China principle" that says they are one country and the Communist Party is its leader.

A visit to Taiwan would be a career capstone for Pelosi, who increasingly uses her position in Congress as a U.S. emissary on the global stage. She has long challenged China on human rights and wanted to visit Taiwan earlier this year.

Pelosi's delegation includes U.S. Reps. Gregory Meeks, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Commit-

tee; Mark Takano, chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs; Suzan DelBene, vice chair of the House Ways and Means Committee; Raja Krishnamoorthi, a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and chair of the Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform; and Andy Kim, a member of the House Armed Services and Foreign Affairs Committees.

Nichelle Nichols, Lt. Uhura on 'Star Trek,' has died at 89

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Nichelle Nichols, who broke barriers for Black women in Hollywood when she played communications officer Lt. Uhura on the original "Star Trek" television series, has died at the age of 89.

Her son Kyle Johnson said Nichols died Saturday in Silver City, New Mexico.

"Last night, my mother, Nichelle Nichols, succumbed to natural causes and passed away. Her light however, like the ancient galaxies now being seen for the first time, will remain for us and future generations to enjoy, learn from, and draw inspiration," Johnson wrote on her official Facebook page Sunday. "Hers was a life well lived and as such a model for us all."

Her role in the 1966-69 series as Lt. Uhura earned Nichols a lifelong position of honor with the series' rabid fans, known as Trekkers and Trekkies. It also earned her accolades for breaking stereotypes that had limited Black women to acting roles as servants and included an interracial onscreen kiss with co-star William Shatner that was unheard of at the time.

"I shall have more to say about the trailblazing, incomparable Nichelle Nichols, who shared the bridge with us as Lt. Uhura of the USS Enterprise, and who passed today at age 89," George Takei wrote on Twitter. "For today, my heart is heavy, my eyes shining like the stars you now rest among, my dearest friend."

Takei played Sulu in the original "Star Trek" series alongside Nichols. But her impact was felt beyond her immediate co-stars, and many others in the "Star Trek" world also tweeted their condolences.

Celia Rose Gooding, who currently plays Uhura in "Star Trek: Strange New Worlds," wrote on Twitter that Nichols "made room for so many of us. She was the reminder that not only can we reach the stars, but our influence is essential to their survival. Forget shaking the table, she built it."

"Star Trek: Voyager" alum Kate Mulgrew tweeted, "Nichelle Nichols was The First. She was a trailblazer who navigated a very challenging trail with grit, grace, and a gorgeous fire we are not likely to see again."

Like other original cast members, Nichols also appeared in six big-screen spinoffs starting in 1979 with "Star Trek: The Motion Picture" and frequented "Star Trek" fan conventions. She also served for many years as a NASA recruiter, helping bring minorities and women into the astronaut corps.

More recently, she had a recurring role on television's "Heroes," playing the great-aunt of a young boy with mystical powers.

The original "Star Trek" premiered on NBC on Sept. 8, 1966. Its multicultural, multiracial cast was creator Gene Roddenberry's message to viewers that in the far-off future — the 23rd century — human diversity would be fully accepted.

"I think many people took it into their hearts ... that what was being said on TV at that time was a reason to celebrate," Nichols said in 1992 when a "Star Trek" exhibit was on view at the Smithsonian Institution.

She often recalled how Martin Luther King Jr. was a fan of the show and praised her role. She met him at a civil rights gathering in 1967, at a time when she had decided not to return for the show's second season.

"When I told him I was going to miss my co-stars and I was leaving the show, he became very serious and said, 'You cannot do that,'" she told The Tulsa (Okla.) World in a 2008 interview.

"You've changed the face of television forever, and therefore, you've changed the minds of people," she said the civil rights leader told her.

"That foresight Dr. King had was a lightning bolt in my life," Nichols said.

During the show's third season, Nichols' character and Shatner's Capt. James Kirk shared what was described as the first interracial kiss to be broadcast on a U.S. television series. In the episode, "Plato's Stepchildren," their characters, who always maintained a platonic relationship, were forced into the kiss

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by aliens who were controlling their actions.

The kiss "suggested that there was a future where these issues were not such a big deal," Eric Deggans, a television critic for National Public Radio, told The Associated Press in 2018. "The characters themselves were not freaking out because a Black woman was kissing a white man ... In this utopian-like future, we solved this issue. We're beyond it. That was a wonderful message to send."

Worried about reaction from Southern television stations, showrunners wanted to film a second take of the scene where the kiss happened off-screen. But Nichols said in her book, "Beyond Uhura: Star Trek and Other Memories," that she and Shatner deliberately flubbed lines to force the original take to be used.

Despite concerns, the episode aired without blowback. In fact, it got the most "fan mail that Paramount had ever gotten on 'Star Trek' for one episode," Nichols said in a 2010 interview with the Archive of American Television.

Shatner tweeted Sunday: "I am so sorry to hear about the passing of Nichelle. She was a beautiful woman & played an admirable character that did so much for redefining social issues both here in the US & throughout the world."

Born Grace Dell Nichols in Robbins, Illinois, Nichols hated being called "Gracie," which everyone insisted on, she said in the 2010 interview. When she was a teen her mother told her she had wanted to name her Michelle, but thought she ought to have alliterative initials like Marilyn Monroe, whom Nichols loved. Hence, "Nichelle."

Nichols first worked professionally as a singer and dancer in Chicago at age 14, moving on to New York nightclubs and working for a time with the Duke Ellington and Lionel Hampton bands before coming to Hollywood for her film debut in 1959's "Porgy and Bess," the first of several small film and TV roles that led up to her "Star Trek" stardom.

Nichols was known as being unafraid to stand up to Shatner on the set when others complained that he was stealing scenes and camera time. They later learned she had a strong supporter in the show's creator.

In her 1994 book, "Beyond Uhura," she said she met Roddenberry when she guest starred on his show "The Lieutenant," and the two had an affair a couple of years before "Star Trek" began. The two remained lifelong close friends.

Another fan of Nichols and the show was future astronaut Mae Jemison, who became the first black woman in space when she flew aboard the shuttle Endeavour in 1992.

In an AP interview before her flight, Jemison said she watched Nichols on "Star Trek" all the time, adding she loved the show. Jemison eventually got to meet Nichols.

Nichols was a regular at "Star Trek" conventions and events into her 80s, but her schedule became limited starting in 2018 when her son announced that she was suffering from advanced dementia.

Nichols was placed under a court conservatorship in the control of her son Johnson, who said her mental decline made her unable to manage her affairs or make public appearances.

Some, including Nichols' managers and her friend, film producer and actor Angelique Fawcett, objected to the conservatorship and sought more access to Nichols and to records of Johnson's financial and other moves on her behalf. Her name was at times invoked at courthouse rallies that sought the freeing of Britney Spears from her own conservatorship.

But the court consistently sided with Johnson, and over the objections of Fawcett allowed him to move Nichols to New Mexico, where she lived with him in her final years.

What to watch in primaries in Arizona, Michigan, elsewhere

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

In Missouri, scandal-ridden former Gov. Eric Greitens is attempting a political comeback. In Michigan, a crowded field of Republican gubernatorial candidates includes a man charged in the Jan. 6 U.S. Capitol attack. In Arizona, a prominent figure in the QAnon conspiracy movement is running for the U.S. House.

Those are among some of the most notable contests in Tuesday's primary elections being held in six states.

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Arizona, which Democrat Joe Biden narrowly won in 2020, is a top target for former President Donald Trump, who tried in vain to get his defeat overturned. He has endorsed a slate of candidates up and down the ballot who have promoted his false claims of a stolen election.

Trump has also been zeroed in on the 10 House Republicans who voted to impeach him over the Jan. 6 insurrection. Three of them are on the ballot Tuesday in Washington state and Michigan, as are two members of "the Squad," Democratic Reps. Cori Bush of Missouri and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan.

Meanwhile, Kansas voters could clear the way for the Republican-controlled Legislature to further restrict or ban abortion if they approve a proposed state constitutional change. It's the first referendum vote on abortion policy by a state since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in June.

Ohio is also holding a primary for state legislative races on Tuesday, three months after its statewide and congressional contests — a split system that resulted from legal wrangling over redistricting.

What to watch:

ARIZONA

Trump's endorsed candidates in Arizona all have one thing in common: They have loudly disseminated misinformation about the legitimacy of the 2020 election, despite election officials and Trump's own attorney general saying there is no credible evidence the race was tainted.

In the governor's race, Trump has backed former television news anchor Kari Lake, who has said that she would not have certified Arizona's election results in 2020. Lake faces businesswoman Karrin Taylor Robson, who is endorsed by former Vice President Mike Pence and outgoing Gov. Doug Ducey.

Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, a staunch defender of the 2020 election, is strongly favored to win the Democratic nomination for governor.

In the Republican primary for U.S. Senate, Trump has backed tech investor Blake Masters as the candidate to go up against Democratic incumbent Mark Kelly in the fall. Masters, whose campaign has been bankrolled by billionaire Peter Thiel, has called for reducing legal immigration and espoused the baseless "great replacement" conspiracy theory, claiming Democrats are trying to "replace Americans who were born here."

Attorney General Mark Brnovich, another Senate candidate, has been weighed down by lackluster fundraising and fierce criticism from Trump, who says Brnovich did little to advance his election fraud claims. Another top candidate, Jim Lamon, the founder of a solar energy firm, has touted his experience as a military veteran and entrepreneur.

The Republican primary for secretary of state includes Trump-backed legislator Mark Finchem, a state representative who worked to overturn Trump's 2020 loss; state Rep. Shawnna Bolick, who introduced a bill to let legislators ignore election results and choose their own presidential electors; and state Sen. Michelle Ugenti-Rita, who has long pushed to overhaul election laws. The GOP establishment has rallied around advertising executive Beau Lane in the race.

Ron Watkins, who has ties to the QAnon conspiracy theory, is considered a long shot in his House run. Watkins, a Republican, served as the longtime administrator of the online message boards that became the home of the anonymous "Q." The conspiracy theory is centered around the baseless belief that Trump waged a secret campaign against enemies in the "deep state" and that a group of satanic, cannibalistic child molesters secretly runs the globe.

In the state Legislature, Arizona House Speaker Rusty Bowers, who testified at a Jan. 6 hearing about Trump's pressure to overturn the 2020 election, faces a Trump-backed candidate in his bid to run for the state Senate.

MICHIGAN

The Republican primary for governor was wild from the start, with five candidates getting kicked off the ballot for failing to file enough valid nominating signatures.

Several of the remaining candidates have baggage that could hurt in a general election against Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

Real estate broker Ryan Kelley has pleaded not guilty to misdemeanor charges after authorities said he

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rallied Trump's supporters to storm the U.S. Capitol. Businessman Kevin Rinke was sued in the 1990s for sex harassment and racial discrimination — allegations he says were lies. Chiropractor Garrett Soldano hawked supplements he falsely claimed treated COVID-19. Businesswoman Tudor Dixon, who has been endorsed by Trump, has previously acted in low-budget horror pictures, one of which included a zombie biting off a man's genitals.

All of the candidates falsely say there was fraud in the 2020 election, with Dixon, Kelley and Soldano saying the election was stolen from Trump.

Republican Rep. Peter Meijer is hoping to hold on to his seat after voting to impeach Trump. The former president has endorsed businessman and missionary John Gibbs, who worked in the Trump administration under Housing Secretary Ben Carson.

MISSOURI

Greitens' political career appeared over when he resigned as governor in 2018, following his admission to an extramarital affair and accusations of blackmail and campaign finance violations. On Tuesday, the former Navy SEAL officer has a chance at redemption in his Republican primary for the seat held by retiring GOP U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt.

Greitens, Attorney General Eric Schmitt and U.S. Rep. Vicky Hartzler are the front-runners in a crowded 21-person GOP field that includes U.S. Rep. Billy Long and Mark McCloskey, the St. Louis lawyer who along with his wife pointed guns at racial injustice protesters who ventured onto their private street.

Trump has not made an endorsement in the race, though he's ruled out Hartzler.

The GOP winner in Missouri, a solidly Republican state, will be favored in November. But Republican leaders have long worried that Greitens — his ex-wife has also accused him of abuse, allegations Greitens has called "baseless" — could win the primary but lose the general election.

On the Democratic side, the nomination appears to be up for grabs between Lucas Kunce, a Marine veteran and self-proclaimed populist, and Trudy Busch Valentine, an heiress of the Busch beer fortune who has largely self-funded her campaign.

WASHINGTON

Two Republican House members from Washington state who voted to impeach Trump face primary challengers endorsed by him.

Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler, who has been in Congress since 2011, has said she voted for impeachment because she had "an obligation to the Constitution." Trump has endorsed Joe Kent, a former Green Beret and a conservative cable show regular who echoes the former president's grievances about the 2020 election outcome.

Rep. Dan Newhouse, a congressman since 2015, said he cast the vote to impeach Trump for inciting and refusing to immediately stop the Jan. 6 insurrection. Among his challengers is Loren Culp, a Trump-backed former small-town police chief who refused to concede the 2020 governor's race to Democrat Jay Inslee.

In Washington, the top two vote-getters in each race, regardless of party, move forward to November.

KANSAS

Voters will decide whether to approve a change to the state constitution that could allow the Legislature to restrict or ban abortion despite a 2019 state Supreme Court ruling that abortion access is a fundamental right. It's the first referendum on abortion by a state since Roe v. Wade's reversal.

In statewide races, Republican Kris Kobach is running for attorney general as he attempts a political comeback following losses in races for governor and U.S. Senate in previous years. Kobach, the state's former secretary of state, served as vice chair of a short-lived Trump commission on election fraud after the 2016 election.

Top election official races feature deniers of 2020 results

By BOB CHRISTIE Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — An Arizona lawmaker endorsed by former President Donald Trump who attended the Jan. 6, 2021, rally that preceded the violent assault on the U.S. Capitol and another lawmaker who also

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believes the 2020 presidential election results should be overturned are among four Republicans vying for the top elections post in the presidential battleground.

It's a trend seen in several Republican primaries this year that has led to mixed results for those who peddle conspiracy theories and promote the falsehood that widespread fraud led to Trump's defeat. Tuesday's primary elections feature similar candidates in Kansas and Washington state.

In Kansas, voters will choose between a challenger who questions the 2020 presidential results and the incumbent Republican who believes the election was secure in his state. Washington state's open primary also has a candidate who backs Trump's unsupported claims, although that's not the toughest challenge the Democratic incumbent faces.

So far this year, Republican primary voters have split on whether to put election skeptics on the November ballot.

In June, Nevada voters selected former state lawmaker Jim Marchant, who has been repeating the false claims that the 2020 election was stolen from Trump, to face the Democrat in an open race for secretary of state. But in Colorado, GOP voters rejected a local election clerk who has been appearing with Trump allies promoting conspiracies about voting machines and instead chose a Republican who vowed to keep politics out of elections.

And Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, who rejected Trump's plea to "find" enough votes for him to win the state, easily survived a primary challenge to advance in that state's May primary.

Arizona's secretary of state race is the most eye-catching and consequential of Tuesday's primary battles, in part because of Republican state Rep. Mark Finchem.

The retired Michigan police officer and current Arizona House member was at the Capitol on Jan. 6 and contends Trump lost Arizona because of rampant fraud. He backed a controversial and much-criticized state Senate "audit" of the 2020 election results in the state's most populous county and this year tried to get the Republican-controlled Legislature to notify Congress that Arizona wanted to decertify Joe Biden's election win.

Finchem also is suing in federal court with a leading GOP contender for Arizona governor to block the use of vote-counting machines in Arizona. The lawsuit contends they are potentially prone to hacking that can change votes. A judge is considering whether to throw out the case.

Finchem's claims come despite the lack of valid evidence of any widespread fraud that would have changed the result in Arizona, where Biden beat Trump by just over 10,000 votes. He maintains that "fictitious ballots" marred the results.

"So for you to say that there's no evidence, I think the media is willfully disregarding the evidence that's out there," Finchem said.

His primary competitors include another state House member, Shawna Bolick, a Trump supporter who contends the 2020 election was deeply flawed. She said in a televised debate that she would not have certified the election had she been secretary of state, despite it being a requirement to do so absent a court order.

"And I would have been breaking the law at that point and that would have been fine," she said on the debate carried on Arizona PBS.

The other two Republican candidates are state Sen. Michelle Ugenti-Rita, who acknowledges Biden's victory and has made election reform a key focus during her 12 years in the Legislature, and Beau Lane, a businessman and political newcomer who has earned the endorsement of Republican Gov. Doug Ducey.

Ugenti-Rita said none of the other candidates has her understanding of election law and that she believes she has broad support across the state.

"They immediately recognize my record and experience, and they feel assured that I can get the job done and that's the message," Ugenti-Rita said about voters. "That's what people want. They're done with platitudes — it gets policy nowhere."

Lane said his executive experience makes him the best choice for the job. He noted his long engagement in Republican politics, back to when as a young man he was a page at the 1980 Republican convention

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in which Ronald Reagan was nominated for president.

"Above all, we need somebody who can be a fair dealer and help restore faith in elections," he said.

Lane said other than a few hiccups and isolated cases of voter fraud, the 2020 election was well run, although he joined the other Republicans in criticizing Democratic Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, who is seeking her party's nomination for governor.

"Was there organized, rigged fraud that that changed the outcome of the election?" he asked. "I have seen no evidence of that."

Two Democrats are seeking their party's nomination — former Maricopa County Recorder Adrian Fontes, who lost his seat in the 2020 election, and Arizona House Minority Leader Reginald Bolding. Both criticize Finchem and other Republicans who question the 2020 election results and say a Finchem victory would be dangerous for democracy.

In Kansas, Secretary of State Scott Schwab also is facing a challenge from his right in the state's GOP primary.

Schwab is a former Kansas House member who has defended the use of ballot drop boxes, which Trump and other Republicans say are prone to misuse, even though there is no widespread evidence of that. He has dismissed baseless theories about fraud, at least as a possibility in Kansas elections.

"There were concerns that people had in other states, and some folks want to have that concern in Kansas, but they're just rumors — 'I heard this in Georgia. I heard this in Arizona, I heard this in Nevada, therefore Kansas,'" Schwab said during a recent interview. "And you can't copy and paste situations from one state to the next simply because our statutes are so different."

Schwab's primary opponent is Mike Brown, a construction contractor and former county commissioner in Johnson County, the state's most populous and home to Kansas City-area suburbs.

Brown has made doubts about the security of Kansas elections central to his campaign. He's promised to ban ballot drop boxes and said he will use the secretary of state's office to pursue election fraud cases, rather than taking Schwab's approach of working through prosecutors.

Brown said that when Schwab says Kansas elections ran smoothly with no significant problems, the question is, "Because he said so, or because he can prove it?"

"His answer is, 'There's nothing to see here, keep moving,'" he added. "You should start looking and you should stop moving."

Washington state's "top two" primary features Democratic Secretary of State Steve Hobbs, who was appointed by Gov. Jay Inslee last November and hopes to retain his seat for the remaining two years of former Republican Secretary of State Kim Wyman's four-year term. He's the first Democrat to hold the office since 1965, taking Wyman's seat after she left for an election security job in the Biden administration.

Hobbs faces several Republican and unaffiliated challengers, including Tamborine Borrelli, an "America First" candidate who was fined by the state Supreme Court last month for making legally meritless claims alleging widespread voter fraud.

Hobbs has raised the most among the candidates for the race so far, followed by Pierce County Auditor Julie Anderson, who is running as a nonpartisan and said she is the most experienced in running elections.

Among the Republicans in the race, former Sen. Mark Miloscia — he is now head of the conservative Family Policy Institute — has raised the most money. Republican Sen. Keith Wagoner trails Miloscia in money but has been endorsed by former Republican Secretary of State Sam Reed.

Hobbs has pointed to his experience as a Washington National Guard lieutenant and his months running the office to say why he's best positioned to address issues ranging from cybersecurity concerns to election misinformation.

Anderson said she's running as a nonpartisan because of the hyperpolarization across the country, saying that "we don't need political parties in the secretary of state's office calling balls and strikes at home plate."

Under Washington's primary system, the top two vote-getters advance to the general election in November, regardless of party. Results will likely take days to tally because it's an all-mail election.

Ukraine seeks to retake the south, tying down Russian forces

By The Associated Press undefined

Even as Moscow's war machine crawls across Ukraine's east, trying to achieve the Kremlin's goal of securing full control over the country's industrial heartland, Ukrainian forces are scaling up attacks to reclaim territory in the Russian-occupied south.

The Ukrainians have used American-supplied rocket launchers to strike bridges and military infrastructure in the south, forcing Russia to divert its forces from the Donbas in the east to counter the new threat.

With the war in Ukraine now in its sixth month, the coming weeks may prove decisive.

While the bulk of Russian and Ukrainian military assets are concentrated in the Donbas, the industrial region of mines and factories, both sides hope to make gains elsewhere.

Ukraine has vowed to drive the Russians from the territory they have seized since the start of the invasion, including the southern region of Kherson and part of the Zaporizhzhia region, while Moscow has pledged to hold on to the occupied areas and take more ground around the country.

The Donbas consists of Luhansk province, now fully controlled by Russia, and Donetsk province, about half of which is in Moscow's hands.

Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov noted that by stepping up the attacks in the south, Kyiv has forced Russia to spread its forces.

"The Russian military command has been put before a dilemma: to try to press the offensive in the Donetsk region or build up defenses in the south," Zhdanov said. "It's going to be difficult for them to perform both tasks simultaneously for a long time."

He noted that rather than trying to mount a massive, all-out counteroffensive, the Ukrainians have sought to undermine the Russian military in the south with a series of strikes on its munitions and fuel depots and other key sites.

"It doesn't have to be a head-on attack," Zhdanov noted.

Moscow-backed local officials in Ukraine's east and south have talked about holding votes on joining Russia as early as September. Those plans hinge on Russia's ability to win full control of those areas by then.

"The Kremlin's chief goal is to force Kyiv to sit down for talks, secure the existing line of contact and hold referenda in the autumn," said Mykola Sunhurovsky, of the Razumkov Center, a Kyiv-based think tank.

He noted that Western weapons have boosted Ukraine's capabilities, allowing it to reach targets far behind the front lines with a high degree of precision.

Ukraine has received about a dozen American-built HIMARS multiple rocket launchers and has used them to strike Russian ammunition depots, which are essential for maintaining Moscow's edge in firepower. HIMARS systems have a range of 80 kilometers (50 miles), enabling the Ukrainians to hit the Russians from beyond the reach of most of the enemy's artillery.

"It's a serious advantage," Sunhurovsky said. "The Ukrainians have started dealing precision strikes on Russian depots, command posts, railway stations and bridges, destroying logistical chains and undermining the Russian military capability."

The Ukrainian strikes on munitions storage sites have caught the Russian army off guard, forcing it to move materiel to scattered locations farther from combat areas, lengthening supply lines, reducing the Russian edge in firepower and helping to slow Russia's offensive in the east.

"They've got to get everything out to smaller, more dispersed stockpiles," said Justin Crump, a former British tank commander who heads Sibylline, a strategic advisory firm. "These are all real irritants that slow Russia down. They've suffered the hit to the tempo of artillery fire, which was really key before."

Crump said the Russian military had underestimated the threat posed by HIMARS and had left their ammunition depots exposed in known locations. "They thought their air defense would shoot down the missiles. And it didn't really," he said.

In a series of attacks that helped boost the country's morale, the Ukrainians repeatedly used HIMARS to strike a key bridge across the Dnieper River in the Kherson region, cutting traffic across it and raising potential supply problems for Russian forces in the area.

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Zhdanov, the Ukrainian military analyst, described the bridge as the key link for supplying Russian forces on the right bank of the Dnieper.

Russia still can use a second crossing on the Dnieper to ferry supplies and reinforcements to its troops in Kherson, which lies just north of the Crimean Peninsula, seized by Russia in 2014. But Ukraine's strikes have shown Russia's vulnerability and weakened its hold on the region.

"The Russians have the river at their back. That's not a great place to be defending," Crump said. "They can't get supplies easily. The morale is probably quite low at this point on that side of the river."

He said Ukraine eventually may launch a massive counterattack involving large numbers of troops and weapons.

"That's the opportunity for Ukraine, I think, to land a sort of more smashing blow on the Russians and push them back," Crump said. "I think there's more chance of that being tried here than we've seen at any other point."

Crump noted that the mere prospect of a major Ukrainian counteroffensive in the south helped Kyiv by forcing the Russians to divert some of their forces from the main battleground in the east.

"That's slowing down the Donbas offensive," Crump said. "So even the threat of an offensive is actually succeeding for Ukraine at the moment."

As species recover, some threaten others in more dire shape

By JOHN FLESHER, CHRISTINA LARSON and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

GLEN ARBOR, Mich. (AP) — Concealed behind trees near Lake Michigan, two scientists remotely manipulated a robotic owl on the forest floor. As the intruder flapped its wings and hooted, a merlin guarding its nest in a nearby pine darted overhead, sounding high-pitched, rapid-fire distress calls.

The small falcon dove toward the enemy — and into a net that Smithsonian interns Tim Baerwald and Zachary Bordner had stretched between steel poles. They gently disentangled the brownish-speckled merlin, then attached a leg band and a backpack transmission unit so researchers could trace the mother bird's movements.

"As long as it's fitted correctly, she'll have a long and happy life," Baerwald said before Bordner released the merlin, which zipped back to its nesting tree.

The mission will enhance knowledge of a species still recovering from a significant drop-off caused by pesticides including DDT, banned in 1972 after harming many birds of prey. It also is helping Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore managers protect the piping plover, an endangered shorebird that merlins kill and eat.

"Merlins are a big threat to their recovery," said Nathan Cooper, a research ecologist with Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute.

The situation is ironic: A troubled species rebounds thanks to restoration efforts, only to make things worse for others in peril by preying on them or outcompeting them for food and living space. Similar circumstances have turned up elsewhere, challenging wildlife experts who want them all to thrive in balanced, healthy environments.

For instance, the iconic bald eagle's comeback has pressured rare water birds. Resurgent peregrine falcons menace endangered California least terns and Western snowy plovers that take refuge at naval bases near San Diego. And, off the California coast, attacks from protected white sharks hinder recovery of threatened sea otters.

Gray seals previously on the brink of extirpation in waters of New England now occupy some Massachusetts beaches by the hundreds. The 800-pound mammal's return has raised worries about vulnerable fish stocks.

Such unintended consequences don't necessarily reveal flaws in the U.S. Endangered Species Act or conservation programs, experts say. Rather, they illustrate nature's complexity and the importance of protecting biological communities, not just individual species.

"Clearly there are occasions when we get these conflicts between species that we're trying to protect,"

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said Stuart Pimm, a Duke University extinction specialist. "But is it a major worry in conservation? No."

Species recoveries can produce tradeoffs, since some animals are more adaptable than others to changes in the climate or landscape, said Bruce Stein, chief scientist with the National Wildlife Federation.

"A lot of ecosystems where these things are occurring are a little out of whack to begin with because we've altered them in some way," Stein said. "With climate change, there are going to be winners and losers. The losers will tend to have specific habitat requirements, narrow ecological niches, and often will be the ones already declining."

The Great Lakes region has an estimated 65 to 70 pairs of sandy-backed, ring-necked piping plovers, which skitter along beaches nibbling tiny marine animals and eggs. They're among three remaining North American populations, their decline caused primarily by habitat loss and predation.

Meanwhile, merlin numbers in the region have jumped. In the past 10 to 15 years, they're suspected of killing at least 57 adult plovers, Cooper said.

While officials have shot some merlins, they're looking for non-lethal controls. Data from the transmitter backpacks might help determine whether capturing and relocating them is worth trying, said Vince Cavalieri, a biologist with the national lakeshore.

EAGLES THREATEN RARE BIRDS

Recovery of America's national bird, the bald eagle, is a triumph. But in one area of coastal Maine, the big raptor poses a problem for the only U.S. breeding population of great cormorants.

"When they're disturbed by eagles, the adult cormorants will flush and leave their nests," said Don Lyons, a conservation scientist at the National Audubon Society's Seabird Institute.

Then gulls, ravens and crows swoop in to gobble cormorant eggs and chicks. "If this happens repeatedly, an entire colony can fail," Lyons said.

His team organizes volunteers to camp near cormorant gatherings to scare away eagles.

In Southern California, least terns and snowy plovers are no match for attacking peregrine falcons, which like eagles bounced back after the ban on DDT. Such pesticides are passed up food chains and cause large birds to produce eggs with thin shells, which females crush when trying to incubate them.

The San Diego Zoo and Wildlife Alliance tries to protect the endangered birds by hiring a falconer to capture problem peregrines, keeping them in a holding facility over winter or releasing them in Northern California. Some find a new territory, while others go back, said Nacho Vilchis, a conservation ecologist.

"If there's a real problem bird that keeps returning, we may ask for permission for lethal removal, but that's only rarely done," Vilchis said.

Hunting and bounties devastated New England's gray seals. Saved by the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, the population has rebounded to tens of thousands.

Fishing groups contend the seals could threaten cod stocks that regulators are struggling to rebuild after decades of overfishing.

The Coastal Ecosystem Alliance, based in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, wants to weaken the protection act to allow hunting and slow the seals' population growth, said board member Peter Krogh.

"Gray seals are certainly this case where recovery has both been cause for celebration and cause for concern," said Kristina Cammen, a University of Maine marine mammal scientist who says they're less of a hazard to fish populations than humans are.

SEALS, CORMORANTS BEDEVIL FISHERS

Like the clash over seals and cod, there are other cases where reviving species may be more a nuisance to people than a threat to other wildlife.

Fish farmers in the South and anglers in the Great Lakes region and Pacific Northwest have long complained about the double-crested cormorant, a dark-feathered diving bird that gorges on catfish, perch, salmon and other prized species.

Cormorants have done so well since the DDT ban that agencies have tried limiting them in some locations with egg oiling, nest destruction and even shooting — drawing lawsuits from environmentalists who say the birds are a scapegoat for human actions that harm fish.

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"They're a part of our avian community and our ecosystems, and there needs to be a place for them," said Dave Fielder, a fisheries research biologist with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. "But when their numbers are so high that they potentially decimate the recreational fishery, that's a problem."

Wild turkeys were spread across North America before European settlement but had dwindled to tens of thousands by the 1930s, disappearing from many states. Now they're hunted in 49 states and are so common in New England that they often cause traffic tie-ups.

Some hunters say hungry turkeys are outcompeting ruffed grouse, which are decreasing in parts of their range, such as the Upper Midwest. But scientists point to habitat loss and climate change.

The National Wild Turkey Federation is helping move turkeys from states with plenty — such as North Carolina, Maine and West Virginia — to Texas and others that could use more, said Mark Hatfield, national director of conservation services.

"If you introduce hunting localized wild turkeys, you reduce the problem with overabundant turkeys right away," Hatfield said.

NATURE AT WORK

Conflicts between recovering species and ones still in trouble don't always mean something is wrong, scientists say. It could reflect a return to how things were before humans got in the way.

"When a population gets back to where it's having the same interactions with other organisms as before it went down, that's nature at work," said John Fitzpatrick, emeritus director of Cornell University's Laboratory of Ornithology.

The bald eagle is "challenging our preconceived notions about what's normal" for prey such as great cormorants in New England and common murrelets on the West Coast, which might have been less abundant before eagles declined, said Lyons of the Audubon Society.

The eagle's recovery "complicates the conservation of certain other species," Lyons said. "But their recovery is such a wonderful outcome ... that's a welcome complication."

Predator-prey relationships are complex and intervening can be tricky, said Stein of the wildlife federation. It's often wiser, he said, to focus on protecting habitat and reconnecting fragmented landscapes to promote natural migration than "moving things around willy-nilly."

But environmental scientist Ian Warkentin, a merlin specialist, said there can be ways to help struggling species without being heavy-handed. Larger falcons — such as peregrines sometimes used to chase birds from airports — might be deployed to shoo merlins from plover nesting areas.

"I fall on the side of the fence that says we should do whatever we can ... to aid the recovery of species for which we've caused such grief," said Warkentin, from Memorial University of Newfoundland's Grenfell Campus.

2 years later, hope for justice in Beirut explosion fades

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — It's been two years since his 3-year-old daughter, Alexandra, was killed in a massive explosion at Beirut's port — and Paul Naggear has lost hope that outrage over the disaster will bring justice and force change in Lebanon.

The investigation into one of the world's biggest non-nuclear explosions has been blocked for months by Lebanon's political powers. Many blame the Lebanese government's longtime corruption and mismanagement for the tragedy, but the elite's decades-old lock on power has ensured they are untouchable.

In fact, some of those charged in the probe were re-elected to parliament earlier this year.

Even as the wrecked silos at the port have been burning for weeks — a fire ignited by the fermenting grains still inside them — authorities seemed to have given up on trying to put out the blaze. A section of the silos collapsed Sunday in a huge cloud of dust.

"It has been two years and nothing's happened," Naggear, said of the Aug. 4, 2020 disaster, when hundreds of tons of highly explosive ammonium nitrate, a material used in fertilizers, detonated at the port. "It's as if my daughter was just hit by a car."

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The blast caused a pressure wave that shattered everything in its path across the capital.

Naggear, his wife, Tracy Awad, and little Alexandra were in their apartment overlooking the port when the massive force sent glass, furniture and other debris flying. Naggear and his wife suffered cuts and bruises. Alexandra, or Lexou, as they called her, was severely injured and died in the hospital.

She was the second-youngest victim of the explosion, which killed more than 215 people and injured more than 6,000.

It later emerged that the ammonium nitrate had been shipped to Lebanon in 2013 and stored improperly at a port warehouse ever since. Senior political and security officials knew of its presence but did nothing.

Lebanon's factional political leaders, who have divvied up power among themselves for decades, closed ranks to thwart any accountability.

Tarek Bitar, the judge leading the investigation, charged four former senior government officials with intentional killing and negligence that led to the deaths of dozens of people. He also charged several top security officials in the case.

But his work has been blocked for eight months pending a Court of Cassation ruling after three former Cabinet ministers filed legal challenges. The court can't rule until a number of vacancies caused by judges retiring are filled. The appointments, signed by the justice minister, are still awaiting approval from the finance minister, an ally of Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri.

Judicial officials with knowledge of Bitar's investigation told The Associated Press it was in advanced stages of answering key questions — including who owned the nitrates, how they entered the port and how the explosion happened. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the investigation.

Bitar is the second judge to take the case. The first judge was forced out after complaints were raised against him by two Cabinet ministers, and if the same happens to Bitar it would likely be the final blow to the investigation.

The lack of justice compounds the pain of relatives and friends of blast victims. They feel let down and abandoned, not only by the government but by public apathy as the months and years have dragged on.

Initially after the explosion, there were large protests and sit-ins demanding justice. It raised hopes that Lebanon's politicians might be held accountable.

But public fervor waned as Lebanese became absorbed with surviving the country's economic collapse. Also, deadly gun battles erupted last year between Hezbollah supporters protesting against Bitar and members of a Christian faction, raising fears that pressing the investigation could push Lebanon into factional conflict.

Now only a handful of people show up at protests and sit-ins organized by relatives of the victims.

Families remain wracked by grief.

For Muhieddine Ladkani, whose father, Mohammed, was killed, time has stood still.

When they first heard explosions coming from the port, his father took the family into their apartment's entrance hall, believing it would be safe since there were no windows. But the blast tore the front door off its hinges and sent a cupboard slamming into the elder Ladkani. He was in a coma for weeks with a brain hemorrhage. He died 31 days later.

Ladkani, a 29-year-old law student, said his family still can't talk about that day.

"We still cannot remember, and we cannot gather as a family," he said. "My brothers and uncles have my father's photos as their profile photo. I don't. Whenever I remember my father, I collapse."

"It is something that I don't want to believe. I can't live with it," Ladkani said. Those who voted for the politicians charged in the disaster are also responsible for his father's death, he added.

"The ink on the fingers of the voters who voted for them is not ink but the blood of the victims," Ladkani said.

One of the charged and reelected politicians, former public works minister Ghazi Zeiter, told the AP he had the right to run for parliament again because there is no court verdict against him. He said Bitar has no right to charge him because legislators and ministers have a special court where they are usually tried.

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Amid the deadlock, some victims' families are turning to courts outside Lebanon.

In mid-July, families filed a \$250 million lawsuit against an American-Norwegian firm, TGS, suspected of involvement in bringing the explosive material to the port. TGS has denied any wrongdoing.

Naggear said his family, two others and the Bar Association have filed a lawsuit in Britain against the London-registered chemical trading company, Savaro Ltd., which investigative journalists in Lebanon say chartered the shipment, intending to take the nitrates from Georgia to an explosives firm in Mozambique.

Naggear said he is losing hope.

He and his wife, who is a dual Lebanese-Canadian citizen, had thought about leaving Lebanon after the blast. But the large public protests in the immediate aftermath gave them hope that change was possible.

But after this year's parliamentary election results, they are again seriously considering leaving.

Still, they vow to continue working for justice. At a recent sit-in, they showed up with their 4-month-old baby, Axel.

"They are trying to make us forget ... but we will not stop, for (Alexandra's) sake until we reach the truth and justice," Naggear said.

The Naggears have repaired their apartment, but they haven't stayed there since Axel's birth, fearing it was still not safe.

The fire burning in the ruins of the grain silos only feeds the sense of danger. A northern section of the structure collapsed on Sunday, and experts say more parts are at risk of falling. At night, orange flames can be seen licking at the base of the northern silo, glowing eerily in the darkness.

AP sources: Decision in Watson discipline case coming Monday

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

A decision on discipline for Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson following accusations of sexual misconduct is coming Monday.

Two people with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press that retired judge Sue L. Robinson has informed the NFL and the NFL Players' Association she's ready to issue a ruling on Watson's disciplinary hearing that concluded a month ago. They spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the discussions are private.

Watson was accused of sexual harassment and assault by 24 massage therapists in Texas and has settled 20 of the civil lawsuits filed against him. Four lawsuits remain pending and the attorney representing the women has said he hopes to take them to trial sometime next spring. However, Watson agreed to settle three of the four, Houston attorney Tony Buzbee told ESPN early Monday.

Two separate Texas grand juries declined to indict Watson on criminal complaints stemming from the allegations.

Watson, who played for four seasons with Houston before being traded to Cleveland in March, has been practicing with the Browns while Robinson has spent weeks trying to determine whether the three-time Pro Bowl quarterback violated the NFL's personal conduct policy and whether to impose discipline.

The NFL argued for an indefinite suspension of at least one year during a three-day hearing in Delaware last month. The league also wants to fine Watson \$5 million, according to a person familiar with the discussions. The union pushed for no punishment, though a person familiar with Watson's defense told the AP in June that a suspension is expected and the goal is to have Watson play this season.

Settlement negotiations didn't progress.

If Robinson, who was jointly appointed by the league and the players' union, imposes any punishment, either side can appeal. In that case, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell or his designee "will issue a written decision that will constitute full, final and complete disposition of the dispute," per terms of Article 46 in the collective bargaining agreement.

The NFLPA already made it clear it won't appeal.

"In advance of Judge Robinson's decision, we wanted to reiterate the facts of this proceeding," the union said in a statement. "First, we have fully cooperated with every NFL inquiry and provided the NFL with

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the most comprehensive set of information for any personal conduct policy investigation. A former Federal Judge — appointed jointly by the NFLPA and NFL — held a full and fair hearing, has read thousands of pages of investigative documents and reviewed arguments from both sides impartially. Every player, owner, business partner and stakeholder deserves to know that our process is legitimate and will not be tarnished based on the whims of the League office. This is why, regardless of her decision, Deshaun and the NFLPA will stand by her ruling and we call on the NFL to do the same.”

The union negotiated the right for either side to appeal a disciplinary officer’s ruling in the CBA signed in March 2020 because Goodell previously had the authority to impose punishment for personal conduct violations.

Watson took the majority of first-team reps with Cleveland’s starting offense during the first four days of camp.

On Saturday, the 26-year-old quarterback practiced in front of Browns fans for the first time since signing a fully guaranteed, five-year \$230 million contract with the team in March. He stayed after practice to sign autographs and pose for photos with fans. He even signed and gave away his cleats after losing a game of rock, paper, scissors to a young fan.

Cleveland traded three first-round draft picks to Houston for Watson, a player the team believes can make it a Super Bowl contender.

If Watson is suspended, coach Kevin Stefanski reiterated last week that backup Jacoby Brissett will be the team’s starter. The Browns also recently signed veteran Josh Rosen as more insurance and Josh Dobbs is also on the roster.

Watson has not yet spoken to reporters during camp, presumably waiting until there is a resolution in his case.

“I know there is that uncertainty, but we can only control what we can control,” Stefanski said. “I think that is what he has done a very nice job of. So much of that is football is there is a lot of volume to what we are doing right now when it comes to football So there are a lot of meetings, there is a lot of install and there is a lot of workout, walkthrough and practice. He has really thrown himself into that.”

Appalachian cultural center reeling from historic flooding

By BRUCE SCHREINER, ANITA SNOW and TIMOTHY D. EASLEY Associated Press

WHITESBURG, Ky. (AP) — The raging floodwaters that left dozens dead or missing in eastern Kentucky also swept away some of the region’s irreplaceable history.

Appalshop, a cultural center known for chronicling Appalachian life for the rest of the world, is cleaning up and assessing its losses, like much of the stricken mountain region around it.

Record flooding on the North Fork of the Kentucky River inundated downtown Whitesburg in southeastern Kentucky, causing extensive damage last week at the renowned repository of Appalachian history and culture. Some of its losses are likely permanent, after floodwaters soaked or swept away some of Appalshop’s treasures, including archives documenting the region’s rich, and sometimes painful, past.

“It’s gut-wrenching to see our beloved building overcome by floodwaters,” said Appalshop executive director Alex Gibson. “We will recover, but right now we are certainly mourning what’s been lost.”

Launched more than a half-century ago in part as a training ground for aspiring filmmakers, Appalshop has evolved into a multifaceted enterprise with a mission to uplift the region. Besides its film institute, it features a radio station, theater, art gallery, record label and community development program.

But now, Appalshop’s focus has turned inward. The center known for training storytellers finds itself part of one of the region’s biggest stories — as floodwaters covered large swaths of the mountainous region, leading to deaths and widespread destruction.

Appalshop is insured and its team is still working to assess the full scope of what’s been lost and what can be salvaged, said its communications director, Meredith Scalos.

“It will probably be a week before we know the totality of the damage,” she said. “We are going to be rebuilding for years, not days or weeks.”

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The first floor of its main building was swamped by the fast-rising water. When cleanup crews went in, they found a thick coating of mud. The radio station and theater suffered major damage, Scalos said. The archives also sustained damage. The upper two floors were unscathed. Another Appalshop building also sustained extensive damage.

At the outset, the highest priority has been to clean up and assess the archives, which included tens of thousands of items documenting cross-sections of Appalachian life over the decades, Scalos said.

Scalos said she feared the loss of one-of-a-kind items that tell the region's story.

Archival materials include film, photos, oral histories, musical performances, magazines and much more. The pieces delved into such topics as coal mining, labor strife, politics, religion, folk art and population trends. Some of the material was swept into the streets of Whitesburg.

Appalshop officials are reaching out to federal emergency officials to determine the availability of assistance, Scalos said. Appalshop receives funding from many sources, including large foundations and individuals. Its enterprises have grown through the years, but its mission has remained constant — to showcase Appalachian traditions and promote the creativity of its residents.

For decades, it has been at the forefront of efforts to reshape the region's image by highlighting the richness of its history and culture and giving Appalachians a voice to share their stories, said Dee Davis, president of the Center for Rural Strategies, which has an office in Whitesburg.

"Over time, Appalshop's films, plays and recordings went a long way to expose the hollowness of the hillbilly stereotypes," said Davis, who formerly worked at Appalshop.

Recalling his time at Appalshop, he said: "Our attitude was, 'We may be hillbillies, but you're no better than us.' And that came through in our work."

The flood, meanwhile, has halted the center's busy schedule. Its Summer Documentary Institute film screening, meant to showcase the works of its interns, was postponed indefinitely, Scalos said.

"That event is the culmination of the youth interns' summer of work where they show their documentaries to friends, family and the community before the films are submitted to film festivals," Scalos said. "That one is particularly gutting."

Appalshop had started planning its fall film screening schedule, but that, too, will be postponed.

Even as it deals with its own crisis, Appalshop hasn't lost sight of its mission. Recognizing the historic nature of what happened over the last few days, the center is trying to chronicle the flooding for future generations.

"We are documenting as much as we can," Scalos said. "Of course, some of our equipment was lost and is not recoverable. In the day and age of the smartphone, it's a lot easier, of course. We'll be looking at ways to pull the stories together, for sure."

Western flames spread, California sees its largest 2022 fire

By NOAH BERGER Associated Press

YREKA, Calif. (AP) — Crews battling the largest wildfire so far this year in California braced for thunderstorms and hot, windy conditions that created the potential for additional fire growth Sunday as they sought to protect remote communities.

The McKinney Fire was burning out of control in Northern California's Klamath National Forest, with expected thunderstorms a big concern Sunday just south of the Oregon state line, said U.S. Forest Service spokesperson Adrienne Freeman.

"The fuel beds are so dry and they can just erupt from that lightning," Freeman said. "These thunder cells come with gusty erratic winds that can blow fire in every direction."

The blaze exploded in size to more than 80 square miles (207 square km) just two days after erupting in a largely unpopulated area of Siskiyou County, according to a Sunday incident report. The cause was under investigation.

The blaze torched trees along California Highway 96, and the scorched remains of a pickup truck sat in a lane of the highway. Thick smoke covered the area and flames burned through hillsides in sight of

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homes. The fire Sunday cast an eerie, orange-brown hue, in one neighborhood where a brick chimney stood surrounded by rubble and scorched vehicles.

A second, smaller fire just to the west that was sparked by dry lightning Saturday threatened the tiny town of Seiad, Freeman said. About 400 structures were under threat from the two California fires. Authorities have not confirmed the extent of the damage yet, saying assessments would begin when it was safe to reach the area.

A third fire, which was on the southwest end of the McKinney blaze, prompted evacuation orders for around 500 homes Sunday, said Courtney Kreider, a spokesperson with the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office. The office said crews had been on the scene of the fire since late Saturday but that the fire Sunday morning "became active and escaped its containment line."

Several people in the sheriff's office have been affected by evacuation orders due to the fires "and they're still showing up to work so, (a) very dedicated crew," she said. A deputy lost his childhood home to fire on Friday, she said.

The McKinney fire "remains 0% contained," the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office said in a Facebook post late Sunday night.

As the McKinney fire threatened, some residents chose to stay behind while others heeded orders to leave.

Larry Castle and his wife, Nancy, were among about 2,000 residents of the Yreka area under evacuation orders. They left Saturday with some of their prized possessions, including Larry's motorcycle, and took their dogs to stay with their daughter near Mount Shasta.

Larry Castle said he wasn't taking any chances after seeing the explosive growth of major fires in recent years.

"You look back at the Paradise fire and the Santa Rosa fire and you realize this stuff is very, very serious," he told the Sacramento Bee.

In northwest Montana, a fire sparked in grasslands near the town of Elmo had grown to about 17 square miles (44 square km) after advancing into forest. Crews were working along edges of the fire Sunday, and aircraft were expected to continue to make water and retardant drops to help slow the fire's advance, said Sara Rouse, a spokesperson with the interagency team assigned to the fire. High temperatures and erratic winds were expected, she said.

A section of Highway 28 between Hot Springs and Elmo that had been closed was reopened with drivers asked to watch for fire and emergency personnel. Visibility in the area was poor, Rouse said.

In Idaho, the Moose Fire in the Salmon-Challis National Forest has burned on more than 75 square miles (196 square km) in timbered land near the town of Salmon. It was 21% contained by Sunday morning. Pila Malolo, planning operations section chief on the fire, said in a Facebook video update that hot, dry conditions were expected to persist Sunday. Officials said they expected fire growth in steep, rugged country on the fire's south side.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency Saturday as the McKinney Fire intensified. The proclamation allows Newsom more flexibility to make emergency response and recovery effort decisions and access federal aid.

California law enforcement knocked on doors in the towns of Yreka and Fort Jones to urge residents to get out and safely evacuate their livestock onto trailers. Automated calls were being sent to land phone lines as well because there were areas without cell phone service.

Scientists say climate change has made the West warmer and drier in the past 30 years and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

The Pacific Coast Trail Association urged hikers to get to the nearest town while the U.S. Forest Service closed a 110-mile (177-km) section of the trail from the Etna Summit to the Mt. Ashland Campground in southern Oregon.

In Hawaii, the Maui County Emergency Management Agency said a brush fire was 90% contained but a red flag warning was in effect for much of Sunday.

And in north Texas, firefighters continued in their effort to contain the 2-week-old, 10 1/2-square-mile (27

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1/3-square-kilometer) Chalk Mountain Fire. The crews now report 83% containment of the fire that has destroyed 16 homes and damaged five others about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southwest of Fort Worth. No injuries have been reported.

Bill Russell, NBA star and civil rights pioneer, dies at 88

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Bill Russell redefined how basketball is played, and then he changed the way sports are viewed in a racially divided country.

The most prolific winner in NBA history, Russell marched with Martin Luther King Jr., stood with Muhammad Ali and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama. The centerpiece of the Boston Celtics dynasty that won 11 championships in 13 years, Russell earned his last two NBA titles as a player-coach — the first Black coach in any major U.S. sport.

Russell died Sunday at the age of 88, with his wife, Jeannine, at his side, his family said in a statement posted on social media. No cause of death was immediately available; Russell, who had been living in the Seattle area, was not well enough to present the NBA Finals MVP trophy in June due to a long illness.

"We hope each of us can find a new way to act or speak up with Bill's uncompromising, dignified and always constructive commitment to principle," the family said. "That would be one last, and lasting, win for our beloved #6."

A Hall of Famer, five-time Most Valuable Player and 12-time All-Star, Russell in 1980 was voted the greatest player in the NBA history by basketball writers. He remains the sport's most decorated champion — he also won two college titles and an Olympic gold medal — and an archetype of selflessness who won with defense and rebounding while others racked up gaudy scoring totals.

Often, that meant Wilt Chamberlain, the only worthy rival of Russell's era and his prime competition for rebounds, MVP trophies and barroom arguments about who was better. Chamberlain, who died in 1999 at 63, had twice as many points, four MVP trophies of his own and is the only person in league history to grab more rebounds than Russell — 23,924 to 21,620.

But Russell dominated in the only stat he cared about: 11 championships to two.

"Bill Russell was the greatest champion in all of team sports," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. More importantly, he added: "Bill stood for something much bigger than sports: the values of equality, respect and inclusion that he stamped into the DNA of our league."

In a statement released by the White House, President Joe Biden praised Russell for his lifelong work in civil right as well as in sports, and called him "a towering champion for freedom, equality, and justice."

"Bill Russell is one of the greatest athletes in our history - an all-time champion of champions, and a good man and great American who did everything he could to deliver the promise of America for all Americans," Biden said.

Reaction poured in Sunday, from Obama to Michael Jordan, from Magic Johnson to Boston's Mayor, Michelle Wu.

"Today, we lost a giant," Obama said. "As tall as Bill Russell stood, his legacy rises far higher — both as a player and as a person. Perhaps more than anyone else, Bill knew what it took to win and what it took to lead."

A Louisiana native, Russell also left a lasting mark as a Black athlete in a city — and country — where race is often a flash point. He was at the March on Washington in 1963, when King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech, and he backed Ali when the boxer was pilloried for refusing induction into the military draft.

In 2011, Obama awarded Russell the Medal of Freedom alongside Congressman John Lewis, billionaire investor Warren Buffett, then-German Chancellor Angela Merkel and baseball great Stan Musial.

"To be the greatest champion in your sport, to revolutionize the way the game is played, and to be a societal leader all at once seems unthinkable," the Celtics said on Sunday. "But that is who Bill Russell was."

Russell said that when he was growing up in the segregated South and later California his parents instilled in him the calm confidence that allowed him to brush off racist taunts.

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"Years later, people asked me what I had to go through," Russell said in 2008. "Unfortunately, or fortunately, I've never been through anything. From my first moment of being alive was the notion that my mother and father loved me." It was Russell's mother who would tell him to disregard comments from those who might see him playing in the yard.

"Whatever they say, good or bad, they don't know you," he recalled her saying. "They're wrestling with their own demons."

But it was Jackie Robinson who gave Russell a road map for dealing with racism in his sport: "Jackie was a hero to us. He always conducted himself as a man. He showed me the way to be a man in professional sports."

The feeling was mutual, Russell learned, when Robinson's widow, Rachel, called and asked him to be a pallbearer at her husband's funeral in 1972.

"She hung the phone up and I asked myself, 'How do you get to be a hero to Jackie Robinson?'" Russell said. "I was so flattered."

William Felton Russell was born on Feb. 12, 1934, in Monroe, Louisiana. He was a child when his family moved to the West Coast, and he went to high school in Oakland, California, and then the University of San Francisco. He led the Dons to NCAA championships in 1955 and 1956 and won a gold medal in 1956 at the Melbourne Olympics in Australia.

Celtics coach and general manager Red Auerbach so coveted Russell that he worked out a trade with the St. Louis Hawks for the second pick in the draft. He promised the Rochester Royals, who owned the No. 1 pick, a lucrative visit by the Ice Capades, which were also run by Celtics owner Walter Brown.

Still, Russell arrived in Boston to complaints that he wasn't that good. "People said it was a wasted draft choice, wasted money," he recalled. "They said, 'He's no good. All he can do is block shots and rebound.' And Red said, 'That's enough.'"

The Celtics also picked up Tommy Heinsohn and K.C. Jones, Russell's college teammate, in the same draft. Although Russell joined the team late because he was leading the U.S. to the Olympic gold, Boston finished the regular season with the league's best record.

The Celtics won the NBA championship — their first of 17 — in a double-overtime seventh game against Bob Pettit's St. Louis Hawks. Russell won his first MVP award the next season, but the Hawks won the title in a finals rematch. The Celtics won it all again in 1959, starting an unprecedented string of eight consecutive NBA crowns.

A 6-foot-10 center, Russell never averaged more than 18.9 points during his 13 seasons, each year producing more rebounds than points. For 10 seasons he averaged more than 20 rebounds. He once had 51 rebounds in a game; Chamberlain holds the record with 55.

Auerbach retired after winning the 1966 title, and Russell became the player-coach — the first Black head coach in NBA history, and almost a decade before Frank Robinson took over Cleveland in baseball's American League. Boston's title streak ended with a loss to Chamberlain and the Philadelphia 76ers in the Eastern Division finals.

Russell led the Celtics back to titles in 1968 and '69, each time winning seven-game playoff series against Chamberlain. Russell retired after the '69 finals, returning for a relatively successful — but unfulfilling — four-year stint as coach and GM of the Seattle SuperSonics and a less fruitful half season as coach of the Sacramento Kings.

Russell's No. 6 jersey was retired by the Celtics in 1972. He earned spots on the NBA's 25th anniversary all-time team in 1970, 35th anniversary team in 1980 and 75th anniversary team. In 1996, he was hailed as one of the NBA's 50 greatest players.

In 2009, the MVP trophy of the NBA Finals was named in his honor. (Russell never won the honor, because it was awarded for the first time in 1969.) He presented his namesake trophy for many years, the last in 2019 to Kawhi Leonard; Russell was not there in 2020 because of the NBA bubble nor in 2021 due to COVID-19 concerns.

In 2013, a statue was unveiled on Boston's City Hall Plaza of Russell surrounded by blocks of granite with quotes on leadership and character. Russell was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1975 but

did not attend the ceremony, saying he should not have been the first African American elected. (Chuck Cooper, the NBA's first Black player, was his choice.)

In 2019, Russell accepted his Hall of Fame ring in a private gathering.

"I felt others before me should have had that honor," he tweeted. "Good to see progress."

But to Jordan, Russell stood alone.

"Bill Russell was a pioneer — as a player, as a champion, as the NBA's first Black head coach and as an activist," the former Chicago Bulls star and current Charlotte Hornets majority owner said. "He paved the way and set an example for every Black player who came into the league after him, including me. The world has lost a legend."

Russell's family said arrangements for the memorial service will be announced in the coming days.

Infrastructure damage hampers flood recovery in Kentucky

By BRUCE SCHREINER and JOHN RABY Associated Press

HINDMAN, Ky. (AP) — Damage to critical infrastructure and the arrival of more heavy rains hampered efforts Sunday to help Kentucky residents hit by recent massive flooding, Gov. Andy Beshear said.

As residents in Appalachia tried to slowly piece their lives back together, flash flood warnings were issued for at least eight eastern Kentucky counties. The National Weather Service said radar indicated up to 4 inches (10.2 centimeters) of rain fell Sunday in some areas, with more rain possible.

Beshear said the death toll climbed to 28 on Sunday from last week's storms, a number he expected to rise significantly and that it could take weeks to find all the victims.

Thirty-seven people were unaccounted for as search and rescue operations continued early Sunday, according to a daily briefing from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. A dozen shelters were open for flood victims in Kentucky with 388 occupants.

Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of the U.S. National Guard Bureau, told The Associated Press about 400 people have been rescued by National Guard helicopter. He estimated that the guard had rescued close to 20 by boat from hard-to-access areas.

At a news conference in Knott County, Beshear praised the fast arrival of FEMA trailers but noted the numerous challenges.

"We have dozens of bridges that are out — making it hard to get to people, making it hard to supply people with water," he said. "We have entire water systems down that we are working hard to get up."

Beshear said it will remain difficult, even a week from now, to "have a solid number on those accounted for. It's communications issues — it's also not necessarily, in some of these areas, having a firm number of how many people were living there in the first place."

The governor also talked about the selflessness he's seen among Kentucky residents suffering from the floods.

"Many people that have lost everything but they're not even getting goods for themselves, they're getting them for other people in their neighborhoods, making sure that their neighbors are OK," Beshear said.

Among the stories of survival that continue to emerge, a 17-year-old girl whose home in Whitesburg was flooded Thursday put her dog in a plastic container and swam 70 yards to safety on a neighbor's roof. Chloe Adams waited hours until daylight before a relative in a kayak arrived and moved them to safety, first taking her dog, Sandy, and then the teenager.

"My daughter is safe and whole tonight," her father, Terry Adams, said in a Facebook post. "We lost everything today ... everything except what matters most."

On an overcast morning in downtown Hindman, about 200 miles (322 kilometers) southeast of Louisville, a crew cleared debris piled along storefronts. Nearby, a vehicle was perched upside down in Troublesome Creek, now back within its debris-littered banks.

Workers toiled nonstop through mud-caked sidewalks and roads.

"We're going to be here unless there's a deluge," said Tom Jackson, who is among the workers.

Jackson was with a crew from Corbin, Kentucky, where he's the city's recycling director, about a two-

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hour drive from Hindman.

His crew worked all day Saturday, and the mud and debris were so thick that they managed to clear one-eighth of a mile of roadway. The water rushing off the hillsides had so much force that it bent road signs.

"I've never seen water like this," Jackson said.

Attendance was down for the Sunday morning service at Hindman's First Baptist Church. Parishioners who rarely miss a service were instead back home tending to cleanup duties caused by floodwaters and mud.

The Rev. Mike Caudill said his church has pitched in to help the reeling community, serving meals and setting up tents for people to pick up cleaning and personal hygiene supplies.

Totes filled with clothes and photos were stacked on retired teacher Teresa Perry Reynolds' front porch, along with furniture too badly damaged to salvage.

"There are memories there," she said of the family photos she and her husband were able to gather.

Her husband's wallet, lost as they escaped the fast-rising water Thursday to go to a neighbor's house, was later found.

"All I know is I'm homeless and I've got people taking care of me," she said.

Parts of eastern Kentucky received between 8 and 10 1/2 inches (20-27 centimeters) over 48 hours. About 13,000 utility customers in Kentucky remained without power Sunday, poweroutage.us reported.

President Joe Biden declared a federal disaster to direct relief money to more than a dozen Kentucky counties.

Last week's flooding extended to West Virginia, where Gov. Jim Justice declared a state of emergency for six southern counties, and to Virginia, where Gov. Glenn Youngkin also made an emergency declaration that enabled officials to mobilize resources across the flooded southwest portion of the state.

England beats Germany in extra time to win Euro 2022

LONDON (AP) — Just when it seemed England might again be weighed down by expectations and history, Chloe Kelly made the breakthrough.

Kelly's goal in the second half of extra time — the first time she had ever scored in a competitive international game — propelled England to its first major women's soccer title on Sunday, beating Germany 2-1.

By the time Kelly scored, England looked to be tiring, even with the boost of the home crowd, and struggling to deal with Germany's fresh substitute players. The game had finished 1-1 after 90 minutes at Wembley Stadium with Lina Magull for Germany canceling out Ella Toone's goal for England.

Then Kelly prodded in a loose ball at the second attempt in the 110th minute after Germany failed to clear a corner. Cue the celebrations, chants on Trafalgar Square, and congratulations from the queen.

"I always believed I'd be here, but to be here and score the winner, wow. These girls are amazing," said Kelly, who returned from a serious knee injury in April. "This is amazing, I just want to celebrate now."

Kelly took her shirt off to celebrate her goal, earning a yellow card but also a shout-out from Brandi Chastain, who celebrated in similar style when her penalty kick won the World Cup for the U.S. in 1999. "Enjoy the free rounds of pints and dinners for the rest of your life from all of England. Cheers!" Chastain wrote on Twitter.

After the final whistle, the England players danced and the crowd sang their anthem "Sweet Caroline." The good-natured atmosphere inside the stadium Sunday drew contrasts with the violent scenes when the England men's team lost its European Championship final to Italy at the same stadium a year ago.

The tournament-record crowd of more than 87,000 underlined the growth of women's soccer in Europe since the last time England and Germany played for a continental title 13 years ago.

On that occasion, Germany surged to a 6-2 win over an England team which still relied on part-time players. Two years later, England launched its Women's Super League, which has professionalized the game and grown into one of the main competitions worldwide.

That has meant increasing competition for Germany, which was a pioneering nation in European women's soccer and increasingly faces well-funded rivals like England, Spain and France.

England's title comes 56 years after the nation's only major men's title which was also an extra-time win

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at Wembley over Germany at the 1966 World Cup. Queen Elizabeth II's congratulatory message called the England team an "inspiration for girls and women today, and for future generations."

The players, too, are conscious of how their success has important consequences.

"We talked and talked and finally we did it," England captain Leah Williamson said. "It's the proudest moment of my life so I'm going to lap it up and take every single second in. The legacy of this tournament and this team is a change in society. We've brought everyone together."

On Sunday, Germany was without captain Alexandra Popp — the team's leading scorer with six goals — after she reported a muscle problem in the warmup. She was replaced in the lineup by Schüller while Svenja Huth took over as captain.

The game was goalless after a physical first half in which Ellen White shot narrowly over the bar for England, while Marina Hegering nearly forced the ball in for Germany at a corner before Williamson and Earps intervened.

Either team could have had a penalty in the opening half, first when the ball seemed to touch Williamson's arm as she cleared, and later when Hegering dived to clear the ball and collided with Lucy Bronze.

Ella Toone latched onto a long pass from Keira Walsh to get in behind the German defense in the 62nd minute and cleverly sent a lobbed shot over goalkeeper Merle Frohms and into the net for the opening goal.

Toone's goal, six minutes after she entered the game from the bench, sparked celebrations as England manager Sarina Wiegman — the winning coach with the Netherlands in 2017 — raised both arms in joy.

Facing its first defeat in nine European finals, Germany came close when Lea Schüller hit the post and then leveled the score in the 79th when Lina Magull knocked a low cross past England goalkeeper Mary Earps, taking the game to extra time.

When the game went to extra time there were echoes of another European Championship final at the same venue the year before, when the England men's team had a 1-0 lead but lost on penalties to Italy, but Kelly's goal changed all that. England took control of the game in the final minutes, denying Germany chances for a second equalizer.

After the final whistle, Popp joined her teammates on the field and, with midfielder Lena Oberdorf, was comforted by England's Georgia Stanway.

England's jubilant players entered Wiegman's post-match news conference singing "It's Coming Home" as they celebrated their dramatic win.

Wiegman was in the middle of the news conference when her squad burst into the room, singing and dancing around the top table.

Goalkeeper Earps even climbed on top of the table to continue dancing as the celebrations looked set to continue late into the evening.

Wiegman remains unbeaten in 12 games as coach at the European Championships after winning the tournament first with the Netherlands and now with England. One of her first moves after England won was to share a hug with 35-year-old midfielder Jill Scott, the only remaining player on either team from England's 2009 loss to Germany.

The game was refereed by Ukrainian Kateryna Monzul, who fled her home country after Russia invaded. One of Europe's leading referees, Monzul left her home in Kharkiv -- a major city which has been heavily bombarded by Russian forces -- and spent five days living in a basement at her parents' house before leaving the country and eventually living and working in Italy.

17-year-old killed, 4 hurt in stabbings on Wisconsin river

SOMERSET, Wis. (AP) — A Minnesota teenager died and four other people were seriously hurt after being stabbed while tubing down a Wisconsin river, authorities said.

St. Croix County Sheriff Scott Knudson the victims and suspect, a 52-year-old Prior Lake, Minnesota man, were all on the Apple River when the attack happened Saturday afternoon. Knudson said investigators were working to determine what led to the stabbings and whether the victims and suspect knew each other. They were tubing with two different groups that included about 20 people.

"We don't know yet who was connected to who, who knew each other or what precipitated it," Knudson

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said.

The knife attack happened on a difficult-to-access section of the river near the town of Somerset, Wisconsin, which is about 35 miles (56 kilometers) east of Minneapolis. The suspect was arrested about an hour and a half later while getting off the river downstream.

"Thank goodness a witness had taken a photo of him," Knudson told the Minneapolis Star Tribune. "Another witness located him at the exit of the tubing area, where he was taken into custody."

A 17-year-old boy from Stillwater, Minnesota, died. Two of the other victims were flown to a hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota, and two others were taken there by ambulance. The sheriff's office said Sunday that the condition of all four surviving victims — a woman and three men in their 20s — ranged from serious to critical. They suffered stab wounds to their chests and torsos.

The sheriff's office didn't name the victims, but did provide a few details about them. The victims included a 20-year-old man and a 22-year-old man from Luck, Wisconsin; a 22-year-old man from Elk River, Minnesota; and a 24-year-old woman from Burnsville, Minnesota;

The name of the suspect wasn't immediately released, but St. Croix County jail records show a 52-year-old man was being held without bond on suspicion of first-degree homicide, four counts of aggravated battery and four counts of mayhem.

Appreciation: Bill Russell lived a life like very few others

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

Bill Russell hated autographs. Saw no point to them. If he was out dining and got approached by someone asking for his signature, Russell's usual response was to instead ask the person to join him at the table to have a conversation about life.

The autograph-seekers almost always declined.

Oh, the stories they missed.

Russell, the greatest winner in the history of team sports, died Sunday at 88. The basketball legacy is beyond well-known: 11 championships in 13 years with the Boston Celtics, first Black coach in the NBA, first Black coach to win an NBA title, Hall of Fame player, Hall of Fame coach, Olympic champion, NCAA champion, member of the league's 75th anniversary team, and the namesake of the NBA Finals MVP award which, had it existed when he played, he would have won at least a half-dozen times.

But if those souvenir hounds had taken Russell up on the chance to sit with him for a meal, they might have heard about his obsession with golf. Or the mating habits of bees, something he penned a column about once. Or expensive cars with souped-up sound systems so he could blare the music of Laura Nyro, Janis Ian, or Crosby, Stills and Nash — some of his favorites.

"His mind was bigger than basketball," author Taylor Branch, who spent about a year living with Russell near Seattle in the 1970s while working with him on a book, said Sunday. "And so was his personality, as great as he was in basketball."

Take away all the on-court accomplishments, and Russell still lived a life.

He stood side-by-side with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s, the height of the civil rights movement. He was in the audience when King delivered the "I Have A Dream" speech in Washington in 1963. He marched in Mississippi after the slaying of civil rights leader Medgar Evers. He supported Muhammad Ali when the fighter refused to go to Vietnam. He helped start the National Basketball Players Association. President Barack Obama — at about 6-foot-2, a taller-than-average individual — had to stretch a bit when draping the Presidential Medal of Freedom around Russell's neck in 2011, even after Russell crouched down to accommodate the moment.

"He endured insults and vandalism, but he kept on focusing on making the teammates who he loved better players, and made possible the success of so many who would follow," Obama said that day. "And I hope that one day, in the streets of Boston, children will look up at a statue built not only to Bill Russell the player, but Bill Russell the man."

Russell once got asked a question about being a Black star in Boston, a city with a complicated history when it comes to race. The premise was that it had to be difficult for Russell to live in such a place, to

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play for fans in such a city.

"What I ascribed to do, and I did quite well, is every time I came into an adversarial situation, I decided to take control of it so that if a guy came up to me and tried to give me a bad day, I made sure that he was the one who left with the bad day," Russell said. "And so, to do this took thought, planning and discretion and intelligence. That was the way I conducted my life."

Case in point: The apparent invasion of raccoons into Reading, Massachusetts, around 1958.

In his second season with the Celtics, Russell bought a house in Reading. He left for a road trip and his garbage cans got turned over. Same thing happened during the season's second road trip. Russell went to the police, who surmised that raccoons must be the culprits. Russell asked for a gun permit.

"The raccoons heard about that," Russell said. "Never turned the trash cans over again."

The gun never got purchased, either.

It would be a disservice — an insult, really — to look at Russell as only a basketball player, even as one of the greatest ever. He's still second on the NBA's all-time rebounding list, behind only Wilt Chamberlain, and will probably be in that spot forever since nobody has come remotely close to him in the last 50 years. He won five MVP awards, tied for second-most with Michael Jordan, one behind Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's league record.

"That's what I did," Russell said in 2009. "It wasn't who I was."

That's the lesson. He didn't shut up and dribble. He stood for what he believed, stood with who he believed in. Being fearless on the basketball court was easy. Being fearless in the real world — even when dealing with matters of race in some of the nation's darkest times on that topic — was somehow even easier.

"He had such curiosity about human nature, about psychology," Branch said. "It was a treasure for me to be around Bill and see how he viewed the world in all of its dimensions."

The world has many of them. So did Russell. And on Sunday, the world lost an absolute legend.

Oh, the stories we will miss.

Drone explosion hits Russia's Black Sea Fleet headquarters

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A small explosive device carried by a makeshift drone blew up Sunday at the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet on the Crimean Peninsula, wounding six people and prompting the cancellation of ceremonies there honoring Russia's navy, authorities said.

Meanwhile, one of Ukraine's richest men, a grain merchant, was killed in what Ukrainian authorities said was a carefully targeted Russian missile strike on his home.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the drone explosion in a courtyard at the naval headquarters in the city of Sevastopol. But the seemingly improvised, small-scale nature of the attack raised the possibility that it was the work of Ukrainian insurgents trying to drive out Russian forces.

A Russian lawmaker from Crimea, Olga Kovitidi, told Russian state news agency RIA-Novosti that the drone was launched from Sevastopol itself. She said the incident was being treated as a terrorist act, the news agency said.

Crimean authorities raised the terrorism threat level for the region to "yellow," the second-highest tier.

Sevastopol, which was seized along with the rest of Crimea from Ukraine by Russia in 2014, is about 170 kilometers (100 miles) south of the Ukrainian mainland. Russian forces control much of the mainland along the Black Sea.

The Black Sea Fleet's press service said the drone appeared to be homemade. It described the explosive device as "low-power." Sevastopol Mayor Mikhail Razvozhaev said six people were wounded. Observances of Russia's Navy Day holiday were canceled in the city.

Ukraine's navy and an adviser to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the reported drone attack underlined the weakness of Russian air defenses.

"Did the occupiers admit the helplessness of their air defense system? Or their helplessness in front of the Crimean partisans?" Oleksiy Arestovich said on Telegram.

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If such an attack is possible by Ukraine, he said, "the destruction of the Crimean bridge in such situations no longer sounds unrealistic" — a reference to the span that Russia built to connect its mainland to Crimea after the annexation.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, the mayor of the major port city of Mykolaiv, Vitaliy Kim, said shelling killed one of Ukraine's wealthiest men, Oleksiy Vadatursky, and his wife, Raisa. Vadatursky headed a grain production and export business.

Another presidential adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, said Vadatursky was specifically targeted.

It "was not an accident, but a well-thought-out and organized premeditated murder. Vadatursky was one of the largest farmers in the country, a key person in the region and a major employer. That the exact hit of a rocket was not just in a house, but in a specific wing, the bedroom, leaves no doubt about aiming and adjusting the strike," he said.

Vadatursky's agribusiness, Nibulon, includes a fleet of ships for sending grain abroad.

In the Sumy region in Ukraine's north, near the Russian border, shelling killed one person, the regional administration said. And three people died in attacks over the past day in the Donetsk region, which is partly under the control of Russian-backed separatist forces, said regional Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko.

Podolyak said on Twitter that images of the prison where at least 53 Ukrainian prisoners of war were killed in an explosion on Friday indicated that the blast came from within the building in Olenivka, which is under Russian control.

Russian officials have claimed the building was attacked by Ukraine with the aim of silencing POWs who might be giving information about Ukrainian military operations. Ukraine has blamed Russia for the explosion, saying it was done to cover up the torture and execution of prisoners.

Satellite photos taken before and after show that a small, squarish building in the middle of the prison complex was demolished, its roof in splinters.

Podolyak said those images and the lack of damage to adjacent structures showed that the building was not attacked from the air or by artillery. He contended the evidence was consistent with a thermobaric bomb, a powerful device sometimes called a vacuum bomb, being set off inside.

The International Red Cross asked to immediately visit the prison to make sure the scores of wounded POWs had proper treatment, but said Sunday that its request had yet to be granted. It said that denying the Red Cross access would violate the Geneva Convention on the rights of POWs.

Meanwhile, Zelenskyy said that the war has significantly reduced the size of Ukraine's grain harvest compared with past years, but that Ukraine is working on ways to export what it has to avoid a global food crisis.

"The Ukrainian harvest this year is in danger of being half as large," he said on Twitter.

Russia and Ukraine recently reached an agreement that would allow the release of millions of tons of grain held up in Black Sea ports. Officials have said they expect the shipments to begin soon.

It's coming home! England rejoices as soccer women win Euros

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — "It's coming home!"

England won a major international soccer tournament on Sunday for the first time in more than half a century. The fact it was the women's team, not the men's, that ended decades of pain made it all the sweeter for many fans.

Crowds erupted in joy at London's Wembley Stadium, at fan zones across the country and in pubs, clubs and living rooms as the whistle blew after extra time with the score England 2, Germany 1. It was the first-ever European victory for England's Lionesses, and the first major international trophy for any England team — male or female — since 1966.

In London's Trafalgar Square, fans chanted "It's coming home!" — a reference to the England anthem "Three Lions," with its chorus "football's coming home" — and jumped into public fountains in celebration.

"I'm so happy," said 24-year-old Becca Stewart. "It shows that after all these years, women's football is

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something to care about and something to scream about. We did it — the men couldn't do it but we did!" At Wembley, the crowd broke into "Sweet Caroline," the Neil Diamond song that has become a soccer anthem.

"The girls finally brought football home," said Mary Caine, who attended the game with her 8-year-old daughter. "We're delighted! It's historic. It was magic in there and a breakthrough moment for women's sport."

Whatever the outcome had been, the Lionesses have energized a nation and brought interest in women's sport in Britain to an entirely new level. Their success has provided a welcome distraction from the U.K.'s political turmoil and its cost-of-living crisis amid soaring prices for food and fuel.

The final was watched by a record crowd of more than 87,000 at Wembley and a huge TV audience, after a tournament that received an unprecedented level of media coverage. More than 9 million people watched the broadcast of England's 4-0 semi-final win over Sweden last week.

Before Sunday, no U.K. team -- England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland -- had won a major international soccer tournament since England's victory over West Germany in the 1966 men's World Cup.

At that time, women's teams were banned from using facilities by the Football Association, the sport's governing body in England. The FA had ruled in 1921 that "the game of football is quite unsuitable for females and ought not to be encouraged." The ban was not lifted until 50 years later.

Now, said Jade Monroe, watching the women's final on big screens in Trafalgar Square, her 6-year-old daughter will know she can do "anything she wants in life."

England's trophy drought was almost broken a year ago when the men got to the final of a pandemic-delayed Euro 2020 competition, only to lose to Italy in a penalty shootout.

The dynamic men's team under coach Gareth Southgate was also hailed as a team that represented modern Britain -- a multi-ethnic squad whose members took a knee against racism before games, supported LGBT pride, campaigned hard against poverty and vanquished longstanding rivals like Germany.

The 2021 men's Euros final was marred by some drunken disorder outside Wembley Stadium, however, and racist social media messages directed at some players after England's defeat were a reminder that there's still a long way to go.

There was no repeat of the boorish behavior at Sunday's match, where the crowd included many families with soccer-mad girls.

Girls in many parts of England still have far fewer opportunities to play than boys, and the national women's team lacks the diversity of the men's side. But its stars have thrilled a nation.

Mitra Wilson, who watched the final in Trafalgar Square, said the team was an inspiration to her daughters, aged 8 and 9.

"It is empowering them to know they can do it and nothing has to hold them back," she said.

Doctor: Biden tests positive for COVID for 2nd day in a row

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden tested positive for COVID-19 for the second straight day, in what appears to be a rare case of "rebound" following treatment with an anti-viral drug.

In a letter noting the positive test, Dr. Kevin O'Connor, the White House physician, said Sunday that the president "continues to feel well" and will keep on working from the executive residence while he isolates.

Biden tested positive on Saturday, requiring him to cancel travel and in-person events as he isolates for at least five days in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

After initially testing positive on July 21, Biden, 79, was treated with the anti-viral drug Paxlovid. He tested negative for the virus this past Tuesday and Wednesday, clearing him to leave isolation while wearing a mask indoors.

Research suggests that a minority of those prescribed Paxlovid experience a rebound case of the virus. The fact that a rebound rather than a reinfection possibly occurred is a positive sign for Biden's health once he's clear of the disease.

"The fact that the president has cleared his illness and doesn't have symptoms is a good sign and makes it less likely he will develop long COVID," said Dr. Albert Ho, an infectious disease specialist at Yale University's school of public health.

Part of Beirut port silos, damaged in 2020 blast, collapses

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A section of Beirut's massive port grain silos, shredded in the 2020 explosion, collapsed in a huge cloud of dust on Sunday after a weekslong fire, triggered by grains that had fermented and ignited in the summer heat.

The northern block of the silos toppled after what sounded like an explosion, kicking up thick gray dust that enveloped the iconic structure and the port next to a residential area. It was not immediately clear if anyone was injured.

Assaad Haddad the General Director of the Port Silo, told The Associated Press that "everything is under control" but that the situation has not subsided yet. Minutes later, the dust subsided and calm returned.

However, Youssef Mallah, from the Civil Defense department, said that other parts of the silos' northern block were at risk and that other sections of the giant ruin could collapse.

The 50 year-old, 48 meter (157 feet) tall silos had withstood the force of the explosion two years ago, effectively shielding the western part of Beirut from the blast that killed over 200 people, injured more than 6,000 and badly damaged entire neighborhoods.

In July, a fire broke out in the northern block of the silos due to the fermenting grains. Firefighters and Lebanese Army soldiers were unable to put it out and it smoldered for weeks, a nasty smell spreading around. The environment and health ministries last week issued instructions to residents living near the port to stay indoors in well-ventilated spaces.

The fire and the dramatic sight of the partially blackened silo revived memories and in some cases, the trauma for the survivors of the gigantic explosion that tore through the port on Aug. 4, 2020.

Many rushed to close windows and return indoors after the collapse Sunday.

Rima Zahed, whose brother died in the 2020 blast and who has been part of a survivors' group lobbying for the preservation of the silos as a testament to the port explosion, blamed the government for not taking action to put out the weekslong fire.

"We were talking about this three weeks ago, but they chose to do nothing and leave it on fire," she said. "This shows the state's failure."

When the fermenting grains ignited earlier in July, Lebanese firefighters and army soldiers had tried to put out the fire, but officials and experts told them to stop, fearing the additional moisture from the water would worsen the situation. The Interior Ministry said over a week later that the fire had spread, after reaching some electric cables nearby.

The silos continued smoldering for weeks as the stench of the fermented grains seeped into nearby neighborhoods. Residents and survivors of the explosion told the AP that seeing the smoking silos was akin to reliving their trauma of the port blast. The environment and health ministries last week instructed residents living near the port to stay indoors in well-ventilated spaces.

The Lebanese Red Cross distributed K-N95 masks to those living nearby, and officials ordered firefighters and port workers to stay away from the immediate area near the silos.

Emmanuel Durand, a French civil engineer who volunteered for the government-commissioned team of experts, told the AP earlier in July that the northern block of the silo had been slowly tilting over time but that the recent fire accelerated the rate and caused irreversible damage to the already weakened structure. He told the AP on Sunday that he sent warnings that other parts of the northern block may also collapse imminently.

Durand has been monitoring the silos from thousands of miles away using data produced by sensors he installed over a year ago, and updating a team of Lebanese government and security officials on the developments in a WhatsApp group. He repeatedly warned that a collapse was imminent.

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Last April, the Lebanese government decided to demolish the silos, but suspended the decision following protests from families of the blast's victims and survivors. They contend that the silos may contain evidence useful for the judicial probe, and that it should stand as a memorial for the tragic incident.

The Beirut Port blast was one of the largest explosions in Lebanon's troubled history. It took place less than a year after an uprising rocked Lebanon, with hundreds of thousands protesting the country's entrenched sectarian political parties. The blast also precipitated Lebanon's economic crisis, costing billions of dollars in damages and destroying thousands of tons of grain. Three-quarters of the population now lives in poverty.

The silos, barely standing, have since become an iconic structure in the heart of the devastated port, surrounded to this day by crushed vehicles and warehouses, and piles of debris.

Sunday's collapse of a part of the silos' northern section comes just days ahead of the second anniversary of 2020 explosion.

The Lebanese probe has revealed that senior government and security officials knew about the dangerous material stored at the port, though no officials have been convicted thus far. The implicated officials subsequently brought legal challenges against the judge leading the probe, which has left the investigation suspended since December.

Manchin demurs on Biden in 2024 and Dem majorities this year

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Joe Manchin, one of the Democrats' most conservative and contrarian members, declined on Sunday to endorse Joe Biden if the president seeks a second term in 2024 and refused to say whether he wants Democrats to retain control of Congress after the November elections.

In a round of appearances on five news shows, the West Virginia senator also expressed hope that Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., will back a Democratic package of climate, health care and tax initiatives that he negotiated. She joined Manchin last year in forcing cuts and changes in larger versions of the plan, and support from every Democrat in the 50-50 Senate — plus Vice President Kamala Harris' tiebreaking vote — is needed to overcome anticipated unanimous Republican opposition in votes expected this week. Sinema has declined to tell reporters her stance.

"I would like to think she would be favorable toward it," he said.

But beyond that, Manchin demurred when pressed about supporting his party or its nominee for president in upcoming elections.

"I'm not getting into 2022 or 2024," he said, adding that "whoever is my president, that's my president."

Manchin said control of Congress will be determined by the choices of voters in individual states, rather than his own preferences. People "are sick and tired of politics," he said, and want their representatives in Washington to put country over party.

The senator faces reelection in 2024 in a state where Donald Trump prevailed in every county in the past two presidential races, winning more than two-thirds of West Virginia's voters. But in distancing himself from fellow Democrats, Manchin also tried to decry the rise of partisanship and suggested America's path forward will need to move beyond traditional party-line politics.

His national TV interviews culminated a high-profile week in which his compromise with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., revived a package of White House priorities on climate, health care, taxes and deficit reduction. Manchin had torpedoed a grander plan last December and previously lowered expectations about a substantial agreement being reached.

Both he and Sinema were previously aligned in opposing plans from Democratic senators to spend as much as \$3.5 trillion on a climate and social justice bill. Sinema, however, was cut out of the most recent discussions on the bill, which would narrow the so-called carried interest loophole, bringing in \$14 billion of the proposal's \$739 billion in new revenues. Sinema has previously opposed doing that.

Manchin said Sunday he did not brief Sinema or anyone else in the Democratic caucus on negotiations because of the risk that discussions would fall through. Acknowledging he has not tried to speak to Sinema

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since announcing the deal, Manchin said there were plenty of reasons she would be "positive about it." He said the plan, the "Inflation Reduction Act," would help with manufacturing jobs, reduce deficits by \$300 billion, lower prescription drug prices and accelerate the permitting process for energy production. Sinema "has an awful lot in this piece of legislation the way it's been designed as far as the reduction of Medicare, letting Medicare go ahead and negotiate for lower drug prices," Manchin said. He defended the 15% minimum tax on corporations with \$1 billion or more of earnings as closing "loop-holes," rather than an outright tax increase.

"I agree with her 100 percent we're not going to raise taxes, and we don't," he said. Schumer wants Senate passage this coming week, though he acknowledged that timeline is "going to be hard" because it will take time for the chamber's parliamentarian to make sure the bill conforms to Senate rules.

In the House, Democrats have a 220-211 edge, with four vacancies, leaving little margin for error for passage.

Manchin offered praise for Biden in regard to the bill because "you don't do a bill this magnitude and this size without the president knowing what's going on, the president being involved in, to a certain extent, but also giving approval." But in midterm elections, voters often reject the party that holds the White House and this year, Biden's unpopularity and rising inflation are creating strong headwinds for Democrats.

Manchin demurred when asked whether he hoped Democrats would keep their majorities in Congress. "I think people are sick and tired of politics, I really do. I think they're sick and tired of Democrats and Republicans fighting and feuding and holding pieces of legislation hostage because they didn't get what they wanted," he said, adding, "I'm not going to predict what's going to happen."

Manchin appeared on NBC's "Meet the Press," CNN's "State of the Union," ABC's "This Week," "Fox News Sunday" and CBS' "Face the Nation."

Van Vleuten wins women's Tour de France for 1st time

PLANCHE DES BELLES FILLES, France (AP) — Veteran rider Annemiek van Vleuten won the women's Tour de France for the first time on Sunday after clinching the eighth and final stage in style.

The 39-year-old Van Vleuten won the stage by 30 seconds from Dutch countrywoman Demi Vollering, who also finished the race second overall. Italian rider Silvia Persico was third in the stage, 1 minute, 43 seconds behind the winner.

In the overall standings, Movistar rider Van Vleuten was 3:48 clear of Vollering (Team SD Worx) and 6:35 ahead of Polish rider Katarzyna Niewiadoma (Canyon-SRAM) in third spot.

Van Vleuten had just about enough energy to punch the air in delight when crossing the line after the 123-kilometer (76-mile) mountain stage in the Vosges mountains of eastern France. It featured two category 1 climbs, the second ascent being the stage-ending trek up La Super Planche des Belles Filles, which finished with a daunting gradient of 23%.

She entered the final stage with a lead of 3:14 seconds over Vollering.

On Saturday's penultimate stage, Van Vleuten rose from eighth overall to take the yellow jersey from Marianne Vos with more superb climbing in the Vosges.

Van Vleuten added this victory to a long list of achievements, including three Giro d'Italia Femminile titles, Olympic gold in time trial and two world championship golds in the same discipline.

Six years ago, her career was under threat after she sustained fractures to her spine and was placed in intensive care after crashing during the women's Olympic road race at the Brazil Games.

Vos was among the favorites, but the three-time Giro d'Italia champion ended up in 26th place overall.

Iraq cleric's followers camped out in parliament for 2nd day

By SAMYA KULLAB and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press
BAGHDAD (AP) — With mattresses strewn about, food trucked in and protesters playacting as lawmakers, hundreds of followers of an influential Shiite cleric were camped out Sunday inside the Iraqi parliament

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after toppling security walls around the building and storming in the previous day.

The protesters — followers of cleric Muqtada al-Sadr — pledged to hold an open-ended sit-in to derail efforts by their rivals from Iran-backed political groups to form the country's next government. Their demands are lofty: early elections, constitutional amendments and the ouster of al-Sadr's opponents.

The developments have catapulted Iraq's politics to center stage, plunging the country deeper into a political crisis as a power struggle unfolds between the two major Shiite groups.

Al-Sadr has not visited the scene but egged his loyalists on, tweeting on Sunday that the sit-in was "a great opportunity to radically challenge the political system, the constitution, and the elections." He called on all Iraqis to join the "revolution," an indication the sit-in will likely become a drawn-out event.

On Sunday, the sit-in appeared more of a joyous celebration than a political protest — al-Sadr's followers were dancing, praying and chanting slogans inside the parliament, in praise of their leader. In between, they took naps on mattresses lining the grand halls.

It was a scene starkly different from the one on Saturday, when protesters used ropes and chains to topple concrete walls around the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad, then flooded into the assembly building. It was the second such breach last week, but this time they did not disperse peacefully.

Iraqi security forces fired tear gas and stun grenades at first, to try to repel the demonstrators. The Ministry of Health said about 125 people were injured in the violence — 100 protesters and 25 members of the security forces. Within a few hours, the police backed off, leaving the parliament to the protesters.

The takeover of the parliament showed al-Sadr was using his large grassroots following as a pressure tactic against his rivals in the Coordination Framework — an alliance of Shiite parties backed by Iran and lead by former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki — after his party was not able to form a government despite having won the largest number of seats in the federal elections held last October.

Neither side appears willing to concede and al-Sadr seems intent on derailing government formation efforts by the Iran-backed groups.

But there were red-lines — the road to the judicial council building nearby was closed, with heavy security presence around it. Breaching the building would amount to a coup, and al-Sadr had ordered his followers to steer clear of it.

The protesters appeared prepared for the long-haul — or at least an extended sit-in.

Tuk-tuks, a mainstay of transportation in the impoverished Baghdad suburb of Sadr City from where the cleric derives much of his following, shuttled demonstrators to and from the parliament for a fee of 1,000 Iraqi dinars, or 60 cents.

Coolers were set up and water bottles were passed around. A child handed out sweets while teenagers sold juice from sacks. A few women — a minority in the male-dominated demonstration — swept the floors.

Outside, garbage from food packages and other trash littered the street leading up to the parliament gate while trucks brought in giant cauldrons of steaming rice and beans to feed the protesters. Signs nearby read: "Revolution Restaurant"

Al-Sadr's portraits hung everywhere. Many protesters smoked, tossing cigarette butts on the floor, and cigarette smoke filled the assembly.

A young man, Samir Aziz Abbas sold popsicles. "I am here to make a living," he said, wiping the sweat from his brow.

One protester, Haidar Jameel assumed the seat of Parliament Speaker Mohammed Halbousi — among the most powerful political figures in Iraq — and from it, looked on at his rowdy fellow demonstrators. After al-Sadr's followers took over the parliament, Halbousi had suspended future sessions until further notice.

"We will not back down until our demands are met," Jameel declared.

Al-Sadr's support base consists largely of impoverished Iraqis living in the slums of Baghdad, attracted by calls against corruption. But al-Sadr is also an establishment figure, with many civil servants appointed by his party throughout the state apparatus.

By choosing to stage his protest ahead of the Shiite Islam's holy day of Ashura, al-Sadr capitalized on a moment when religious fervor runs high — protesters performed religious rituals inside the parliament.

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At midday, an imam led a prayer in the central lobby.

Ashura commemorates the killing of the Prophet Muhammed's grandson, Imam Hussein. Iraqis typically march in the thousands to commemorate the day in the holy city of Karbala and emotions run high in the days leading up to it.

According to Shiite religious belief, one way of showing love toward Imam Hussein is to rise against oppression.

Al-Sadr's messaging to his followers is imbued with references to the pilgrimage, said Marsin Alshamary, a post-doctoral fellow at the Brookings Institution.

For the protesters, most of them young men, the sit-in offers a chance to come close to the seat of power in a system that has long neglected them. Before, they would not have been able to enter the heavily fortified zone without permission.

When Meethak Muhi took his turn to sit in the seat of the deputy speaker of parliament, he tied himself to the chair with a scarf.

"The parliament, it's finished," he shouted.

'DC League of Super-Pets' takes No. 1 with \$23 million

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

The summer box office showed signs of slowing down this weekend as the animated "DC League of Super-Pets" opened in theaters across North America.

The superhero spinoff about Superman's dog earned \$23 million from 4,314 locations, according to studio estimates Sunday. Though slightly less than expected, it was still enough to capture the first-place spot and knock Jordan Peele's "Nope" into second place in its second weekend.

Analysts had pegged "DC League of Super-Pets" for a \$25 million launch, which was on the lower end for animated openings this summer. In June, the \$50.6 million for "Lightyear" was considered underwhelming for the \$200 million Disney/Pixar movie. Then in early July, Universal's "Minions: The Rise of Gru" captured \$107 million in its first three days.

But "Super-Pets" is more comparable to Universal's "The Bad Guys," which netted out with around \$97 million domestic after a \$23 million opening, and it's much, much stronger than Paramount's "Paws of Fury: The Legend of Hank's" \$6.3 million debut several weeks ago.

"This opening is a huge win for DC fans, the box office, WB and our filmmakers," said Jeff Goldstein, the studio's president of domestic distribution.

"DC League of Super-Pets" was not intended to be a midsummer release. Originally, "Super-Pets" had been slated for May, while this weekend was reserved for "Black Adam," Warner Bros.' other Dwayne Johnson superhero pic. But postproduction delays due to a backup at VFX houses forced "Black Adam" to move back to October. Instead of giving up the prime date, the studio filled the open spot with a family-friendly title with an all-star voice cast, including Kevin Hart, John Krasinski, Keanu Reeves and Kate McKinnon as an evil guinea pig.

"Super-Pets" has several summer vacation weeks left with little significant competition, and the hope is that it will continue to grow steadily thanks to positive feedback from audiences this weekend. And with \$18.4 million from international showings, it has already grossed \$41.4 million globally.

"The interest is red hot," Goldstein said. "Young family movies play for a long time. Given our CinemaScore of A- and word of mouth, we're going to be around for a while."

Second place went to Universal's "Nope," which fell 57% from its debut last weekend and earned an additional \$18.6 million. The North American grosses for "Nope" are now sitting at \$80.6 million before it begins its international expansion in August.

"Thor: Love and Thunder" took third place with \$13.1 million in its fourth weekend, bringing its domestic total to \$301.5 million. Its global total is now sitting at \$662 million, without a release in China.

"Minions: The Rise of Gru" stuck its heels in fourth place in its fifth weekend with \$10.9 million. Worldwide, it has now earned \$710.4 million.

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And rounding out the top five was "Top Gun: Maverick," which made an additional \$8.2 million in its 10th weekend, bringing its domestic total to \$650.1 million.

Major new theatrical releases were limited this weekend, but gave audiences a variety of options. Focus Features debuted the film "Vengeance" in 998 locations this weekend, where it earned an estimated \$1.8 million. B.J. Novak's directorial debut follows a podcaster (Novak) who travels from New York to west Texas to investigate the death of his girlfriend. The well-reviewed thriller features Issa Rae and Ashton Kutcher. And Bleecker Street opened the Sundance charmer "A Love Song," starring Wes Studi and Dale Dickey, in four theaters, where it earned an estimated \$18,702.

Things are slowing down at the domestic box office heading into August, which is not uncommon. And there are still big films to come, like Sony's "Bullet Train" with Brad Pitt, which speeds into theaters next weekend.

"July generated over \$1 billion, and that's impressive. It's the first billion-dollar month since December 2019," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "That gives us a tailwind going into August, but don't expect any \$100 million debuts for a while."

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "DC League of Super-Pets," \$23 million.
2. "Nope," \$18.6 million.
3. "Thor: Love and Thunder," \$13.1 million.
4. "Minions: The Rise of Gru," \$10.9 million.
5. "Top Gun: Maverick," \$8.2 million.
6. "Where the Crawdads Sing," \$7.5 million.
7. "Elvis," \$5.8 million.
8. "The Black Phone," \$2.5 million.
9. "Jurassic World: Dominion," \$2.1 million.
10. "Vengeance," \$1.8 million.

South Africa's ANC says economy, corruption are priorities

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa says the fight against corruption and work to improve the country's faltering economy have been endorsed by the ruling African National Congress party in order to improve its declining electoral support.

Ramaphosa on Sunday addressed the close of the party's national policy conference where it discussed what is must do to address the country's challenges, including the high poverty levels, 35% unemployment rate and rising inflation.

"The conference has agreed that we need to allocate extraordinary and militant measures to accelerate increasing growth, create employment and alleviate poverty," said Ramaphosa.

"We have also noted with great concern the impact of the rising cost of living on South African families," said Ramaphosa of the country's inflation rate of 7.4%.

The policy meeting, seen as a preview to its conference in December where it will elect new leaders, was attended by more than 2,000 delegates.

According to Ramaphosa, the delegates also expressed concern about the country's electricity crisis, which has resulted in nationwide rolling power cuts which have hit businesses and households as the state power utility Eskom fails to keep the lights on.

The delegates supported the government's efforts to address the power cuts.

"We have recognized that our economic progress requires a secure supply of affordable and sustainable energy," said Ramaphosa.

"The conference has endorsed the actions recently announced by the government to improve the performance of Eskom's existing power stations and to add new generation capacity to the grid as quickly

as possible," said Ramaphosa.

The party's contentious step-aside policy, which requires party leaders accused of corruption to step down from their positions, was endorsed by the conference despite some opposition from rival factions within the party.

Delegates from the KwaZulu-Natal province who remain loyal to former President Jacob Zuma, have argued that the step-aside rule is not implemented consistently and is used by Ramaphosa to silence political rivals.

The policies agreed on at the conference are expected to be adopted at the national conference in December, where Ramaphosa will be seeking re-election as the party's leader.

Ukraine war hangs over UN meeting on nukes treaty's legacy

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — There was already plenty of trouble to talk about when a major U.N. meeting on the landmark Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty was originally supposed to happen in 2020.

Now the pandemic-postponed conference finally starts Monday as Russia's war in Ukraine has reanimated fears of nuclear confrontation and cranked up the urgency of trying to reinforce the 50-year-old treaty.

"It is a very, very difficult moment," said Beatrice Fihn, the executive director of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

Russia's invasion, accompanied by ominous references to its nuclear arsenal, "is so significant for the treaty and really going to put a lot of pressure on this," she said. "How governments react to the situation is going to shape future nuclear policy."

The four-week meeting aims to generate a consensus on next steps, but expectations are low for a substantial — if any — agreement.

Still, Swiss President Ignazio Cassis, prime ministers Fumio Kishida of Japan and Frank Bainimarama of Fiji, and more than a dozen nations' foreign ministers are among attendees expected from at least 116 countries, according to a U.N. official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly before the conference.

In force since 1970, the Nonproliferation Treaty has the widest adherence of any arms control agreement. Some 191 countries have joined.

Nations without nuclear weapons promised not to acquire them, while nuclear-armed Britain, China, France, Russia (then the Soviet Union) and the United States agreed to negotiate toward eliminating their arsenals someday. All endorsed everyone's right to develop peaceful nuclear energy.

India and Pakistan, which didn't sign, went on to get the bomb. So did North Korea, which ratified the pact but later announced it was withdrawing. Non-signatory Israel is believed to have a nuclear arsenal but neither confirms nor denies it.

Nonetheless, the Nonproliferation Treaty has been credited with limiting the number of nuclear newcomers (U.S. President John F. Kennedy once foresaw as many as 20 nuclear-armed nations by 1975) and serving as a framework for international cooperation on disarmament.

The total number of nuclear weapons worldwide has shrunk by more than 75% from a mid-1980s peak, largely due to the end of the Cold War between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union. But experts estimate roughly 13,000 warheads remain worldwide, the vast majority in the U.S. and Russia.

Meetings to assess how the treaty is working are supposed to happen every five years, but the 2020 conference was repeatedly delayed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Challenges have only grown in the meantime.

When launching the Ukraine war in February, Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that any attempt to interfere would lead to "consequences you have never seen" and emphasized that his country is "one of the most potent nuclear powers." Days later, Putin ordered Russia's nuclear forces to be put on higher alert, a move that U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called "bone-chilling."

"The prospect of nuclear conflict, once unthinkable, is now back within the realm of possibility," he said.

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The events in Ukraine create a tricky choice for the upcoming conference, said Patricia Lewis, a former U.N. disarmament research official who is now at the international affairs think tank Chatham House in London.

"On the one hand, in order to support the treaty and what it stands for, governments will have to address Russia's behavior and threats," she said. "On the other hand, to do so risks dividing the treaty members."

Another uncomfortable dynamic: The war has heightened some countries' apprehensions about not having nuclear weapons, especially since Ukraine once housed but gave up a trove of Soviet nukes.

Conference participants can stress other security strategies or emphasize the costs and dangers of acquiring nuclear weapons, but "it's important not to be too preachy," said Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution think tank in Washington.

"The idea that we can just look other countries in the face and say, 'You're better off without the bomb' — that's a bit of a hard argument to carry right now categorically," said O'Hanlon, a senior fellow specializing in defense and security.

Ukraine is hardly the only hot topic.

North Korea appears to have been preparing recently for its first nuclear weapons test since 2017. Talks about reviving the deal meant to keep Iran from developing nukes are in limbo.

The U.S. and Russia have only one remaining treaty curtailing their nuclear weapons and have been developing new technologies. Britain last year raised a self-imposed cap on its stockpile. China says it's modernizing — or, the U.S. claims, expanding — the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal.

Daryl Kimball, who heads the nonprofit Arms Control Association in Washington, can't recall another time when the Nonproliferation Treaty has come up for review with "so many difficulties in so many different areas, and where we have seen such severe tensions between the major players."

U.S. Ambassador Adam Scheinman, the presidential special representative for nuclear nonproliferation, said Washington hopes for a "balanced" outcome that "sets realistic goals and advances our national and international security interests."

"You can have no doubt that Russia's actions will affect the climate at the conference and prospects for an agreed outcome document. Other difficult issues may complicate this, as well. But I'm prepared to be somewhat optimistic," he said in a telephone briefing.

The Associated Press sent inquiries to Russia's U.N. mission about Moscow's goals for the conference. There was no immediate response.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said his country wants to work toward improving global nuclear governance and upholding the international order and will "firmly safeguard the legitimate security and development interests and rights of China and the developing world."

If the world can't speak with one voice, disarmament advocates say a strong statement from a large group of countries could send a meaningful message.

In recent years, frustration with the Nonproliferation Treaty catalyzed another pact that outright prohibits nuclear weapons. Ratified by over 60 countries, it took effect last year, though without any nuclear-armed nations on board.

At a recent meeting in Vienna, participating countries condemned "any and all nuclear threats" and inked a lengthy plan that includes considering an international trust fund for people harmed by nuclear weapons.

Fihn, whose Geneva-based group campaigned for the nuclear ban treaty, hopes the vigor in Vienna serves as inspiration — or notice — for countries to make progress at the U.N. conference.

"If you don't do it here," she said, "we're moving on without you elsewhere."

States boost child care money as congressional effort stalls

By MAYSOON KHAN Associated Press/Report for America

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Difficulties in finding affordable child care cost Enoshja Ruffin her job three years ago. The mother of six was let go from her position as a counselor for kids with cerebral palsy after she missed three shifts because she had trouble finding babysitters.

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After three months on a waiting list, though, she placed her children in a day care center whose cost was covered by government subsidies and the center's financial assistance program.

"Had I not gotten financial help, I would not be successful. I would not have a degree. I would just be another statistic," said Ruffin, 28, of Utica, New York, who was able to take college classes while her kids were in day care. She now works as an organizer for the liberal political group Citizen Action.

Democrats in Washington had big ambitions this year to boost child care subsidies nationally as part of a broad domestic spending bill. But with those plans stalled because of a lack of bipartisan support, some states moved ahead with plans of their own.

New York lawmakers passed a state budget in the spring that calls for it to spend \$7 billion to make child care more affordable over the next four years.

The legislation will double previous state support for government subsidies that help families shoulder part or all of their child care costs. Eligibility will be expanded to more middle-income families. Under the new rules, a family of four with an annual household income of up to \$83,250 will be eligible for subsidies.

New Mexico last spring raised income eligibility for subsidies to the highest level of any state. A family of four with an annual household income of up to \$111,000 can now qualify for at least some government aid. Until June 2023, New Mexico will also waive child care copays, which saves families \$400 to \$900 per month, based on their income level.

Rhode Island lawmakers passed a state budget last month that provides a one-time tax credit of \$250 per child to help pay for child care, nearly doubles the number of seats available in government-funded prekindergarten programs, and provides subsidies for child care workers.

All those steps were intended to address an affordability challenge. In 2019, child care centers in the U.S. charged an average of \$406 per week for children under 18 months old, \$315 per week for children ages 18-35 months and \$289 per week for 3- to 5-year-olds.

Ronora James, a child care provider based in Rochester, New York, said she lost staff to fast-food restaurants that offer competitive wages.

Child care workers made an average hourly wage of \$13.22 in the U.S. in May 2021, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The minimum wage in New York ranges from \$13.20 to \$15 per hour, depending on the part of the state.

"People have to go where the money is to survive, and that is an issue for us," James said.

"In New York City, we have some of the highest minimum wages in the country, but a minimum wage worker has to work 26 weeks at a minimum wage to pay for the child care for their family," New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, said Monday at an event promoting the state's child care investments. "That's asking too much of our families."

Although child care has seen increasing bipartisan support in recent years, some Republican leaders are cautious about expanding government aid.

"I support steps to create more quality, accessible and reliable child care options, especially as costs continue to rise," said New York's GOP Assembly Minority Leader William Barclay in a statement. "However, as we've seen repeatedly in state programs, the level of spending and how funds are distributed must be closely monitored. Too often, state-run programs spiral out of control and fail to provide the intended services. Despite the governor's lofty promises, we can't allow that to happen here."

New York's legislation also increased state reimbursements to child care providers, which the industry said was necessary to help centers remain financially viable.

Since January 2020, the number of center- and family-based child care facilities in the state has shrunk by about 1,326, according to Pete Nabozny, policy director at The Children's Agenda. Most of those programs are operated by women and people of color, he said.

Some New York lawmakers say they want to eventually make child care freely available as early as kindergarten. Sen. Jessica Ramos and Assemblymember Sarah Clark, both Democrats, said they hope to get support in the state's next legislative session for more changes, including expanding eligibility even more and boosting pay for providers.

"I think child care is one of the few places where it's hard to fix one piece of it. You have to fix the whole system at one time. I'm hoping we can continue to build on what we've done so far and do more," Clark

said.

Winning lottery jackpot is lucky for some, tragic for others

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

Dave and Erica Harrig stayed true to their values when they won a lottery jackpot of more than \$61 million in 2013. It made all the difference.

The couple from Gretna, Nebraska, a community on the outskirts of Omaha where Dave Harrig now is a volunteer firefighter, allowed themselves to buy a new home, some vintage automobiles and a few ocean cruises after they both quit their jobs.

But nine years later, they still live much as they always did, remaining in their community, keeping up with church, family and friends, and teaching their children to work hard to make a living despite any financial windfall that might come their way.

Many other winners haven't been as lucky, suffering personal setbacks and lawsuits or becoming the victims of scams. The latest winner of a big jackpot came Friday, when a single ticket sold in Illinois matched the numbers for a \$1.337 billion Mega Millions prize. Illinois is among the states where winners of more than \$250,000 can choose to not reveal their names.

Dave Harrig, an Air Force veteran who worked in aircraft maintenance, says keeping things simple probably saved him and his family from the kind of hassles and tragedies that have befallen other big winners.

Almost overnight, the Harrig family mailbox was filled with letters full of hard luck stories: sick children, lost jobs, burned out homes.

Dave Harrig said they ignored them all and focused on their own family and charities.

They didn't even touch the principal on their winnings until just a few years ago, when they tapped into it to fund a new museum of firefighting in Gretna that will open soon.

"We have nicer things, a bigger house, and more than we ever had in the past. But we are the same, and my wife and I keep each other in check," Dave Harrig said, encouraging future lottery winners to invest wisely, choose a national investment adviser rather than a local one, and to avoid advisers who try to sell financial products.

They've ignored false rumors that have swirled about them, suggesting that his wife at one point ran off with a doctor and that he had a lawyer girlfriend. Their four children endured teasing at school.

"We're still learning, but it has helped to stay working together as a team," he said of himself and his wife.

He acknowledged the struggles of some past winners, saying the experience of winning a jackpot "can really accentuate your character and any addictions."

The late Andrew Whittaker Jr., of West Virginia, suffered lawsuits and personal setbacks after he claimed a record \$315 million Powerball jackpot on Christmas night in 2002.

At the time, it was the largest U.S. lottery jackpot won by a single ticket. People harassed him so much with requests for money he was quoted several times saying he wished he had torn up the ticket.

Before dying of natural causes in 2020 at age 72, he struggled with alcohol and gambling problems and had a series of personal tragedies, including the death of his granddaughter.

Winning the lottery brought other kinds of headaches for Manuel Franco, of West Allis, Wisconsin, who claimed a \$768 million lottery jackpot in April 2019.

Then just 24, Franco excitedly held a news conference to discuss his win, but later reportedly went into hiding amid harassment by strangers and the news media.

The Better Business Bureau of Wisconsin began warning people in 2021 about messages from scammers who claimed to be the multimillion-dollar winner.

Using Franco's name, the scammers sent text messages, social media messages, phone calls and emails phishing for personal information, telling recipients they had been chosen to receive money.

The BBB said scammers got more than \$13,000 from people they tricked, including people in Alabama and Colorado.

Despite the problems encountered by the winners, lottery officials favor publicly identifying winners to

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instill public trust in the games.

That's in large part because some past drawings have been rigged. Former Multi-State Lottery Association information security director Eddie Tipton pleaded guilty in 2017 to manipulating software so he could predict winning numbers on certain days of the year. He and his brother rigged jackpots in numerous states for a combined payout of some \$24 million.

Floods strike new blow in place that has known hardship

By BRUCE SCHREINER, ANDREW SELSKY and DYLAN LOVAN Associated Press

JACKSON, Ky. (AP) — Evelyn Smith lost everything in the deadly floods that devastated eastern Kentucky, saving only her grandson's muddy tricycle. But she's not planning to leave the mountains that have been her home for 50 years.

Like many families in this dense, forested region of hills, deep valleys and meandering streams, Smith's roots run deep. Her family has lived in Knott County for five generations. They've built connections with people that have sustained them, even as an area long mired in poverty has hemorrhaged more jobs with the collapse of the coal industry.

After fast-rising floodwaters from nearby Troublesome Creek swamped her rental trailer, Smith moved in with her mother. At age 50 she is disabled, suffering from a chronic breathing disorder, and knows she won't be going back to where she lived; her landlord told her he won't put trailers back in the same spot. Smith, who didn't have insurance, doesn't know what her next move will be.

"I've cried until I really can't cry no more," she said. "I'm just in shock. I don't really know what to do now."

The devastation is expected to mount in the state. Gov. Andy Beshear said Sunday that the death toll had risen to 26 and was expected to rise.

"There is widespread damage with many families displaced and more rain expected throughout the next day," Beshear said via Twitter.

For many people who lost their homes, connections with family and neighbors will only grow in importance in the aftermath of the floods, which wiped out homes and businesses and engulfed small towns. Still, in a part of the state that includes seven of the 100 poorest counties in the nation, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, they may not be enough for people already living on the margins.

"People who are poor in east Kentucky are really some of the most disadvantaged people in our entire country," said Evan Smith, an attorney with the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund, which provides free legal services for low-income and vulnerable people. "And for those who have now lost vehicles, homes, loved ones, it's hard for me to see how they bounce back from this."

"I mean, people will," Smith added. "People are more resilient than we can imagine at times. But without some type of state and national help, I don't know what we're going to do."

He thinks some people who can afford to leave will do so, with younger people — less likely than their elders to try to rebuild where they are — more likely to look for jobs elsewhere.

Coal once dominated the economy of this corner of the Appalachian Mountains, offering the best-paying jobs in a place that had difficulty sustaining other kinds of work, but production has plunged by some 90% since the heyday of 1990, according to a state report. And as production declined, the jobs went away.

The record floods "couldn't have come at a worse time," said Doug Holliday, a 73-year-old attorney in Hazard, Kentucky, who represents miners with black lung disease and other health problems.

"The coal business has been petering out and a lot of people have left," Holliday said. "The people who are left live paycheck-to-paycheck or on Social Security, and most of them live in mobile homes on the very edge of the economy."

Holliday thinks an old friend died in one of those mobile homes, which was swept away by floodwaters and hasn't been seen since. He isn't the only one trying to account for people in what Beshear called "one of the worst, most devastating flooding events" in Kentucky's history.

There's a chance the legacy of the coal industry, diminished though it is, made the flooding worse. The

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hardest hit areas of eastern Kentucky received between 8 and 10 1/2 inches (20-27 centimeters) of rain over 48 hours, and the degradation of the land wrought by coal mining might have altered the landscape enough to help push rivers and creeks to crest at record levels.

"Decades upon decades of strip mining and mountaintop-removal mining leaves the land unable to help absorb some of that runoff during periods of high rainfall," said Emily Satterwhite, director of Appalachian Studies at Virginia Tech.

The North Fork of the Kentucky River reached 20.9 feet (6.4 meters) in Whitesburg — more than 6 feet (1.8 meters) over the previous record — and crested at a record 43.5 feet (13.25 meters) in Jackson, said National Weather Service meteorologist Brandon Bonds.

Melinda Hurd, 27, was forced from her home in Martin, Kentucky, on Thursday afternoon when the Big Sandy River rose to her front steps — and then kept coming.

"As soon as I stepped off my steps it was waist high," she said. She is staying with two of her dogs at Jenny Wiley State Park in Prestonsburg, about 20 minutes from her home.

Hurd's neighbors weren't as lucky; some were stuck on their roofs, waiting to be rescued.

"I know our whole basement is destroyed," she said. "But I feel very, very lucky. I don't think it will be a total loss."

Hurd works a cash job caring for an elderly woman, meaning she has no insurance or benefits.

Hurd's home also flooded in 2009 on Mother's Day, nearly destroying everything inside. She received financial help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency then, and will likely need more help this time around.

At a briefing with Beshear, FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell said more help is on the way. And the governor opened an online portal for donations to flood victims.

Satterwhite said many residents will want to remain, kept in place by attachments to extended families and support networks that sustain them through good times and bad.

Smith, the woman who salvaged her 2-year-old grandson's trike, said fast-rising water forced her from her trailer around 1:30 a.m. Thursday.

"Everything in it has got mud all over it," she said. "There's probably 6 to 8 inches (15 to 20 centimeters) of mud in the rooms. The walls are all water-logged all the way up."

Despite all that, she's not leaving Knott County. She doesn't think she ever could.

"It's the mountains," she said. "It's the land, it's the people that connect together to make it a home."

Parkland trial a rare, curtailed look at mass shooting gore

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Few Americans outside law enforcement and government ever see the most graphic videos or photos from the nation's worst mass shootings — in most states, such evidence is only displayed at trial and most such killers die during or immediately after their attacks. They never make it to court.

That has made the penalty trial of Florida school shooter Nikolas Cruz for his 2018 murder of 17 people at Parkland's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School unusual.

As the worst U.S. mass shooting to reach trial, the surveillance videos taken during his attack and the crime scene and autopsy photos that show its horrific aftermath are being seen by jurors on shielded video screens and, after each day's court session, shown to a small group of journalists. But they are not shown in the gallery, where parents and spouses sit, or to the general public watching on TV.

Some online believe that should change — that to have an informed debate on gun violence, the public should see the carnage mass shooters like Cruz cause, often with high-velocity bullets fired from AR-15 semiautomatic rifles and similar weapons.

Others disagree. They say the public display of such videos and photos would add to the harm the victims' families already endure and might entice some who are mentally disturbed to commit their own mass shooting. They believe such evidence should remain sealed.

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Liz Dunning, a vice president at the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, doesn't believe releasing such videos and photos would have the political impact some think. Polls show that most Americans already support stronger background checks for gun buyers and bans or restrictions on AR-15s and similar weapons, said Dunning, whose mother was murdered by a gunman.

"Public perception is not the issue," Dunning said. "We should be asking more of the powerful."

Since most of the worst U.S. mass shooters were killed by themselves or police during or immediately after their attack, it is rare for anyone outside government to see such surveillance videos or police and autopsy photos. The public didn't see such evidence after the Las Vegas shooting in 2017, Orlando in 2016, Sandy Hook in 2012, Virginia Tech in 2007 and others.

But Cruz, 23, fled after his shooting and was arrested an hour later. He pleaded guilty in October to 17 counts of first-degree murder - his trial is only to determine if he is sentenced to death or life without parole. The videos and photos are part of the prosecution's case.

Since the trial began July 18, everyone in the courtroom and watching on TV has seen and heard heart-breaking testimony from teachers and students who saw others die. They have heard the gunshots and screams as jurors watched cellphone videos.

But when graphic videos and photos are presented, those are not shown. Usually, they only hear medical examiners and police officers give emotionless descriptions of what the jury is seeing.

Then at the end of each day, a group of reporters reviews the photos and videos, but are only allowed to write descriptions. That was a compromise as some parents feared photos of their dead children would be posted online and wanted no media access.

Miami media attorney Thomas Julin said in Florida before the internet, any photos or other evidence presented at trial could be seen and copied by anyone. Newspapers didn't print the most gruesome photos, so no one cared.

But in the mid-1990s as the internet boomed, Danny Rolling faced a death penalty trial for the serial murders of four University of Florida students and a community college student. The victims' families argued that the publication of crime scene photos would cause them emotional harm. The judge ruled that anyone could view the photos, but no one could copy them. Such compromises have since become standard in Florida's high-profile murder trials.

The surveillance video of the Stoneman Douglas shooting is silent. It shows Cruz moving methodically from floor-to-floor in a three-story classroom building, shooting down hallways and into classrooms. Victims fall. Cruz often stops and shoots them again before moving on.

The crime scene photos show the dead where they fell, sometimes on top of or next to each other, often in contorted shapes. Blood and sometimes brain matter are splattered on floors and walls.

The autopsy photos show the damage Cruz and his bullets did. Some victims have massive head wounds. One student had his elbow blown off, another had her shoulder blown open. Another had most of her forearm ripped away.

Yet, despite their gruesomeness, Columbia University journalism professor Bruce Shapiro says most autopsy and crime scene photos wouldn't have a lasting public impact because they don't have context.

The photos and videos that have a strong effect on public opinion tell a story, said Shapiro, who runs the university's think tank on how journalists should cover violence.

The photos of Emmett Till's battered body lying in its coffin after the Black teenager was tortured and killed by Mississippi white supremacists in 1955. Mary Ann Vecchio screaming over Kent State student Jeffrey Miller's body after he was shot by National Guard troops in 1970. Vietnamese child Phan Thi Kim Phuc running naked after being burned by a napalm bomb in 1972. The video of police officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on George Floyd's neck until he's dead in 2020.

"They work not just because they are graphic, but because they are powerful, stirring images," Shapiro said.

And even if the graphic photos and videos were released, most major newspapers, wire services and television stations would be hesitant to use them. Their editors weigh whether the public benefit of seeing

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an image outweighs any prurient interest — and they usually pass.

That would leave most for only the most salacious websites. They would also become fodder for potential mass shooters, who frequently research past killers. Cruz did; testimony showed he spent the seven months before his attack making hundreds of computer searches about committing massacres.

"The images of the carnage will become part of their dark fantasy life," Shapiro said.

Maggie's legacy: Divisive Thatcher looms over UK Tory race

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Two people are running to be Britain's next prime minister, but a third presence looms over the contest: Margaret Thatcher.

The late former prime minister dominated Britain in the 1980s, and has left a large and contested legacy. Critics see her as an intransigent ideologue whose free-market policies frayed social bonds and gutted the country's industrial communities. But for the governing Conservative Party, Thatcher is an icon, an inspiration and the presiding spirit who made Britain fit for the modern era.

In the race to replace Boris Johnson as Conservative leader and prime minister, both Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and former Treasury chief Rishi Sunak claim to embody the values of Thatcher, who died in 2013 at 87.

Asked who was Britain's greatest prime minister? Both candidates unhesitatingly say Thatcher. Sunak made a key speech in the late leader's hometown of Grantham, declaring himself a proponent of "common-sense Thatcherism," while his wife and children took selfies in front of the Iron Lady's bronze statue.

Truss talks about her own modest origins, inviting comparisons to grocer's daughter Thatcher, and adopts poses and outfits — bold blue dresses, pussy-bow blouses — that echo the distinctive style of Britain's first female prime minister.

Historian Richard Vinen of King's College London says Truss is an "Instagram Thatcher."

Victoria Honeyman, associate professor of British politics at the University of Leeds, says Thatcher is "a talisman" for Conservatives. Robert Saunders, a historian of modern Britain at Queen Mary University of London, believes "she has become a creature of myth."

"Like Thor's hammer, Thatcher's handbag can bestow godlike powers on those deemed worthy to lift it," Saunders wrote on the Unherd website.

In one sense, the Thatcher fixation is easily explained. She led the Conservatives to three successive election victories and was never defeated at the ballot box. She was eventually brought down — like Johnson — by her own party, ousted in 1990 after 11 years in power.

"Every Conservative leader since Margaret Thatcher has failed," said Vinen, author of the book "Thatcher's Britain."

John Major lost the party power in 1997, and the three leaders after him kept the Tories in opposition. Prime Minister David Cameron gambled on a 2016 referendum that, against his wishes, took Britain out of the European Union. His successor Theresa May was defeated by Brexit infighting, and Johnson has been given the boot by Conservative lawmakers after months of ethics scandals.

Thatcher's decade in power, through war and peace, boom and bust, also offers rich pickings for acolytes to choose from. She was a wartime leader who defeated Argentina over the Falkland Islands, a democrat who stood up to the Soviet Union and saw the Cold War end, a union-bashing capitalist who unleashed the power of the financial markets.

"You can basically cherry-pick what you want," Honeyman said.

That selective memory is at work when today's Conservatives, who are overwhelmingly pro-Brexit, say Thatcher would have supported the decision to leave the EU. Vinen says "it's almost sacrilegious" to point it out, but "Thatcher was actually pro-European for most of her time in office."

Thatcher's economic legacy is also contested. Truss and Sunak both claim to be offering Thatcherite economics, but their policies are very different. Truss says she will boost borrowing and cut taxes immediately to ease Britain's cost-of-living crisis, while Sunak says it's vital to get the country's soaring inflation

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rate under control first.

Both can point to decisions Thatcher made in support of their stances, although Vinen thinks Sunak's inflation-busting focus is closer to Thatcher economically.

"She (didn't) believe that you can lower tax unless you cut spending," he said.

Britain's new leader will be elected by about 180,000 members of the Conservative Party, many of whom regard Thatcher as a heroine. Millions of other British voters remember her differently.

Thatcher privatized state-owned industries, sold off public housing and defeated Britain's coal miners after a bitter, year-long strike. Under her leadership, industries shut and millions were thrown out of work, especially in the north of England.

Johnson, whose Conservative hero is Winston Churchill rather than Thatcher, secured a huge election victory in 2019 by winning over voters in northern England's post-industrial towns who had never considered supporting the Conservatives before.

Honeyman said that Johnson's successor would be wise not to laud Thatcher too loudly if they hope to hang onto those northern districts, where people still talk about the closure of factories and mines "and about the impact that that had upon their communities, about the way it fractured people's lives."

"This isn't ancient history for some of these people," she said. "This is their lived experience."

Those memories are not so vivid for the 47-year-old Truss, who was a teenager when Thatcher left office. Sunak, now 42, was just 10 years old in 1990.

But 84-year-old Conservative veteran Norman Fowler, who served in Thatcher's government and later served as speaker of the House of Lords, warned the candidates against "overdoing it" with the Iron Lady worship.

"I was in her Cabinet, shadow and real, for 15 years," Fowler told Times Radio. "Even I wouldn't say that she was perfect in every way. And therefore, the party need not model itself entirely upon her. So I would give it a rest."

Today in History: Aug. 1, Hitler opens Berlin Olympics

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Aug. 1, the 213th day of 2022. There are 152 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Aug. 1, 1936, the Olympics opened in Berlin with a ceremony presided over by Adolf Hitler.

On this date:

In 1876, Colorado was admitted as the 38th state.

In 1907, the U.S. Army Signal Corps established an aeronautical division, the forerunner of the U.S. Air Force.

In 1944, an uprising broke out in Warsaw, Poland, against Nazi occupation; the revolt lasted two months before collapsing.

In 1957, the United States and Canada announced they had agreed to create the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD).

In 1966, Charles Joseph Whitman, 25, went on an armed rampage at the University of Texas in Austin that killed 14 people, most of whom were shot by Whitman while he was perched in the clock tower of the main campus building. (Whitman, who had also slain his wife and mother hours earlier, was finally gunned down by police.)

In 1975, a 35-nation summit in Finland concluded with the signing of a declaration known as the Helsinki Accords dealing with European security, human rights and East-West contacts.

In 1994, Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley confirmed they'd been secretly married 11 weeks earlier. (Presley filed for divorce from Jackson in January 1996, citing irreconcilable differences.)

In 2001, Pro Bowl tackle Korey Stringer, 27, died of heat stroke, a day after collapsing at the Minnesota Vikings' training camp on the hottest day of the year.

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In 2007, the eight-lane Interstate 35W bridge, a major Minneapolis artery, collapsed into the Mississippi River during evening rush hour, killing 13 people.

In 2011, the U.S. House of Representatives passed, 269-161, emergency legislation to avert the nation's first-ever financial default; Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords returned to the House for the first time since being shot in Jan. 2011 to cast a "yes" vote.

In 2013, defying the United States, Russia granted Edward Snowden temporary asylum, allowing the National Security Agency leaker to slip out of the Moscow airport where he had been holed up for weeks.

In 2014, a medical examiner ruled that a New York City police officer's chokehold caused the death of Eric Garner, whose videotaped arrest and final pleas of "I can't breathe!" had sparked outrage.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama made his rival's personal millions a front-and-center issue in the race for the White House, telling a swing-state audience in Ohio that Mitt Romney "is asking you to pay more so that people like him can get a big tax cut." Four teams from China, South Korea and Indonesia were kicked out of the women's badminton doubles at the London Olympics for trying to lose on purpose in order to earn an easier matchup in the knockout round.

Five years ago: By a vote of 92-5, the Senate confirmed President Donald Trump's nomination of Christopher Wray as FBI director. He replaced James Comey, who was fired by Trump amid the investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential campaign.

One year ago: After much delay, senators unveiled a \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill. American swimmer Caeleb Dressel captured his fourth and fifth gold medals of the Tokyo Olympics, while Australia's Emma McKeon won two more golds and became the first female swimmer – and second woman in any sport – to claim seven medals at one Olympics. Texas-born Italian sprinter Marcell Jacobs won gold in the 100 meters, Italy's first medal in the event. Belarusian track sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, who faced punishment at home after criticizing the way the track team was managed, said her Olympic team officials tried to remove her from Japan in a dispute that led to a standoff at Haneda Airport in Tokyo. (She would later find refuge in Poland.) Rapper DaBaby was cut from Lollapalooza's closing lineup following crude and homophobic remarks he had made at a Miami-area music festival.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Ramblin' Jack Elliott is 91. Former Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, R-N.Y., is 85. Actor Giancarlo Giannini is 80. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Roy Williams is 72. Blues singer-musician Robert Cray is 69. Singer Michael Penn is 64. Rock singer Joe Elliott (Def Leppard) is 63. Rock singer-musician Suzi Gardner (L7) is 62. Rapper Chuck D (Public Enemy) is 62. Actor Jesse Borrego is 60. Actor Demian Bichir is 59. Rapper Coolio is 59. Actor John Carroll Lynch is 59. Rock singer Adam Duritz (Counting Crows) is 58. Movie director Sam Mendes is 57. Country singer George Ducas is 56. Actor Jennifer Gareis is 52. Actor Charles Malik Whitfield is 50. Actor Tempestt Bledsoe is 49. Actor Jason Momoa is 43. Actor Honeysuckle Weeks is 43. Singer Ashley Parker Angel is 41. Actor Taylor Fry is 41. Actor Elijah Kelley is 36.