

# Groton Daily Independent

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“The simple things can be really powerful.”

-Jon Taffer



## 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**

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

## SABER SHRED HELP WANTED

Now hiring full or part-time positions. Tire handler, responsible for assisting in unloading tires from semi trailers, feeding the tire shredder and general cleanup tasks. Must be able to lift 50 lbs. Starting pay \$16/hr. Contact Robert Wegner at 605-397-7579. Saber Shred Solutions (formerly New Deal Tire Groton, SD)

## CARD OF THANKS

I WOULD LIKE to say a big thank you to everyone who called, sent cards, gave gifts or visited me for my 80th birthday. I would also like to thank my daughter, Deb, for putting on a wonderful supper for me. It was a very special time. Blessings to all of you!

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

## OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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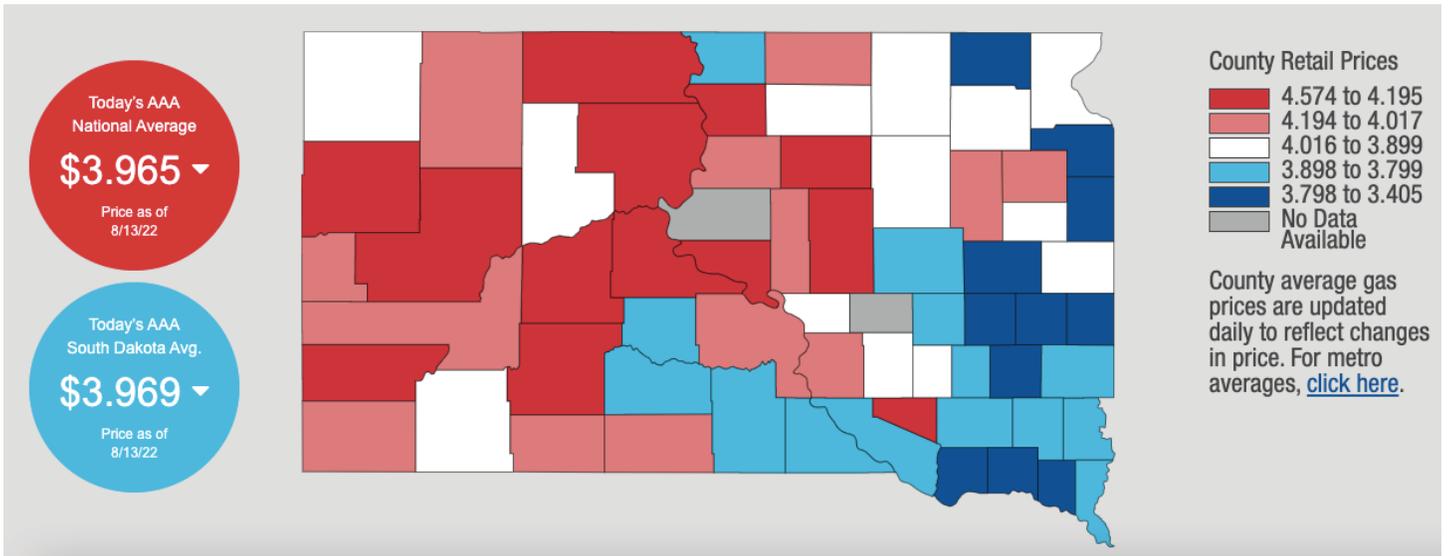
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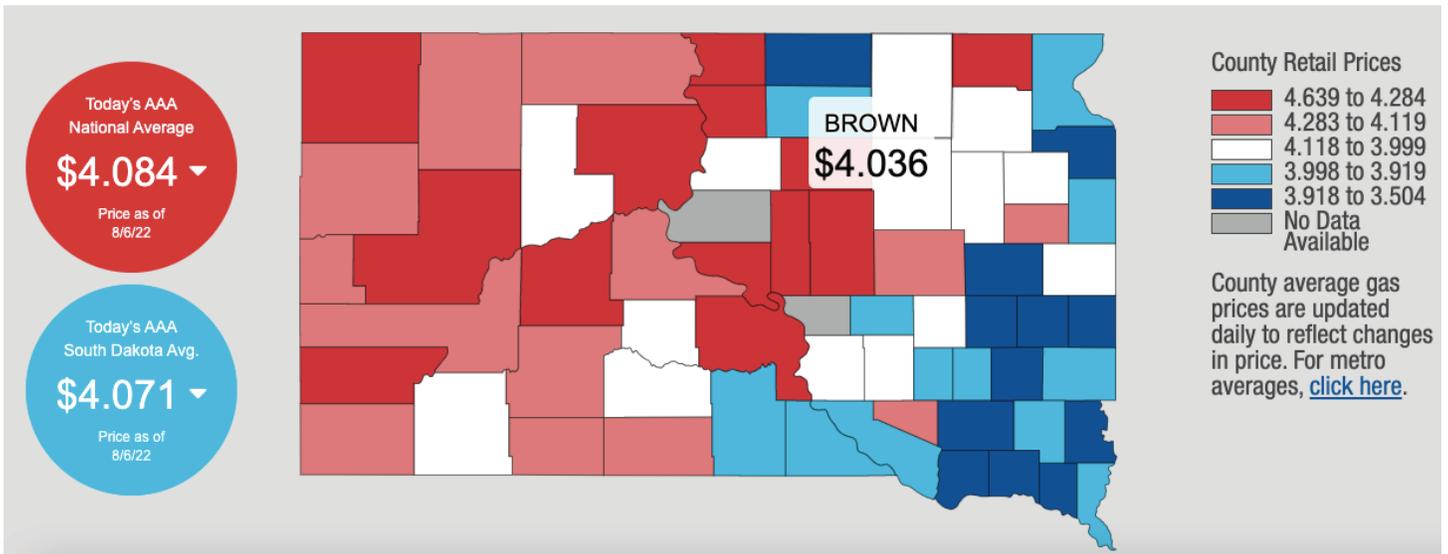
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

Current Avg.	\$3.969	\$4.141	\$4.621	\$4.851
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.987	\$4.160	\$4.649	\$4.862
Week Ago Avg.	\$4.071	\$4.265	\$4.744	\$4.948
Month Ago Avg.	\$4.649	\$4.830	\$5.295	\$5.351
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.181	\$3.286	\$3.685	\$3.267

### This Week



### Last Week



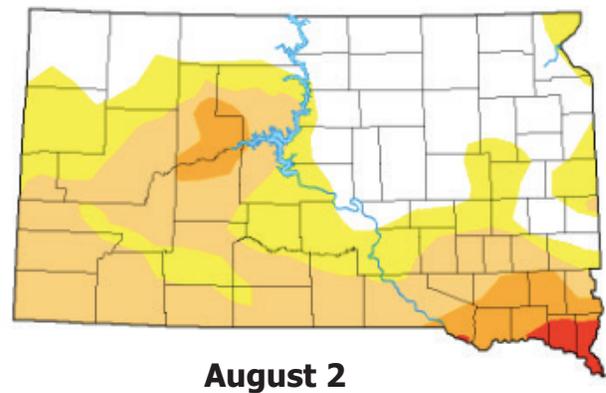
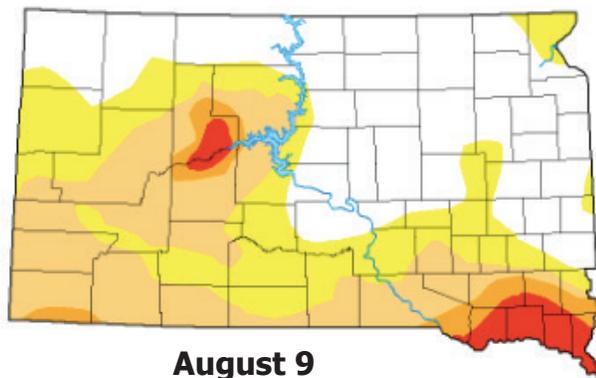
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## Drought Classification



## Drought Monitor



Most of the Great Plains recorded only a few tenths of an inch of rain at best last week, as did most of North Dakota. Rainfall was more abundant in central and southern Colorado, and in a swath across much of Wyoming and South Dakota. Totals of 0.5 to 2.0 inches were common in these areas, with isolated higher amounts of 2 to 5 inches soaking northwestern Wyoming, scattered areas in central and southern Colorado, and portions of central and eastern South Dakota. Fairly large areas of heavy rain were noted in south-central and parts of eastern South Dakota. Not surprisingly, parts of the wetter areas saw dryness ease somewhat while hot and dry conditions from eastern Wyoming and Nebraska southward promoted large areas of expansion and intensification there. In the last 60 days, much of this area received 35 to 65 percent of normal rainfall, but most locations recorded more. Periods of excessive heat have exacerbated the effects of the subnormal precipitation, and even some areas with near normal rainfall have seen conditions dry out due to the heat. Surface moisture shortages are now most acute in western Kansas and southwestern Nebraska, and a sizeable part of this area is in exceptional drought (D4), with the remainder in D3 along with northeastern Colorado, southeastern Kansas, northwestern Nebraska, and a newly-developed area in central South Dakota. Only the central and northern Dakotas, northeastern Kansas and adjacent areas, portions of the Colorado mountains, and part of central and northern Wyoming are largely devoid of drought, though abnormal dryness has been identified in some of those areas.

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## **BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA**

**REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY**

**August 16th, 2022, 8:45 A.M.**

**COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN**

- 1.) Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
- 2.) Approval of Agenda
- 3.) Opportunity for Public Comment
- 4.) IMEG – Elm Lake Access Road Bid Award
- 5.) Lottery Permits Approval
- 6.) Leases
- 7.) Temporary Alcohol Permit
- 8.) Dirk Rogers – Right of ways WEB Water, 4 way stop @ 14W & County 10, Department Update
- 9.) Consent Calendar
  - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of August 9, 2022
  - b. Claims/Payroll
  - c. HR Report
  - d. Sheriff's Report
- 10.) Other Business
- 11.) Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
- 12.) Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/CathyMcNickle>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: +1 (872) 240-3311

Access Code: 601-168-909

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission.

Presentations may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board)

Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

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## Highway Patrol Sturgis Rally Daily Information

Compiled from 6 a.m. Saturday August 6, 2022, to 6 a.m. Friday August 12, 2022

Item	Sturgis	Rapid City District	District Total	Last Year to Date
DUI Arrests	90	24	114	99
Misd Drug Arrests	79	38	117	128
Felony Drug Arrests	81	7	88	96
Total Citations	635	434	1069	1243
Total Warnings	2346	1505	3851	3354
Cash Seized	\$4335.00	\$0.00	\$4335.00	\$1862.00
Vehicles Seized	4	0	4	0
For Drug Poss.	4	0	4	0
For Serial No.	0	0	0	0
Non-Injury Crashes	12	22	34	35
Injury Crashes	27	14	41	49
Fatal Crashes	1	2	3	2
# of Fatalities	1	2	3	2

Fatal Crashes:

None Reported.

Injury Crashes:

At 12:01 p.m., Thursday, near the intersection of Nemo Road and Estes Creek Road, one mile east of Nemo: A 2014 Harley-Davidson Tri-Glide Trike was eastbound on Nemo Road when the driver lost control. The vehicle went into the ditch and eventually rolled over onto the driver. The 71-year-old male driver, who was wearing a helmet, sustained serious non-life threatening injuries. He was wearing a helmet.

At 1:13 p.m., Thursday, U.S. Highway 212, mile marker 25, 10 miles east of Belle Fourche: A 2009 Yamaha Warrior motorcycle was westbound on U.S. Highway 212 when the driver lost control. The motorcycle entered the north ditch and rolled. The 48-year-old male driver suffered minor injuries and was transported to the Spearfish hospital. He was not wearing a helmet.

At 1:46, Thursday, U.S. Highway 14A, mile marker 34, three miles southwest of Lead: A 2009 Harley-Davidson motorcycle was eastbound on U.S. Highway 14A when it swerved to miss an object reported to be in the road. The driver lost control, the motorcycle went into the ditch and hit a sign. The 55-year-old male driver suffered serious non-life threatening injuries and was airlifted to a Rapid City hospital. He was not wearing a helmet.

At 2:29 p.m., Thursday, U.S. Highway 385, mile marker 106, 16 miles south of Deadwood: A 2017 Harley-Davidson FLH motorcycle was southbound on U.S. Highway 385 and had pulled to the shoulder of the road to make a U-turn into the northbound lane. While attempting the U-turn, the motorcycle collided with a southbound 1995 Harley-Davidson XL883 motorcycle. The 56-year-old female driver of the XL883 motorcycle sustained serious non-life threatening injuries and was airlifted to the Rapid City hospital. She was not wearing a helmet. The 65-year-old male driver of the FLH motorcycle was not injured. He was

wearing a helmet.

At 4:09 p.m., Thursday, U.S. Highway 14A, mile marker 12, one mile south of Spearfish: A 2017 Harley-Davidson motorcycle was northbound on U.S. Highway 14A and entered the approach to a parking area. The motorcycle turned too quickly and was rear-ended by a 2004 Harley-Davidson motorcycle. The 2004 motorcycle tipped over and the 72-year-old male driver was thrown from the motorcycle. He suffered serious non-life threatening injuries. He was taken to the Spearfish hospital. The 70-year-old male driver of the 2017 was wearing a helmet.

At 6:40 p.m., Thursday, Interstate 90, mile marker 30, within the city limits of Sturgis: The driver of a 2006 Harley-Davidson Cruiser motorcycle lost control while getting on Interstate 90 at exit 30. The 61-year-old male driver was not injured. The 57-year-old female passenger suffered minor injuries. She was taken by private vehicle to the Sturgis hospital. They were not wearing helmets.

## 2022 Sturgis Rally Vehicle Count - Through Day Seven

STURGIS, S.D. – Vehicle traffic counts from the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) for vehicles entering Sturgis for the 82nd Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally Aug. 5-14, 2022, are available and will be updated daily.

Traffic counts at nine locations entering Sturgis for the 2022 Rally are as follows:

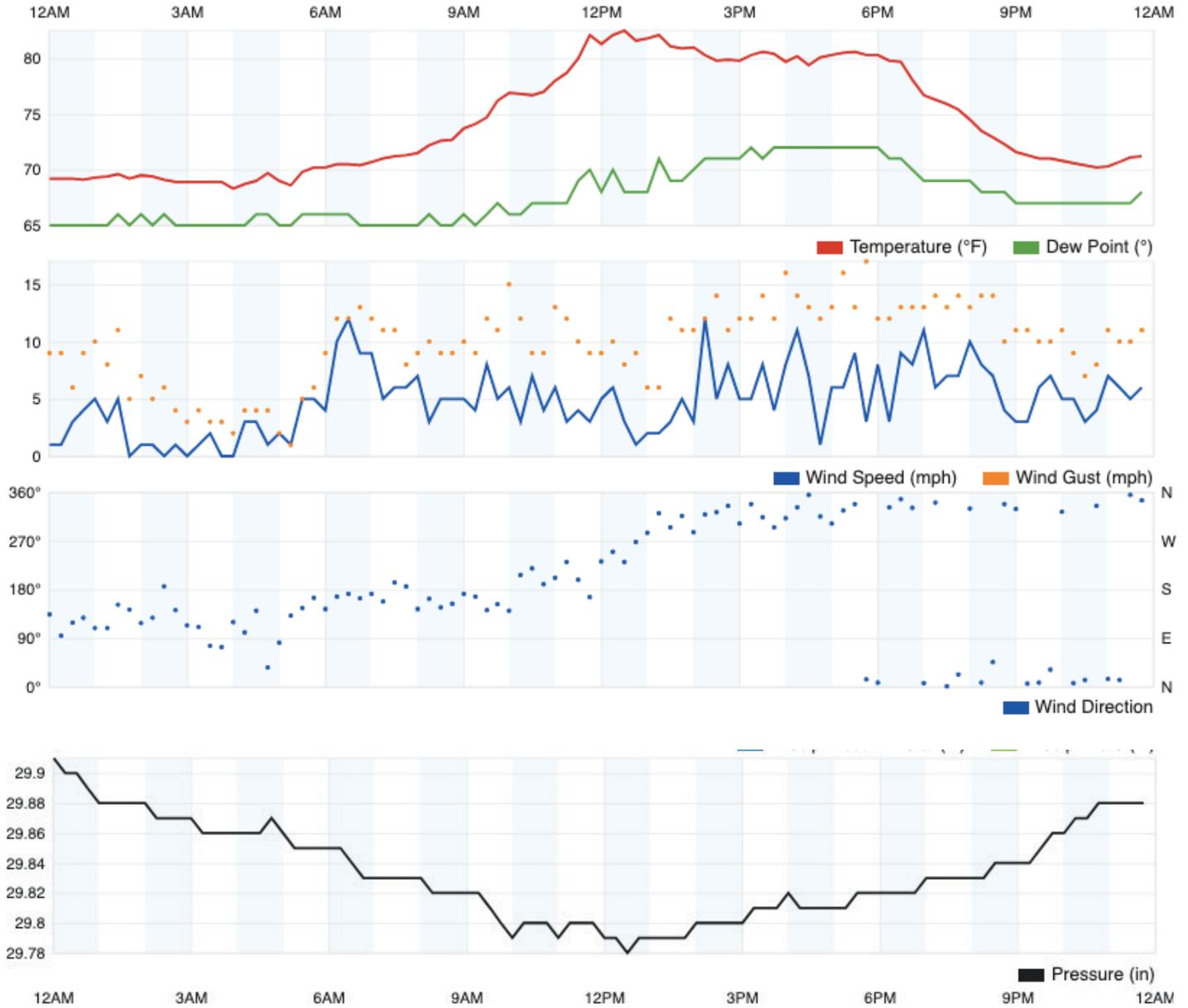
**Friday, Aug. 5: 56,855 entering:** Up 11.4% from the previous five-year average  
**Saturday, Aug. 6: 62,199 entering:** Up 5% from the previous five-year average  
**Sunday, Aug. 7: 60,672 entering:** Up 6.8% from the previous five-year average  
**Monday, Aug. 8: 62,050 entering:** Up 3.3% from the previous five-year average  
**Tuesday, Aug. 9: 58,610 entering:** Up 1.6% from the previous five-year average  
**Wednesday, Aug. 10: 54,599 entering:** Down 1.9% from the previous five-year average  
**Thursday, Aug. 11: 45,356 entering:** Down 11.7% from the previous five-year average

**2022 - 7 Day Total: 400,341 Vehicles**  
Previous 5-Year Average: 391,811 Vehicles

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Becoming  
Sunny

High: 82 °F

Tonight



Increasing  
Clouds

Low: 60 °F

Sunday



Slight Chance  
Showers

High: 83 °F

Sunday  
Night



Partly Cloudy  
then Slight  
Chance  
Showers

Low: 63 °F

Monday



Chance  
Showers

High: 81 °F

## Today

### 80s

A partly to mostly cloudy morning,  
then decreasing clouds



## Sunday

### 80s

A 20-30% chance of showers and  
thunderstorms over central SD, with  
chances increasing to 40-60% over  
south central SD Sunday night.



After a partly to mostly cloudy start to the day, we'll see increasing sunshine this afternoon. That decrease in clouds will be short lived, as we'll see increasing clouds tonight and the potential for some rain late tonight and into Sunday. The greatest chances (20-30%) on Sunday will be over central South Dakota.

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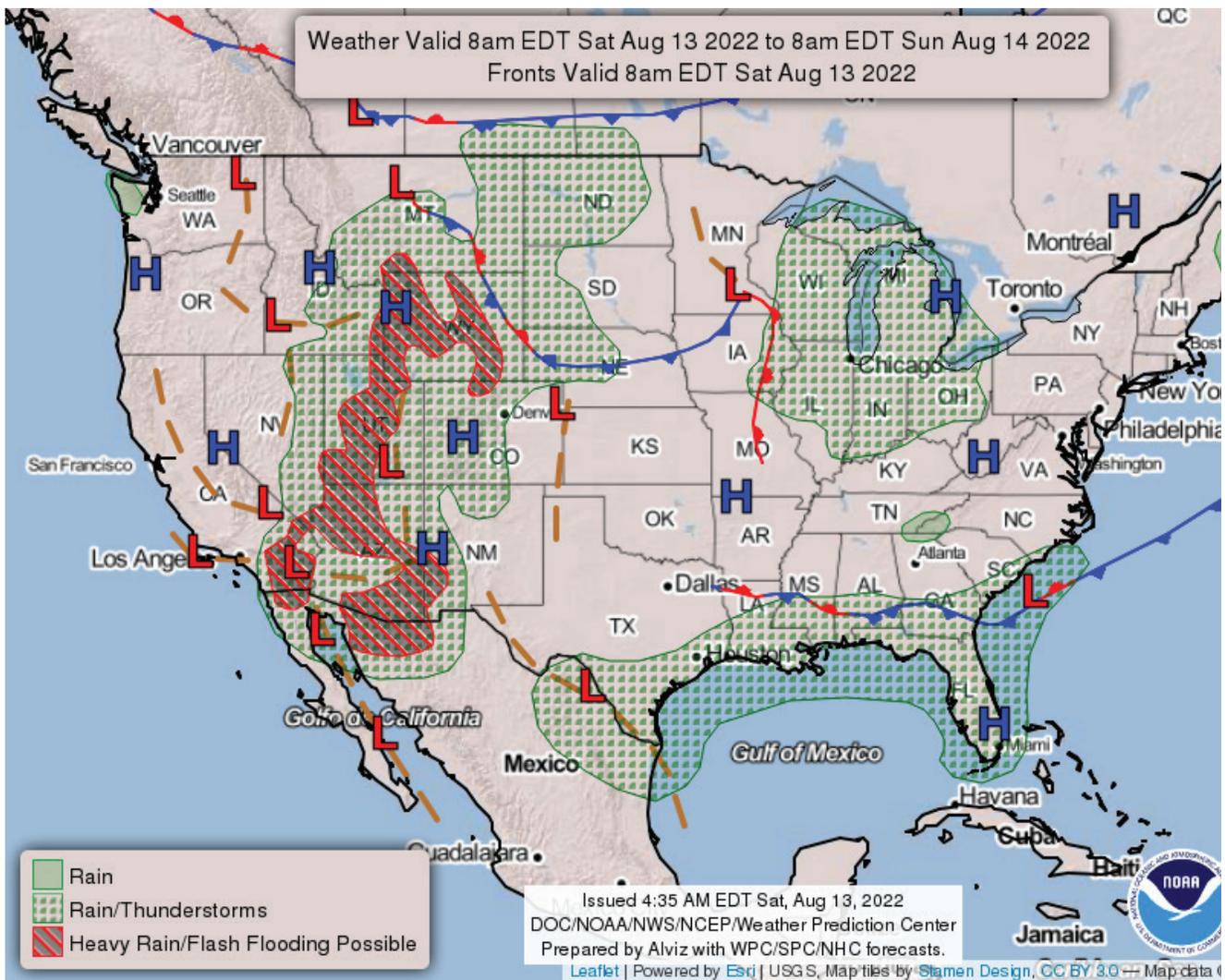
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 83 °F at 1:20 PM**  
**Low Temp: 68 °F at 3:58 AM**  
**Wind: 17 mph at 5:38 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 14 hours, 15 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 112 in 1965  
Record Low: 35 in 1964  
Average High: 84°F  
Average Low: 57°F  
Average Precip in Aug.: 0.94  
Precip to date in Aug.: 0.65  
Average Precip to date: 15.04  
Precip Year to Date: 15.19  
Sunset Tonight: 8:44:50 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:30:49 AM



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## Today in Weather History

August 13, 2000: A thunderstorm set numerous prairie fires in Harding County. Over a thousand acres burned by the end of the day.

1831: The Great Barbados Hurricane was an intense Category 4 hurricane that left cataclysmic damage across the Caribbean and Louisiana in 1831. From August 11 through the 13, Bermudians were amazed to see the sun with a decidedly blue appearance, giving off an eerie blue light when it shone into rooms and other enclosed places. Ships at sea as far west as Cape Hatteras reported that "their white sails appeared a light blue colour." A month later it was learned that the astounding blue sunlight had coincided with a terrible hurricane that caused 1,477 people to lose their lives. It was assumed that the hurricane was intensive enough to cause an unusual disturbance in the higher atmospheric strata, and refraction, diffraction or absorption of light rays, to produce the blue reflection. Because the sun appeared bluish-green, Nat Turner took this as the final signal and began a slave rebellion a week later on August 21.

1919 - High winds and heavy rain struck the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. In New Jersey, winds gusted to 60 mph at Atlantic City, and nine inches of rain fell at Tuckerton. The wind and rain leveled crops and stripped trees of fruit causing several million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1980 - The afternoon high at New York City was just 89 degrees. But there were fifteen days of 90 degree heat during the month, their hottest August of record. (The Weather Channel)

1985 - Hail larger than golf balls, driven by 70 mph winds, moved down crops, stripped trees, and broke windows, near Logan KS. Road graders cleared three foot drifts of hail on Kansas Highway 9 east of Logan. (The Weather Channel)

1987: A succession of thunderstorms produced rainfall that was unprecedented in 116 years of precipitation records at Chicago, Illinois during an 18 hour period from the evening of the 13th to the early afternoon of the 14th. The resulting flash flood was the worst ever to strike the Chicago metropolitan area, causing three deaths and water damage that amounted to 221 million dollars. O'Hare International Airport received an event total of 9.35 inches of rain in 18 hours, shattering the previous 24-hour record of 6.24 inches. For about 24 hours, the airport was only accessible from the air as all roads were blocked by high water, including the Kennedy Expressway.

1987 - Thunderstorms deluged the Central Gulf Coast States with torrential rains. Thunderstorms in Mississippi drenched Marion County with up to 15 inches of rain during the morning hours, with 12.2 inches reported at Columbia. Floodwaters swept cars away in the Lakeview subdivision of Columbia when the the Lakeview Dam broke. Flash flooding caused more than three million dollars damage in Marion County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A dozen cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Lansing MI reported a record 35 days of 90 degree weather for the year, Detroit MI reported a record 37 days of 90 degree heat for the year, and Williamsport PA reported a record 38 days of 90 degree weather for the year. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing in a tropical airmass over the northeastern U.S. soaked Connecticut and Massachusetts with four to eight inches of rain over the weekend, between the 11th and 13th of the month. Hartford CT received 7.70 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1991: Stockton, California received 0.05 inch of rainfall on this day. Since 1949, this is the only measured rainfall in Stockton on August 13th.

2003: A string of days in Paris France with temperatures from the 4th to the 12th above 95°F ends when the day's high drops to 90°F. During the long, hot summer which began 25 July and has registered several days above 100°F, an estimated 14,800 have died from heat-related causes, the French government admits.

2014: An official, New York State 24 hour precipitation record was set at Islip, NY on August 12-13 when 13.57" of rain fell.



## Monstro the Goldfish

### Scripture: Luke 10:27-37 (English Standard Version)

27 And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii[a] and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

### Insight By: Monica La Rose

Samaritans, a people group formed from the intermarriage of Israelites and gentiles brought into the land by the Assyrians, only accepted the first five books of Moses as Scripture and rejected other tenets of traditional Jewish faith, such as worship centered in Jerusalem (the Samaritans' worship was centered at Mount Gerizim).

Tensions between Jews and Samaritans ran high. In choosing a Samaritan as the hero of His now-famous parable (Luke 10:25–37), Jesus brilliantly challenged His listeners on who their neighbors were.

### Comment: By Elisa Morgan

Lacey Scott was at her local pet store when a sad fish at the bottom of the tank caught her eye. His scales had turned black and lesions had formed on his body. Lacey rescued the ten-year-old fish, named him "Monstro" after the whale in the fairytale Pinocchio, and placed him in a "hospital" tank, changing his water daily. Slowly, Monstro improved, began to swim, and grew in size. His black scales transformed to gold. Through Lacey's committed care, Monstro was made new!

In Luke 10, Jesus tells the story of a traveler who was beaten, robbed, and left for dead. Both a priest and a Levite passed by, ignoring the man's suffering. But a Samaritan—a member of a despised people group—took care of him, even paying for his needs (Luke 10:33–35). Pronouncing the Samaritan as the true "neighbor" in the story, Jesus encouraged His listeners to do the same.

What Lacey did for a dying goldfish, we can do for people in need around us. Homeless, unemployed, disabled, and lonely "neighbors" lie in our path. Let us allow their sadness to catch our eyes and draw us to respond with neighborly care. A kind greeting. A shared meal. A few dollars slipped from palm to palm. How might God use us to offer His love to others, a love which can make all things new?

**Reflect and Prayer:** How can you reach out to others in a neighborly way? What can you do for people in need around you?

Dear God, thank You for making me new! May I be a neighbor to those who desperately need Your care in order to be transformed by You.

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## 2022-23 Community Events

- 07/21/2022: Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course  
07/22/2022: Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start  
07/24/2022: Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20  
07/27/2022: Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm  
08/05/2022: Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm  
08/12/2022: GHS Basketball Golf Tournament  
No Date Set: Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot  
09/10/2022: Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
No Date Set: 6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm  
09/11/2022: Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10 a.m.  
09/02-04: Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport  
10/01/2022: Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm  
10/07/2022: Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am  
10/31/2022: Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)  
10/31/2022: United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/12/2022: Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)  
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)  
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course  
12/10/2022: Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm  
01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center  
01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)  
04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)  
04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)  
04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)  
05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)  
05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)  
07/04/2023 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start (4th of July)  
07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)  
09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)  
10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)  
10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm  
11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## Groton Daily Independent

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## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

23-24-50-54-64, Mega Ball: 3, Megaplier: 3

(twenty-three, twenty-four, fifty, fifty-four, sixty-four; Mega Ball: three; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$82,000,000

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: 48,000,000

### Judge tells Lyman County to work with tribe on election plan

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A federal judge temporarily ordered a South Dakota county to work with the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe to implement by November a redistricting plan to allow for the election of tribal candidates to the County Commission.

The tribe had sued Lyman County, alleging a delay to a new redistricting plan until 2024 or 2026 violated federal law by keeping Native American voters from electing county commissioners who represented them.

The chief judge for the U.S. District Court in South Dakota, Roberto A. Lange, issued a preliminary injunction on Thursday, which was requested by the tribe, and suggested the court could come up with a plan to implement the new voting districts if the county does not.

“Cooperation between the Tribe and the County, between Tribal members and non-Tribal members, is crucial to the future of Lyman County,” Lange wrote in his order. “If the County does not come forward with an appropriate remedial plan, this Court can impose its own.”

Lyman County has had an at-large election process since 1992. That means candidates running for the five commissioner seats can live anywhere within the county.

Lyman County contains part of the Lower Brule reservation and has a Native American population of 38%. But with the at-large commissioner seats, no Native American candidate has ever succeeded in winning a seat on the commission, South Dakota Public Broadcasting reported.

To avoid a lawsuit, Lyman County and Lower Brule agreed that the county must establish two commissioner positions chosen by Native American voters. In October 2021, Lower Brule proposed five single-candidate districts, two of them with a Native American majority and three with a white majority.

But in February, the Lyman County Commission enacted an ordinance establishing just two voting districts, one white with three commissioners and one Native American with two commissioners. The commission also voted to delay the changes until after the next election, leaving the at-large system in play.

Lower Brule Sioux Tribe Vice Chairman Neil Russell said in a statement, that the tribe “remains ready to help Lyman County make positive changes on and off-reservation: let’s get started.”

The county commission did not immediately respond to the ruling. It plans to meet Monday.

### Conservative push to alter Constitution focuses on primaries

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — The fliers piled up in mailboxes in central South Dakota like snow during a high-plains blizzard: “Transgender Sex Education in Schools?” one asked. “Vote Against Sex Ed Radical Mary Duvall for State Senate.”

The mailers were part of a \$58,000 campaign against the five-term Republican lawmaker, an enormous sum of money in a place where the cost of running for a statehouse seat is typically in the low five figures. Despite the subject of the attack ads, Duvall was targeted not for her stance on sex education but for her

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opposition to a longshot bid by some conservatives to force a convention to amend the U.S. Constitution. "I knew they were angry at me, but I had no idea this was going to be coming during my primary campaign," said Duvall, who ended up losing her race by 176 votes.

Duvall opposed legislation that would have added South Dakota to 19 other states calling for a gathering known as a convention of states, following a plan mapped out by a conservative group that wants to change parts of the United States' foundational document. When that number hits two-thirds of the states — or 34 — under the procedure laid out in the Constitution, a convention would meet with the power to amend the 235-year-old document.

The campaign against Duvall was part of a more than \$600,000 push in at least five states earlier this year by the group, Convention of States Action, and its affiliates in Republican primaries to elect sympathetic lawmakers who could add more states to its column. Much of the money comes from groups that do not have to disclose their donors, masking the identity of who is funding the push to change the Constitution.

Mark Meckler, the group's president and former head of Tea Party Patriots, issued a brief statement saying the group was committed to being active in the midterms "in a big way."

For years, Convention of States Action has been a staple of the conservative political scene. But its engagement in primary campaigns marks an escalation at a time when parts of the conservative movement are testing the limits of the nation's political rulebook, pushing aggressive tactics from gerrymandering to voting restrictions.

The track record of the convention group's spending is spotty. In South Dakota, where the group and its affiliates spent more than \$200,000 targeting four state Senate seats, Duvall was the only one of its targets to lose. And the challenger who beat her, Jim Mehlhaff, said in an interview that he thinks the group's intervention hurt him.

"I didn't appreciate the negative tone of their mailers. It probably cost me some votes," said Mehlhaff, a former member of Pierre's city commission who had his own base of support in the district before the intervention of Convention of States. "This is South Dakota. People don't like negative campaigns."

Mehlhaff was baffled at the notion that a possible constitutional convention factored so heavily in his race: "Convention of states is not my issue at all," he said.

Supporters of a convention argue it's the best way to amend the Constitution — especially to take power from Congress, which has to approve by a two-thirds vote any proposed amendments that don't come from a convention. Still, no amendments have been implemented through a convention since the Constitution was ratified in 1788.

Backers argue that any amendments that emerge from the convention would have to be approved by even more states than required to call it — three-quarters, or 38 of them — ensuring that the only changes would be measures with broad support. The GOP would have the upper hand in that venue, though, as it controls the legislatures in 30 states.

One liberal group is pushing for a convention to change campaign finance laws that has won backing in four states, while another effort by conservatives seeks one to impose a balanced budget amendment. The Convention of States group is more vague on its goals, stating that it seeks a gathering that could pass amendments only to "limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government, impose fiscal restraints, and place term limits on federal officials."

That alarms many Democrats, who see the push as a partisan effort to write conservative goals into the Constitution. But several conservatives have also balked, fearing that a convention could open the document to changes they wouldn't favor, such as on gun control or campaign spending.

"Lots of things can happen that we can't predict" if there's a constitutional convention, said Walter Olson, a senior fellow at the conservative Cato Institute in Washington, D.C. "A lot of Republicans are temperamentally conservative and don't like taking large leaps into the unknown, and they are going to be seen as dragging their heels."

The convention group has won some successes lately. Earlier this year, it persuaded South Carolina's GOP-controlled Legislature to approve a motion for a convention, making it the 19th state, all Republican-run, to sign on. But it has been stymied in some solidly conservative states such as South Dakota, whose

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state Senate has repeatedly voted down resolutions for a convention.

Duvall said that's because Republican voters there don't want a constitutional rewrite.

"The majority of my constituents I've talked to say 'No, this is a bad idea and dangerous,'" Duvall said.

Robert Natelson, a retired law professor who formerly served as an advisor to Convention of States Action, said that's a result of fear-mongering. He has researched historical conventions of states and said they have clear procedures and limitations. They have occurred throughout the country's history with varied records of accomplishment, on subjects ranging from the war of 1812 to how certain Western states would share water from the Colorado River.

"This was a process designed for the people to use," Natelson said. "If you think everything's going well, if you're part of the 15% of the population that has a favorable view of Congress, then you don't want a convention."

The movement is using money to combat skepticism. Convention of States Action and its affiliated foundation reported raising more than \$10 million in 2020, according to IRS documents. As nonprofits, the organizations do not need to disclose most of their donors.

The Convention of States' recent spending came through multiple newly created political groups that steered campaign money around the country, largely shielding donors from disclosure.

"They have gone out of their way to set up a web of dark money groups to obscure where the money is coming from and evade reporting requirements," said Arn Pearson, executive director of the Center for Media and Democracy, which filed complaints with authorities in Arizona and Montana against the network's campaign apparatus.

In Montana, the network spent \$126,000 on radio ads and mailers to support two state legislators and a candidate for a state House seat after failing multiple times to get a resolution through the Legislature. The state Commissioner of Political Practices found the group failed to register as a political organization and report its campaign spending.

According to a disclosure report it filed in Michigan, the group also spent more than \$40,000 supporting statehouse candidates there. It spent \$10,000 on statehouse races in North Carolina. A group it formed in Idaho reported spending more than \$100,000 before the state's May 17 primary, including more than \$75,000 against state Rep. Judy Boyle, a conservative who co-wrote a newspaper column with a liberal lawmaker about why a convention of states was a bad idea.

A seven-term lawmaker, Boyle said she'd been warned the group would target her and said their radio ads falsely claimed the local right-to-life group endorsed her opponent.

"I knew then that the group believes the ends justify the means and they would go to any length to smear me, which they did," Boyle said via text message.

She eventually won her election — by six votes.

## Author Salman Rushdie on ventilator after New York stabbing

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

CHAUTAUQUA, N.Y. (AP) — Salman Rushdie, whose novel "The Satanic Verses" drew death threats from Iran's leader in the 1980s, was stabbed in the neck and abdomen Friday by a man who rushed the stage as the author was about to give a lecture in western New York.

A bloodied Rushdie, 75, was flown to a hospital and underwent surgery. His agent, Andrew Wylie, said the writer was on a ventilator Friday evening, with a damaged liver, severed nerves in his arm and an eye he was likely to lose.

Police identified the attacker as Hadi Matar, 24, of Fairview, New Jersey. He was awaiting arraignment following his arrest at the Chautauqua Institution, a nonprofit education and reereat center where Rushdie was scheduled to speak.

Matar was born in the United States to Lebanese parents who emigrated from Yaroun, a border village in southern Lebanon, Mayor Ali Tehfe told The Associated Press. His birth was a decade after "The Satanic Verses" first was published.

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The motive for the attack was unclear, State Police Maj. Eugene Staniszewski said.

Rushdie's 1988 novel was viewed as blasphemous by many Muslims, who saw a character as an insult to the Prophet Muhammad, among other objections. The book was banned in Iran, where the late leader Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a 1989 fatwa, or edict, calling for Rushdie's death.

Iran's theocratic government and its state-run media assigned no rationale for Friday's assault. In Tehran, some Iranians interviewed Saturday by the AP praised the attack on an author they believe tarnished the Islamic faith, while others worried it would further isolate their country.

An AP reporter witnessed the attacker confront Rushdie on stage and stab or punch him 10 to 15 times as the author was being introduced. Dr. Martin Haskell, a physician who was among those who rushed to help, described Rushdie's wounds as "serious but recoverable."

Event moderator Henry Reese, 73, a co-founder of an organization that offers residencies to writers facing persecution, was also attacked. Reese suffered a facial injury and was treated and released from a hospital, police said. He and Rushdie had planned to discuss the United States as a refuge for writers and other artists in exile.

A state trooper and a county sheriff's deputy were assigned to Rushdie's lecture, and state police said the trooper made the arrest. But after the attack, some longtime visitors to the center questioned why there wasn't tighter security for the event, given the decades of threats against Rushdie and a bounty on his head offering more than \$3 million to anyone who killed him.

Matar, like other visitors, had obtained a pass to enter the Chautauqua Institution's 750-acre grounds, Michael Hill, the institution's president, said.

The suspect's attorney, public defender Nathaniel Barone, said he was still gathering information and declined to comment. Matar's home was blocked off by authorities.

Rabbi Charles Savenor was among the roughly 2,500 people in the audience for Rushdie's appearance.

The assailant ran onto the platform "and started pounding on Mr. Rushdie. At first you're like, 'What's going on?' And then it became abundantly clear in a few seconds that he was being beaten," Savenor said. He said the attack lasted about 20 seconds.

Another spectator, Kathleen James, said the attacker was dressed in black, with a black mask.

"We thought perhaps it was part of a stunt to show that there's still a lot of controversy around this author. But it became evident in a few seconds" that it wasn't, she said.

Amid gasps, spectators were ushered out of the outdoor amphitheater.

The stabbing reverberated from the tranquil town of Chautauqua to the United Nations, which issued a statement expressing U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' horror and stressing that free expression and opinion should not be met with violence.

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Friday's attack, which led an evening news bulletin on Iranian state television.

From the White House, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan described the attack as "reprehensible" and said the Biden administration wished Rushdie a quick recovery.

"This act of violence is appalling," Sullivan said in a statement. "We are thankful to good citizens and first responders for helping Mr. Rushdie so quickly after the attack and to law enforcement for its swift and effective work, which is ongoing."

Rushdie has been a prominent spokesman for free expression and liberal causes, and the literary world recoiled at what Ian McEwan, a novelist and Rushdie's friend, described as "an assault on freedom of thought and speech."

"Salman has been an inspirational defender of persecuted writers and journalists across the world," McEwan said in a statement. "He is a fiery and generous spirit, a man of immense talent and courage and he will not be deterred."

PEN America CEO Suzanne Nossel said the organization didn't know of any comparable act of violence against a literary writer in the U.S. Rushdie was once president of the group, which advocates for writers and free expression.

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After the publication of "The Satanic Verses," often-violent protests erupted across the Muslim world against Rushdie, who was born in India to a Muslim family.

At least 45 people were killed in riots over the book, including 12 people in Rushdie's hometown of Mumbai. In 1991, a Japanese translator of the book was stabbed to death and an Italian translator survived a knife attack. In 1993, the book's Norwegian publisher was shot three times and survived.

Khomeini died the same year he issued the fatwa calling for Rushdie's death. Iran's current supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, never issued a fatwa of his own withdrawing the edict, though Iran in recent years hasn't focused on the writer.

The death threats and bounty led Rushdie to go into hiding under a British government protection program, which included a round-the-clock armed guard. Rushdie emerged after nine years of seclusion and cautiously resumed more public appearances, maintaining his outspoken criticism of religious extremism overall.

In 2012, Rushdie published a memoir, "Joseph Anton," about the fatwa. The title came from the pseudonym Rushdie used while in hiding. He said during a New York talk the same year the memoir came out that terrorism was really the art of fear.

"The only way you can defeat it is by deciding not to be afraid," he said.

Anti-Rushdie sentiment has lingered long after Khomeini's decree. The Index on Censorship, an organization promoting free expression, said money was raised to boost the reward for his killing as recently as 2016.

An AP journalist who went to the Tehran office of the 15 Khordad Foundation, which put up the millions for the bounty on Rushdie, found it closed Friday night on the Iranian weekend. No one answered calls to its listed telephone number.

Rushdie rose to prominence with his Booker Prize-winning 1981 novel "Midnight's Children," but his name became known around the world after "The Satanic Verses."

Widely regarded as one of Britain's finest living writers, Rushdie was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2008 and earlier this year was made a member of the Order of the Companions of Honor, a royal accolade for people who have made a major contribution to the arts, science or public life.

Organizers of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, which opens Saturday in Scotland and is one of the world's largest literary gatherings, are encouraging guest authors to read a sentence from Rushdie's work at the start of their events.

"We are inspired by his courage and are thinking of him at this difficult time," festival director Nick Barley said. "This tragedy is a painful reminder of the fragility of things we hold dear and a call to action: We won't be intimidated by those who would use violence rather than words."

The Chautauqua Institution, about 55 miles (89 kilometers) southwest of Buffalo in a rural corner of New York, has served for more than a century as a place for reflection and spiritual guidance. Visitors don't pass through metal detectors or undergo bag checks. Most people leave the doors to their century-old cottages unlocked at night.

The center is known for its summertime lecture series, where Rushdie has spoken before.

At an evening vigil, a few hundred residents and visitors gathered for prayer, music and a long moment of silence.

"Hate can't win," one man shouted.

## Praise, worry in Iran after Rushdie attack; government quiet

By NASSER KARIMI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iranians reacted with praise and worry Saturday over the attack on novelist Salman Rushdie, the target of a decades-old fatwa by the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini calling for his death.

It remains unclear why Rushdie's attacker, identified by police as Hadi Matar of Fairview, New Jersey, stabbed the author as he prepared to speak at an event Friday in western New York. Iran's theocratic

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government and its state-run media have assigned no motive to the assault.

But in Tehran, some willing to speak to The Associated Press offered praise for an attack targeting a writer they believe tarnished the Islamic faith with his 1988 book "The Satanic Verses." In the streets of Iran's capital, images of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini still peer down at passers-by.

"I don't know Salman Rushdie, but I am happy to hear that he was attacked since he insulted Islam," said Reza Amiri, a 27-year-old deliveryman. "This is the fate for anybody who insults sanctities."

Others, however, worried aloud that Iran could become even more cut off from the world as tensions remain high over its tattered nuclear deal.

"I feel those who did it are trying to isolate Iran," said Mahshid Barati, a 39-year-old geography teacher. "This will negatively affect relations with many — even Russia and China."

Khomeini, in poor health in the last year of his life after the grinding, stalemate 1980s Iran-Iraq war decimated the country's economy, issued the fatwa on Rushdie in 1989. The Islamic edict came amid a violent uproar in the Muslim world over the novel, which some viewed as blasphemously making suggestions about the Prophet Muhammad's life.

"I would like to inform all the intrepid Muslims in the world that the author of the book entitled 'Satanic Verses' ... as well as those publishers who were aware of its contents, are hereby sentenced to death," Khomeini said in February 1989, according to Tehran Radio.

He added: "Whoever is killed doing this will be regarded as a martyr and will go directly to heaven."

Early on Saturday, Iranian state media made a point to note one man identified as being killed while trying to carry out the fatwa. Lebanese national Mustafa Mahmoud Mazeah died when a book bomb he had prematurely exploded in a London hotel on Aug. 3, 1989, just over 33 years ago.

Matar, the man who attacked Rushdie on Friday, was born in the United States to Lebanese parents who emigrated from the southern village of Yaroun, the town's mayor Ali Tehfe told the AP.

Yaroun sits only kilometers (miles) away from Israel. In the past, the Israeli military has fired on what it described as positions of the Iran-backed Shiite militia Hezbollah around that area.

At newsstands Saturday, front-page headlines offered their own takes on the attack. The hard-line Vatan-e Emrouz's main story covered what it described as: "A knife in the neck of Salman Rushdie." The reformist newspaper Etemad's headline asked: "Salman Rushdie near death?"

The conservative newspaper Khorasan bore a large image of Rushdie on a stretcher, its headline blaring: "Satan on the path to hell."

But the 15th Khordad Foundation — which put the over \$3 million bounty on Rushdie — remained quiet at the start of the working week. Staffers there declined to immediately comment to the AP, referring questions to an official not in the office.

The foundation, whose name refers to the 1963 protests against Iran's former shah by Khomeini's supporters, typically focuses on providing aid to the disabled and others affected by war. But it, like other foundations known as "bonyads" in Iran funded in part by confiscated assets from the shah's time, often serve the political interests of the country's hard-liners.

Reformists in Iran, those who want to slowly liberalize the country's Shiite theocracy from inside and have better relations with the West, have sought to distance the country's government from the edict. Notably, reformist President Mohammad Khatami's foreign minister in 1998 said that the "government disassociates itself from any reward which has been offered in this regard and does not support it."

Rushdie slowly began to re-emerge into public life around that time. But some in Iran have never forgotten the fatwa against him.

On Saturday, Mohammad Mahdi Movaghar, a 34-year-old Tehran resident, described having a "good feeling" after seeing Rushdie attacked.

"This is pleasing and shows those who insult the sacred things of we Muslims, in addition to punishment in the hereafter, will get punished in this world too at the hands of people," he said.

Others, however, worried the attack — regardless of why it was carried out — could hurt Iran as it tries to negotiate over its nuclear deal with world powers.

Since then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the accord in 2018, Tehran has

seen its rial currency plummet and its economy crater. Meanwhile, Tehran enriches uranium now closer than ever to weapons-grade levels amid a series of attacks across the Mideast.

"It will make Iran more isolated," warned former Iranian diplomat Mashallah Sefatzadeh.

While fatwas can be revised or revoked, Iran's current Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who took over after Khomeini has never done so.

"The decision made about Salman Rushdie is still valid," Khamenei said in 1989. "As I have already said, this is a bullet for which there is a target. It has been shot. It will one day sooner or later hit the target."

As recently as February 2017, Khamenei tersely answered this question posed to him: "Is the fatwa on the apostasy of the cursed liar Salman Rushdie still in effect? What is a Muslim's duty in this regard?"

Khamenei responded: "The decree is as Imam Khomeini issued."

## Ukrainian minister says Russia blocking access to medicines

By DEREK GATOPOULOS and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's health minister has accused Russian authorities of committing a crime against humanity by blocking access to affordable medicines in areas its forces have occupied since invading the country 5 1/2 months ago.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Ukrainian Health Minister Viktor Liashko said Russian authorities repeatedly have blocked efforts to provide state-subsidized drugs to people in occupied cities, towns and villages.

"Throughout the entire six months of war, Russia has not (allowed) proper humanitarian corridors so we could provide our own medicines to the patients that need them," Liashko said, speaking at the Health Ministry in Kyiv late Friday.

"We believe that these actions are being taken with intent by Russia, and we consider them to be crimes against humanity and war crimes that will be documented and will be recognized," the minister said.

The Ukrainian government has a program that provides medications to people with cancer and chronic health conditions. The destruction of hospitals and infrastructure along with the displacement of an estimated 7 million people inside the country also have interfered with other forms of treatment, according to United Nations and Ukrainian officials.

The war in Ukraine has caused severe disruptions to the country's state-run health service, which was undergoing major reforms, largely in response to the coronavirus pandemic, when Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops to invade on Feb. 24.

The World Health Organization said it recorded 445 attacks on hospitals and other health care facilities as of Aug. 11 that directly resulted in 86 deaths and 105 injuries.

But Liashko said the secondary effects were far more severe.

"When roads and bridges have been damaged in areas now controlled by the Ukrainian forces... it is difficult to get someone who had a heart attack or a stroke to the hospital," he said. "Sometimes, we can't make it in time, the ambulance can't get there in time. That's why war causes many more casualties (than those killed in the fighting). It's a number that cannot be calculated." \_\_\_ Full coverage of the war in Ukraine: <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine> \_\_\_ Follow Gatopoulos at <https://twitter.com/dgatopoulos>

and Arhirova at [https://twitter.com/h\\_arhirova](https://twitter.com/h_arhirova)

## Author Salman Rushdie stabbed on lecture stage in New York

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

CHAUTAUQUA, N.Y. (AP) — Salman Rushdie, whose novel "The Satanic Verses" drew death threats from Iran's leader in the 1980s, was stabbed in the neck and abdomen Friday by a man who rushed the stage as the author was about to give a lecture in western New York.

A bloodied Rushdie, 75, was flown to a hospital and underwent surgery. His agent, Andrew Wylie, said the writer was on a ventilator Friday evening, with a damaged liver, severed nerves in his arm and an eye he was likely to lose.

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Police identified the attacker as Hadi Matar, 24, of Fairview, New Jersey. He was arrested at the scene and was awaiting arraignment. Matar was born a decade after "The Satanic Verses" was published. The motive for the attack was unclear, State Police Maj. Eugene Staniszewski said.

An Associated Press reporter witnessed the attacker confront Rushdie on stage at the Chautauqua Institution and stab or punch him 10 to 15 times as he was being introduced. The author was pushed or fell to the floor, and the man was arrested.

Dr. Martin Haskell, a physician who was among those who rushed to help, described Rushdie's wounds as "serious but recoverable."

Event moderator Henry Reese, 73, a co-founder of an organization that offers residencies to writers facing persecution, was also attacked. Reese suffered a facial injury and was treated and released from a hospital, police said. He and Rushdie were due to discuss the United States as a refuge for writers and other artists in exile.

A state trooper and a county sheriff's deputy were assigned to Rushdie's lecture, and state police said the trooper made the arrest. But after the attack, some longtime visitors to the center questioned why there wasn't tighter security for the event, given the decades of threats against Rushdie and a bounty on his head offering more than \$3 million for anyone who kills him.

Rabbi Charles Savenor was among the roughly 2,500 people in the audience. Amid gasps, spectators were ushered out of the outdoor amphitheater.

The assailant ran onto the platform "and started pounding on Mr. Rushdie. At first you're like, 'What's going on?' And then it became abundantly clear in a few seconds that he was being beaten," Savenor said. He said the attack lasted about 20 seconds.

Another spectator, Kathleen James, said the attacker was dressed in black, with a black mask.

"We thought perhaps it was part of a stunt to show that there's still a lot of controversy around this author. But it became evident in a few seconds" that it wasn't, she said.

Matar, like other visitors, had obtained a pass to enter the Chautauqua Institution's 750-acre grounds, Michael Hill, the president of the nonprofit education center and resort, said.

The suspect's attorney, public defender Nathaniel Barone, said he was still gathering information and declined to comment. Matar's home was blocked off by authorities.

The stabbing reverberated from the tranquil town of Chautauqua to the United Nations, which issued a statement expressing U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' horror and stressing that free expression and opinion should not be met with violence.

From the White House, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan described the attack as "reprehensible" and said the Biden administration wished Rushdie a quick recovery.

"This act of violence is appalling," Sullivan said in a statement. "We are thankful to good citizens and first responders for helping Mr. Rushdie so quickly after the attack and to law enforcement for its swift and effective work, which is ongoing."

Rushdie has been a prominent spokesman for free expression and liberal causes, and the literary world recoiled at what Ian McEwan, a novelist and Rushdie's friend, described as "an assault on freedom of thought and speech."

"Salman has been an inspirational defender of persecuted writers and journalists across the world," McEwan said in a statement. "He is a fiery and generous spirit, a man of immense talent and courage and he will not be deterred."

PEN America CEO Suzanne Nossel said the organization didn't know of any comparable act of violence against a literary writer in the U.S. Rushdie was once president of the group, which advocates for writers and free expression.

Rushdie's 1988 novel was viewed as blasphemous by many Muslims, who saw a character as an insult to the Prophet Muhammad, among other objections. Across the Muslim world, often-violent protests erupted against Rushdie, who was born in India to a Muslim family.

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knife attack. In 1993, the book's Norwegian publisher was shot three times and survived.

The book was banned in Iran, where the late leader Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a 1989 fatwa, or edict, calling for Rushdie's death. Khomeini died that same year.

Iran's current Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has never issued a fatwa of his own withdrawing the edict, though Iran in recent years hasn't focused on the writer.

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An Associated Press journalist who went to the Tehran office of the 15 Khordad Foundation, which put up the millions for the bounty on Rushdie, found it closed Friday night on the Iranian weekend. No one answered calls to its listed telephone number.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "was appalled to learn of the attack" on Rushdie, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. "In no case is violence a response to words spoken or written by others in their exercise of the freedoms of opinion and expression."

In 2012, Rushdie published a memoir, "Joseph Anton," about the fatwa. The title came from the pseudonym Rushdie used while in hiding.

Rushdie rose to prominence with his Booker Prize-winning 1981 novel "Midnight's Children," but his name became known around the world after "The Satanic Verses."

Widely regarded as one of Britain's finest living writers, Rushdie was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2008 and earlier this year was made a member of the Order of the Companions of Honor, a royal accolade for people who have made a major contribution to the arts, science or public life.

In a tweet, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson deplored that Rushdie was attacked "while exercising a right we should never cease to defend."

The Chautauqua Institution, about 55 miles (89 kilometers) southwest of Buffalo in a rural corner of New York, has served for more than a century as a place for reflection and spiritual guidance. Visitors don't pass through metal detectors or undergo bag checks. Most people leave the doors to their century-old cottages unlocked at night.

The center is known for its summertime lecture series, where Rushdie has spoken before.

At an evening vigil, a few hundred residents and visitors gathered for prayer, music and a long moment of silence.

"Hate can't win," one man shouted.

## China sending fighter jets to Thailand for joint exercises

BANGKOK (AP) — The Chinese air force is sending fighter jets and bombers to Thailand for a joint exercise with the Thai military on Sunday.

The training will include air support, strikes on ground targets and small- and large-scale troop deployment, the Chinese Defense Ministry said in a statement posted on its website.

China's expanding military activities in the Asia-Pacific region have alarmed the United States and its allies and form part of a growing strategic and economic competition that has inflamed tensions between the world's two largest economies.

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U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin visited Thailand in June as part of an effort to strengthen what he called America's "unparalleled network of alliances and partnerships" in the region.

The Falcon Strike exercise will be held at the Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base in northern Thailand near the border with Laos. Thai fighter jets and airborne early warning aircraft from both countries will also take part.

The training comes as the U.S. holds combat drills in Indonesia with Indonesia, Australia, Japan and Singapore in the largest iteration of the Super Garuda Shield exercises since they began in 2009.

It also follows China's sending warships, missiles and aircraft into the waters and air around Taiwan in a threatening response to a visit by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to the self-ruled island, which China claims as its territory.

Kurt Campbell, a top advisor to President Joe Biden on the Indo-Pacific, said Friday that the U.S. would take resolute steps to support Taiwan, including sending warships and aircraft through the 160-kilometer (100-mile) wide waterway that separates Taiwan and China.

"We'll continue to fly, sail and operate where international law allows, consistent with our longstanding commitment to freedom of navigation," he said in a call with reporters. "And that includes conducting standard air and maritime transits through the Taiwan Strait in the next few weeks."

## **Sinema took Wall Street money while killing tax on investors**

By BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, the Arizona Democrat who single-handedly thwarted her party's longtime goal of raising taxes on wealthy investors, received nearly \$1 million over the past year from private equity professionals, hedge fund managers and venture capitalists whose taxes would have increased under the plan.

For years, Democrats have promised to raise taxes on such investors, who pay a significantly lower rate on their earnings than ordinary workers. But just as they closed in on that goal last week, Sinema forced a series of changes to her party's \$740 billion election-year spending package, eliminating a proposed "carried interest" tax increase on private equity earnings while securing a \$35 billion exemption that will spare much of the industry from a separate tax increase other huge corporations now have to pay.

The bill, with Sinema's alterations intact, was given final approval by Congress on Friday and is expected to be signed by President Joe Biden next week.

Sinema has long aligned herself with the interests of private equity, hedge funds and venture capital, helping her net at least \$1.5 million in campaign contributions since she was elected to the House a decade ago. But the \$983,000 she has collected since last summer more than doubled what the industry donated to her during all of her preceding years in Congress combined, according to an Associated Press review of campaign finances disclosures.

The donations, which make Sinema one of the industry's top beneficiaries in Congress, serve a reminder of the way that high-power lobbying campaigns can have dramatic implications for the way legislation is crafted. They also highlight a degree of political risk for Sinema, whose unapologetic defense of the industry's favorable tax treatment is viewed by many in her party as indefensible.

"From their vantage point, it's a million dollars very well spent," said Dean Baker, a senior economist at the Center for Economic and Policy Research, a liberal-leaning think tank. "It's pretty rare you see this direct of a return on your investment. So I guess I would congratulate them."

Sinema's office declined to make her available for an interview. Hannah Hurley, a Sinema spokesperson, acknowledged the senator shares some of the industry's views on taxation, but rebuffed any suggestion that the donations influenced her thinking.

"Senator Sinema makes every decision based on one criteria: what's best for Arizona," Hurley said in a statement. "She has been clear and consistent for over a year that she will only support tax reforms and revenue options that support Arizona's economic growth and competitiveness."

The American Investment Council, a trade group that lobbies on behalf of private equity, also defended

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their push to defeat the tax provisions.

"Our team worked to ensure that members of Congress from both sides of the aisle understand how private equity directly employs workers and supports small businesses throughout their communities," Drew Maloney, the organization's CEO and president, said in a statement.

Sinema's defense of the tax provisions offer a jarring contrast to her background as a Green Party activist and self-styled "Prada socialist" who once likened accepting campaign cash to "bribery" and later called for "big corporations & the rich to pay their fair share" shortly before launching her first campaign for Congress in 2012.

She's been far more magnanimous since, praising private equity in 2016 from the House floor for providing "billions of dollars each year to Main Street businesses" and later interning at a private equity mogul's boutique winery in northern California during the 2020 congressional recess.

The soaring contributions from the industry to Sinema trace back to last summer. That's when she first made clear that she wouldn't support a carried interest tax increase, as well as other corporate and business tax hikes, included in an earlier iteration of Biden's agenda.

During a two-week period in September alone, Sinema collected \$47,100 in contributions from 16 high-ranking officials from the private equity firm Welsh, Carson, Anderson & Stowe, records show. Employees and executives of KKR, another private equity behemoth, contributed \$44,100 to Sinema during a two-month span in late 2021.

In some cases, the families of private equity managers joined in. David Belluck, a partner at the firm Riverside Partners, gave a \$5,800 max-out contribution to Sinema one day in late June. So did three of his college-age kids, with the family collectively donating \$23,200, records show.

"I generally support centrist Democrats and her seat is important to keep a Democratic Senate majority," Belluck said, adding that his family has known Sinema since her election to Congress. "She and I have never discussed private equity taxation."

The donations from the industry coincide with a \$26 million lobbying effort spearheaded by the investment firm Blackstone that culminated on the Senate floor last weekend.

By the time the bill was up for debate during a marathon series of votes, Sinema had already forced Democrats to abandon their carried interest tax increase.

"Senator Sinema said she would not vote for the bill .. unless we took it out," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer told reporters last week. "We had no choice."

But after private equity lobbyists discovered a provision in the bill that would have subjected many of them to a separate 15% corporate minimum tax, they urgently pressed Sinema and other centrist Democrats for changes, according to emails as well as four people with direct knowledge of the matter who requested anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

"Given the breaking nature of this development we need as many offices as possible weighing in with concerns to Leader Schumer's office," Blackstone lobbyist Ryan McConaghy wrote in a Saturday afternoon email obtained by the AP, which included proposed language for modifying the bill. "Would you and your boss be willing to raise the alarm on this and express concerns with Schumer and team?"

McConaghy did not respond to a request for comment.

Sinema worked with Republicans on an amendment that stripped the corporate tax increase provisions from the bill, which a handful of vulnerable Democrats also voted for.

"Since she has been in Congress, Kyrsten has consistently supported pro-growth policies that encourage job creation across Arizona. Her tax policy positions and focus on growing Arizona's economy and competitiveness are longstanding and well known," Hurley, the Sinema spokesperson, said.

But many in her party disagree. They say the favorable treatment does little to boost the overall economy and argue there's little compelling evidence to suggest the tax benefits are enjoyed beyond some of the wealthiest investors.

Some of Sinema's donors make their case.

Blackstone, a significant source of campaign contributions, owns large tracts of real estate in Sinema's

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home state, Arizona. The firm was condemned by United Nations experts in 2019 who said Blackstone's financial model was responsible for a "financialization of housing" that has driven up rents and home costs, "pushing low-income, and increasingly middle-income people from their homes."

Blackstone employees executives and their family members have given Sinema \$44,000 since 2018, records show.

In a statement, Blackstone called the allegations by the UN experts "false and misleading" and said all employee contributions are "strictly personal." The firm added that it was "incredibly proud of its investments in housing."

Another major financial services donor is Centerbridge Partners, a New York-based firm that buys up the debt of distressed governments and companies and often uses hardball tactics to extract value. Since 2017, Sinema has collected at least \$29,000 from donors associated with the firm, including co-founder Mark Gallogly and his wife, Elizabeth Strickler, records show.

In 2012, Centerbridge Partners purchased Arizona-based restaurant chain P.F. Chang's for roughly \$1 billion. After loading the struggling company up with \$675 million of debt, they sold it to another private equity group in 2019, according to Bloomberg News. The company received a \$10 million coronavirus aid loan to cover payroll, but shed jobs and closed locations as it struggled with the pandemic.

Centerbridge Partners was also part of a consortium of hedge funds that helped usher in an era of austerity in Puerto Rico after buying up billions of dollars of the island government's \$72 billion debt — and filing legal proceedings to collect. A subsidiary of Centerbridge Partners was among a group of creditors who repeatedly sued one of the U.S. territory's pension funds. In one 2016 lawsuit, the group of creditors asked a judge to divert money from a Puerto Rican pension fund in order to collect.

A Centerbridge representative could not immediately provide comment Friday.

Liberal activists in Arizona say they plan to make Sinema's reliance on donations from wealthy investors a campaign issue when she is up for reelection in 2024.

"There are many takes on how to win, but there is no universe in which it is politically smart to fight for favorable tax treatment of the wealthiest people in the country," said Emily Kirkland, a political consultant who works for progressive candidates. "It's absolutely going to be a potent issue."

## Expanded IRS free-file system one step closer in Dems' bill

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The flagship climate change and health care bill passed by Democrats and soon to be signed by President Joe Biden will bring U.S. taxpayers one step closer to a government-operated electronic free-file tax return system.

It's something lawmakers and advocates have been seeking for years. For many Americans, it's frustrating that beyond having to pay sometimes hefty tax bills, they also have to shell out additional money for tax preparation programs or preparers because of an increasingly complex U.S. tax system.

"It's definitely something we should do, and when the IRS is adequately resourced, it's something that will happen," said Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen at a June Senate Finance Committee hearing.

And now that the IRS is set to receive nearly \$80 billion through the so-called "Inflation Reduction Act," the agency has the means to develop new systems to help Americans pay their taxes. The legislation passed Congress on Friday.

Several hurdles stand in the way. Even in a best-case scenario, it will likely take years to get a new, free system up and running. There's also pushback from commercial tax preparation companies, which question whether Americans want the IRS to prepare their taxes.

Perhaps this biggest hurdle is an agreement between the IRS and some commercial tax preparation companies, known as the Free File Alliance, which prevents the federal agency from creating its own free tax return filing system. In short, the IRS agreed not create its own filing system if companies would instead provide free services to taxpayers making \$73,000 or less.

This program, though, has been marred with controversy, with commercial firms misrepresenting their

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services and low taxpayer participation rates.

The Government Accountability Office in April reported that while 70% of taxpayers were eligible for services through the Free File Alliance, only 3% of taxpayers actually use the service. The watchdog recommended the IRS find new free filing options before the Alliance expires in October 2023.

With the funding in the bill, the IRS has an opportunity to create a new system.

Included is a provision that allots \$15 million to the IRS to make plans for a free direct e-file tax return system. Those plans would have to be developed within nine months and would include cost estimates for creating and administering a system. They would also require public input.

There are also legislative attempts to move this effort along.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., in July resubmitted a bill called the Tax Filing Simplification Act that would require the IRS to create its own free online tax filing service and move away from its partnership with private online tax preparation companies.

"I've been pushing for a free tax filing system for years, and now the IRS is on the verge of having significant funding to modernize its IT systems, which means it's time to develop simplified filing tools laid out in my Tax Filing Simplification Act," Warren told The Associated Press.

"Americans spend too much time and money to file their taxes, and the IRS should adopt these proposals to help millions of Americans file taxes and claim refunds."

At her Finance Committee appearance, Yellen called for a new system.

"There's no reason in the world that a modern economy shouldn't have a system that makes it easy for such a large group of taxpayers to file their returns," she said.

Vanessa Williamson, a senior fellow at the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center, said "if the IRS moves forward with a free product, it could save lower-income families the money they used to give to H&R Block or TurboTax."

"Tax prep companies are notorious for tricking tax filers into paying for services they should be getting for free," Williamson said, "so an IRS free file service would be a very welcome step that would save Americans money."

In 2019, ProPublica wrote about Intuit's TurboTax and H&R Block Inc.'s efforts to mislead taxpayers away from the federally supported free services for which they qualified. And in May, New York Attorney General Letitia James secured a \$141 million settlement with Mountain View, California-based Intuit Inc., which had to pay restitution to some taxpayers.

Intuit withdrew from the Alliance in July 2021, stating in a blog post that the company could provide its benefits without the Free File Alliance's limitations. H&R Block withdrew from the partnership in 2020.

"Most Americans don't want the tax collector to also serve as the tax preparer," said Derrick L. Plummer, a spokesman for Intuit.

"The IRS already has a core mission that it needs to focus on, and creating a new system would cost billions of taxpayer dollars and jeopardize the financial freedom of millions more," he said. A spokesperson for H&R Block did not respond to an Associated Press request for comment.

Ideas for what a government run free-file program might look like are already being studied.

Bruce Sacerdote, a Dartmouth economist, has examined systems in other countries in which taxpayers don't have to enter much data on their electronic forms because the government has already done so.

"The IRS has tremendous amounts of information on wages and dividends," he said, adding that a government-supported tax filing system "could be a wonderful thing."

Such systems are used in Germany, Japan and other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries that collaborate to develop policies that promote economic growth.

"As a taxpayer, there could be a great benefit to pre-population," he said. "Filing taxes is enormously time-consuming. Given all the information has on taxpayers, the IRS could they simply send you a completed return."

**Suspect in 4 New Mexico killings left trail of violence**

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By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN, STEFANIE DAZIO and JULIE WATSON Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — In the six years since he resettled in the United States from Afghanistan, the primary suspect in the slayings of four Muslim men in Albuquerque has been arrested several times for domestic violence and captured on camera slashing the tires of a woman's car, according to police and court records.

The lengthy pattern of violence — which began not long after Muhammad Syed arrived in the states — has shocked members of the city's small, close-knit Muslim community, some of whom knew him from the local mosque and who initially had assumed the killer was an outsider with a bias against the Islamic religion. Now, they are coming to terms with the idea that they never really understood the man.

"I think based on knowing his history now — and we didn't before — he's obviously a disturbed individual. He obviously has a violent tendency," said Ahmad Assed, president of the Islamic Center of New Mexico.

Police say Syed, 51, was acquainted with his victims and was likely motivated by "interpersonal conflicts."

He was arrested Monday night and remains in custody. Prosecutors say he is a dangerous man and plan to ask a judge next week to keep him locked up pending trial on murder charges in connection with two of the shooting deaths. Syed is also the primary suspect in the other two homicides, but police say they will not rush to charge him in those cases as long as he remains in jail and doesn't pose a threat to the community. The married father of six has denied involvement in the killings; his defense attorneys have declined to comment.

Few details have emerged publicly about Syed's life before he and his family came to America in 2016, but a U.S. government document obtained by The Associated Press says he graduated from Rehman Baba High School in western Kabul in 1990. Between 2010 and 2012, he worked as a cook for the Al Bashar Jala Construction Company.

In December 2012, Syed fled Afghanistan with his wife and children, the report states. The family made its way to Pakistan, where Syed sought work as a refrigerator technician. A native Pashto speaker who was also fluent in Dari, he was admitted to the United States in 2016 as a refugee.

The very next year, according to court records, a boyfriend of Syed's daughter alleged that Syed, his wife and one of Syed's sons pulled him out of a car and punched and kicked him before driving away. The boyfriend, who was found with a bloody nose, scratches and bruises, told police he was attacked because Syed, a Sunni Muslim, did not want his daughter in a relationship with a Shiite man.

In 2018, Syed was taken into custody after a fight with his wife about her driving. Syed told police that his wife had slapped him in the car, but she said he pulled her by the hair, threw her to the ground and made her walk two hours to their destination.

Months later, Syed allegedly beat his wife and attacked one of his sons with a large slotted metal spoon that left his hair blood-soaked, according to court documents. Syed's wife told police everything was fine. But the son, who was the one who called them, told officers that Syed routinely beat him and his mother.

Two of the cases were dismissed after the wife and boyfriend declined to press charges. The third was dismissed after Syed completed a pretrial intervention program. In 2020, Syed was arrested after he allegedly refused to pull over for police after running a traffic light, but that case was also eventually dismissed.

"If you're trying to understand how violence in a particular person evolves, you just have to know that he didn't wake up last year and become a serial killer," said former FBI profiler Mary Ellen O'Toole. "He had experience with violence. And that's the challenge of law enforcement ... to identify what is your experience with violence and when did it start?"

Syed told detectives that he'd served with the Afghan National Army Special Operations Command, a small, elite group of Afghan soldiers who fought the Taliban. He said he likes the AK-47-style weapon police found at his house because he'd used one in Afghanistan.

Yet the U.S. government profile the AP reviewed did not list any military experience, and Syed turned 40 the year the elite force was formed in 2011 — likely too old to be selected for combat in the heaviest fighting.

"That sounds a little fishy," said Lt. Col. Daniel L. Davis, who served two tours in Afghanistan and is a senior fellow and military expert at the Defense Priorities think tank. He said while Syed may have been a

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soldier, "special forces guys are usually 22, 25 years old, maybe 30, because it is so physically demanding."

The Syed family lives in a small duplex on the city's south side, a working-class part of town where many of the older homes and apartments have security bars affixed to their doors and windows. The area has become a magnet for Afghan refugees and other immigrants looking to make a new home in New Mexico's largest city.

The slayings of the four men — the first in November and the other three occurring in rapid succession over a period of less than two weeks in July and the first week of August — set off ripples of terror in Albuquerque's Muslim community of about 4,500. Residents were afraid to go out of their homes — to the point where city officials offered to deliver meals — and some considered leaving town.

That was what Syed told investigators he was doing when he left in his Volkswagen Jetta on Sunday: heading out of state to find a safer place for his frightened family.

Police say he was, in fact, skipping town after killing Naeem Hussain just days before.

Syed is the primary suspect — but hasn't been charged — in the death of Hussain, a 25-year-old man from Pakistan who was fatally shot on Aug. 5 in the parking lot of a refugee resettlement agency in south-east Albuquerque; and the slaying of Muhammad Zahir Ahmadi, a 62-year-old Afghan immigrant who was fatally shot in the head last November behind the market he owned in the city.

Ahmadi is the brother-in-law of the woman whose tires Syed slashed in 2020, while Syed and Hussain had known each other since 2016, police said.

Syed has been charged with murder in the deaths of Aftab Hussein and Muhammad Afzaal Hussain. Hussein, 41, was slain on the night of July 26 after parking his car in the usual spot near his home. Afzaal Hussain, a 27-year-old urban planner who had worked on the campaign of a New Mexico congresswoman, was gunned down on the night of Aug. 1 while taking his evening walk.

While Syed told police he recognized Hussein from parties in the community, it was unclear how he knew Afzaal Hussain.

Despite the violence he allegedly inflicted on his wife and children, Syed's family is standing by him.

"My father is not a person who can kill somebody," his daughter recently told CNN, which did not disclose her identity to protect her safety. "My father has always talked about peace. That's why we are here in the United States. We came from Afghanistan, from fighting, from shooting."

## Hot nights: US in July sets new record for overnight warmth

BY SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Talk about hot nights, America got some for the history books last month.

The continental United States in July set a record for overnight warmth, providing little relief from the day's sizzling heat for people, animals, plants and the electric grid, meteorologists said.

The average low temperature for the Lower 48 states in July was 63.6 degrees (17.6 Celsius), which beat the previous record set in 2011 by a few hundredths of a degree. The mark is not only the hottest nightly average for July, but for any month in 128 years of record keeping, said National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration climatologist Karin Gleason. July's nighttime low was more than 3 degrees (1.7 Celsius) warmer than the 20th century average.

Scientists have long talked about nighttime temperatures -- reflected in increasingly hotter minimum readings that usually occur after sunset and before sunrise -- being crucial to health.

"When you have daytime temperatures that are at or near record high temperatures and you don't have that recovery overnight with temperatures cooling off, it does place a lot of stress on plants, on animals and on humans," Gleason said Friday. "It's a big deal."

In Texas, where the monthly daytime average high was over 100 degrees (37.8 Celsius) for the first time in July and the electrical grid was stressed, the average nighttime temperature was a still toasty 74.3 degrees (23.5 Celsius) — 4 degrees (2.2 Celsius) above the 20th century average.

In the past 30 years, the nighttime low in the U.S. has warmed on average about 2.1 degrees (1.2 Celsius), while daytime high temperatures have gone up 1.9 degrees (1.1 Celsius) at the same time. For

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decades climate scientists have said global warming from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas would make the world warm faster at night and in the northern polar regions. A study earlier this week said the Arctic is now warming four times faster than the rest of the globe.

Nighttime warms faster because daytime warming helps make the air hold more moisture than that moisture helps trap the heat in at night, Gleason said.

"So it is in theory expected and it's also something we're seeing happen in the data," Gleason said.

NOAA on Friday also released its global temperature data for July, showing it was on average the sixth hottest month on record with an average temperature of 61.97 degrees (16.67 degrees Celsius), which is 1.57 degrees (0.87 degrees Celsius) warmer than the 20th century average. It was a month of heat waves, including the United Kingdom breaking its all-time heat record.

"Global warming is continuing on pace," Colorado meteorologist Bob Henson said.

## **Jury: Democratic PAC defamed Roy Moore, awards him \$8.2M**

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — A federal jury awarded Republican Roy Moore \$8.2 million in damages Friday after finding a Democratic-aligned super PAC defamed him in a TV ad recounting sexual misconduct accusations during his failed 2017 U.S. Senate bid in Alabama.

Jurors found the Senate Majority PAC made false and defamatory statements against Moore in one ad that attempted to highlight the accusations against Moore. The verdict, returned by a jury after a brief trial in Anniston, Alabama, was a victory for Moore, who has lost other defamation lawsuits, including one against comedian Sacha Baron Cohen.

"We're very thankful to God for an opportunity to help restore my reputation which was severely damaged by the 2017 election," Moore said in a telephone interview.

Ben Stafford, an attorney representing Senate Majority PAC, said in an emailed statement that they believe the ruling would be overturned on appeal.

Moore, a former Republican judge known for his hardline stances opposing same-sex marriage and supporting the public display of Ten Commandments, lost the 2017 Senate race after his campaign was rocked by misconduct allegations against him. Leigh Corfman told The Washington Post and said Moore sexually touched her in 1979 when she was 14 and he was a 32-year-old assistant district attorney. Moore denied the accusation. Other women said Moore dated them, or asked them out on dates, when they were older teens.

The accusations against Moore contributed to his loss to Democrat Doug Jones, the first Democrat to represent Alabama in the Senate in a quarter-century. The seat returned to Republican control with the 2020 election of Tommy Tuberville, a former college football coach.

Senate Majority PAC funded a group called Highway 31 that ran a \$4 million advertising blitz against Moore.

The lawsuit centered on one TV commercial that recounted accusations against Moore. Moore's attorneys argued the ad, through the juxtaposition of statements, falsely claimed he solicited sex from young girls at a shopping mall, including another 14-year-old who was working as a Santa's helper, and that resulted in him being banned from the mall.

The advertisement began with: "What do people who know Roy Moore say?" It followed with the statements "Moore was actually banned from the Gadsden mall ... for soliciting sex from young girls" and "One he approached was 14 and working as Santa's helper."

Wendy Miller has previously testified that she met Moore when she was 14 and working as a Santa's helper at the local mall. She testified Moore told her she was pretty, asked her where she went to high school and offered to buy her a soda. He asked her out two years later, but her mother told her she could not go.

Moore's attorneys argued the juxtaposition of statements in the ad painted Moore in a false light and falsely made it look like he was soliciting sex from girls at the mall.

"In their ad they strung quotes together to make a single statement. That's what the jury found of-

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fensive. They got up and lied and said they didn't intend that," Jeffrey Scott Wittenbrink, an attorney for Moore, said.

The Senate Majority PAC had argued the ad was substantially true and that there were widespread reports about Moore's inappropriate behavior at the mall. An attorney said they planned to appeal.

According to a Thursday court filing from Senate Majority, a Gadsden police officer who worked as security at the Gadsden Mall in the late 1970s — J.D. Thomas — testified that he told Moore not to return to the mall after receiving complaints from store managers that Moore was asking out teen employees or making them uncomfortable. Moore maintained he was never banned from the mall.

"No amount of deflection or distraction from Roy Moore will change the fact that multiple individuals testified under oath to corroborate credible accusations against him. Many others have come forward to make their allegations public, at serious personal cost. We do not think this verdict is the right decision, but we believe the facts are clear and this ruling will be overturned on appeal," Stafford, an attorney representing Senate Majority PAC, said in an emailed statement.

## **FBI seized top secret documents in Trump estate search**

By MICHAEL BALSAMO, ZEKE MILLER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI recovered "top secret" and even more sensitive documents from former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, according to court papers released Friday after a federal judge unsealed the warrant that authorized the sudden, unprecedented search this week.

A property receipt unsealed by the court shows FBI agents took 11 sets of classified records from the estate during a search on Monday.

The seized records include some marked not only top secret but also "sensitive compartmented information," a special category meant to protect the nation's most important secrets that if revealed publicly could cause "exceptionally grave" damage to U.S. interests. The court records did not provide specific details about information the documents might contain.

The warrant says federal agents were investigating potential violations of three different federal laws, including one that governs gathering, transmitting or losing defense information under the Espionage Act. The other statutes address the concealment, mutilation or removal of records and the destruction, alteration or falsification of records in federal investigations.

The property receipt also shows federal agents collected other potential presidential records, including the order pardoning Trump ally Roger Stone, a "leatherbound box of documents," and information about the "President of France." A binder of photos, a handwritten note, "miscellaneous secret documents" and "miscellaneous confidential documents" were also seized in the search.

Trump's attorney, Christina Bobb, who was present at Mar-a-Lago when the agents conducted the search, signed two property receipts — one that was two pages long and another that is a single page.

In a statement earlier Friday, Trump claimed that the documents seized by agents were "all declassified," and argued that he would have turned them over if the Justice Department had asked.

While incumbent presidents generally have the power to declassify information, that authority lapses as soon as they leave office and it was not clear if the documents in question have ever been declassified. And even an incumbent's powers to declassify may be limited regarding secrets dealing with nuclear weapons programs, covert operations and operatives, and some data shared with allies.

Trump kept possession of the documents despite multiple requests from agencies, including the National Archives, to turn over presidential records in accordance with federal law.

The Mar-a-Lago search warrant served Monday was part of an ongoing Justice Department investigation into the discovery of classified White House records recovered from Trump's home earlier this year. The Archives had asked the department to investigate after saying 15 boxes of records it retrieved from the estate included classified records.

It remains unclear whether the Justice Department moved forward with the warrant simply as a means to retrieve the records or as part of a wider criminal investigation or attempt to prosecute the former

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president. Multiple federal laws govern the handling of classified information, with both criminal and civil penalties, as well as presidential records.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Bruce Reinhart, the same judge who signed off on the search warrant, unsealed the warrant and property receipt Friday at the request of the Justice Department after Attorney General Merrick Garland declared there was "substantial public interest in this matter," and Trump said he backed the warrant's "immediate" release. The Justice Department told the judge Friday afternoon that Trump's lawyers did not object to the proposal to make it public.

In messages posted on his Truth Social platform, Trump wrote, "Not only will I not oppose the release of documents ... I am going a step further by ENCOURAGING the immediate release of those documents."

The Justice Department's request was striking because such warrants traditionally remain sealed during a pending investigation. But the department appeared to recognize that its silence since the search had created a vacuum for bitter verbal attacks by Trump and his allies, and felt that the public was entitled to the FBI's side about what prompted Monday's action at the former president's home.

"The public's clear and powerful interest in understanding what occurred under these circumstances weighs heavily in favor of unsealing," said a motion filed in federal court in Florida on Thursday.

The information was released as Trump prepares for another run for the White House. During his 2016 campaign, he pointed frequently to an FBI investigation into his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, over whether she mishandled classified information.

To obtain a search warrant, federal authorities must prove to a judge that probable cause exists to believe that a crime was committed. Garland said he personally approved the warrant, a decision he said the department did not take lightly given that standard practice where possible is to select less intrusive tactics than a search of one's home.

In this case, according to a person familiar with the matter, there was substantial engagement with Trump and his representatives prior to the search warrant, including a subpoena for records and a visit to Mar-a-Lago a couple of months ago by FBI and Justice Department officials to assess how the documents were stored. The person was not authorized to discuss the matter by name and spoke on condition of anonymity.

FBI and Justice Department policy cautions against discussing ongoing investigations, both to protect the integrity of the inquiries and to avoid unfairly maligning someone who is being scrutinized but winds up ultimately not being charged. That's especially true in the case of search warrants, where supporting court papers are routinely kept secret as the investigation proceeds.

In this case, though, Garland cited the fact that Trump himself had provided the first public confirmation of the FBI search, "as is his right." The Justice Department, in its new filing, also said that disclosing information about it now would not harm the court's functions.

The Justice Department under Garland has been leery of public statements about politically charged investigations, or of confirming to what extent it might be investigating Trump as part of a broader probe into the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol and efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

The department has tried to avoid being seen as injecting itself into presidential politics, as happened in 2016 when then-FBI Director James Comey made an unusual public statement announcing that the FBI would not be recommending criminal charges against Clinton regarding her handling of email — and when he spoke up again just over a week before the election to notify Congress that the probe was being effectively reopened because of the discovery of new emails.

The attorney general also condemned verbal attacks on FBI and Justice Department personnel over the search. Some Republican allies of Trump have called for the FBI to be defunded. Large numbers of Trump supporters have called for the warrant to be released hoping they it will show that Trump was unfairly targeted.

"I will not stand by silently when their integrity is unfairly attacked," Garland said of federal law enforcement agents, calling them "dedicated, patriotic public servants."

Earlier Thursday, an armed man wearing body armor tried to breach a security screening area at an FBI field office in Ohio, then fled and was later killed after a standoff with law enforcement. A law enforcement

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official briefed on the matter identified the man as Ricky Shiffer and said he is believed to have been in Washington in the days leading up to the attack on the Capitol and may have been there on the day it took place.

## Fetterman 'grateful' as he returns to Pa. Senate race

By STEVE PEOPLES and GENE J. PUSKAR Associated Press

ERIE, Pa. (AP) — Pennsylvania Senate candidate John Fetterman acknowledged he was lucky to be alive as he officially returned to the campaign trail Friday, more than 90 days after the Democrat suffered a stroke that threatened his life and political prospects in one of the nation's premier Senate contests.

Fetterman spoke for nearly 11 minutes, haltingly at times, as he addressed several hundred voters packed inside a convention center on the shores of Lake Erie. It was the 52-year-old lieutenant governor's only scheduled public rally this month as he gradually ramps up his public schedule.

"Tonight for me, it's about being grateful — just grateful," said Fetterman, who stood for the duration of his remarks. "Three months ago my life could have ended. It's the truth."

He said he may not have survived his stroke if he was in rural Elk County instead of being just 20 minutes away from a major stroke facility.

"Gisele saved my life," he said, wearing his usual hooded sweatshirt and jeans.

Fetterman's return marks a significant development in the race to fill retiring Republican Sen. Pat Toomey's seat. The Pennsylvania contest offers Democrats perhaps their best pickup opportunity nationally as the two parties battle for Senate control in the November midterm elections. The chamber is now split 50-50, with Vice President Kamala Harris giving Democrats the narrowest of majorities with her tie-breaking vote.

Republican nominee Dr. Mehmet Oz, a celebrity heart surgeon endorsed by former President Donald Trump, has railed against Fetterman's prolonged public absence throughout the summer.

Oz posted a fake "Have You Seen This Person?" poster online last month. He needled Fetterman again Friday in an interview with Newsmax.

"We're doing very well, campaigning all over the Commonwealth, which is a far cry from my opponent, who refuses to leave his home," Oz charged.

Fetterman's physical appearance is a central element of his nontraditional political brand.

At 6 feet, 9 inches, he sports a shaved head and tattooed arms. He's also an unapologetic progressive with a working-class background who supports legalizing marijuana, abolishing the Senate filibuster and establishing a national government health insurance program for everyone — "Medicare for all" in progressives' campaign jargon.

Fetterman's health has been a dominant issue in the Senate contest since the days before the May 17 primary, when his campaign revealed he had a stroke. He required surgery to implant a pacemaker with a defibrillator, and later disclosed that he also had a serious heart condition.

His doctor offered a blunt letter in early June detailing Fetterman's decision not to take prescribed medication or see a doctor for several years after a 2017 health scare.

"If he does what I've told him, and I do believe that he is taking his recovery and his health very seriously this time, he should be able to campaign and serve in the U.S. Senate without a problem," Dr. Ramesh Chandra wrote.

Fetterman is now taking his medication as prescribed, eating a low-sodium diet and walking 3 to 5 miles most days, campaign spokesman Joe Calvello said: "He's following the doctor's orders."

On Friday night, Fetterman spoke haltingly throughout his remarks and sometimes fumbled his words. The crowd, which exceeded 1,300, according to the convention center staff, was energized throughout.

Calvello noted that Fetterman still has mild speech and hearing issues as he works his way back to full health.

"He'll miss a word here or there when he's speaking sometimes, or maybe in a crowded room he'll miss hearing a word," he said. "Besides that, he's rock solid."

The high-profile Senate contest has been playing out on television and social media despite Fetterman's

extended absence.

Fetterman, who has dominated Oz in fundraising, has been running television ads promoting his candidacy for months. The Democrat has also drawn millions of views from creative social media posts, including one featuring a character from the infamous MTV show "Jersey Shore" telling Oz to come home. Oz is a former New Jersey resident, and it has been a major issue throughout the campaign.

"He's a New Jersey resident. He doesn't live here. He's not about us. He doesn't care about us," Fetterman said.

He concluded his remarks the way he opened them — with gratitude.

"Three months ago, I may not have made it. But now, I'm standing right here in Erie," he said as the crowd erupted.

## Judds asks court to seal report of death investigation

By KRISTIN M. HALL AP Entertainment Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The family of country singer Naomi Judd filed an amended court petition Friday to seal police reports and recordings made during the investigation into her death.

The family filed the petition in Williamson County Chancery Court, saying the records contain video and audio interviews with relatives in the immediate aftermath of Judd's death and releasing such details would inflict "significant trauma and irreparable harm."

The petition was filed on behalf of the singer's husband Larry Strickland and her daughters Ashley and Wynonna Judd and was a more detailed follow-up to an earlier request made by the family last week. A representative provided it to The Associated Press with the family's permission.

Judd, 76, died on April 30 at her home in Tennessee. Her daughter Ashley has previously said that her mother killed herself, and the family said she was lost to "the disease of mental illness."

The court filing on Friday also included details about how Ashley Judd found her mother alive after she shot herself. Ashley stayed by her mother's side, waiting for 30 minutes until help arrived.

The petition asks the court to prohibit the Williamson County Sheriff's Office from releasing the records for several reasons, among them that the disclosure would include her medical records and that the family has a right to privacy.

Tennessee public records law generally allows local law enforcement records to be released, but police have the discretion to hold records while an investigation is ongoing. Once an investigation is closed, that exemption no longer applies. The AP left a message for the sheriff on Friday seeking comment.

Strickland, Wynonna and Ashley Judd submitted statements outlining their concerns about the records. Strickland said in the court filing that he was unaware that his interviews with law enforcement were being recorded, adding that he shared personal and private information to assist in the investigation.

Ashley Judd said she was in "clinical shock, active trauma and acute distress" when she spoke with law enforcement and that she did not want those records, including video, audio and photos, to permanently stay in the public domain and haunt the family for generations.

The petition said that media outlets in Tennessee had already filed public records requests in her case.

Judd's death the day before she was due to be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame has garnered intense national media attention surrounding the cause of her death, but also the filing of estate and will paperwork.

A family statement said that misinformation about the Judds was being spread and they wanted to state the facts, while also protecting their privacy amid the grieving process.

"Our family continues to grieve together privately, in unity and community, recognizing our mother's beauty and talents as a gift to the world," the statement said. "There has been misinformation circulated as we continue to mourn and we lament that. We ask news organizations only to cover facts. And as we recognize other families struggling as a loved one faces mental health crises, we encourage them to seek help through NAMI: The National Alliance on Mental Illness at 800-950-6264 or call 988 available 24 hours a day."

Naomi and her daughter Wynonna Judd scored 14 No. 1 songs in a career that spanned nearly three decades. The red-headed duo combined the traditional Appalachian sounds of bluegrass with polished pop stylings, landing hit after hit in the 1980s. Wynonna led the duo with her powerful vocals, while Naomi provided harmonies and stylish looks on stage.

The Judds released six studio albums and an EP between 1984 and 1991 and won nine Country Music Association Awards and seven from the Academy of Country Music. They earned a total of five Grammy Awards together on hits like "Why Not Me" and "Give A Little Love," and Naomi earned a sixth Grammy for writing "Love Can Build a Bridge."

## Southern Baptists say denomination faces DOJ investigation

By HOLLY MEYER and DAVID CRARY Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention said Friday that several of the denomination's major entities are under investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice in the wake of its multiple problems related to clergy sex abuse.

The SBC's Executive Committee has received a subpoena, but no individuals have been subpoenaed at this point, according to the committee's lawyers.

"This is an ongoing investigation and we are not commenting on our discussions with DOJ," they said.

The statement from SBC leaders — including Executive Committee members, seminary presidents and heads of mission organizations — gave few details about the investigation, but indicated it dealt with widespread sexual abuse problems that have rocked the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S.

"Individually and collectively each SBC entity is resolved to fully and completely cooperate with the investigation," the statement said. "While we continue to grieve and lament past mistakes related to sexual abuse, current leaders across the SBC have demonstrated a firm conviction to address those issues of the past and are implementing measures to ensure they are never repeated in the future."

There was no immediate comment from the Justice Department about the investigation.

Earlier this year, an SBC sex abuse task force released a blistering 288-page report from outside consultant, Guidepost Solutions. The firm's seven-month independent investigation found disturbing details about how denominational leaders mishandled sex abuse claims and mistreated victims.

The report focused specifically on how the SBC's Executive Committee responded to abuse cases, revealing that it had secretly maintained a list of clergy and other church workers accused of abuse. The committee later apologized and released the list, which had hundreds of accused workers on it.

A Guidepost spokesperson declined to comment on news of the DOJ probe.

Following the release of the Guidepost report, the SBC voted during its annual meeting in June to create a way to track pastors and other church workers credibly accused of sex abuse and launch a new task force to oversee further reforms. Earlier this week, SBC President Bart Barber, who also signed Friday's statement, announced the names of the Southern Baptist pastors and church members who will serve on the task force.

Southern Baptist sex abuse survivor Christa Brown, who has long called for the SBC to do more to address sex abuse across its churches, celebrated the news of the DOJ investigation.

"Hallelujah. It's about time," Brown said in a Friday post on Twitter. "This is what's needed."

Another survivor, Jules Woodson, went public with her abuse story in 2018 and has been pushing for reforms in the SBC ever since. On Friday, she reacted to the investigation news by tweeting, "May justice roll down!!!"

Oklahoma pastor Mike Keahbone, who serves on the Executive Committee and is the vice chair of the new abuse task force, said on Twitter that the investigation "is not something to fear ... If there is more work to do, we will do it."

## Voter groups object to proposed Nevada hand-counting rules

By GABE STERN Associated Press/Report For America

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RENO, Nev. (AP) — As officials in some parts of rural Nevada vow to bypass voting machines in favor of hand counting ballots this November, the Nevada secretary of state's office is proposing statewide rules that would specify how to do it, including requiring bipartisan vote counters, room for observation and how many ballots to count at a time.

On Friday, four voting rights groups came out against the proposal, calling it an "admirable attempt to ensure higher standards" for counting votes by hand, but urging the secretary of state to prohibit the practice outright, noting that the push for hand-counting stems from "unfounded speculation" about voting machines.

"The regulations are not enough to address the underlying accuracy issues and remediate the legal deficiencies of hand count processes," the groups Brennan Center, All Voting is Local, ACLU Nevada and Silver State Voices said in a statement Friday.

Both voting rights groups and hand-count proponents spoke at an online hearing Friday, the first meeting convened to discuss the regulations. Voting rights groups lobbied to prohibit hand-counts, while voting machine skeptics, a majority of the speakers, said the proposed regulations were a power grab meant to sabotage hand-counting.

The debate over how to regulate hand-counting comes after a push for the method in some conservative rural parts of the state where election misinformation has grown.

Mark Wlaschin, deputy secretary of state for elections in Nevada, said the regulations have been in the works for nearly a year and don't come in direct response to events in Nye County, where the county clerk responsible for administering elections resigned last month after election conspiracies led to a successful push to hand-count votes. Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske is the lone elected statewide official who is a Republican.

Wlaschin said the rules would help counties that opt to switch to hand-counting systems, preventing clerks from having to draw up rules from scratch. They would also create a uniform structure so the state can ensure the counting is valid. If a county wants to switch to hand-counting, he said, "at least now it's not going to fall on the clerk to (conduct) a year of research in developing a template of his or her own."

Nye County is one of the first jurisdictions nationwide to act on election conspiracies related to mistrust in voting machines. Nevada's least populous county, Esmeralda, used hand-counting to certify June's primary results, when officials spent more than seven hours counting 317 ballots cast.

Proponents of hand-counting have described the old-fashioned method as a way to address distrust in elections, especially unproven claims that voting machines are prone to hacking and are untrustworthy. Experts say hand-counting is not only far more time consuming but opens the process to more errors.

At the center of the push is Mark Kampf, the new interim Nye County clerk who has repeated the lie that former President Donald Trump won the 2020 election. He wrote the framework of a new vote-counting plan that would transform elections in his rural county with the help of Jim Marchant, a Republican secretary of state candidate and leader of the "America First" coalition of candidates who deny the validity of the 2020 election results. At a February candidates forum, Marchant told a crowd "Your vote hasn't counted for decades."

In an interview during his first full day in office Monday, Kampf declined to discuss his belief that the 2020 presidential election was stolen, saying his views about that election are not relevant to his new job. Instead, he outlined his plan for paper ballots that are the exact same as current mail-in ballots, in-person signature verification and a camera livestream set up alongside poll watchers so others can see the voting process as well.

Alongside the hand-count will be a parallel tabulating process that uses the same machines currently used to count mail-in ballots.

Kampf said at that time that he agreed with some of the state's proposed hand-counting rules, but on Friday he urged officials to scrap the regulations, parts of which he said create an "incredible undue burden."

Kampf was among many who exceeded the two-minute limit, speaking for over 30 minutes. He said Nye County should be exempt from the regulations because of its plan for a parallel voting tabulation process.

Wlaschin asked if the parallel voting process would be phased out in favor of solely counting votes by

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hand.

Kampf, who was appointed as interim clerk and is on the ballot for a four-year term, answered: "Like in any system transition process, if it doesn't work — and I fully anticipate that we can get it to work — and I hope we can prove to you and to those who are doubting and have significant doubts that it can work, that you'd make that decision at that point in time."

Absent from the regulations is any enforcement if a county fails to follow the rules. Part of ensuring compliance falls on the secretary of state's office, Wlaschin said, and part of that falls on the county clerks.

Nearly every other Nevada county plans to stick with machine counting.

Humboldt County Clerk Tami Rae Spero read the hand-count regulations and thought of what resources that would take in her rural county of about 17,000.

The teams of four and table spacing requirements would help a hand-count run smoothly, but she wondered where would she find the needed space and bipartisan personnel.

"Let's just hope we don't actually ever have to," she said.

## Congress OKs Dems' climate, health bill, a Biden triumph

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A divided Congress gave final approval Friday to Democrats' flagship climate and health care bill, handing President Joe Biden a back-from-the-dead triumph on coveted priorities that the party hopes will bolster their prospects for keeping their House and Senate majorities in November's elections.

The House used a party-line 220-207 vote to pass the legislation, prompting hugs among Democrats on the House floor and cheers by White House staff watching on television. "Today, the American people won. Special interests lost," tweeted the vacationing Biden, who was shown beaming in a White House photo as he watched the vote on TV from Kiawah Island, South Carolina. He said he would sign the legislation next week.

The measure is but a shadow of the larger, more ambitious plan to supercharge environment and social programs that Biden and his party unveiled early last year. Even so, Democrats happily declared victory on top-tier goals like providing Congress' largest ever investment in curbing carbon emissions, reining in pharmaceutical costs and taxing large companies, hoping to show they can wring accomplishments from a routinely gridlocked Washington that often disillusion voters.

"Today is a day of celebration, a day we take another giant step in our momentous agenda," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., who minutes later announced the final vote as she presided over the chamber. She said the measure "meets the moment, ensuring that our families thrive and that our planet survives."

Republicans solidly opposed the legislation, calling it a cornucopia of wasteful liberal daydreams that would raise taxes and families' living costs. They did the same Sunday but Senate Democrats banded together and used Vice President Kamala Harris' tiebreaking vote to power the measure through that 50-50 chamber.

"Democrats, more than any other majority in history, are addicted to spending other people's money, regardless of what we as a country can afford," said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. "I can almost see glee in their eyes."

Biden's initial 10-year, \$3.5 trillion proposal also envisioned free prekindergarten, paid family and medical leave, expanded Medicare benefits and eased immigration restrictions. That crashed after centrist Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., said it was too costly, using the leverage every Democrat has in the evenly-divided Senate.

Still, the final legislation remained substantive. Its pillar is about \$375 billion over 10 years to encourage industry and consumers to shift from carbon-emitting to cleaner forms of energy. That includes \$4 billion to cope with the West's catastrophic drought.

Spending, tax credits and loans would bolster technology like solar panels, consumer efforts to improve home energy efficiency, emission-reducing equipment for coal- and gas-powered power plants and air pollution controls for farms, ports and low-income communities.

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Another \$64 billion would help 13 million people pay premiums over the next three years for privately bought health insurance. Medicare would gain the power to negotiate its costs for pharmaceuticals, initially in 2026 for only 10 drugs. Medicare beneficiaries' out-of-pocket prescription costs would be limited to \$2,000 starting in 2025, and beginning next year would pay no more than \$35 monthly for insulin, the costly diabetes drug.

The bill would raise around \$740 billion in revenue over the decade, over a third from government savings from lower drug prices. More would flow from higher taxes on some \$1 billion corporations, levies on companies that repurchase their own stock and stronger IRS tax collections. About \$300 billion would remain to defray budget deficits, a sliver of the period's projected \$16 trillion total.

Against the backdrop of GOP attacks on the FBI for its court-empowered search of former President Donald Trump's Florida estate for sensitive documents, Republicans repeatedly savaged the bill's boost to the IRS budget. That's aimed at collecting an estimated \$120 billion in unpaid taxes over the coming decade, and Republicans have misleadingly claimed that the IRS will hire 87,000 agents to target average families.

Rep. Andrew Clyde, R-Ga., said Democrats would also "weaponize" the IRS with agents, "many of whom will be trained in the use of deadly force, to go after any American citizen." Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, asked Thursday on "Fox and Friends" if there would be an IRS "strike force that goes in with AK-15s already loaded, ready to shoot some small business person."

Few IRS personnel are armed, and Democrats say the bill's \$80 billion, 10-year budget increase would be to replace waves of retirees, not just agents, and modernize equipment. They have said typical families and small businesses would not be targeted, with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen directing the IRS this week to not "increase the share of small business or households below the \$400,000 threshold" that would be audited.

Republicans say the legislation's new business taxes will increase prices, worsening the nation's bout with its worst inflation since 1981. Though Democrats have labeled the measure the Inflation Reduction Act, nonpartisan analysts say it will have a barely perceptible impact on prices.

The GOP also says the bill would raise taxes on lower- and middle-income families. An analysis by Congress' nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation, which didn't include the bill's tax breaks for health care and energy, estimated that the corporate tax boosts would marginally affect those taxpayers but indirectly, partly due to lower stock prices and wages.

"House Democrats ensured voters will fire them this fall," said spokeswoman Torunn Sinclair of the House GOP campaign committee. In an email, she listed dozens of Democrats in competitive reelections who will face Republican attacks for raising taxes and empowering the IRS "to target their constituents."

Democratic-leaning interest groups had their own warnings. "We'll ensure that every Republican who voted against this bill is held accountable for prioritizing polluters and corporate special interests over the health and well being of their constituents," said Tiernan Sittenfeld, a top official of the League of Conservation Voters.

The bill caps three months in which Congress has approved legislation on veterans' benefits, the semiconductor industry, gun checks for young buyers and Ukraine's invasion by Russia and adding Sweden and Finland to NATO. All passed with bipartisan support, suggesting Republicans also want to display their productive side.

It's unclear whether voters will reward Democrats for the legislation after months of painfully high inflation dominating voters' attention, Biden's dangerously low popularity ratings and a steady history of midterm elections that batter the party holding the White House.

Biden called his \$3.5 trillion plan Build Back Better. Besides social and environment initiatives, it proposed rolling back Trump-era tax breaks for the rich and corporations and \$555 billion for climate efforts, well above the money in Friday's legislation.

With Manchin opposing those amounts, it was sliced to a roughly \$2 trillion measure that Democrats moved through the House in November. He unexpectedly sank that bill too, earning scorn from exasperated fellow Democrats from Capitol Hill and the White House.

Last gasp talks between Manchin and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., seemed fruitless

until the two unexpectedly announced agreement last month on the new package.

Manchin won concessions for the fossil fuel industries he champions, including procedures for more oil drilling on federal lands. So did Centrist Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., who ended up eliminating planned higher taxes on hedge fund managers and helping win the drought funds.

## Judge revives Obama-era ban on coal sales from US lands

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — A federal judge on Friday reinstated a moratorium on coal leasing from federal lands that was imposed under former President Barack Obama and then scuttled under former President Donald Trump, in an order that marked a major setback to the already struggling coal industry.

The ruling from U.S. District Judge Brian Morris requires government officials to conduct a new environmental review before they can resume coal sales from federal lands. Morris faulted the government's previous review of the program, done under Trump, for failing to adequately consider the climate damage from coal's greenhouse gas emissions and other effects.

Almost half the nation's annual coal production — some 260 million tons last year — is mined by private companies from leases on federal land, primarily in Western states such as Wyoming, Montana and Colorado.

Few coal leases were sold in recent years after demand for the fuel shrank drastically. But the industry's opponents had urged Morris to revive the Obama-era moratorium to ensure it can't make a comeback as wildfires, drought, rising sea levels and other effects of climate change worsen.

Coal combustion for electricity remains one of the top sources of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, even after many power plants shut down over the past decade because of concerns over pollution and changing economic conditions.

The coal program brought in about \$400 million to federal and state coffers through royalties and other payments in 2021, according to government data. It supports thousands of jobs and has been fiercely defended by industry representatives, Republicans in Congress and officials in coal-producing states.

Among President Joe Biden's first actions in his first week in office was to suspend oil and gas lease sales — a move later blocked by a federal judge — and he faced pressure from environmental groups to take similar action against coal.

The administration last year launched a review of climate damage from coal mining on public lands as it expanded scrutiny of government fossil fuel sales that contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. But no changes had been announced as a result of that review.

"This decision gives the Biden administration the opportunity to make good on its commitment to seriously battle the climate crisis," said Earthjustice attorney Jenny Harbine, who represented environmental groups and the Northern Cheyenne Tribe in the case. "No progress has been made to reform the program or do what's needed to phase out existing leases."

The Northern Cheyenne Reservation in southeastern Montana is near several major strip mines. Tribal members have long fought against further development. Tribal President Serena Wetherelt said in a statement that Biden and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland need to fulfill their trust obligation and take a hard look at the effects of the U.S. federal lands energy program.

"Our lands and waters mean everything to us," Wetherelt said.

Interior Department officials were reviewing the ruling, spokesperson Melissa Schwartz said.

National Mining Association President Rich Nolan said the industry lobbying group would appeal Friday's ruling.

"This is a deeply disappointing decision with energy-driven inflation, energy affordability and energy security top concerns for Americans," Nolan said. "Denying access to affordable, secure energy during an energy affordability crisis is deeply troubling."

Officials from Montana and Wyoming had intervened in the case on the side of the federal government and argued against reviving the moratorium.

A spokesperson for Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen said the Biden administration's defense

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of the federal coal program was only “half-hearted” because of its close alignment with environmentalists. Knudsen spokesperson Kyler Nerison added that the decision was an example of environmentalists taking advantage of federal laws to endlessly delay energy development.

Extracting and burning fossil fuels from federal land generates the equivalent of 1.4 billion tons (1.3 billion metric tons) annually of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide, according to a 2018 report from the U.S. Geological Survey. That’s equivalent to almost one-quarter of total U.S. carbon dioxide emissions.

Obama Interior Secretary Sally Jewell suspended coal sales in large part over climate concerns in 2016. After Trump Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke revived the program in 2017, California, New York, New Mexico and Washington state sued. The Northern Cheyenne, joined by the Sierra Club and other environmental groups, also filed a legal challenge.

In 2017 and 2018, the most recent years for which data was available, the U.S. government sold leases for 134 million tons of coal on public land in six states, according to figures provided by the Interior Department. That’s a relatively small amount compared with previous years, for example 2011 and 2012, when more than 2 billion tons were sold in Wyoming alone.

Demand for coal has plummeted as many utilities switch to natural gas or renewables to generate power.

## By chance, AP reporter on scene to witness Rushdie attack

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Reporter Joshua Goodman traveled with his family to the Chautauqua Institution in western New York for a peaceful week away from the news. Instead, the news found him.

Goodman, an Associated Press correspondent for Latin America based in Miami, was attending a lecture by author Salman Rushdie on Friday when Rushdie was stabbed onstage.

The journalist said goodbye to his wife and asked her to pick up their two children before he began to work, equipped only with his mobile phone. He dictated words, took photos and sent video that told the world someone had attacked Rushdie, whose 1988 book “The Satanic Verses” was viewed as blasphemous by many Muslims and led Iran’s then-leader to issue an edict calling for the author’s death.

It was a remarkable example of being in the right place at the right time to witness an unexpected event.

“It was very surreal is the only way you’d describe it,” Goodman said. “This was the last place you’d expect something like this.”

The institution is more than a century old, located over an hour away from the closest major city of Buffalo, N.Y. It is known for its summer retreats where visitors come for spiritual reflection and education. Goodman was one of 13 family members who rented a house on the grounds for the week. He left his computer behind and ignored emails.

Goodman, 46, learned to sail. On Thursday night, he and his family roasted marshmallows while watching a full moon rise over Lake Chautauqua.

Rushdie’s interview, advertised as focusing on the importance of persecuted writers having a place to work, was one of the week’s highlights. Goodman arrived at the outdoor amphitheater just as it was about to begin.

The threats against Rushdie — a \$3 million bounty was placed on his head and he spent years in hiding — had not been forgotten. Some audience members joked nervously about not wanting to be in the front row. But there was very little security at a location where many families don’t even lock their doors at night, Goodman said.

Rushdie was seated and was being introduced when his attacker climbed onstage and began assaulting him. From his vantage point, Goodman said he wasn’t sure if Rushdie was being punched or stabbed, until he could see what appeared to be blood.

“There was a moment of shock,” he said. “Everyone in the audience was sitting in disbelief.”

When an officer with a police dog and others rushed toward the stage, Goodman realized what was happening and switched into reporter mode. He quickly sent an email to several of his editors at AP about what was happening and headed toward the stage himself.

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Goodman lingered to take pictures and interview witnesses despite the institute's staff saying he and all the audience members had to leave, he said. Goodman had covered protests before while stationed in Latin America, so scenes of violence were not foreign to him, but never in such a bucolic setting.

The AP sent an alert to its members about the news at 11:06 a.m. Eastern, followed by the first story six minutes later.

It was only after an hour of work that Goodman had the chance to reflect on what he said was one of the worst things he'd ever seen. "It was so callous and deliberate," he said.

Goodman said he was sad for his children who, like many, are affected by bad news in the world. He had hoped for a week's reprieve, and they had enjoyed their time in summer camp.

"I don't take any satisfaction in witnessing tragedy," he said. "I do take satisfaction in informing others."

## **Inflation Reduction Act may have little impact on inflation**

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and JOSH BOAK Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — With inflation raging near its highest level in four decades, the House on Friday gave final approval to President Joe Biden's landmark Inflation Reduction Act. Its title raises a tantalizing question: Will the measure actually tame the price spikes that have inflicted hardships on American households?

Economic analyses of the proposal suggest that the answer is likely no — not anytime soon, anyway.

The legislation, which the Senate passed earlier this week and now heads to the White House for Biden's signature, won't directly address some of the main drivers of surging prices — from gas and food to rents and restaurant meals.

Still, the law could save money for some Americans by lessening the cost of prescription drugs for the elderly, extending health insurance subsidies and reducing energy prices. It would also modestly cut the government's budget deficit, which might slightly lower inflation by the end of this decade.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office concluded last week that the changes would have a "negligible" impact on inflation this year and next. And the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Wharton Budget Model concluded that, over the next decade, "the impact on inflation is statistically indistinguishable from zero."

Such forecasts also undercut the arguments that some Republicans, such as House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy have made, that the bill would "cause inflation," as McCarthy said in a speech on the House floor last month.

Biden himself, in speaking of the legislation's effect on inflation, has cautiously referred to potentially lower prices in individual categories rather than to lower inflation as a whole. This week, the president said the bill would "bring down the cost of prescription drugs, health insurance premiums and energy costs."

At the same time, the White House has trumpeted a letter signed by more than 120 economists, including several Nobel Prize winners and former Treasury secretaries, that asserts that the law's reduction in the government's budget deficit — by an estimated \$300 billion over the next decade, according to the CBO — would put "downward pressure on inflation."

In theory, lower deficits can reduce inflation. That's because lower government spending or higher taxes, which help shrink the deficit, reduce demand in the economy, thereby easing pressure on companies to raise prices.

Jason Furman, a Harvard economist who served as a top economic adviser in the Obama administration, wrote in an opinion column for The Wall Street Journal: "Deficit reduction is almost always inflation-reducing."

Yet Douglas Holtz-Eakin, who was a top economic adviser to President George W. Bush and later a director of the CBO, noted that the lower deficits won't kick in until five years from now and won't be very large over the next decade considering the size of the economy.

"\$30 billion a year in a \$21 trillion economy isn't going to move the needle," Holtz-Eakin said, referring to the estimated amount of deficit reduction spread over 10 years.

He also noted that Congress has recently passed other legislation to subsidize semiconductor production

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in the U.S. and expand veterans' health care, and suggested that those laws will spend more than the Inflation Reduction Act will save.

In addition, Kent Smetters, director of the Penn Wharton Budget Model, said the law's health care subsidies could send inflation up. The legislation would spend \$70 billion over a decade to extend tax credits to help 13 million Americans pay for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act.

Those subsidies would free up money for recipients to spend elsewhere, potentially increasing inflation, although Smetters said he thought the effect would likely be very small.

While the act could have the benefit of increasing the savings of millions of households on pharmaceutical and energy costs, it's unlikely to have much effect on overall inflation. Prescription drugs account for only 1% of the spending in the U.S. consumer price index; spending on electricity and natural gas makes up just 3.6%.

Starting in 2025, the act will cap the amount Medicare recipients would pay for their prescription drugs at \$2,000 a year. It will authorize Medicare to negotiate the cost of some high-priced pharmaceuticals — a long-sought goal that President Donald Trump had also floated. It would also limit Medicare recipients' out-of-pocket costs for insulin at \$35 a month. Insulin prescriptions averaged \$54 in 2020, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

"This is a historic change," said Leigh Purvis, director of health care costs at the AARP Public Policy Institute. "This is allowing Medicare to protect beneficiaries from high drug prices in a way that was not there before."

A study by Kaiser found that in 2019, 1.2 million Medicare recipients spent an average of \$3,216 on drug prescriptions. Purvis said recipients who use the most expensive drugs can spend as much as \$10,000 or \$15,000 a year.

The legislation authorizes Medicare to negotiate prices of 10 expensive pharmaceuticals, starting next year, though the results won't take effect until 2026. Up to 60 drugs could be subject to negotiation by 2029.

Holtz-Eakin argued that while the provision may lower the cost of some Medicare drugs, it would discourage the development of new drugs or reduce new venture capital investment in start-up pharmaceutical companies.

The Inflation Reduction Act's energy provisions could also create savings, though the amounts are likely to be much smaller.

The bill will provide a \$7,500 tax credit for new purchases of electric vehicles, though most EVs won't qualify because the legislation requires them to include batteries with U.S. materials.

And the legislation also significantly expands a tax credit for homeowners who invest in energy-efficient equipment, from a one-time \$500 credit to \$1,200 that a homeowner could claim each year. Vincent Barnes, senior vice president for policy at the Alliance to Save Energy, said this would allow homeowners to make new energy-efficient investments over several years.

But for all Americans, including those who aren't homeowners, the impact will likely be limited. The Rhodium Group estimates that by 2030 the bill's provisions will save households an average of up to \$112 a year as gas and electricity becomes cheaper as more Americans drive EVs and houses become more energy-efficient.

## California governor proposes extending nuclear plant's life

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Friday proposed extending the life of the state's last operating nuclear power plant by five to 10 years to maintain reliable power supplies in the climate change era.

The proposal to keep the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant running beyond a scheduled closing by 2025 gave new urgency to a decades-long fight over the seismic safety of the site. And critics depicted Newsom's plan as a huge financial giveaway for plant operator Pacific Gas & Electric, while warning it would gut state environmental safeguards.

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Newsom's draft proposal includes a potential forgivable loan for PG&E for up to \$1.4 billion and would require state agencies to act quickly to clear the way for the reactors to continue running.

The seaside plant located midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco produces 9% of the state's electricity. The proposal says its continued operation beyond 2025 is "critical to ensure statewide energy system reliability" as climate change stresses the energy system.

"The governor has been clear for months about the potential need to extend the life of Diablo Canyon," Newsom spokesman Anthony York said.

He added that Newsom has stressed the need to keep all options on the table to maintain reliable power and that "this proposal reflects the continued need to keep that flexibility."

Newsom's proposal amounts to an attempt to unspool a complex 2016 agreement among environmentalists, plant worker unions and the utility to close the plant by 2025. The joint decision also was endorsed by California utility regulators, the Legislature and then-Democratic Gov. Jerry Brown.

Environmental groups depicted the move as a "dangerous" betrayal of the 2016 pact.

"Legislators should reject it out of hand," said a joint statement from Friends of the Earth, the Natural Resources Defense Council and Environment California.

Ralph Cavanagh of the Natural Resources Defense Council said the plan would provide sweeping exemptions from environmental rules, including the California Environmental Quality Act.

"This draft was prepared by someone with little understanding of California energy policy or history," Cavanagh said.

David Weisman, legislative director of the Alliance for Nuclear Responsibility advocacy group said Newsom's blueprint would "give PG&E over \$1 billion in loans at below the interest rate even state agencies charge among themselves, and it's completely forgivable."

PG&E's service area is concentrated in Northern California and Weisman asked: "What are taxpayers in Southern California getting out of this?"

The draft proposal was released ahead of a California Energy Commission meeting on the state's energy needs and the role that the nuclear plant could play in maintaining reliable service.

Newsom clearly wants to avoid a repeat of August 2020, when a record heat wave caused a surge in power use for air conditioning that overtaxed California's electrical grid. That caused two consecutive nights of rolling blackouts for the state, affecting hundreds of thousands of residential and business customers.

The Newsom administration is pushing to expand clean energy, as the state aims to cut emissions by 40% below 1990 levels by 2030. Nuclear power doesn't produce carbon pollution like fossil fuels, but leaves behind waste that can remain dangerously radioactive for centuries.

The California Legislature has less than three weeks to determine if it will endorse the plan and attempt to extend the life of the plant — a decision that would be made amid looming questions over the costs and earthquake safety risks.

The legislative session shuts down Aug. 31 — when all business is suspended — and only a rare special session called by Newsom could provide a longer period to consider the move.

The Democratic governor, who is seen as a possible future White House candidate, has urged PG&E for months to pursue a longer run beyond a scheduled closing by 2025, warning that the plant's power is needed as the state transitions to solar, wind and other renewable sources of energy.

Those raising questions with Newsom include state Sen. John Laird, a Santa Cruz Democrat whose district includes the plant.

With an extended run, "Who pays, and is there fairness in who pays?" Laird asked in an interview. "There have been additional earthquake faults discovered near the plant, and seismic upgrades were never totally completed. Will they address that?"

Laird outlined other issues that include who would pay for maintenance that has been put off because the plant is scheduled to close by 2025, and whether there is time for PG&E to order and receive additional radioactive fuel — and casks to store spent fuel — to keep operating.

"We are under a tight timeframe," Laird added. "That begs the question of could they do everything it

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needs to be extended by 2025?"

PG&E CEO Patricia "Patti" Poppe told investors in a call last month that state legislation would have to be enacted by September to open the way for the utility to reverse course.

PG&E, which has long said the plant is seismically safe, has not said much about whether it will push to extend operations beyond 2025.

The company is assessing that possibility while continuing to plan for closing and dismantling the plant "unless those actions are superseded by new state policies," PG&E spokesperson Suzanne Hosn said in a statement.

Construction of the Diablo Canyon plant began in the 1960s and critics say potential shaking from nearby earthquake faults not recognized when the design was first approved could damage equipment and release radiation. One nearby fault was not discovered until 2008.

PG&E also would have to obtain a new operating license from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to run the plant beyond 2025.

Newsom's push for a longer run for the reactors doesn't square easily with his assessment in 2016, when as lieutenant governor he supported the closure agreement as part of the State Lands Commission.

Seismic issues at the plant "are not insignificant concerns," he said at the time. "This is not the preeminent site if you're ... concerned about seismic safety."

## Gunman in Montenegro kills 10, then shot dead by passerby

CETINJE, Montenegro (AP) — A man went on a shooting rampage in the streets of this western Montenegro city Friday, killing 10 people, including two children, before being shot dead by a passerby, officials said.

Montenegrin police chief Zoran Brdjanin said in a video statement shared with media that attacker was a 34-year-old man he identified only by his initials, V.B.

Brdjanin said the man used a hunting rifle to first shoot to death two children ages 8 and 11 and their mother, who lived as tenants in the attacker's house in Cetinje's Medovina neighborhood.

The shooter then walked into the street and randomly shot 13 more people, seven of them fatally, the chief said.

"At the moment, it is unclear what provoked V.B. to commit this atrocious act," Brdjanin said.

Andrijana Nastic, the prosecutor coordinating the crime scene investigation, told journalists that the gunman was killed by a passerby and that a police officer was among the wounded. She said nine of those killed died at the scene and two died at a hospital where they were taken for surgery.

Cetinje, the seat of Montenegro's former royal government, is 36 kilometers (22 miles) west of Podgorica, the current capital of the small Balkan nation.

Prime Minister Dritan Abazovic wrote on his Telegram channel that the incident was "an unprecedented tragedy" and urged the nation "to be, in their thoughts, with the families of the innocent victims, their relatives, friends and all the people of Cetinje."

President Milo Djukanovic said on Twitter that he was "deeply moved by the news of the terrible tragedy" in Cetinje, calling for "solidarity" with the families who lost loved-ones in the incident.

## Respected snake researcher dies from rattlesnake bite

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

FALLS CHURCH, Va. (AP) — A respected snake researcher who had been making significant discoveries about the species since childhood has died after being bitten by a timber rattler.

William H. "Marty" Martin died Aug. 3 after being bitten the day before by a captive snake on the property at his home in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, according to his wife, Renee Martin.

Martin, who was 80 years old, continued to make arduous mountain hikes to document and count snake populations in remote sites, said Joe Villari, who manages the Bull Run Mountains Preserve in northern Virginia and would accompany Martin on his outings there.

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"He was in his 80s, and he was hard to keep up with," said Villari, who made it a point to join Martin on his semiannual treks to remote mountain dens where the snakes would live.

John Sealy, a rattlesnake researcher from Stokesdale, North Carolina, who knew Martin for more than 30 years, said Martin was perhaps the foremost authority on timber rattlers, a species he studied since childhood.

As a boy, Martin found a population of timber rattlers in the Bull Run Mountains that was previously unknown, and convinced a herpetologist to come out and verify the find.

Sealy said Martin was known throughout the community of snake experts for his field work and research, and his ability to find and document a species that makes itself hard to find.

"They're extremely secretive animals," he said.

Deaths from snakebites are extremely rare; the Centers for Disease Control estimates they account for about five fatalities annually in the U.S.

Dan Keyler, a toxicology professor at the University of Minnesota and an expert on snakebites, said a second snakebite can be more dangerous than a first for some people and rattlesnakes can be more dangerous if they grow to a size that allows them to inject more venom. Age can also be a factor in a person's susceptibility.

Martin had been bitten before in his career, but recovered.

Villari said timber rattlers tend to be docile, avoid human contact and often won't bite even if they're accidentally stepped on.

"They save their venom for their prey," he said.

## Amazon's Ring, MGM to launch show from viral doorbell videos

NEW YORK (AP) — Two Amazon-owned companies — Ring and Hollywood studio MGM — are teaming to create a TV show in the mold of "America's Funniest Home Videos" using viral footage from Ring's doorbell and smart-home cameras.

The half-hour show, called "Ring Nation," will be hosted by actor and comedian Wanda Sykes and premier in syndication on Sept. 26, MGM said.

The studio noted audiences should expect to see the usual things that go viral — marriage proposals, neighbors saving neighbors and silly animals.

The series showcases Amazon's fusion of its various business arms, this time to highlight what MGM called "interesting moments from communities across the country."

"You have one company that owns two juggernauts and (has) just figured out how to leverage one against the other," said Robert Passikoff, president of the brand research firm Brand Keys. He noted that unlike scripted movies or shows, a reality series using Ring footage will likely be cheaper to produce.

The show also presents a branding opportunity for the Seattle-based e-commerce and retail giant, which bought Ring in 2018 for \$1 billion and has dealt with rounds of privacy concerns around Ring and its relationship with police departments across the country.

Last month, Amazon revealed it had provided Ring doorbell footage to law enforcement 11 times this year without the user's permission — all in response to emergency requests, according to the company.

MGM, which Amazon purchased for \$8.5 billion, said in a statement Thursday that "Ring Nation" will offer audiences "daily dose of life's unpredictable, heartwarming and hilarious viral videos" shared by people from their cameras.

"Many of these have been previously shared online," Amazon spokesperson Nick Schweers said. "Others were sent directly to the team." Ring Nation secures permissions for each video from the owner and anyone identifiable in the video, or from companies that hold the rights to the clips, he said.

Amazon's deal to purchase MGM was closed earlier this year, though the Federal Trade Commission has said it still retains discretion to challenge it. Big Fish Entertainment, a production company owned by MGM, will also be part of the partnership.

## Mary Gauthier uses songwriting to help people through trauma

By DAVID BAUDER AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Having used songwriting to navigate her own trauma, Mary Gauthier is putting those skills to work helping others do the same.

The Nashville-based musician has collaborated with war veterans to write about what they've been through, even producing a disc of the music, and more recently sat with health care workers who were on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gauthier still writes for herself, and her most recent album "Dark Enough to See the Stars" reflects the love found with partner and fellow musician Jaimee Harris, and the sadness of losing friends like John Prine and Nanci Griffith.

Yet through her workshops and the book she wrote, "Saved by a Song: The Art and Healing Power of Songwriting," Gauthier has become increasingly interested in how music can mean more than something to listen to.

"I couldn't make sense of a lot of things in my life, and I use art to help me," Gauthier said. "And I just had a sense that it was something that songwriters can do to help people with their own trauma."

Music is a second career for Gauthier (pronounced go-SHAY), who's 60. She was a talented chef in Boston three decades ago. She was also a drunk. A DWI one summer night 32 years ago scared her sober.

Summoning the nerve to sing, then to write songs, led her to the stage of the Newport Folk Festival, and eventually to Nashville.

"My sense was that you were born to do this — people were chosen or something and I didn't feel chosen," she said. "I didn't know how to get to the place where I felt like I could do it. Sober, I was able to do it."

Her 2005 song, "I Drink," was a seminal moment. In it, she imagines what her life would have been like if she hadn't quit booze.

The chorus is blunt: "Fish swim, birds fly. Daddies yell, mamas cry. Old men sit and think. I drink."

When she performs the song, it's a barometer of the night's audience. Some will hoot and holler, because who writes drinking songs that aren't supposed to be fun? Those who are really listening know it's not an anthem. It's a sad song.

"The narrator in the song is saying 'I know what I am, but I don't give a damn,'" she said. Some of her listeners, particularly those in recovery, "know that this is a red flag. Because people who scream 'I don't give a damn,' generally are screaming it because they do."

Similarly, her song "March 11, 1962" — her birthday — is emotionally devastating. Gauthier, who was given up for adoption as an infant, sings about her very real experience of tracking down her birth mother, calling her, and being rejected. Mary was a secret in her life, and she wanted it to remain so.

There was no happy ending, even after the song came out. Gauthier talked only one other time to her birth mother, seeking the identity of her father, and the woman said she couldn't remember.

The important thing for Gauthier was being brave enough to make the call.

"It was an articulation of how hard it is as an adoptee to go back in there and request information and try to get your story," she said. "It's so scary. The fear is primal, like it could kill you. It's terrifying. You get regressed into this infant again that was relinquished."

"For me, the story is just a reminder of how far I've come," she said, "because it's not terrifying anymore. I climbed Fear Mountain and I lived. It didn't kill me, and it actually helped me heal."

Gauthier is determined to share those feelings, of conquering fear and healing.

She began meeting with veterans groups with the help of Austin singer-songwriter Darden Smith, who has done similar work. She'll sit with her guitar amid a group and ask them to tell their experiences. Reluctantly at first, the stories come out. Gauthier keys on a phrase or experience, and together they write a song.

"I think it changed Mary's life," Smith said. "I think that Mary found a certain calling. Her first calling was to write songs and deliver her own story. Her second calling was to play it for people. Her third calling was using these skill sets to help people tell their stories."

People are often reluctant to talk about trauma because they associate it with failure, Gauthier said.

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Every time she works with a group, she can sense the relief in people who recognize that what they're feeling is not unique.

"It's not me pulling it out of them," she said. "It's the song. I'm just the midwife. The song is the maestro. The song is the CEO. We make an agreement: Let's just be honest and see where it goes."

It's enormously gratifying to find some way of being of service, she said.

"I know that it is helping them in a way I can't fully articulate but I can see it in their faces," she said. "Who wouldn't want to do that?"

## Anne Heche remains on life support for donor evaluation

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Anne Heche remains on life support and under evaluation for organ donation after a car crash that led to her brain death, a representative for the actor said Friday.

Under current California law, death can be determined by the loss of all brain function and in accordance with accepted medical standards.

While Heche is legally dead, she's on life support and "her heart is still beating" so that the nonprofit organization OneLegacy can determine if she can be a donor, spokeswoman Holly Baird said in a statement.

The process, which involves assessing which organs are viable and finding an appropriate recipient, could take from one day to several days, Baird told The Associated Press.

In the U.S., most organ transplants are done after the donor has been declared brain-dead.

The actor suffered a "severe anoxic brain injury," caused by a lack of oxygen, when her car crashed into a Los Angeles area home Aug. 5 and fire erupted, according to a statement released Thursday that said she wasn't expected to survive.

She's been hospitalized at a Los Angeles burn center.

"This is a sad day. I'm sending Anne's children, family and friends all of my love," Ellen DeGeneres said Friday on Twitter amid reports of Heche's dire condition. They were a couple from 1997 to 2000.

Detectives investigating the crash said narcotics were found in a blood sample taken from Heche, though toxicology tests still had to be performed to differentiate them from drugs she was given for her injuries, Los Angeles police said.

A native of Ohio, Heche first came to prominence on the NBC soap opera "Another World" from 1987 to 1991. She won a Daytime Emmy Award for the role of twins Marley and Vicky.

In the late 1990s she became one of the hottest actors in Hollywood, a constant on magazine covers and in big-budget films. In 1997 alone, she played opposite Johnny Depp as his wife in "Donnie Brasco" and Tommy Lee Jones in "Volcano" and was part of the ensemble cast in the original "I Know What You Did Last Summer."

The following year, she starred with Harrison Ford in "Six Days, Seven Nights" and appeared with Vince Vaughn and Joaquin Phoenix in "Return to Paradise."

## European drought dries up rivers, kills fish, shrivels crops

By SYLVIE CORBET and NICOLAS GARRIGA Associated Press

LUX, France (AP) — Once, a river ran through it. Now, white dust and thousands of dead fish cover the wide trench that winds amid rows of trees in France's Burgundy region in what was the Tille River in the village of Lux.

From dry and cracked reservoirs in Spain to falling water levels on major arteries like the Danube, the Rhine and the Po, an unprecedented drought is afflicting nearly half of Europe. It is damaging farm economies, forcing water restrictions, causing wildfires and threatening aquatic species.

There has been no significant rainfall for almost two months in the continent's western, central and southern regions. In typically rainy Britain, the government officially declared a drought across southern and central England on Friday amid one of the hottest and driest summers on record.

And Europe's dry period is expected to continue in what experts say could be the worst drought in 500

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years.

Climate change is exacerbating conditions as hotter temperatures speed up evaporation, thirsty plants take in more moisture and reduced snowfall in the winter limits supplies of fresh water available for irrigation in the summer. Europe isn't alone in the crisis, with drought conditions also reported in East Africa, the western United States and northern Mexico.

As he walked in the 15-meter (50-foot) wide riverbed in Lux, Jean-Philippe Couasn , chief technician at the local Federation for Fishing and Protection of the Aquatic Environment, listed the species of fish that had died in the Tille.

"It's heartbreaking," he said. "On average, about 8,000 liters (2,100 gallons) per second are flowing. ... And now, zero liters."

In areas upstream, some trout and other freshwater species can take shelter in pools via fish ladders. But such systems aren't available everywhere.

Without rain, the river "will continue to empty. And yes, all fish will die. ... They are trapped upstream and downstream, there's no water coming in, so the oxygen level will keep decreasing as the (water) volume goes down," Couasn  said. "These are species that will gradually disappear."

Jean-Pierre Sonvico, the regional head of the federation, said diverting the fish to other rivers won't help because those waterways also are affected.

"Yes, it's dramatic because what can we do? Nothing," he said. "We're waiting, hoping for storms with rain, but storms are very local so we can't count on it."

The European Commission's Joint Research Center warned this week that drought conditions will get worse and potentially affect 47% of the continent.

Andrea Toreti, a senior researcher at the European Drought Observatory, said a drought in 2018 was so extreme that there were no similar events for the last 500 years, "but this year, I think, it is really worse."

For the next three months, "we see still a very high risk of dry conditions over Western and Central Europe, as well as the U.K.," Toreti said.

Current conditions result from long periods of dry weather caused by changes in world weather systems, said meteorologist Peter Hoffmann of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research near Berlin.

"It's just that in summer we feel it the most," he said. "But actually the drought builds up across the year."

Climate change has lessened temperature differences between regions, sapping the forces that drive the jet stream, which normally brings wet Atlantic weather to Europe, he said.

A weaker or unstable jet stream can bring unusually hot air to Europe from North Africa, leading to prolonged periods of heat. The reverse is also true, when a polar vortex of cold air from the Arctic can cause freezing conditions far south of where it would normally reach.

Hoffmann said observations in recent years have all been at the upper end of what existing climate models predicted.

The drought has caused some European countries to restrict water usage, and shipping is endangered on the Rhine and the Danube rivers.

The Rhine, Germany's biggest waterway, is forecast to reach critically low levels in the coming days. Authorities say it could become difficult for many large ships to safely navigate the river at the city of Kaub, roughly midway between Koblenz and Mainz.

On the Danube, authorities in Serbia have started dredging to keep vessels moving.

In neighboring Hungary, wide parts of Lake Velence near Budapest have turned into patches of dried mud, beaching small boats. Aeration and water circulation equipment was installed to protect wildlife, but water quality has deteriorated. A weekend swimming ban was imposed at one beach.

Stretches of the Po, Italy's longest river, are so low that barges and boats that sank decades ago are resurfacing.

Italy's Lake Garda has fallen to its lowest levels ever, and people who flocked to the popular spot east of Milan at the start of a long summer weekend found a newly exposed shoreline of bleached rocks with a yellow hue. Authorities recently released more water from the lake, Italy's largest, to help with irrigation, but halted the effort to protect the lucrative tourist season.

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The drought also has affected England, which last month had its driest July since 1935, according to the Met Office weather agency. The lack of rain has depleted reservoirs, rivers and groundwater and left grasslands brown and tinder-dry.

Millions in the U.K. already were barred from watering lawns and gardens, and 15 million more around London will face such a ban soon.

U.K. farmers face running out of irrigation water and having to use winter feed for animals because of a lack of grass. The Rivers Trust charity said England's chalk streams — which allow underground springs to bubble up through the spongy layer of rock — are drying up, endangering aquatic wildlife like kingfishers and trout.

Even countries like Spain and Portugal, which are used to long periods without rain, have seen major consequences. In the Spanish region of Andalusia, some avocado farmers have had to sacrifice hundreds of trees to save others from wilting as the Vinuela reservoir in Malaga province dropped to only 13% of capacity.

Some European farmers are using water from the tap for their livestock when ponds and streams go dry, using up to 100 liters (26 gallons) a day per cow.

In normally green Burgundy, the source of Paris' Seine River, the grass has turned yellow-brown and tractors churn up giant clouds of dust.

Baptiste Colson, who owns dairy cows and grows feed crops in the village of Moloy, said his animals are suffering, with the quality and quantity of their milk decreasing. The 31-year-old head of the local Young Farmers union said he has been forced to dip into his winter fodder in August.

"That is the biggest concern," Colson said.

EU corn production is expected to be 12.5 million tons below last year and sunflower production is projected to be 1.6 million tons lower, according to S&P Global Commodity Insights.

Colson expects at least a 30% drop in corn yields, a major problem for feeding his cows.

"We know we'll have to buy food ... so the cows can continue producing milk," he said. "From an economic point of view, the cost will be high."

## Polio detected in NYC's sewage, suggesting virus circulating

By KAREN MATTHEWS and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The virus that causes polio has been found in New York City's wastewater in another sign that the disease, which hadn't been seen in the U.S. in a decade, is quietly spreading among unvaccinated people, health officials said Friday.

The presence of the poliovirus in the city's wastewater suggests likely local circulation of the virus, health authorities from the city, New York state and the federal government said.

The authorities urged parents to get their children vaccinated against the potentially deadly disease.

"The risk to New Yorkers is real but the defense is so simple — get vaccinated against polio," New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasana said. "With polio circulating in our communities there is simply nothing more essential than vaccinating our children to protect them from this virus, and if you're an unvaccinated or incompletely vaccinated adult, please choose now to get the vaccine. Polio is entirely preventable and its reappearance should be a call to action for all of us."

Dr. José R. Romero, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, said, "This is sobering; we know polio spreads silently, and it's likely that there are many people infected with polio and shedding the virus in these communities. This is also an urgent and living reminder of the importance of vaccination."

New York City is being forced to confront polio as city health officials are struggling to vaccinate vulnerable populations against monkeypox and adjusting to changing COVID-19 guidelines.

"We are dealing with a trifecta," Mayor Eric Adams said Friday on CNN. "COVID is still very much here. Polio, we have identified polio in our sewage, and we're still dealing with the monkeypox crisis. But the team is there. And we're coordinating and we're addressing the threats as they come before us, and we're

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prepared to deal with them with the assistance of Washington, D.C.”

The announcement about the discovery of the polio virus in New York City comes shortly after British health authorities reported finding evidence the virus has spread in London but found no cases in people. Children ages 1-9 in London were made eligible for booster doses of a polio vaccine Wednesday.

In New York, one person suffered paralysis weeks ago because of a polio infection in Rockland County, north of the city. Wastewater samples collected in June in both Rockland and adjacent Orange County were found to contain the virus.

CDC officials said the virus identified in wastewater samples collected in New York City did not contain enough genetic material to determine if they were linked to the Rockland County patient.

Most people infected with polio have no symptoms but can still give the virus to others for days or weeks. Vaccination offers strong protection, and authorities urged people who haven't gotten the shots to seek one immediately.

Based on past outbreaks, it is possible that hundreds of people in the state have gotten polio and don't know it, officials said.

Polio was once one of the nation's most feared diseases, with annual outbreaks causing thousands of cases of paralysis. The disease mostly affects children.

Vaccines became available starting in 1955, and a national vaccination campaign cut the annual number of U.S. cases to less than 100 in the 1960s and fewer than 10 in the 1970s, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A small percentage of people who contract polio suffer paralysis. The disease is fatal for 5-10% of those paralyzed.

All schoolchildren in New York are required to have a polio vaccine, but Rockland and Orange counties are both known as centers of vaccine resistance.

According to the CDC's most recent childhood vaccination data, about 93% of 2-year-olds had received at least three doses of polio vaccine. But the rate is only 80% in New York state, and is far lower in the area around where the polio case was reported — just 60% in Rockland County and 59% in Orange County, according to state data.

While health officials across the board are urging the unvaccinated to get the shots immediately, Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease expert at Vanderbilt University, said there is currently no evidence that a booster campaign such as London's is needed in New York City or elsewhere in the U.S.

“Polio vaccine, given in infancy, should have rather long-term protection,” he said.

## Ship reaches Ukraine to load up with wheat for hungry Africa

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A ship docked in a Ukrainian Black Sea port on Friday to begin loading up with wheat for hungry people in Ethiopia. It will be the first food delivery to Africa under a U.N. plan to unblock grain trapped by Russia's war on Ukraine and bring relief to some of the millions worldwide who are on the brink of starvation.

For months, fighting in Ukraine and a Russian blockade of Ukraine's ports meant that grain produced in Ukraine, one of the world's key breadbaskets, piled up in silos. That sent global food prices sky-high and led to hunger in Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia. In recent days, several ships carrying grain have left Ukrainian ports under the new deal — but most of those shipments were animal feed and went to Turkey or Western Europe under previous contracts.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the ship named Brave Commander will carry its wheat to the Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti, where it will be unloaded and sent on to Ethiopia.

“The wheat will go to the World Food Program's operations in Ethiopia, supporting the Horn of Africa drought response as the threat of famine stalks the drought-hit region,” he said. “It is one of many areas around the world where the near-complete halt of Ukrainian grain and food on the global market has made life even harder for the families already struggling with rising hunger.”

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The ship was expected to take on more than 23,000 metric tons, according to Ukraine's Infrastructure Ministry — still only a tiny portion of the 20 million tons of grain languishing now in Ukraine. It docked in the port city of Yuzhne late Friday, the ministry said.

Ethiopia, along with neighboring Somalia and Kenya, is facing the worst drought in four decades in the Horn of Africa. Thousands of people across the region have died from hunger or illness this year. Forecasts for the coming weeks indicate that for the first time, a fifth straight rainy season will fail to materialize. Millions of livestock, the basis of many families' wealth and food security, have died.

"Millions of households will struggle to cope with these shocks" in Ethiopia, according to a new assessment by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network. "Food assistance needs are at record levels, with up to 15 million people in need of food assistance."

While one shipment won't solve the crisis, the World Food Program still heralded it as an "important step" in getting Ukrainian grain out of the country to the worst-affected countries. Ethiopian officials did not respond to requests for comment.

Yet on Ukraine's front lines, the fighting was incessant, especially in the eastern region of the Donbas, where much of the fighting has been centered as the war approaches the six-month mark. The town of Kramatorsk was hit by 11 rockets overnight. Seven people were killed and 14 others were wounded in and around the town, which remains cut off from gas, running water and electricity.

"Three quarters of the population of the region have already been evacuated, because incessant shelling by the Russian army doesn't leave civilians any choice — it's either to die from wounds, or from hunger and cold in winter," Donetsk regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko told Ukrainian television.

The threat of a nuclear accident also loomed in southern Ukraine, where shelling has hit near Europe's largest nuclear plant.

Shelling near the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant continued overnight. Russian forces fired more than 40 rockets at the city of Marhanets, which is across the Dnieper River from the power plant. Three people were wounded in the most recent shelling, including a 12-year-old boy. The neighboring city of Nikopol was shelled as well, said Valentyn Reznichenko, the governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region.

The U.N. nuclear chief warned late Thursday that "very alarming" military activity at the nuclear plant could lead to dangerous consequences.

International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Grossi urged Russia and Ukraine, who blame each other for the attacks at the nuclear plant, to immediately allow nuclear experts to assess damage and evaluate safety and security at the sprawling nuclear complex. He said the situation at the plant "has been deteriorating very rapidly."

He pointed to shelling and several explosions at Zaporizhzhia last Friday that forced the shutdown of its electrical power transformer and two backup transformers, forcing the shutdown of one nuclear reactor.

Ukrainian Interior Minister Denys Monastyrsky said authorities were drafting plans to evacuate residents from towns and villages near the plant.

"There is a high-level threat, so there are plans for any possible development, including release of radiation," Monastyrsky said Friday. "We all have seen the Russian shelling of the plant. It's horrible."

He said Russian forces have stationed weapons at the plant and have denied Ukrainian nuclear workers access to some areas in the complex.

"It's hard to even imagine the scale of tragedy if the Russians continue their action there," he said. "We have become convinced that there is no restraining factors. There is a deliberate stand declared by the Russian authorities that they are ready for any action, regardless of consequences."

## **NOT REAL NEWS: A look at what didn't happen this week**

By The Associated Press undefined

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue stories and visuals of the week. None of these are legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked them out. Here are the facts:

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Photo altered to include judge who approved Mar-a-Lago warrant

CLAIM: A photo shows Ghislaine Maxwell, the former girlfriend of Jeffrey Epstein who was convicted of sex trafficking, with U.S. Magistrate Bruce Reinhart, the judge who approved the FBI search warrant for Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate.

THE FACTS: This image has been manipulated by combining two separate, unrelated photos. Social media users are sharing the manipulated image that puts Reinhart and Maxwell together, making it appear she is rubbing his foot as he holds a bottle of bourbon and package of Oreos. "Ghislaine Maxwell and Judge Bruce Reinhart... looking awful cozy!" read one tweet of the image shared by hundreds. But reverse image searches show that the original photo of Maxwell was with Epstein, not Reinhart. That photo was released in 2021 as evidence in her trial and published by various news outlets. Maxwell was sentenced in June to 20 years in prison for helping Epstein sexually abuse underage girls. The AP identified the photo of Reinhart on a Facebook profile under his name. The caption indicates he was watching a football game. The manufactured image is circulating amid attention on Reinhart for approving the FBI search warrant for Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate. Reinhart is a former federal prosecutor and has served as a magistrate in West Palm Beach, Florida, since March 2018. Reinhart did at one point represent associates of Epstein. For example, court records reviewed by the AP show he was an attorney for Sarah Kellen, Epstein's personal assistant. The search at Mar-a-Lago was part of an investigation into whether Trump took classified records from the White House to his Florida residence, according to people familiar with the matter, the AP reported.

— Associated Press writer Angelo Fichera in Philadelphia contributed this report.

Monkeypox wasn't found in Georgia drinking water

CLAIM: A news report shows that monkeypox has been detected in drinking water.

THE FACTS: The clip comes from an Atlanta-area news broadcast explaining how wastewater — not drinking water — can be tested for evidence of monkeypox's spread. But the July 26 broadcast is being mischaracterized online to push the false claim that monkeypox has been found in residents' tap water. The video shows a reporter explaining that the public works department in Fulton County, which encompasses Atlanta, is launching new efforts to try to detect monkeypox in the community. While the news report is playing in the video, a viewer filming their TV screen can be heard in the background saying "there's monkeypox in the water." TikTok and Twitter users are sharing the clip out of context to suggest it means that drinking water is contaminated or being intentionally tampered with. But the county's tests have nothing to do with drinking water, nor did they reveal that the virus had been found in that supply. "The testing that we're doing in wastewater for monkeypox DNA is completely separate from drinking water," said Marlene Wolfe, an environmental microbiologist and epidemiologist at Atlanta's Emory University, who is involved in the testing initiative. "We have not tested drinking water, we are not planning to test drinking water, we don't have any expectations or concerns about monkeypox spreading through drinking water." Experts say monkeypox is primarily spread through skin-to-skin contact such as sexual activity, or contact with items that previously touched an infected person's rash or body fluids. Dr. Mark Slifka, a microbiology and immunology expert and professor at the Oregon National Primate Research Center, confirmed that "there is really no way" that monkeypox can be transmitted through drinking water. "Historically, there has been no evidence of monkeypox spread through drinking water and currently during this global outbreak, there is absolutely no evidence for monkeypox being spread through drinking water," Slifka wrote in an email. Wolfe said that people infected with monkeypox excrete virus DNA through skin lesions, saliva, feces and urine, which, much like COVID-19, can enter wastewater through sewage that is produced after showering, flushing toilets and more. That water can be tested using PCR technology to determine whether certain viruses are being spread. This method has also been widely used for earlier detection of new COVID-19 waves. Data released after the news report found that wastewater samples from two areas in Fulton County have tested positive for monkeypox. Meanwhile, drinking water comes from separate reservoirs that go through different quality and treatment processes to make it drinkable. "That's a totally different department. We only handle wastewater," said Patrick Person, a Fulton County water quality manager. He

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added that wastewater is also eventually sanitized before being returned to the environment.

— Associated Press writer Sophia Tulp in New York contributed this report.

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Tweet misrepresents Kenyan president's speech

CLAIM: Video shows outgoing Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta publicly admitting that his deputy president, William Ruto, will win the presidential elections on Aug. 9.

THE FACTS: A tweet in English gave an incorrect description of the video, where Kenyatta speaks his mother tongue, Kikuyu. Kenyans headed to the polls on Tuesday to select a successor to Kenyatta, who has spent a decade in power. One candidate in the race is Raila Odinga, an opposition leader, who is backed by Kenyatta, his former rival. The other candidate is Ruto, Kenyatta's deputy who fell out with the president. While Kenyatta was commissioning a dam project last week in Gatundu, a town in Kiambu County, he addressed the crowd from a car's sunroof on Aug. 1. A Twitter user shared a video of Kenyatta's speech and provided a false description in English: "President Uhuru Kenyatta publicly admits that DP@WilliamsRuto will WIN the August 9, Elections," the tweet states. The AP translated the video, confirming that Kenyatta does not mention that Ruto will win. Instead, Kenyatta cautioned people against voting for Ruto. Kenyatta encouraged residents to vote for leaders allied with Odinga, a tweet from Kenya's State House notes. "You are told to refuse us because they claim they are hustlers and they will bring you this and that," Kenyatta said in the video. "Ask yourself what you are given. And when someone enters that house they look at you with a mean eye," he continued, referring to the State House, the official residence of Kenya's president. Ruto often refers to himself as a "hustler" who rose from humble beginnings, compared to Kenyatta and Odinga, who have elite backgrounds, the AP has reported. Multiple media outlets in Kenya also reported on the speech and made no mention of Kenyatta telling residents Ruto will win.

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WHO chief is vaccinated against COVID-19, contrary to false claim

CLAIM: Video shows World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus saying he isn't vaccinated against COVID-19.

THE FACTS: The clip is from a documentary and shows part of an interview, filmed weeks after Ghebreyesus was vaccinated, in which he says at one point that he waited for better global vaccine equity before receiving his own shot. But the clip is circulating on social media without context to falsely claim that it shows the WHO leader expressing that he had not been vaccinated against COVID-19. "Tedros not jabbed?" reads one tweet, which garnered more than 8,000 likes. The 35-second clip shows a portion of a 2021 interview of Tedros by Jon Cohen, a writer for the publication Science. The interview was included in a documentary, "How to Survive a Pandemic," which runs more than 100 minutes. The clip shows Cohen asking Ghebreyesus when he was vaccinated, and then cuts to the WHO director-general responding: "You know, still I feel like I know where I belong: in a poor country called Ethiopia, in a poor continent called Africa, and wanted to wait until Africa and other countries, in other regions, low-income countries, start vaccination. So I was protesting, in other words, because we're failing." But the documentary never claimed Ghebreyesus was not vaccinated, nor did Ghebreyesus' response indicate as much. In the full June 12, 2021, interview — which was edited for the documentary — Ghebreyesus in fact did reply that he was vaccinated on May 12, according to the Science article by Cohen that followed. Ghebreyesus also publicly posted a photo on Twitter showing him receiving his vaccine that day, which he followed with a post about vaccine equity. The date was not included in the portion of the response shown in the documentary, Cohen confirmed to the AP. Cohen responded to the erroneous claim about Ghebreyesus' vaccination status on Twitter, calling it a "lie," and pointing to his written interview. The filmmaker, David France, said in an interview with the AP that the important part of Ghebreyesus' answer was his explanation that he had waited for better vaccine equity before getting his own shot. But, he said, Ghebreyesus' explanation that he had waited was clearly in the past tense. "In the context of the film, it was the wait — and the reason for the wait — that was the core part of his answer, and that's what we included," France said.

— Angelo Fichera

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Earth spinning faster is no cause for concern, scientists say

CLAIM: The Earth is spinning faster and days are getting shorter, a change that is noticeable and cause for immediate concern.

THE FACTS: While the Earth on June 29 did indeed record its shortest-ever day since the adoption of the atomic clock standard in 1970 — at 1.59 milliseconds less than 24 hours — scientists say this is a normal fluctuation. Still, news of the faster rotation led to misleading posts on social media about the significance of the measurement, leading some to express concern about its implications. “They broke news of earth spinning faster which seems like it should be bigger news,” claimed one tweet that was shared nearly 35,000 times. “We so desensitized to catastrophe at this point it’s like well what’s next.” Some Twitter users responded to these tweets with jokes, as well as skepticism about the magnitude of the measurement. Others, however, voiced worries about how it would affect them. But scientists told the AP that the Earth’s rotational speed fluctuates constantly and that the record-setting measurement is nothing to panic over. “It’s a completely normal thing,” said Stephen Merkowitz, a scientist and project manager at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center. “There’s nothing magical or special about this. It’s not such an extreme data point that all the scientists are going to wake up and go, what’s going on?” Andrew Ingersoll, an emeritus professor of planetary science at the California Institute of Technology, agreed with this assessment. “The Earth’s rotation varies by milliseconds for many reasons,” he wrote in an email to the AP. “None of them are cause for concern.” The slight increase in rotational speed also does not mean that days are going by noticeably faster. Merkowitz explained that standardized time was once determined by how long it takes the Earth to rotate once on its axis — widely understood to be 24 hours. But because that speed fluctuates slightly, that number can vary by milliseconds. Scientists in the 1960s began working with atomic clocks to measure time more accurately. The official length of a day, scientifically speaking, now compares the speed of one full rotation of the Earth to time taken by atomic clocks, Merkowitz said. If those measurements get too out of sync, the International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service, an organization that maintains global time, may fix the discrepancy by adding a leap second. And despite recent decreases in the length of a day over the last few years, days have actually been getting longer over the course of several centuries, according to Judah Levine, a physicist in the Time and Frequency Division of the National Institute of Standards and Technology. He added that the current trend was not predicted, but agreed it’s nothing to worry about. Many variables impact the Earth’s rotation, such as influences from other planets or the moon, as well as how Earth’s mass redistributes itself. For example, ice sheets melting or weather events that create a denser atmosphere, according to Merkowitz. But the kind of event that would move enough mass to affect the Earth’s rotation in a way that is perceptible to humans would be something dire like the planet being hit by a giant meteor, Merkowitz said.

## More Black NFL retirees win dementia cases in rescored tests

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Two years after a pair of former players sued the NFL over the treatment of Black retirees in the league’s \$1 billion concussion settlement, hundreds of men whose medical tests were rescored to eliminate race bias now qualify for awards.

The newly approved payouts, announced in a report Friday, are a victory for NFL families in the decade-long legal saga over concussions. The 2020 lawsuit unearthed the fact the dementia tests were being “race-normed” — adjusted due to assumptions that Black people have a lower cognitive baseline score. Changes to the settlement made last year are meant to make the tests race-blind.

The new results will add millions to the NFL’s payouts for concussion-linked brain injuries. A league spokesman did not return a phone call Friday or respond to emails sent in recent weeks seeking comment on the rescoring.

Of the 646 Black men whose tests were rescored, nearly half now qualify for dementia awards. Sixty-one are classified as having early to moderate dementia, with average awards topping \$600,000; nearly

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250 more have milder dementia and will get up to \$35,000 in enhanced medical testing and treatment, according to the claims administrator's report.

Former players, lawyers and advocates say they'll now turn to getting the word out to more players who could receive awards.

"Our work has produced some great results and has opened many eyes," said Ken Jenkins, a former Washington player who, along with his wife, petitioned the federal judge overseeing the settlement to make the changes and urged the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division to investigate. "Now we're really focused on getting as many players who deserve compensation to be compensated."

This first group of players had the best chance of success because they otherwise passed the testing protocols and would have qualified if they were white. Thousands of other Black former players can ask to be rescored or retested, but their cases might not be as strong based on earlier results on dementia, validity and impairment tests. About 70 percent of active players and 60 percent of living retirees are Black.

The fact that the testing algorithm adjusted scores by race — as a rough proxy for someone's socio-economic background — went unnoticed for several years until lawyers for former Steelers Kevin Henry and Najeh Davenport sued the league. Factors such as age, education and race have long been used in neurology to help diagnose dementia. But experts say the formula was never meant to be used to determine payouts in a legal case.

"In 2022, how can you possibly think that another human being comes out of the womb with less cognitive ability? It's just impossible to believe that that can be true," Jenkins said. "It's unspeakable."

Advocates fear that many former players don't know they can be rescored or retested, especially if they have cognitive issues and live alone.

"Men who are homeless, men who originally signed up but their cognitive function changed, men who are divorced or isolated — we are going to go looking for them," said Amy Lewis, Jenkins' wife.

The couple, once critical of class counsel Chris Seeger for his response to the issue, now work with him to spread the word.

Seeger — lead lawyer for the nearly 20,000 retired players, who negotiated the settlement with the NFL — has apologized for initially failing to see the scope of the racial bias. He vowed in a recent interview to "make sure the NFL pays every nickel they should."

The league's tally just passed \$1 billion in approved claims. However, appeals and audits mean actual payouts lag behind that number and now stand at about \$916 million. Payouts include awards for four other compensable diagnoses: Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Lou Gehrig's disease and deaths before April 2015 involving CTE, or chronic traumatic encephalopathy.

As reviewers tackle the thornier dementia claims, the process has slowed and audits and appeals intensified.

"Their mantra is deny, deny, delay until you die," said James Pruitt, 58, a wide receiver who played for Indianapolis and Miami from 1986 to 1991.

After his NFL retirement, Pruitt became a teacher and middle school principal in Palm Beach County, Florida. But in 2010, in his mid-40s, the district asked him to step down. He could no longer perform his duties. Over time, he stopped calling on friends from his playing days.

"I don't get out, and I don't remember a lot of things. I've been told that I repeat things," he said. "I'm kind of embarrassed by the whole situation."

After the settlement was approved in 2015, he and his wife attended meetings with lawyers who traveled the country to sell the plan to retired players' groups.

"We were told ... this was going to be a very easy process, you just need to go to the doctors, get a qualifying diagnosis from them," said Traci Pruitt, 42. "Yet here we are six years later, and we're still getting the runaround."

The couple has twice been approved by doctors only to have the decision overturned — once after their first doctor was removed from the program. Their lawyer believes they'll be successful on their third try, under the race-neutral scoring formula. They're still waiting to hear.

Traci Pruitt, an accountant who works from home, said an award would ensure she gets the help she needs to care for her husband: "While I love him, I don't necessarily have that background and skill set." Seeger said he believes the claims process is picking up steam after a slow start.

"I know folks have said they weren't moving that well for awhile. I think we've won some appellate battles with the courts," Seeger said. "I don't think the NFL expected to pay \$1 billion — and we're about to cross \$1 billion."

\_\_\_ Follow AP Legal Affairs Writer Maryclaire Dale on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/Maryclairedale>

## Trump Organization, CFO's tax fraud trial set for October

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Capping an extraordinary week in Donald Trump's post-presidency, a New York judge ordered Friday that his company and its longtime finance chief stand trial in the fall on tax fraud charges stemming from a long-running criminal investigation into Trump's business practices.

Manhattan Judge Juan Manuel Merchan scheduled jury selection for Oct. 24 in the case, which involves allegations the Trump Organization gave CFO Allen Weisselberg more than \$1.7 million in off-the-books compensation, including rent, car payments and school tuition.

Lawyers at a hearing Friday suggested the trial could last several months.

Merchan denied requests by Weisselberg's lawyers and the Trump Organization to throw out the case, though he did drop one criminal tax fraud count against the company citing the statute of limitations. More than a dozen other counts remain. Weisselberg's lawyers argued prosecutors in the Democrat-led Manhattan district attorney's office were punishing him because he wouldn't flip on the former president.

Merchan rejected that, saying that evidence presented to the grand jury "was legally sufficient to support the charges in the indictment," and that those proceedings were properly conducted, their "integrity unimpaired."

If the schedule holds, Weisselberg and the Trump Organization will be on trial during the November midterm elections where Trump's Republican party could win control of one or both houses of Congress. At the same time, Trump has been laying the groundwork for a potential comeback campaign for president in 2024.

The criminal trial is just one of several legal concerns playing out in real time in Trump's orbit. FBI agents searched Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida in an unrelated probe Monday, and on Thursday, he and the U.S. Department of Justice called for the public release of search warrant documents.

Trump sat for a deposition Wednesday as New York Attorney General Letitia James wraps up a parallel civil investigation into allegations Trump's company misled lenders and tax authorities about asset values. Trump invoked his Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination more than 400 times.

Trump has not been charged in the criminal probe, but prosecutors have noted that he signed some of the checks at the center of the case. Trump, who has decried the New York investigations as a "political witch hunt," has said his company's actions were standard practice in the real estate business and in no way a crime. James is a Democrat.

Weisselberg and the Trump Organization have pleaded not guilty.

The most serious charge against Weisselberg, grand larceny, carries five to 15 years in prison. The tax fraud charges against the company are punishable by a fine of double the amount of unpaid taxes, or \$250,000, whichever is larger.

Weisselberg, who turns 75 on Monday, is the only Trump executive charged in the yearslong criminal investigation started by former Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr., who went to the Supreme Court to secure Trump's tax records. Vance's successor, Alvin Bragg, is now overseeing the investigation. Several other Trump executives have been granted immunity to testify before a grand jury in the case.

Prosecutors alleged that Weisselberg and the Trump Organization schemed to give off-the-books compensation to senior executives, including Weisselberg, for 15 years. Weisselberg alone was accused of defrauding the federal government, state and city out of more than \$900,000 in unpaid taxes and unde-

served tax refunds.

In the months after Weisselberg's arrest, the criminal probe appeared to be progressing toward a possible criminal indictment of Trump himself, but the investigation slowed, a grand jury was disbanded and a top prosecutor left after Bragg took office in January — though he insists it is continuing.

Although the criminal investigation is separate from James' civil investigation, which could lead to a lawsuit and fines for Trump and his company, her office has been involved in both investigations. James has dispatched several lawyers to work with Manhattan prosecutors, and it was evidence uncovered in the civil investigation that led to criminal charges against Weisselberg.

## **In 'The Princess,' a documentary on Diana flips the focus**

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

The last thing the world needs, you might think, is another Princess Diana documentary.

It's a fair thought considering that almost 25 years after her death, her life and impact is still media fodder. Whether it's a magazine cover or a book claiming to have new revelations or just an image of Kristen Stewart in a re-creation of her wedding dress for the movie "Spencer" or Elizabeth Debicki sporting the "revenge dress" for the series "The Crown," the culture continues to have an insatiable appetite for all things Diana.

And yet documentarian Ed Perkins managed to find a novel way in: by turning the lens back on us.

"The obvious truth is that Diana's story is one of the most told and retold stories probably in the past 30 years," Perkins said in an interview this week. "We only felt it was worth us adding to that conversation if we really felt like we had a new perspective to offer up."

"The Princess" has no talking heads and no traditional narrator. Instead, it tells the story of her public life using only archival footage from news broadcasts, talk shows and radio programs. It begins from the time of her earliest moments being trailed by cameras at the news of her royal courtship to the aftermath of her death in 1997. It premieres Saturday at 8 p.m. Eastern on HBO and will be available to stream on HBO Max.

Perkins never met Diana. He was 11 when she died and remembers his mother waking him up with tears flooding down her eyes. For the next week, they were glued to the television leading up to her funeral, as much of the world was. At the time, he recalled just feeling confused and taken aback by what he said was a "very un-British outpouring of grief."

This was someone most people only knew through the media, he thought. Why were they acting as if they'd lost a mother or a sister? Why had millions cheered on her wedding? Why, for 17 years, did everyone dissect "everything she did, everything she said, everything she wore?"

"There's something about her story which has always felt strangely personal to me," he said. "I think millions of people around the world have a sort of similar relationship. There's something about her or what she represented that sort of got under lots of people's skin and became a part of the kind of collective consciousness or understanding of who we were."

They were questions that lingered over the years. And at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, he and his archival team decided to try to answer the why. As you can imagine for one of the most photographed people in history, the archive was enormous. For six months, Perkins watched footage for eight to 12 hours a day, trying to find moments that spoke to him (and stay awake).

"It was often about trying to find subtext and body language," he said. "Diana is almost like a silent movie star. She doesn't speak publicly that much throughout her public life. And yet I think she was incredibly adept, almost masterful, at sort of projecting her own very public/private story publicly and sort of trying to tell us how to feel, how she was feeling."

He also used the many hours of the public's phone-in commentary that aired on British radio shows over the years to function as a kind of Greek chorus.

The film, which got raves at the Sundance Film Festival earlier this year, is trying to take audiences on both an emotional and intellectual journey as it unfolds in the present tense. For Perkins, it's not just an

historical document either: It's an origin story for some things that are happening today.

"I want the film to allow us to turn the camera back on all of us and force ourselves to ask some difficult questions about our relationship, yes to Diana, but perhaps more broadly, our relationship to the royal family and more broadly still, what is our relationship to celebrity," Perkins said. "Then the most important and interesting — but perhaps most difficult — thing to talk about with regard to this story is what was our role in this story? What was our complicity in this tragic tale?"

## Conservative push to alter Constitution focuses on primaries

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — The fliers piled up in mailboxes in central South Dakota like snow during a high-plains blizzard: "Transgender Sex Education in Schools?" one asked. "Vote Against Sex Ed Radical Mary Duvall for State Senate."

The mailers were part of a \$58,000 campaign against the five-term Republican lawmaker, an enormous sum of money in a place where the cost of running for a statehouse seat is typically in the low five figures. Despite the subject of the attack ads, Duvall was targeted not for her stance on sex education but for her opposition to a longshot bid by some conservatives to force a convention to amend the U.S. Constitution.

"I knew they were angry at me, but I had no idea this was going to be coming during my primary campaign," said Duvall, who ended up losing her race by 176 votes.

Duvall opposed legislation that would have added South Dakota to 19 other states calling for a gathering known as a convention of states, following a plan mapped out by a conservative group that wants to change parts of the United States' foundational document. When that number hits two-thirds of the states — or 34 — under the procedure laid out in the Constitution, a convention would meet with the power to amend the 235-year-old document.

The campaign against Duvall was part of a more than \$600,000 push in at least five states earlier this year by the group, Convention of States Action, and its affiliates in Republican primaries to elect sympathetic lawmakers who could add more states to its column. Much of the money comes from groups that do not have to disclose their donors, masking the identity of who is funding the push to change the Constitution.

Mark Meckler, the group's president and former head of Tea Party Patriots, issued a brief statement saying the group was committed to being active in the midterms "in a big way."

For years, Convention of States Action has been a staple of the conservative political scene. But its engagement in primary campaigns marks an escalation at a time when parts of the conservative movement are testing the limits of the nation's political rulebook, pushing aggressive tactics from gerrymandering to voting restrictions.

The track record of the convention group's spending is spotty. In South Dakota, where the group and its affiliates spent more than \$200,000 targeting four state Senate seats, Duvall was the only one of its targets to lose. And the challenger who beat her, Jim Mehlhaff, said in an interview that he thinks the group's intervention hurt him.

"I didn't appreciate the negative tone of their mailers. It probably cost me some votes," said Mehlhaff, a former member of Pierre's city commission who had his own base of support in the district before the intervention of Convention of States. "This is South Dakota. People don't like negative campaigns."

Mehlhaff was baffled at the notion that a possible constitutional convention factored so heavily in his race: "Convention of states is not my issue at all," he said.

Supporters of a convention argue it's the best way to amend the Constitution — especially to take power from Congress, which has to approve by a two-thirds vote any proposed amendments that don't come from a convention. Still, no amendments have been implemented through a convention since the Constitution was ratified in 1788.

Backers argue that any amendments that emerge from the convention would have to be approved by even more states than required to call it — three-quarters, or 38 of them — ensuring that the only changes would be measures with broad support. The GOP would have the upper hand in that venue, though, as

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it controls the legislatures in 30 states.

One liberal group is pushing for a convention to change campaign finance laws that has won backing in four states, while another effort by conservatives seeks one to impose a balanced budget amendment. The Convention of States group is more vague on its goals, stating that it seeks a gathering that could pass amendments only to "limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government, impose fiscal restraints, and place term limits on federal officials."

That alarms many Democrats, who see the push as a partisan effort to write conservative goals into the Constitution. But several conservatives have also balked, fearing that a convention could open the document to changes they wouldn't favor, such as on gun control or campaign spending.

"Lots of things can happen that we can't predict" if there's a constitutional convention, said Walter Olson, a senior fellow at the conservative Cato Institute in Washington, D.C. "A lot of Republicans are temperamentally conservative and don't like taking large leaps into the unknown, and they are going to be seen as dragging their heels."

The convention group has won some successes lately. Earlier this year, it persuaded South Carolina's GOP-controlled Legislature to approve a motion for a convention, making it the 19th state, all Republican-run, to sign on. But it has been stymied in some solidly conservative states such as South Dakota, whose state Senate has repeatedly voted down resolutions for a convention.

Duvall said that's because Republican voters there don't want a constitutional rewrite.

"The majority of my constituents I've talked to say 'No, this is a bad idea and dangerous,'" Duvall said.

Robert Natelson, a retired law professor who formerly served as an advisor to Convention of States Action, said that's a result of fear-mongering. He has researched historical conventions of states and said they have clear procedures and limitations. They have occurred throughout the country's history with varied records of accomplishment, on subjects ranging from the war of 1812 to how certain Western states would share water from the Colorado River.

"This was a process designed for the people to use," Natelson said. "If you think everything's going well, if you're part of the 15% of the population that has a favorable view of Congress, then you don't want a convention."

The movement is using money to combat skepticism. Convention of States Action and its affiliated foundation reported raising more than \$10 million in 2020, according to IRS documents. As nonprofits, the organizations do not need to disclose most of their donors.

The Convention of States' recent spending came through multiple newly created political groups that steered campaign money around the country, largely shielding donors from disclosure.

"They have gone out of their way to set up a web of dark money groups to obscure where the money is coming from and evade reporting requirements," said Arn Pearson, executive director of the Center for Media and Democracy, which filed complaints with authorities in Arizona and Montana against the network's campaign apparatus.

In Montana, the network spent \$126,000 on radio ads and mailers to support two state legislators and a candidate for a state House seat after failing multiple times to get a resolution through the Legislature. The state Commissioner of Political Practices found the group failed to register as a political organization and report its campaign spending.

According to a disclosure report it filed in Michigan, the group also spent more than \$40,000 supporting statehouse candidates there. It spent \$10,000 on statehouse races in North Carolina. A group it formed in Idaho reported spending more than \$100,000 before the state's May 17 primary, including more than \$75,000 against state Rep. Judy Boyle, a conservative who co-wrote a newspaper column with a liberal lawmaker about why a convention of states was a bad idea.

A seven-term lawmaker, Boyle said she'd been warned the group would target her and said their radio ads falsely claimed the local right-to-life group endorsed her opponent.

"I knew then that the group believes the ends justify the means and they would go to any length to smear me, which they did," Boyle said via text message.

She eventually won her election — by six votes.

## **Anne Heche on life support, survival of crash 'not expected'**

By LYNN ELBER and ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writers

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Anne Heche is on life support after suffering a brain injury in a fiery crash a week ago and her survival isn't expected, according to a statement from a representative.

The actor, who is in a coma and in critical condition, is being kept on life support for possible organ donation, according to the statement released Thursday night on behalf of her family and friends.

Heche, who's been hospitalized at the Grossman Burn Center at West Hills hospital north of Los Angeles, suffered a "severe anoxic brain injury," the statement said. Such an injury is caused by a sustained lack of oxygen to the brain.

"She is not expected to survive," the statement said. "It has long been her choice to donate her organs and she is being kept on life support to determine if any are viable."

On the morning of Aug. 5, Heche's car smashed into a house in a neighborhood in west Los Angeles and a fire erupted with the car embedded inside the home.

Earlier Thursday, police said they were investigating Heche for driving under the influence. Detectives with a search warrant took a sample of her blood and found narcotics in her system, LAPD spokesperson Officer Jeff Lee said.

Toxicology tests, which can take weeks to complete, must be performed to identify the drugs more clearly and to differentiate them from any medication she may have been given for treatment at the hospital.

Evidence is still being gathered from the crash, police said, and they would present a case to prosecutors if it is warranted when the investigation is complete.

A representative for Heche declined comment on the investigation.

On Tuesday, Heche spokesperson Heather Duffy Boylston said she had been in a coma since after the accident, with burns that required surgery and lung injuries that required the use of a ventilator to breathe.

"Anne had a huge heart and touched everyone she met with her generous spirit. More than her extraordinary talent, she saw spreading kindness and joy as her life's work — especially moving the needle for acceptance of who you love," Thursday's statement said. "She will be remembered for her courageous honesty and dearly missed for her light."

Heche, 53, was among the most prominent film stars in Hollywood in the late 1990s, playing opposite actors including Johnny Depp ("Donnie Brasco") and Harrison Ford ("Six Days, Seven Nights"). In a 2001 memoir, she discussed her lifelong struggles with mental health.

She recently had recurring roles on the network TV series "Chicago P.D." and "All Rise," and in 2020 was a contestant on "Dancing With the Stars."

## **Kansas abortion vote shows limits of GOP's strength**

By AARON M. KESSLER, JOHN HANNA, NUHA DOLBY and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press  
TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — An increase in turnout among Democrats and independents and a notable shift in Republican-leaning counties contributed to the overwhelming support of abortion rights last week in traditionally conservative Kansas, according to a detailed Associated Press analysis of the voting results.

A proposed state constitutional amendment would have allowed the Republican-controlled Legislature to tighten restrictions or ban abortions outright. But Kansas voters rejected the measure by nearly 20 percentage points, almost a mirror of Republican Donald Trump's statewide margin over Democrat Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election.

In the aftermath of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to repeal a woman's constitutional right to an abortion, the threat of new restrictions in the state galvanized Democrats and independents more than anticipated. At the same time, Republicans showed less interest in turning out to support the measure.

The findings reinforce a sense in both parties that the Supreme Court's decision may have altered the dynamics of this year's midterm elections. Here's how it played out:

'OVERPLAYED THEIR HAND'

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In 2020, Trump carried Kansas by 18 points. Last week, not a single county in the state favored the ballot measure as much as it had supported the former president, the AP found.

In 99 of the state's 105 counties, support for the abortion measure was more than 10 percentage points lower than its support for Trump against Biden. In 29 of those counties, that difference was more than 20 points.

And in 14 Kansas counties that Trump won, majorities rejected the amendment.

"The anti-abortion politicians have just overplayed their hand on these bans," said Tamarra Wieder, director for Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates in Kentucky, where another abortion measure will be on the ballot in November.

The Kansas county with the largest drop from the presidential election to the abortion referendum was Greenwood, in rural southeast Kansas. Trump won nearly 80% of the vote there in 2020, but there was about a 30-point shift on abortion, with voters narrowly favoring "no," the position that leaves abortion rights in place for women in Kansas.

Beyond counties that flipped entirely, dozens of deeply Republican counties saw voters favor the abortion amendment as expected, but by much narrower margins than their preference for Trump two years ago. Near Topeka, for example, 72% of voters in Pottawatomie County backed the former president's re-election, while just 57% supported the amendment.

Abortion opponents said they were stunned by the margin of the results.

"I was surprised for sure," said Ruth Tisdale, executive director of the Advice and Aid Pregnancy Center. "I thought that it would be a closer outcome either way. I didn't have a strong sense of whether it would pass or not, but I thought that it would be closer, you know, 51 to 49 kind of thing. ... It was very sad."

**HUGE TURNOUT, SURGE OF INDEPENDENTS**

It wasn't just the amendment's margin of defeat that jolted the political consciousness. It was also the seam-busting turnout in what otherwise should have been a normal, low-turnout primary in a midterm election year.

The latest AP tallies show that more than 922,000 votes were cast by Kansas voters on the abortion referendum. That's roughly twice as many voters as turned out for the state's previous midterm primary election in 2018, and it's about as many as turn out for Kansas' midterm general elections in some years. Overall turnout — 48% of registered voters — outpaced the 34% turnout for the 2020 presidential primaries.

The most recent electorate also was considerably less Republican than in a typical Kansas primary. From 2010 through 2020, Republican primary ballots outnumbered non-Republican ballots by about 2-to-1. In last week's election, according to the Kansas secretary of state's office, the two groups turned out in nearly equal numbers.

Advocates on both sides of the amendment spent more than \$14 million blanketing Kansas with ads and signs, knocking on doors and calling voters, according to state campaign finance reports.

That effort helped attract an unusual variable in Kansas primaries: independent voters. That group is eligible to vote on referenda but not for candidates running in any party primary. But campaign ads emphasized that "no affiliation" voters could indeed vote on the abortion question. It worked: Around 184,000 more votes were cast for the abortion amendment than voted for governor, a likely barometer to measure their portion of the electorate.

"The decision to overturn Roe really was a wake-up call for more moderate voters," said Ashley All, a spokesperson for Kansans for Constitutional Freedom, a group that fought against the ballot measure.

**'ENERGY AROUND BALLOT MEASURES'**

The result from Kansas is rippling into numerous other states.

In Georgia, the membership for NARAL Pro-Choice America jumped from 53,000 to more than 80,000 and could hit 100,000 by the November election, said Alicia Stallworth, the director of NARAL campaigns in the Southeastern U.S.

"I don't think this is something that disappears," Stallworth said of the current energy among abortion rights advocates.

Abortion-rights advocates said the decision to strike down Roe vs. Wade, the 1973 case that recognized

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a woman's constitutional right to an abortion, energized many voters who had assumed abortion access was safe.

"It was such a beacon of light in this moment," said Heather Shumaker, director of state abortion access at the National Women's Law Center, of the Kansas vote. "I think there is energy around ballot measures for the foreseeable future."

In Ohio, Democratic gubernatorial nominee Nan Whaley has called for a statewide ballot question on a state constitutional amendment to protect abortion rights as soon as 2023.

In South Dakota, a group called Dakotans for Health is pushing a similar ballot initiative in 2024. And in Colorado, advocates want a 2024 referendum that could allow public funding for abortion.

But getting measures on ballots without going through a state legislature can be difficult. The Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, which advises liberal groups on initiative campaigns, advises the process could take three years.

## 'WHY WE'RE LOSING'

In half of the states, including Kansas, only lawmakers can put propositions on the statewide ballot. That means in Texas, which bans most abortions, the only options are to wait for legislators to put an initiative to a vote—as anti-abortion lawmakers did in Kansas — or vote out the incumbents.

"In Texas we know that's why we're losing," said Delma Catalina Limones, communications director for Avow, an abortion-rights group in that state.

But despite the apparent confidence of Kansas legislators to put the abortion amendment on the ballot this month, their expectations were upended by the resounding defeat.

Value Them Both Coalition, the main group in Kansas that fought in favor of the amendment, called it a "temporary setback" and promised in a statement that "our dedicated fight to value women and babies is far from over."

## India to miss renewable energy goal, officials, experts say

By SIBI ARASU Associated Press

BENGALURU, India (AP) — India will miss its renewable energy target for the end of the year, with experts saying "multiple challenges" including a lack of financial help and taxes on imported components are stalling the clean energy industry.

The country has installed just over half of its planned renewable energy capacity, a high level parliamentary report found last week.

The target, set in January 2018, would have increased India's renewable energy capacity to 43% of its current energy mix. The government now says it hopes to achieve the goal by mid-2023.

The shortfall is down to "inconsistent federal and state-level renewable energy policies, excessive custom duties on renewable energy related products as well as financing issues," said Vibhuti Garg, an energy economist based in New Delhi, who added that the solar industry is particularly vulnerable to such roadblocks.

She added that "improving the financial health of government-owned power companies" would help build out renewable capacity in India. State-owned power companies have been struggling as a result of delays in government grants and consumer payments and the COVID-19 pandemic which led to shutdowns of energy-heavy industries.

India's parliamentary committee stated that ministry-level approvals for solar projects take "an unduly long time" making it difficult for new solar parks to open.

It added that state-owned energy companies owe 117 billion rupees (\$1.5 billion) to renewable energy generators and developers and the debt contributed to the slow buildout of clean energy.

The Indian government's ministry of new and renewable energy, which is in charge of meeting the nation's renewable energy targets, attributed the failure to meet targets to the COVID-19 pandemic.

India, the third largest emitter of carbon dioxide after China and the U.S., recently finalized its climate targets and pledged that 50% of power generation will be from clean energy sources by 2030. The coun-

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try's energy needs are expected to double by the end of the decade as the populations grows and the government seeks to improve living standards.

India's climate targets were rated as "insufficient" by Climate Action Tracker, an organization which conducts independent scientific analysis to determine if a country's ambitions are in line with limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) or 2C (3.6F).

Other observers say that the failure to meet these targets is not as big a setback as it appears to be.

While the target won't be achieved, "it has played an important role in directing India's electricity and power generation systems towards renewable energy," said Ashish Fernandes of Climate Risk Horizons, an organization which looks at the risks climate change poses to India's economy.

He added that long-term agreements to purchase coal power has stopped federal and state energy companies from investing heavily in renewables.

"We need to start retiring old, expensive coal plants and replacing them with renewable energy. This can save energy companies and consumers a lot of money as well," he said.

## At 75, India's democracy is under pressure like never before

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — The Aug. 5 demonstrations by India's main opposition Congress party against soaring food prices and unemployment began like any other recent protest — an electorally weak opposition taking to the New Delhi streets against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's massively popular government.

The protests, however, quickly took a turn when key Congress lawmakers led by Rahul Gandhi — Modi's main opponent in the last two general elections — trooped to the Parliament, leading to fierce standoffs with police.

"Democracy is a memory (in India)," Gandhi later tweeted, describing the dramatic photographs that showed him and his party leaders being briefly detained by police.

Gandhi's statement was largely seen as yet another frantic effort by a crisis-ridden opposition party to shore up its relevance and was dismissed by the government. But it resonated amid growing sentiment that India's democracy — the world's largest with nearly 1.4 billion people — is in retreat and its democratic foundations are floundering.

Experts and critics say trust in the judiciary as a check on executive power is eroding. Assaults on the press and free speech have grown brazen. Religious minorities are facing increasing attacks by Hindu nationalists. And largely peaceful protests, sometimes against provocative policies, have been stamped out by internet clampdowns and the jailing of activists.

"Most former colonies have struggled to put a lasting democratic process in place. India was more successful than most in doing that," said Booker Prize-winning novelist and activist Arundhati Roy. "And now, 75 years on, to witness it being dismantled systematically and in shockingly violent ways is traumatic."

Modi's ministers say India's democratic principles are robust, even thriving.

"If today there is a sense in the world that democracy is, in some form, the future, then a large part of it is due to India," External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said in April. "There was a time when, in this part of the world, we were the only democracy."

History is on Jaishankar's side.

At midnight on August 15, 1947, the red sandstone parliamentary building in the heart of India's capital echoed with the high-pitched voice of Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister.

"At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom," Nehru famously spoke, words that were heard over live radio by millions of Indians. Then he promised: "To the nations and peoples of the world, we send greetings and pledge ourselves to cooperate with them in furthering peace, freedom and democracy."

It marked India's transition from a British colony to a democracy — the first in South Asia — that has since transformed from a poverty-stricken nation into one of the world's fastest-growing economies, earning itself a seat at the global high table and becoming a democratic counterweight to its authoritarian

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neighbor, China.

Apart from a brief interruption in 1975 when a formal emergency was declared under the Congress party rule that saw outright censorship, India clung doggedly to its democratic convictions — largely due to free elections, an independent judiciary that confronted the executive, a thriving media, strong opposition and peaceful transitions of power.

But experts and critics say the country has been gradually departing from some commitments and argue the backsliding has accelerated since Modi came to power in 2014. They accuse his populist government of using unbridled political power to undermine democratic freedoms and preoccupying itself with pursuing a Hindu nationalist agenda.

“The decline seems to continue across several core formal democratic institutions... such as the freedom of expression and alternative sources of information, and freedom of association,” said Staffan I. Lindberg, political scientist and director of the V-Dem Institute, a Sweden-based research center that rates the health of democracies.

Modi’s party denies this. A spokesperson, Shehzad Poonawalla, said India has been a “thriving democracy” under Modi’s rule and has witnessed “reclamation of the republic.”

Most democracies are hardly immune to strains.

The number of countries experiencing democratic backsliding “has never been as high” as in the past decade, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance said last year, adding the U.S. to the list along with India and Brazil.

Still, the descent appears to be striking in India.

Earlier this year, the U.S.-based non-profit Freedom House downgraded India from a free democracy to “partially free.” The V-Dem Institute classified it as an “electoral autocracy” on par with Russia. And the Democracy Index published by The Economist Intelligence Unit called India a “flawed democracy.”

India’s Foreign Ministry has called the downgrades “inaccurate” and “distorted.” Many Indian leaders have said such reports are an intrusion in “internal matters,” with India’s Parliament disallowing debates on them.

Globally, India strongly advocates democracy. During the inaugural Summit for Democracy organized by the U.S. in December, Modi asserted the “democratic spirit” is integral to India’s “civilization ethos.”

At home, however, his government is seen bucking that very spirit, with independent institutions coming under increasing scrutiny.

Experts point to long pending cases with India’s Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of key decisions taken by Modi’s government as major concerns.

They include cases related to a controversial citizenship review process that has already left nearly 2 million people in Assam state potentially stateless, the now revoked semi-autonomous powers pertaining to disputed Kashmir, the opaque campaign finance laws that are seen disproportionately favoring Modi’s party, and its alleged use of military-grade spyware to monitor political opponents and journalists.

India’s judiciary, which is independent of the executive, has faced criticism in the past but the intensity has increased, said Deepak Gupta, a former Supreme Court judge.

Gupta said India’s democracy appears to be “on the downswing” due to the court’s inability to uphold civil liberties in some cases by denying people bail and the misuse of sedition and anti-terror laws by police, tactics that were also used by earlier governments.

“When it comes to adjudication of disputes... the courts have done a good job. But when it comes to their role as protectors of the rights of the people, I wish the courts had done more,” he said.

The country’s democratic health has also taken a hit due to the status of minorities.

The largely Hindu nation has been proud of its multiculturalism and has about 200 million Muslims. It also has a history of bloody sectarian violence, but hate speech and violence against Muslims have increased recently. Some states ruled by Modi’s party have used bulldozers to demolish the homes and shops of alleged Muslim protesters, a move critics say is a form of collective punishment.

The government has sought to downplay these attacks, but the incidents have left the minority community reeling under fear.

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"Sometimes you need extra protection for the minorities so that they don't feel that they are second-rate citizens," said Gupta.

That the rising tide of Hindu nationalism has helped buoy the fortunes of Modi's party is evident in its electoral successes. It has also coincided with a rather glaring fact: the ruling party has no Muslim lawmaker in the Parliament, a first in the history of India.

The inability to fully eliminate discrimination and attacks against other minorities like Christians, tribals and Dalits — who form the lowest rung of India's Hindu caste hierarchy — has exacerbated these concerns. Even though the government sees the ascent of an indigenous woman as India's ceremonial president as a significant step toward equal representation, critics have cast their doubts calling it political optics.

Under Modi, India's Parliament has also come under scrutiny for passing important laws with little debate, including a religious-driven citizenship law and controversial agricultural reform that led to massive protests. In a rare retreat, his government withdrew the farm laws and some saw it as a triumph of democracy, but that sentiment faded quickly with increased attacks on free speech and the press.

The country fell eight places, to 150, out of 180 countries in this year's Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders, which said "Indian journalists who are too critical of the government are subjected to all-out harassment and attack campaigns."

Shrinking press freedoms in India date to previous governments but the last few years have been worse.

Journalists have been arrested. Some are stopped from traveling abroad. Dozens are facing criminal prosecution, including sedition. At the same time, the government has introduced sweeping regulatory laws for social media companies that give it more power to police online content.

"One has only to look around to see that the media has certainly shriveled up during Mr. Modi's regime," said Coomi Kapoor, journalist and author of "The Emergency: A Personal History," which chronicles India's only period of emergency.

"What happened in the emergency was upfront and there was no pretense. What is happening now is more gradual and sinister," she said.

Still, optimists like Kapoor say not everything is lost "if India strengthens its democratic institutions" and "pins its hopes on the judiciary."

"If the independence of the judiciary goes, then I'm afraid nothing will survive," she said.

Others, however, insist India's democracy has taken so many body blows that the future looks increasingly bleak.

"The damage is too structural, too fundamental," said Roy, the novelist and activist.

## **J&J to end sales of baby powder with talc globally next year**

Associated Press undefined

Johnson & Johnson is pulling baby powder containing talc worldwide next year after it did the same in the U.S. and Canada amid thousands of lawsuits claiming it caused cancer.

Talc will be replaced by cornstarch, the company said.

The company has faced litigation alleging its talcum powder caused users to develop ovarian cancer, through use for feminine hygiene, or mesothelioma, a cancer that strikes the lungs and other organs.

J&J insists, and the overwhelming majority of medical research on talc indicates, that the talc baby powder is safe and doesn't cause cancer.

However, demand for the company's baby powder fell off, and J&J removed the talc-based product in most of North America in 2020.

The company did so after it saw demand drop due to "misleading talc litigation advertising that caused global confusion and unfounded concern," about product safety a company spokeswoman said.

J&J said the change announced late Thursday will simplify its product selection and meet evolving global trends.

Last October, J&J said a separate subsidiary it created to manage talc litigation claims had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

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J&J said then that it funded the subsidiary, named LTL Management, and established a \$2 billion trust to pay claims the bankruptcy court determines that it owes.

The health care giant also said last fall that it will turn its consumer health business — which sells the baby powder, Band-Aids and other products — into a separate publicly traded company. The part of the company selling prescription drugs and medical devices will keep the J&J name.

Shares of Johnson & Johnson, based in New Brunswick, New Jersey, rose slightly before the opening bell Friday. The stock has performed better than the Dow Jones Industrial Average, of which J&J is a member, for most of the year.

## Today in History: August 13, East Germany seals the border

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Aug. 13, the 225th day of 2022. There are 140 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Aug. 13, 1961, East Germany sealed off the border between Berlin's eastern and western sectors before building a wall that would divide the city for the next 28 years.

On this date:

In 1521, Spanish conqueror Hernando Cortez captured Tenochtitlan (teh-natch-teet-LAHN'), present-day Mexico City, from the Aztecs.

In 1792, French revolutionaries imprisoned the royal family.

In 1846, the American flag was raised in Los Angeles for the first time.

In 1889, William Gray of Hartford, Connecticut, received a patent for a coin-operated telephone.

In 1910, Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, died in London at age 90.

In 1932, Adolf Hitler rejected the post of vice chancellor of Germany, saying he was prepared to hold out "for all or nothing."

In 1960, the first two-way telephone conversation by satellite took place with the help of Echo 1.

In 1995, Baseball Hall of Famer Mickey Mantle died at a Dallas hospital of rapidly spreading liver cancer; he was 63.

In 2003, Iraq began pumping crude oil from its northern oil fields for the first time since the start of the war. Libya agreed to set up a \$2.7 billion fund for families of the 270 people killed in the 1988 Pan Am bombing.

In 2004, TV chef Julia Child died in Montecito, California, two days short of her 92nd birthday.

In 2011, seven people were killed when a stage collapsed at the Indiana State Fair during a powerful storm just before a concert was to begin. In eastern Pakistan, al-Qaida gunmen kidnapped an American development expert, Warren Weinstein. (Weinstein was killed in a U.S. drone strike in Jan. 2015.)

In 2020, in an interview on Fox Business Network, President Donald Trump acknowledged that he was starving the U.S. Postal Service of money in order to make it harder to process an expected surge of mail-in ballots. Israel and the United Arab Emirates announced that they were establishing full diplomatic relations in a deal brokered by the U.S.; it required Israel to halt its plan to annex occupied West Bank land sought by the Palestinians.

Ten years ago: A routine serving of an eviction notice to a man living near the Texas A&M University campus turned deadly when the resident opened fire, leading to the death of a law enforcement officer and another man before the gunman was killed. Helen Gurley Brown, 90, the longtime editor of Cosmopolitan magazine, died in New York.

Five years ago: In a statement, the White House said President Donald Trump "very strongly" condemned individual hate groups such as "white supremacists, KKK and neo-Nazis;" the statement followed criticism of Trump for blaming the previous day's deadly violence at a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, on "many sides." Protesters decrying hatred and racism converged around the country, saying they felt compelled to respond to the white supremacist rally in Virginia. Actor, director and writer Joe

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Bologna died at the age of 82.

One year ago: The Taliban completed their sweep of Afghanistan's south, taking four more provincial capitals in a lightning offensive that brought them closer to Kabul, just weeks before the U.S. was set to officially end its two-decade war. U.S. weather officials said the average global temperature in July made it the hottest month ever recorded. Grammy-winning folk singer-songwriter Nanci Griffith died at 68.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders is 89. Actor Kevin Tighe is 78. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is 76. Opera singer Kathleen Battle is 74. High wire aerialist Philippe Petit is 73. Hockey Hall of Famer Bobby Clarke is 73. Golf Hall of Famer Betsy King is 67. Movie director Paul Greengrass is 67. Actor Danny Bonaduce (bahn-uh-DOO'-chee) is 63. TV weatherman Sam Champion is 61. Actor Dawnn (correct) Lewis is 61. Actor John Slattery is 60. Actor Debi Mazar is 58. Actor Quinn Cummings is 55. Actor Seana Kofoed is 52. Country singer Andy Griggs is 49. Actor Gregory Fitoussi is 46. Country musician Mike Melancon (Emerson Drive) is 44. Actor Kathryn Fiore is 43. Former White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders is 40. Actor Sebastian Stan is 40. Actor Eme Ikwuakor (IK'-wah-ker) is 38. Pop-rock singer James Morrison is 38. Actor Lennon Stella is 23.