

Groton Daily Independent

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Fri., Aug. 26

School Breakfast: Biscuits and Gravy
School Lunch: Pizza Cruncher, Green Beans
Senior Menu: Roast beef, potatoes/carrots/onions, gravy, fruit, whole wheat bread.
7 p.m.: Football hosts Redfield

Sat., Aug. 27

SEAS Confession: 3:45-4:15 p.m., SEAS Mass: 4:30 p.m.
10 a.m.: 3/4 and 5/6 football at Sisseton
1 p.m.: Girls soccer hosts Vermillion

Sun., Aug. 28

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study 8:00 am. Worship (St. John's 9:00 am, Zion 11:00 am)
Emmanuel: 9 am Worship, 1-4pm 9th grade Confirmation Retreat
Methodist: 8:30am Conde Worship, 9:30am Coffee Hour. 10:30am Groton Worship

No matter how little money and how few possessions you own, having a dog makes you rich.

Louis Sabin

Chicken Soup
for the Soul

Mon., Aug. 29

School Breakfast: Egg Bake
School Lunch: Chicken Nuggets, Tater Tots
Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, dill potato, seven layer salad, fruited Jell-O with topping, whole wheat bread.
Volleyball at Aberdeen Christian (7th at 5:15 p.m. JV at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity)
Emmanuel: 6:30 am Bible Study
The Pantry open at the Groton Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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Lady Tigers challenge NEC favorite Hamlin

Groton Area's volleyball team opened its season Thursday night at Hamlin, taking on one of the North-east Conference favorites. But the Lady Tigers gave the Chargers a stunning challenge that left Coach Chelsea Hanson very happy with the performance of the Tigers. Hamlin did win, 3-1, with game scores of 25-20, 20-25, 25-22 and 25-20. The first set was tied nine times and the lead changed hands six times before Hamlin got the upper hand and got the 25-20 win. Groton Area commanded most of the second set with just one tie and one lead change. Hamlin got the 4-0 lead but Groton Area chipped away at the lead, tying the game at nine and took a 13-9 lead and continued to the 25-20 win. Groton Area also had the upper hand for most of the third set, leading 19-16, before Hamlin staged a come-back to take a 21-19 lead and ended up with 25-22 win. The fourth set was competitive from beginning to end. The game was tied three times early in the set and Groton Area held an 11-8 lead before Hamlin scored seven straight points to take a 15-11 lead. Groton Area came back, tying the set at 16 and taking the lead, 17-16. The set was tied at 17 and 18 before Groton Area took a 20-18 lead. Hamlin then scored the last seven points to take a 25-20 win.

Sydney Leicht led Groton Area with six kills and four ace serves, Anna Fjeldheim had five kills and two ace serves, Hollie Frost had four kills, Lydia Meier three kills, Elizabeth Flihs had two kills, a block and an ace serve, Laila Roberts had three ace serves, Carly Guthmiller had an ace serve and Aspen Johnson had one kill.

Groton Area won the junior varsity game, 25-18 and 25-17. Jaedyn Penning had three kills and an ace serve, Faith Traphagen had five kills and an ace serve, Chesney Weber had two kills and an ace serve, Jerica Locke had a kill, Rylee Dunker had four ace serves and Emma Kutter was the leader with eight kills and a block.

Hamlin won the C match, 26-24 and 25-17. Both junior high teams also won.

The varsity game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Bahr Spray Foam, John Sieh Agency, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Locke Electric, Dacotah Bank, SD Army National Guard, Milbrandt Enterprises Inc. The junior varsity game was also broadcasted and was sponsored by Rich and Tami Zimney. The C match was also broadcasted via an anonymous sponsor.

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Rounds Introduces Legislation to Strengthen School Security SAVES Act would establish grants to enhance school safety at state and local levels

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) introduced the Security to Avoid Violence in Educational Settings (SAVES) Act. This legislation would redirect federal funds to establish a grant program to enhance school safety at the state and local levels.

“The first responsibility of any school is to provide for the safety of all students,” said Rounds. “When it comes to our kids, it should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. South Dakota has schools of many sizes and needs. Decisions about education are best made at the state and local levels. This bill would allow states and local schools to determine how to improve school safety in a manner that best fits their needs.”

The SAVES Act would create a new Department of Justice grant program to improve school security. This program would reallocate \$500 million in funding over five years to states to create grants for local K-12 schools and school systems. Unlike other federal programs for school security, this grant program will allow states and local schools, rather than federal agencies, to determine how to utilize this money to strengthen school safety.

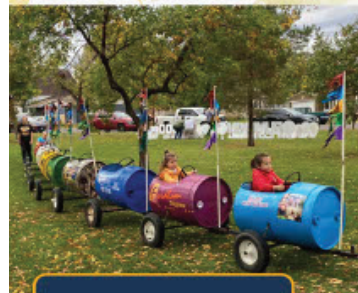
The grant program would not cost any additional taxpayer money. It would instead transfer funding appropriated in last year’s Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements at public school facilities. The redirecting of funds would allow schools to access metal detectors and school security officers rather than providing solar panels at schools.

GROTON'S EVENTS



Sept. 2 – 4 Airport
Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton
Municipal Airport

Sept. 10 8am-3pm
Lion's Club Fall City-
wide Rummage Sale



Oct. 1 10am-3pm
Pumpkin Fest at
the City Park

Sept. 11 10am
Couples Sunflower
Tourney at Olive
Grove Golf Course

Oct. 7 10am
Lake Region Marching
Band Festival



Oct. 31 4-6pm
Downtown Trick
or Treat

Oct. 31 5:30-7pm
United Methodist
Church Trunk or Treat

GROTON
Chamber Of Commerce

120 N Main St., Groton, SD 57445

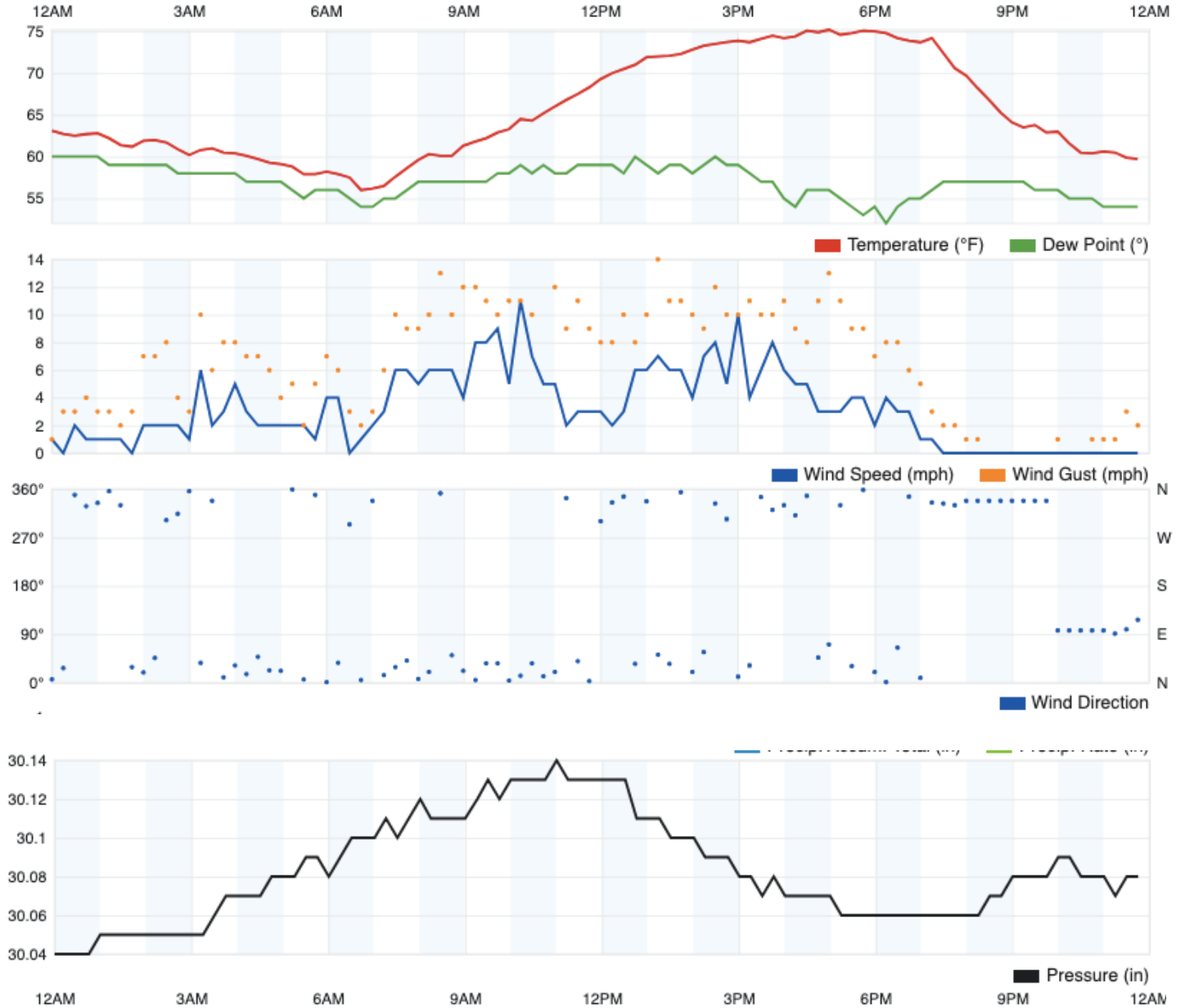
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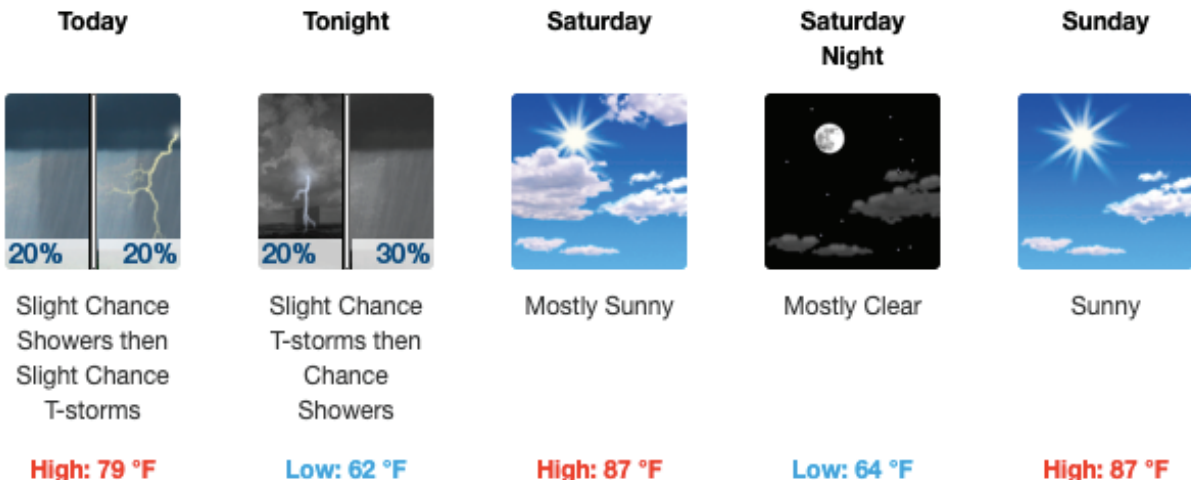
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Off & On Showers & Weak Storms



	FRIDAY											Saturday																							
	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm	12am	1am	2am	3am	4am	5am	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm
Aberdeen	11	19	19	20	20	20	20	20	19	18	16	14	19	23	21	18	18	18	16	15	23	30	21	12	3	3	3	3	4	5	7	9	7	6	6
Eureka	14	19	22	25	32	40	41	41	34	36	27	17	12	7	7	7	9	12	21	30	30	30	21	12	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	4
McIntosh	19	22	28	34	34	34	30	27	21	11	8	5	4	3	4	4	12	20	25	30	30	30	21	11	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	3
Miller	30	27	26	25	25	25	22	19	12	4	4	4	8	12	9	6	8	10	20	30	30	30	25	19	14	12	9	7	6	6	13	20	15	10	9
Mobridge	34	42	53	65	62	59	46	32	23	14	9	4	4	3	4	4	11	18	24	30	30	30	21	11	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	4
Murdo	33	25	15	5	3	2	1	0	2	5	3	2	3	5	4	4	12	20	25	30	30	30	21	12	4	4	5	5	7	10	8	7	5	3	3
Pierre	51	32	26	20	14	9	5	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	5	7	13	20	25	30	30	30	21	12	3	3	3	2	4	6	5	3	3	3	3
Sisseton			1	1	4	8	10	12	12	13	14	14	14	14	19	23	25	26	29	32	32	32	27	21	15	13	10	8	6	4	12	20	27	34	30
Watertown	1	2	6	10	10	9	12	14	15	17	15	14	14	14	14	20	26	27	28	29	30	25	20	15	12	8	5	7	8	14	20	25	30	27	
Wheaton				1	2	6	10	10	11	9	8	11	14	15	17	23	30	35	40	40	40	33	26	19	17	14	12	9	7	13	20	25	31	29	



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 8/26/2022 4:01 AM Central

Showers and weak storms will move across the area today, with additional activity Saturday morning and again in the afternoon and then Sunday as well. While it looks like there will be persistent chances through the next few days, none of the systems look to produce widespread moisture.

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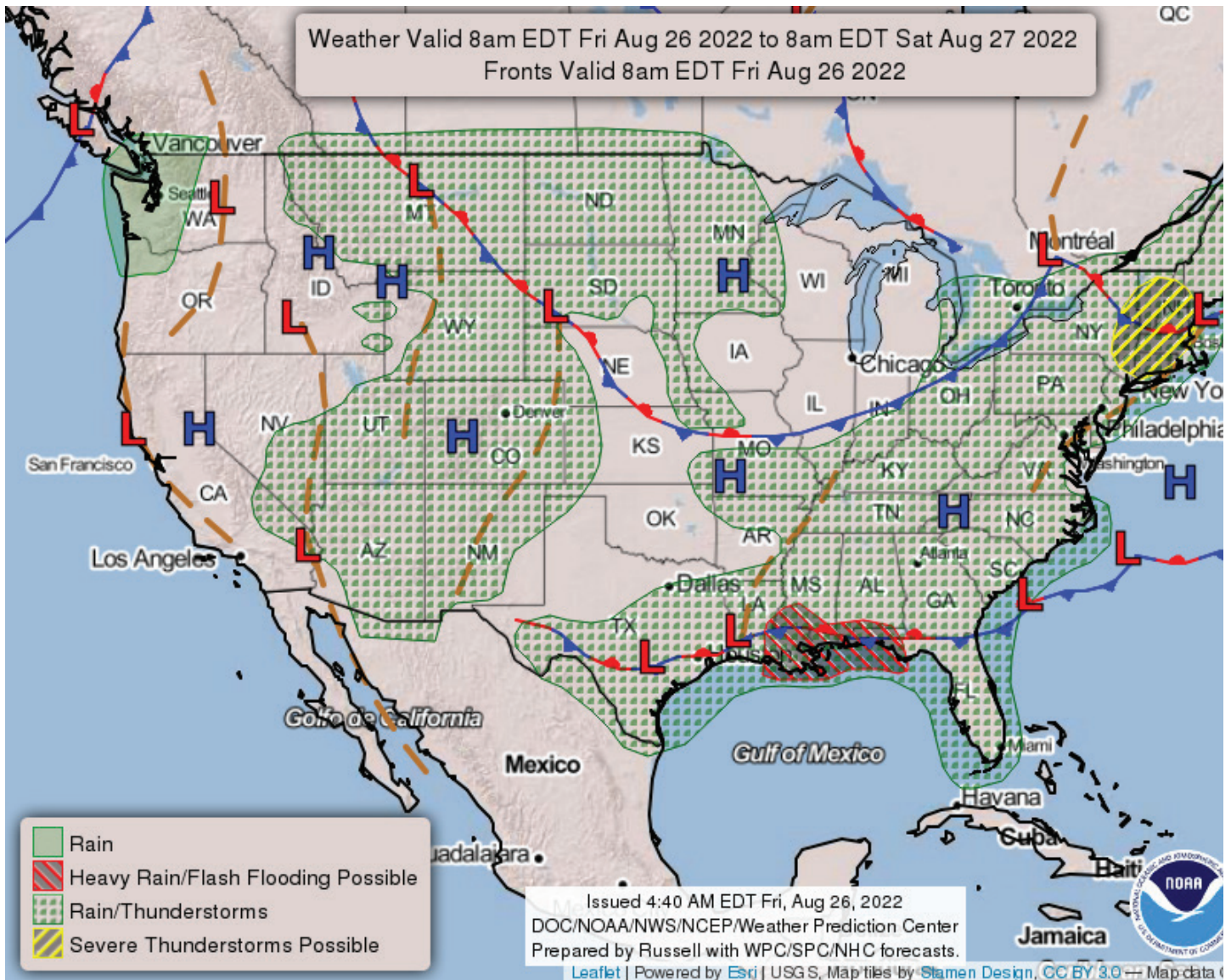
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 75.2 °F at 5:00 PM
Low Temp: 56.0 °F at 6:45 AM
Wind: 14 mph at 1:15 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 37 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1991
Record Low: 34 in 1914
Average High: 81°F
Average Low: 54°F
Average Precip in Aug.: 1.89
Precip to date in Aug.: 1.11
Average Precip to date: 15.98
Precip Year to Date: 15.65
Sunset Tonight: 8:22:49 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:46:40 AM



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Today in Weather History

August 26, 1983: Heavy rainfall up to four and a half inches fell in the town of Mahto, Corson County, flooding basements. Hail, up to three inches in diameter, caused significant damage to roofs and broke numerous windows.

August 26, 1998: Massive rainfall of 3 to over 6 inches fell across far eastern Corson, most of Campbell and Walworth counties during the evening hours of the 26th. The heavy rain caused flooding on many roads along with some highways through the night and into the morning hours on the 27th. Near Selby, high winds, heavy rain, and some hail caused damage to sunflowers and moved a barn three feet off the foundation. In Selby, wind-driven rain pushed water through some ceilings and into basements. An old barn near Glenham was also blown down by the strong winds. Some rainfall amounts include 3.50 inches at Herried, 3.80 inches at Java, 4.20 inches at Selby, 4.50 inches 3N of Selby and just southeast of Mclaughlin, 5 inches at Glenham, 5.75 inches 8N of Mobridge, and 6.35 inches 1.5 miles southeast of Glenham.

1864: A train running from Cincinnati to Chicago was derailed by a tornado in Dearborn County, Indiana, or 75 miles southeast of Indianapolis. Two passenger cars were lifted from the tracks and dropped in a ravine which injured 30 people.

1883 - Krakatoa Volcano exploded in the East Indies. The explosion was heard more than 2500 miles away, and every barograph around the world recorded the passage of the air wave, up to seven times. Giant waves, 125 feet high and traveling 300 mph, devastated everything in their path, hurling ashore coral blocks weighing up to 900 tons, and killing more than 36,000 persons. Volcanic ash was carried around the globe in thirteen days producing blue and green suns in the tropics, and then vivid red sunsets in higher latitudes. The temperature of the earth was lowered one degree for the next two years, finally recovering to normal by 1888. (David Ludlum)

1976: A weak tornado touched down briefly in the Hockley Hills near Kiana, AK, about 29 miles north of the Arctic Circle. This tornado is the most northerly report of a tornado on record. Kiana is 545 miles northwest of Anchorage, Alaska.

1949 - A hurricane made landfall at Delray Beach. Winds reached 153 mph at the Jupiter Lighthouse before the anemometer failed. The hurricane caused 45 million dollars damage to crops, and also caught the Georgia and South Carolina coast resulting in another two million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1965 - Late night severe thunderstorms associated with an unusually strong late summer cold front produced 100 mph winds straight line winds in the Chicago area and northwest Indiana. In Lake County IND, high winds derailed a train near Crown Point, and left a canoe suspended among telephone lines. Two nights later the temperature at Midway Airport in Chicago dipped to 43 degrees, establishing a record for the month of August. (Storm Data) (Hugh Crowther)

1976 - A weak tornado touched down briefly in the Hockley Hills near Kiana, AK, about 29 miles north of the Arctic Circle. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Showers and thunderstorms drenched northern Illinois during the morning and afternoon hours pushing August rainfall totals for Chicago, Moline and Peoria to new all-time highs for any month of the year. By the end of August, Chicago had received 17.10 inches of rain, which easily surpassed the previous record of 14.17 inches established in September 1961. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A dozen cities in Texas, Colorado and California reported record high temperatures for the date, including readings of 100 degrees at Pueblo CO, 106 degrees at Wichita Falls TX, and 109 degrees at Redding CA. Afternoon thunderstorms in Utah deluged the town of Beaver with more than an inch of rain in twenty minutes. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Anchorage, AK, was soaked with a steady rain, and the 24 hour total of 4.12 inches smashed their previous 24 hour precipitation total of 2.10 inches. It also pushed their rainfall total for the month past their previous record for August. (The National Weather Summary)

1992: Hurricane Andrew made a second landfall near Burns Point, LA as a Category 3 hurricane. Morgan City, LA recorded sustained winds of 92 mph with a peak gust of 108 mph. Hammond, LA was deluged with 11.92 inches of rain. As Andrew moved inland and weakened, it spawned 47 tornadoes from this date through the 28th from the South to the Mid-Atlantic States.

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Our Daily Bread. | Love God. Love Others.

Just Ask!

Scripture: Philippians 4:4–7 (NIV)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus..

Insight By: Tim Gustafson

At this point in his letter to the church in Philippi, Paul begins a somewhat lengthy conclusion. Despite the admonishment he's just given to the two quarreling church members, Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2), his tone remains warm and relational. The crux of the passage is this: "The Lord is near" (v. 5). The reason we can rejoice in any situation (v. 4), the reason we can "let [our] gentleness be evident to all," the reason we can obey Paul's exhortation not to "be anxious about anything" (v. 6) is because Jesus is near. Scholars debate whether this means His return is near or if Paul means He's close to us. Either interpretation should have a similar effect for our understanding. He's with us via the Holy Spirit, and He promises to return for us (John 14:3)..

Comment by Arthur Jackson

The gleeful shouts arising from our basement came from my wife, Shirley. For hours she'd wrestled with a newsletter project, and she was ready to be done with it. In her anxiety and uncertainty about how to move forward, she prayed for God's help. She also reached out to Facebook friends and soon the project was completed—a team effort.

While a newsletter project is a little thing in life, small (and not so small) things can bring about worry or anxiousness. Perhaps you're a parent walking through the stages of childrearing for the first time; a student facing newfound academic challenges; a person grieving the loss of a loved one; or someone experiencing a home, work, or ministry challenge. Sometimes we're needlessly on edge because we don't ask God for help (James 4:2).

Paul pointed the followers of Jesus in Philippi and us to our first line of defense in times of need: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6). When life gets complicated, we need reminders like the one from the hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus":

Oh what peace we often forfeit,
oh what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry,
everything to God in prayer.

And perhaps in our asking God for help, He'll lead us to ask people who can assist us. .

Reflect and Prayer: What situations challenge you that you can bring to God in prayer? Why do you hesitate to ask Him or others for help?

Dear God, forgive me for not bringing my burdens to You in prayer. Help me to reach out to others and ask for help too.

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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)
09/11/2022: 6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3-5pm
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

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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- Colored \$79.88/year
- Colored \$42.60/6 months
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News from the Associated Press

Watson case revives old fight for massage therapy industry

By TERESA M. WALKER AP Pro Football Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Michelle Krause still grapples with the challenge of acknowledging she's a massage therapist when she first meets someone, dreading their reaction or misguided comments even after 18 years in the profession.

"It makes you not want to share, so I didn't," says the 52-year-old Krause, a former firefighter who made the career change after suffering a neck injury on the job — and getting help in her recovery from massage therapy. "So I would tell people I did nutrition and finance, so that they would not want to talk to me about my work."

Krause was among hundreds of therapists from across the country who gathered for the American Massage Therapy Association's three-day national convention, which began Thursday. It was an opportunity to talk about a job made more difficult amid the pandemic, the 2021 attack on three Atlanta-area massage businesses in which eight people were killed and the lingering stain of NFL quarterback Deshaun Watson's ongoing case that has perpetuated the sex worker stigma around the industry.

The latter is in their face each day of the conference, which is being held in Cleveland. Watson is now the quarterback for the Browns and his new workplace looms just a block from the convention center and the conference attendees' hotel across the street.

They can avoid the reminder by taking another route to the convention center — walking underground.

Not that these professionals want to hide. They didn't ask for any of this and they aren't happy about it.

The convention was planned three years ago, well before the first report of the quarterback being accused of sexual misconduct with a massage therapist and Watson's demand to be traded by the Houston Texans. The NFL issued Watson an 11-game suspension and \$5 million fine this month and says the case is now over.

But it's far from over for this group of professionals and the AMTA, which believes the sanctions are not nearly harsh enough.

"It mind-boggles me that something like that can happen," said Amber Rasmussen, a therapist of 21 years currently working in Rapid City, South Dakota.

Massage therapy as a licensed profession has a long history, dating to 1916 when Ohio became the first state to license operators. Therapists currently are regulated or certified by 45 states, with hundreds of hours needed to be licensed, and many more in continuing education to keep the certification. Massage therapy is now covered by Medicare Advantage programs and some insurance.

There are stories of massage therapists leaving the industry after the recent crises, though no definitive numbers are available indicating any mass exodus.

The approximately 2,000 therapists attending this year's convention is similar to 2019, the last gathering after conferences in 2020 and 2021 were canceled due to the pandemic.

Michaele Colizza, the association's national president, said more work remains to be done to educate the public about the important role massage therapy plays in health care, pain management and keeping athletes fit and pursuing their sports.

"AMTA strongly believes that any client who steps over the line to inappropriately touch should face the legal consequences," Colizza said in a statement. "Additionally, irresponsible remarks made by lawyers or in the media coverage put professional, licensed massage therapists at risk by condoning inappropriate conduct in a massage environment."

"We believe that massage is and always should be about health and well-being in a safe environment," she said.

Michael Phelps was the keynote speaker Thursday. Krause recalled how everyone wanted to try cupping as therapy after seeing the 23-time Olympic gold medalist use it during the 2016 Summer Games. Phelps,

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who won 28 medals overall, also gave credit to massage therapy, positive publicity for the industry.

But that was fleeting — the Atlanta killings by a white gunman who targeted Asian spa businesses and the Watson case have cast therapists in a different light.

"It's really upsetting," said Krause, who had to block a former fellow firefighter for his inappropriate joke on her business page. "It's disrespectful."

NFL players still are allowed to use their own massage therapists outside team headquarters. Part of Watson's settlement restricts him to massage sessions with club-approved therapists for the rest of his career.

While there were no anti-Watson protests outside Cleveland's Huntingdon Convention Center nor any mention of the Browns quarterback inside, there was an undercurrent that suggested he was an impetus to what some believe needs to be done going forward.

Conference topics were focused on education, ethics, vetting potential customers and setting boundaries. Therapists also talked about renewed diligence about where they work and how they do their jobs.

Mary Czech, of Whitmore Lake, Michigan, said for her, sadly, the latest controversy is not something new.

The college graduate is fully licensed in her home state and certified in oncology massage. She's made sure during 20 years in the profession that she knows how to escape a massage room if a client acts inappropriately, down to the location of the closest phone and police department.

"This has been something I've been struggling with," the 55-year-old said. "I've always had a safety plan, and that's not right."

Watson's case has revived the disconnect between what massage therapists do as opposed to what people think they do.

Krause only works by referral now. The former firefighter recalled an incident 16 years ago when a man grabbed her arm and complimented her bicep.

"I actually twisted his arm ... and I said, 'I touch you. You don't touch me,'" said Krause, of Severna Park, Maryland. "He tried to hug me at the end of the session, and thank God I was in a more public place."

Dawn Menning of Aberdeen, South Dakota, said she wears scrubs to drive home the professional aspect of massage.

"I'm dressed in medical clothing, I'm wearing scrubs," said Menning, who also keeps a large wooden spoon nearby in case someone tries something inappropriate. "I'm trying to give that impression that you're here for a therapeutic treatment, and there's nothing else."

Mentoring young therapists is another key, experienced therapists say, reminding them they have the right to refuse service.

Tonia McGeorge, 36, of Ipswich, South Dakota, makes in-home visits, has her own mobile studio and also works at a spa in Aberdeen.

"It might be someone who has \$1 million," McGeorge said. "But is it worth your career and reputation? ... Your reputation is your integrity."

That's the big battle for a profession with so many women running their own businesses.

Marcella Thompson of Louisville, Kentucky, said a therapist took a call from a potential client asking for other services. The therapist warned the caller she was going to follow the law by sharing his name and number with police.

"We have to be less intimidated," Thompson said, "and be more stern and make sure those boundaries are completely clear."

Czech is staging her own Watson protest. The Michigan native, who has been a bit of a Browns' fan during her Detroit Lions' struggles, thought of attending Cleveland's preseason finale Saturday night while in town.

But frustrated with the NFL, Czech said: "I'm not going to go to a Browns game now."

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Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Arlington def. Iroquois, 25-21, 25-19, 25-13
Baltic def. Colman-Egan, 25-19, 25-14, 25-19
Belle Fourche def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-12, 25-15, 25-20
Bon Homme def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-17, 25-12, 22-25, 25-22
Bridgewater-Emery def. Corsica/Stickney, 26-24, 25-27, 25-20, 25-20
Burke def. Colome, 25-14, 25-13, 25-7
Canton def. Canistota, 25-17, 25-15, 25-19
Castlewood def. Hitchcock-Tulare, 25-17, 25-14, 25-16
Centerville def. Menno, 25-22, 25-20, 22-25, 26-24
Chester def. Ethan, 25-14, 25-3, 25-11
Dakota Valley def. Yankton, 3-0
DeSmet def. Deubrook, 25-23, 19-25, 8-25, 25-18, 16-14
Dell Rapids St. Mary def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-21, 25-21, 25-22
Dell Rapids def. West Central, 25-22, 25-14, 25-19
Faith def. Lemmon, 19-25, 26-24, 25-14, 25-23
Faulkton def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-11, 25-9, 25-13
Florence/Henry def. Great Plains Lutheran, 25-9, 25-13, 25-19
Garretson def. Beresford, 25-7, 25-11, 25-19
Hamlin def. Groton Area, 25-20, 20-25, 25-22, 25-20
Harrisburg def. Brandon Valley, 25-15, 25-11, 25-13
Ipswich def. Highmore-Harrold, 25-15, 25-20, 25-20
Kadoka Area def. Little Wound, 25-10, 25-11, 25-13
Kimball/White Lake def. Gregory, 25-11, 25-22, 25-14
Leola/Frederick def. Waubay/Summit, 25-12, 25-16, 25-6
Madison def. Flandreau, 25-23, 25-15, 22-25, 14-25, 20-18
Milbank def. Sisseton, 25-20, 21-25, 25-16, 17-25, 15-10
Miller def. Winner, 25-10, 25-9, 25-21
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton def. Parker, 25-9, 25-19, 25-13
Northwestern def. Wolsey-Wessington, 25-20, 19-25, 9-25, 27-17, 15-9
Oldham-Ramona/Rutland def. Howard, 19-25, 25-17, 25-15, 25-23
Parkston def. Chamberlain, 25-12, 25-6, 25-16
Philip def. Dupree, 28-26, 25-18, 25-17
Potter County def. North Central Co-Op, 25-6, 25-8, 25-7
Rapid City Christian def. Douglas, 25-22, 25-19, 26-28, 25-18
Redfield def. Aberdeen Roncalli, 25-16, 23-25, 25-22, 25-20
Scotland def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-20, 25-21, 25-16
Sioux Falls Christian def. Tea Area, 25-16, 25-20, 25-11
Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-18, 25-15, 25-15
Sioux Valley def. Clark/Willow Lake, 25-21, 24-26, 25-10, 25-19
Spearfish def. Red Cloud, 25-20, 25-16, 25-9
Timber Lake def. Harding County, 3-0
Wagner def. Vermillion, 25-14, 25-13, 25-15
Warner def. Aberdeen Christian, 25-3, 25-8, 25-6
Webster def. Deuel, 25-17, 25-13, 25-15
Wilmot def. Waverly-South Shore, 25-12, 25-5, 25-13
Hansen Early Bird Tournament=

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Championship=

Platte-Geddes def. Hanson, 25-21, 25-10

Consolation Semifinal=

Freeman def. Sanborn Central/Woonsocket, 25-16, 25-23

Freeman def. Wessington Springs, 25-22, 22-25, 25-19

Sanborn Central/Woonsocket def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 25-17, 25-19

Third Place=

Avon def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-22, 25-16

PREP FOOTBALL

Crow Creek def. Takini, forfeit

Lower Brule 40, Tiospa Zina Tribal 8

McLaughlin 50, St. Francis Indian 0

Winnebago, Neb. 58, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 6

Some high school football scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Baylor, Gonzaga players to get paid for promoting rematch

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Baylor and Gonzaga will meet in a men's basketball game in South Dakota on Dec. 2 and organizers will pay players on both teams who agree to help promote the game.

Complete Sports Management and Range Sports announced this week that it would put on the game at the Sanford Pentagon in Sioux Falls.

Baylor and Gonzaga will meet for the seventh time, and first since the Bears beat the Bulldogs in the 2021 national championship game.

The game is an opportunity for players to cash in on their celebrity under name, image and likeness (NIL) rules. Matt Haberman, a spokesman for the organizers, said players would be paid for participating in "tune-in to the game" promotions on the network that televises the game.

Haberman said he couldn't disclose the amount of payment each player would receive. Organizers were still seeking a television partner Thursday.

"We're working to find a media partner who believes in providing this generation of student-athletes more opportunities as well as align with iconic powerhouse basketball brands Baylor and Gonzaga," Range Sports president Will Funk said. "Engaging the players to help activate the game broadcast sponsors is the future of college athletics."

More than an icon: Designer Elizabeth Emanuel recalls Diana

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Elizabeth Emanuel cradles the massive scrapbook across her chest before laying it gently on the table and opening its Prussian blue covers to reveal a personal time capsule of her relationship with Princess Diana.

Emanuel got to know Diana during the months she and her then-husband, David, spent designing the future princess' wedding dress. Four decades later, there's a sense of intimacy as she leafs through sketches, fabric swatches and photos of Diana, displayed alongside images of the designer's mother stitching embroidery into the gown. It's like looking at a family album.

That sense of connection helps Emanuel understand why Diana's death in a Paris car crash 25 years ago next Wednesday — Aug. 31, 1997 — resonated with so many people around the world.

"I think people just felt she was like family, that she cared," Emanuel told The Associated Press. "They felt close to her because you knew every detail of her life. It was in all the press, all the time. And there was all these things going on. And you felt, you know, very much part of her life in a way. And so when

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her life was snatched away, it was this big void. ... It was like a light being snuffed out."

But for Emanuel, Diana wasn't just the icon who appeared every day on TV screens and the front pages of newspapers. She was a real person who played a central role in her life and career.

The scrapbook documents that story — the story of a designer and a princess-to-be.

The tale begins with a pale pink blouse the Emanuels sent to British Vogue for a photo shoot on emerging beauties. Although they didn't know it, the beauty destined to wear the blouse was Lady Diana Spencer, who would soon be engaged to Prince Charles, the heir to the British throne.

Diana liked the blouse so much that she asked who the designers were — then she called them. Emanuel answered the phone and made the appointment, but didn't get her name.

So she was shocked when Diana showed up at her door. By then, the engagement had been announced and Diana was famous.

But she didn't act like it. Emanuel remembers her wearing a little sweater and skirt and perhaps a string of pearls.

"She was so young and just so sweet and shy, and it was really fun," said Emanuel, who was only a few years older than Diana. "It was a big adventure for her suddenly to see all the clothes in the showroom. And she put a lot of trust in us, really, to come up with clothes that would suit her. And for us, I mean, wow, it was just so fabulous to meet her."

When it came time to make the wedding dress, the Emanuels' 12-member team worked in secret to keep details of the garment under wraps. Security guards protected the frock, which was locked in a safe every night.

Newspapers offered thousands of pounds (dollars) for a sneak peak, but staff members turned them away out of respect for Diana, Emanuel said. In an era before smart phones and Facebook, the wedding dress design remained a surprise until the big day.

Emanuel compared Diana's July 29, 1981, royal wedding at St. Paul's Cathedral to the transformation of a chrysalis into a butterfly — or in this case a nursery school teacher in cardigans and sensible skirts into a fairytale princess.

It was the 1980s. Big was in, and Diana walked down the aisle draped in yards of lace with a 25-foot train flowing behind her.

"We went completely over the top," Emanuel said. "I mean, we were young, just out of college. (We said,) 'Let's do it. Let's go crazy. St. Paul's (has) this huge, big aisle. Let's put all the frills on the lace, everything and make it the ultimate fairy princess dress.' And we did that. And I don't think you're going to see another one like that."

The wedding, which was televised around the world, was just the beginning of the public's fascination with Diana. She was rarely out of the headlines for the rest of her life, earning a reputation as "The People's Princess" when she hugged AIDS patients, befriended orphans and championed unfashionable topics like land-mine removal.

When her marriage finally ended, the collapse played out for all to see. Daily. In detail. That, too, struck a chord with the public.

"I think when somebody dies young, it really makes an impact," Emanuel said. "And Diana was the most famous woman on the planet. And she still is, really."

Emanuel has had a long, successful career, creating designs for celebrities such as Madonna and Rita Ora. But she isn't bothered by the fact that "The Dress" remains a constant subject of inquiry.

"It was such a privilege and an honor to have been part of all of that, to have been part of history as well," she said. "I'll never tire of it because it was just an extraordinary period in my life and — it was just wonderful!"

After Somalia hotel siege, a vow to tackle al-Shabab 'snake'

By OMAR FARUK Associated Press

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) — Hell began at sunset.

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It was a Friday evening in Somalia's capital. The patrons of the Hayat hotel had finished their latest prayers and settled in for coffee, tea or dinner. Families, businesspeople and government workers were there — some of the many who see the promise of their country rebuilding from decades of war.

Hotels are refuges in Mogadishu, but targets, too. The al-Shabab extremist group, affiliated with al-Qaida, for years has carried out complex attacks on them, starting with explosions and holding out for hours as a handful of fighters exchanges gunfire with security forces until a bloody morning end.

This time, about 35 hours followed the moment an explosion shattered the Hayat's peace. It was the longest such attack in Somalia's history.

Last weekend's siege could be a turning point for the Horn of Africa nation and its quest for more security. In the days before the attack, new President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud had vowed an offensive against al-Shabab to dislodge it from the large sections of Somalia it has controlled for years.

Horrified Somalis then watched as 21 people at the Hayat were killed and some dismembered, their remains published by al-Shabab in propaganda videos.

The attack was "a window into the mindset of today's Al-Shabab and how it has morphed into a more dark, sinister, and nihilistic movement," the Somali Wire newsletter wrote Wednesday, noting that the hotel was not a "normal" target but "a modest hotel whose clientele were mostly ordinary people."

Now Somalia's president vows "total war."

In a national address this week, he spoke with new determination. Al-Shabab "is like a deadly snake in your clothes," Mohamud said. "There is no solution other than to kill it before it kills you."

Standing in the rubble of his hotel still marked with blood and flesh, owner Abdulkadir Mohamud Nur could barely contemplate more death.

The 60-year-old was overwhelmed as he recounted his helplessness at being a short walk from the hotel for prayers when the attack began. Calls quickly flooded his phone. A suicide bomber had detonated at a side gate, callers said, and gunmen overran security forces and shot at everyone they found.

"I couldn't get closer to the hotel because of the exchange of gunfire," Nur told The Associated Press.

It was chaos. One survivor, Ibrahim Bashir Ali, joined frantic hotel patrons trying to hide in the hall where afternoon coffee had been served. Amid the gunfire, he saw the attackers wearing "battle fatigues." Al-Shabab fighters at times disguise themselves in security uniforms.

"There were hand grenades that made everyone petrified," Ali said. He broke two windows and leaped out the second to escape, injuring himself along the way.

Nur, the hotel owner, immediately thought of his two brothers, Abdirahman and Shuaib, who had come to have lunch with him and afternoon tea. They were still inside, but he dared not call them.

"When such attacks happen, people are advised not to call those whom they think might be at the scene of an attack," Nur said. "The ringing phone might bring the attention of the attackers."

It was wisdom drawn from years of watching al-Shabab attacks on the capital.

Later, Nur learned from hotel colleagues that Abdirahman had been killed near the reception area while looking for a place to hide. And on the second day of the attack, he found Shuaib's body himself.

"We trust the fate of God," Nur said, his face pressed with grief.

The long time it took for Somali security forces to end the siege, and even communicate among themselves, has been questioned and criticized. At first, a paramilitary force trained by Turkey deployed to the hotel but was repulsed by the attackers. Then a group trained by U.S. forces arrived and managed to start rescuing survivors on the ground floor while containing the gunmen.

Somalia's prime minister, Hamza Abdi Barre, says those who failed in their response to the attack will be punished. Security forces did not comment.

The four-story hotel, in a highly fortified area near the international airport and government offices, has been shattered. Rebuilding, like everything else in today's global economy, would be expensive with the rising costs of construction materials.

And yet 67 employees depended on the hotel, and on its owner, a reminder of the fragility in Somalia that remains.

"I'm wondering how these people will continue their lives," Nur said.

IAEA mission seeks to visit Zaporizhzhia plant amid concerns

By PAUL BYRNE Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A mission from the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency is expected to visit the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant next week after it was temporarily knocked offline and more shelling was reported in the area overnight, Ukrainian officials said Friday.

Fire damage to a transmission line at Europe's largest nuclear plant caused a blackout across the region on Thursday and heightened fears of a catastrophe in a country still haunted by the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.

Lana Zerkal, an adviser to Ukraine's energy minister, told Ukrainian media on Thursday evening that logistical issues are being worked out for the IAEA team to come to the Zaporizhzhia plant, which has been occupied by Russian forces and run by Ukrainian workers since the early days of the 6-month-old war.

Zerkal accused Russia of trying to sabotage the visit. Ukraine has alleged that Russia is essentially holding the plant hostage, storing weapons there and launching attacks from around it, while Moscow accuses Ukraine of recklessly firing on the facility.

"Despite the fact that the Russians agreed for the mission to travel through the territory of Ukraine, they are now artificially creating all the conditions for the mission not to reach the facility, given the situation around it," she said, offering no details.

There was no immediate comment from Moscow to the claims. The atomic agency's head, Rafael Mariano Grossi, also said Thursday he hopes to send a team to the plant within days. Negotiations over how the team would access the plant are complicated but advancing, he said on France-24 television.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian officials said an area close to the plant came under a barrage of shelling overnight, amid mounting concerns that an armed conflict near a working atomic plant could cause more serious damage, even as Zaporizhzhia's reactors are protected by reinforced concrete containment domes.

Dnipropetrovsk governor Valentyn Reznichenko said shelling in the city of Nikopol, which is across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia plant, damaged 10 houses, a school and a sanatorium, causing no casualties.

A power line also has been cut, leaving up to 1,000 local residents without electricity, he added. Nikopol has been under nearly constant Russian shelling since July 12, with eight people killed, 850 buildings damaged and over half the population of 100,000 fleeing the city.

On Thursday, the Zaporizhzhia plant was cut off from the electrical grid after fires damaged the last operating regular transmission line, according to Ukraine's nuclear power agency, Energoatom.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy blamed Russian shelling and said the plant's emergency backup diesel generators had to be activated to supply power needed to run the plant. Zaporizhzhia's Russian-installed regional governor, Yevgeny Balitsky, blamed the transmission-line damage on a Ukrainian attack.

It was not immediately clear whether the damaged line carried outgoing electricity or incoming power, needed for the reactors' vital cooling systems. A loss of cooling could cause a nuclear meltdown.

As a result of the transmission-line damage, the two reactors still in use out of the plant's six went offline, Balitsky said, but one was quickly restored, as was electricity to the region.

Many nuclear plants are designed to automatically shut down or at least reduce reactor output in the event of a loss of outgoing transmission lines. The IAEA said Ukraine informed it that the reactors' emergency protection systems were triggered, and all safety systems remained operational.

The three regular transmission lines at the plant are out of service because of previous war damage. Ukraine cannot simply shut down its nuclear plants during the war because it is heavily reliant on them. Its 15 reactors at four stations provide about half of its electricity.

Elsewhere, two people were killed and six more injured over the past 24 hours in the eastern Donetsk region, Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said Friday. In the northeastern Sumy region, on the border with Russia, more than 100 munitions were fired over the past 24 hours, burning down a house, governor Dmytro Zhyvytsky said.

Ordinary Japanese 'salarymen' reach TikTok stardom

By YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — They're your run-of-the-mill "salarymen," as company workers in Japan are called — hard-working, friendly and, well, rather regular.

But the chief executive and general manager at a tiny Japanese security company are among the nation's biggest TikTok stars, drawing 2.7 million followers and 54 million likes, and honored with awards as a trend-setter on the video-sharing app.

Daikyo Security Co.'s account, which gathers goofy dances, gobbled instant noodles and other everyday fare, is the brainchild of the company president.

Despite his unpretentious demeanor, Daisuke Sakurai is dead serious about not only enhancing brand power but also recruiting young people to his company, a challenge he sees as a matter of survival.

Founded in 1967, Daikyo has 85 employees, 10 of them working at the headquarters office, tucked away on the second floor of an obscure building in a downtown Tokyo alley.

"Our job is among those labeled 'Three-K' in Japan," Sakurai said, referring to "kitsui, kitanai, kiken," meaning, "hard, dirty and dangerous."

A common job for Daikyo guards is to work at construction sites, directing traffic with a flashing stick, making sure the trucks come and go safely without running over pedestrians.

It's not a job that requires overly special skills, but no one wants to stand around outdoors for hours. As many as 99 security companies are fighting over every recruit, in contrast to two potential employers for office clerks, Sakurai said.

And this is in rapidly aging Japan, where every sector is suffering a labor shortage.

So why not turn to social media, the place where youngsters supposedly flock? Sakurai started posting on Twitter and Instagram. But it was when he went on TikTok that things went viral.

In a hit segment, General Manager Tomohiko Kojima slaps, with a flip of his hand, gel sheets, each decorated with the eyes of various comic-book characters, on his boss's face, right over his eyes.

"What is this character?" the subtitles ask in English.

No cuts are used, they say proudly. Kojima had to keep trying until the strip landed just right.

"I don't practice during my work hours," he said with a laugh.

The clips have a clear message: They defy the stereotype of rigidly hierarchical, perhaps even oppressive, Japanese companies. At Daikyo, a worker gets to slap gel sheets on the CEO.

Before TikTok, the number of people applying for jobs at Daikyo was zero. After TikTok, the company is getting dozens of applicants, including those of people who want to work on the videos.

Some of the videos, such as one in which the workers cook up a scrumptious omelet, unfold to the sounds of snappy songs, like "World's Smallest Violin" by American pop trio AJR.

They all depict the happy yet humble life of uniformed men and women at work who don't take themselves too seriously.

They are Japan's good guys. And it's clear they like each other very much.

Their success contrasts with the image of Japan Inc. as falling behind in digital technology, especially of older men who are fixed in their ways and unable to embrace new technology.

These days, TikTok is flooded with businesses seeking attention, from "izakaya" pubs and hair salons to taxi companies.

Sakurai has his eyes on global influence now, hoping to draw workers from places like Vietnam and Indonesia, and allowing them to work in English.

And so a recent video features gel sheets with various nations' flags on them, a clip that has drawn thousands of comments and millions of views.

Slap a flag from Mongolia, and viewers from Mongolia comment in gratitude. Others request their favorite flags, be it Lithuania or Lebanon.

It's a sign TikTok has helped Daikyo overcome language and cultural barriers by simply hamming it up

and getting a laugh.

"What makes my job worthwhile is that it's about people," Kojima said.

"What draws me are people, not things."

Russia divestment promises by US states largely unfulfilled

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Driven by moral outrage over Russia's invasion of Ukraine earlier this year, U.S. governors and other top state officials made it clear: They wanted to cut their financial ties with Russia.

A few states quickly followed through. Idaho sold \$300,000 of bonds in a Russian oil company in early March. A day before the invasion, the Kentucky Teachers Retirement System sold its shares in the Russian bank Sberbank.

But those examples are outliers. Six months into a war that has killed thousands of Ukrainians and displaced over 12 million more, most of the pledges to drop Russian investments — some made with great fanfare during news conferences — have gone unfulfilled, according to an Associated Press review, state retirement administrators and firms that invest state funds.

Swift global reaction has cut off much of Russia's economy from the rest of the world. That has made it nearly impossible for divestment by state pension funds, university endowments and other public-sector holdings — as well as private investments such as those in 401(k) accounts.

"These pension funds want to get out, but it's just not realistic to sell everything in the current environment," said Keith Brainard, research director at the National Association of State Retirement Administrators.

Benjamin Smith, a spokesperson for the Rhode Island treasury, said the factors that make it hard to divest also show that a worldwide effort to isolate Russian President Vladimir Putin is working.

"This is good news because it means that pressure from investors across the world, including Rhode Island, is succeeding in exacting a toll on the Russian economy, making it more difficult for Putin to fund his military operation, state-owned companies, and corrupt network of oligarchs," he said in an email, noting that Rhode Island's pension plan exposure in Russia never exceeded 0.3% of its assets.

Any pre-war investments in Russia are now worthless, or nearly so. That's raising questions from some officials and fund managers about whether divesting is even necessary.

In Hawaii, one of a handful of states where top administration officials did not pledge to divest, Gov. David Ige said at a May 5 news conference that the state's employee pension system had "very little to almost nothing" invested in Russia.

"The few remaining investments are quite small, and so I didn't feel compelled to just make a statement for political reasons that we would be divesting," he said.

Before Russia's invasion in late February, many government-controlled investments had only small holdings — a fraction of 1% in every reported case — in Russian investments. But even that could amount to millions of dollars.

The largest U.S. public-sector retirement fund, California's CalPERS, said just 17 cents of every \$100 of its portfolio was in Russian investments as the war broke out. Even so, that translated into \$765 million worth of stocks, real estate and private equity.

By the end of June, the value had shrunk to \$194 million. The entire loss was because the holdings dropped in value; none had been sold.

There is no way to know how much state government entities in the U.S. have invested in Russia or companies based there, but collectively they were worth billions of dollars before the war. Much of the money was invested in Russian government bonds, oil and coal companies as part of emerging-markets index funds.

Quick to condemn the invasion, state officials said they could put pressure on Putin by dumping their Russian investments.

"Our moral imperative before these atrocities demand that you act to address Russia's aggressions and

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immediately restrict Russian access to California's capital and investments," California Gov. Gavin Newsom wrote in a letter Feb. 28 to the boards overseeing the massive pension funds that serve teachers, state and local government workers and university employees.

Across the country, governors and other top officials made similar statements.

Just after the invasion began, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul signed an executive order calling for divestment "to the extent possible," while Arizona's Board of Regents voted to exit any Russian investments.

The treasurers for 36 states plus the District of Columbia and U.S. Virgin Islands signed a joint letter in March advocating divestment of publicly controlled funds from Russia. They noted a financial reason for doing so: "The current crisis also constitutes a substantial risk for states' investments and our economic security."

A major chunk of the government holdings in Russia are in the form of index funds that investors use to mimic overall stock market performance. Russian stocks were commonly part of funds specializing in emerging markets. MCSI and other firms that decide which stocks should be in the funds quickly dropped Russian securities.

But the companies that sell investment products based on those indexes were left in the lurch, still leaving pieces of Russian stocks in their investors' portfolios.

As part of the sanctions, stock markets in the U.S. and elsewhere stopped the trading of Russian stocks. And the Moscow Stock Exchange was closed for nearly a month, reopening with tight controls that keep U.S. investors from selling.

The assets sank in value amid the invasion, though the precise value isn't always clear.

Maryland said that as of the beginning of February, \$197 million of its state retirement and pension system funds were invested in Russian assets. A month later, the state estimated the value had plunged and amounted to just \$32 million. The state has been unable to unload its investments.

For the handful of states in which top officials have not endorsed divestment, eroding values like that are a main reason.

Shortly after the invasion, South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster said the amount of state investments in Russia was "miniscule" and noted that the value was about to "shrink to almost nothing as the Russian economy is being virtually shut off from the world."

In Florida, Lamar Taylor, the interim executive director of the agency that oversees investments of pension funds, said during a cabinet meeting that some investment managers might seek to unload Russian assets as soon as they're able, while others could hold on in case they're worth more later.

At the meeting, Gov. Ron DeSantis said the State Board of Administration has a legal responsibility to try to make money for the retirement system.

"That would violate your fiduciary duty, if you liquidated at massive losses for political reasons rather than for the best interests of the beneficiaries," he said.

But DeSantis said there was a way to make it easier: Lawmakers passing a bill banning investment in Russia.

"If the Legislature could speak clearly, that would be something we'd welcome here, just to make sure we're not furthering investments in parts of the world that are not reflective of our interests or values," he said.

Hank Kim, executive director of the National Conference on Public Employee Retirement Systems, said he has told member pension funds that taking steps to divest is important even if it can't be completed right away.

"The public has a right to know that it was debated in a serious manner," he said.

___ Mulvihill reported from Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Associated Press writers Kimberly Chandler in Montgomery, Alabama; Amy B. Hanson in Helena, Montana; Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville, Tennessee; and Audrey McAvoy in Honolulu contributed to this report.

Britain to see 80% spike in energy bills as crisis deepens

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By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Jennifer Jones keeps feeding money into her energy meter, but it never seems to be enough. And when she can't pay, she feels the impact immediately.

The power in her London home has gone off suddenly three times recently, once when her partner was cooking an egg.

Like millions of people, Jones, 54, is struggling to cope as energy and food prices skyrocket during Britain's worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation. The former school supervisor has health problems and relies on government benefits to get by, but her welfare payments are nowhere near enough to cover her sharply rising bills.

"I've always struggled, but not as much," she said. "Everything is going up. I can't even pay my rent, my council tax, I can't afford to do anything. ... I keep asking myself, what am I supposed to do?"

And things are getting worse. U.K. residents will see an 80% increase in their annual household energy bills, the country's energy regulator announced Friday, following a record 54% spike in April. That will bring costs for the average customer from 1,971 pounds (\$2,332) a year to 3,549 pounds.

The latest price cap — the maximum amount that gas suppliers can charge customers per unit of energy — will take effect Oct. 1, just as the cold months set in. And bills are expected to rise again in January to 4,000 pounds.

To blame for the increase is the soaring price of wholesale natural gas triggered by Russia's war in Ukraine, which is driving up consumer prices and roiling economies across Europe that rely on the fuel for heating homes and generating electricity.

That includes the United Kingdom, which has the highest inflation rate among the Group of Seven wealthiest democracies and seen disruptive strikes for months as workers push for pay to keep pace with the increasingly expensive cost of living.

The energy increases, together with rapidly rising food costs, are expected to push inflation above the 40-year high of 10.1% recorded in July and trigger a recession later this year, the Bank of England has predicted. Charities, public health leaders and even energy firms warn of catastrophic effects on poorer people already struggling to afford essentials as wages lag behind.

Jon Taylor, who helps Jones and others at debt counseling charity Christians Against Poverty, said growing numbers of people who have never had debt problems are turning to the group's helpline.

"What I'm seeing a lot of at the moment is personal tragedies, losing loved ones, emotional health problems," he said. "The pressure of not knowing how to pay the next bill or having enough food to survive just accentuates whatever they're already going through."

About 1 million low-income households have had to take on new or extra debt to cover an essential bill, according to a May study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, a nonprofit focusing on U.K. poverty.

The drop in living standards is "of a scale we haven't seen for many decades," said Rebecca McDonald, the charity's chief economist. "It really warrants big and creative national policy interventions in order to prevent what is a difficult year becoming essentially a catastrophe for many low-income families."

Britain's Conservative government is under heavy pressure to do more to help people and businesses — and fast. Authorities have said they're sending around 1,200 pounds to low-income people. Every household, no matter their financial situation, will get 400 pounds off their energy bills this winter.

Many say that financial support needs to be doubled — at least — and some have called for an immediate freeze on the amount that suppliers can charge for energy. The opposition Labour Party has called for an extension of the government's temporary tax on the windfall profits of oil and gas companies to help pay for relief.

But the government has said no further measures will be announced until the Conservative Party announces a new leader to replace Boris Johnson on Sept. 5. Neither Liz Truss nor Rishi Sunak, the two politicians vying to become the next prime minister, appear to support taxing energy giants.

Treasury chief Nadhim Zahawi acknowledged that the increase in the energy price cap would cause "stress and anxiety." But he insisted the government was ready to develop more options to support households.

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"While (Russian President Vladimir) Putin is driving up energy prices in revenge for our support of Ukraine's brave struggle for freedom, I am working flat out to develop options for further support," he said. "This will mean the incoming prime minister can hit the ground running and deliver support to those who need it most, as soon as possible."

Unions across multiple key sectors have reacted by going on strike to demand pay raises that keep pace with inflation. A series of national rail strikes brought the U.K. train network to a standstill during peak travel days this summer, and postal and port workers, garbage collectors and lawyers have all staged walkouts over pay disputes.

Meanwhile, a grassroots movement called "Don't Pay" is campaigning to gather 1 million people who will commit to not paying their energy bills on Oct. 1 if the price hike goes ahead. The group is hoping that mass nonpayment will force energy firms to end the crisis.

"Everyone we speak to thinks that the price increases we've seen and are going to be seeing on Oct. 1 are beyond a joke and will push people to the edge," said Jeffrey James, one of the campaign's organizers.

"We are being forced into poverty, whilst others who are already in poverty will be forced into a life-or-death situation this winter," he added. "That is the level of discontent and despair we are talking about."

Drought forces earliest harvest ever in French wine country

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

BORDEAUX, France (AP) — The landscape in the prestigious vineyards of Bordeaux looks the same as ever, with healthy, ripe grapes hanging heavy off rows of green vines.

But this year something is starkly different in one of France's most celebrated wine regions and other parts of Europe. The harvest that once started in mid-September is now happening earlier than ever — in mid-August — as a result of severe drought and the wine industry's adaptation to the unpredictable effects of climate change.

Paradoxically, the season of heat waves and wildfires produced excellent grapes, despite lower yields. But achieving such a harvest required creative changes in growing techniques, including pruning vines in a different way and sometimes watering them in places where irrigation is usually banned. And producers across Europe who have seen first-hand the effects of global warming are worried about what more is to come.

So far, "global warming is very positive. We have better ripeness, better balance. ... But if you turn to the future, and if you increase the temperature by one degree more, plus, you will lose the freshness part in the balance of the wine," said Fabien Teitgen, technical director of Château Smith-Haut-Lafitte, an estate that grows organic wine grapes in Martillac, south of Bordeaux.

Grape growers adjusted their practices amid a series of heat waves, combined with lack of rain, that hit most of Europe. In the Bordeaux region, in southwestern France, giant wildfires destroyed large areas of pine forests. It did not rain from the end of June until mid-August.

As the harvest unfolds, dozens of workers kneel in the vineyards to hand-pick grapes and put them into baskets. The fruit is immediately crushed to make juice, which is put into tanks, then barrels to start the wine production process.

The harvest aims to produce the white wine from the famous Pessac-Léognan appellation. Red wine will soon follow.

Eric Perrin, one of the owners of the Château Carbonnieux estate, recalled that during his childhood, in the 1970s, harvests started around mid-September. This year, they began on Aug. 16.

But the 2022 vintage may be better than ever, Perrin said, because the grapes are healthy and well balanced. The hot, dry weather also prevented vines from getting diseases such as mildew.

Producing wine is a centuries-old tradition at Château Carbonnieux, where Thomas Jefferson visited the vineyards in 1787, before becoming president of the United States, and planted a pecan tree that still stands in a park.

Nowadays, Château Carbonnieux wine is sometimes offered by President Emmanuel Macron to esteemed

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hosts.

The drought changed the way wine producers work.

Before, vintners used to give vines a shape that allowed grapes to get the maximum amount of sun so they produced more sugar, which converts into alcohol. This year, growers tended to let leaves protect the grapes so the shadows would preserve the fruit's acidity and freshness, Teitgen explained.

Yields may be 15% to 20% lower in the broader region, mostly due to smaller grapes and the fact that some were burned by the sun in specific areas, Teitgen said, but it won't affect the wine's quality.

In front of the 14th-century tower of the Château Smith-Haut-Lafitte vineyard, Manon Lecouffe this week carefully watered newly planted vines, an indispensable job.

Vines that are several years old have deep roots that allow them to draw water from far underground and endure drought without suffering too much.

But this year, estates had authorization to water adult vines, a practice usually banned in Bordeaux.

"Some plots were heavily suffering with leaves falling," Lecouffe said.

Another step vintners may take is to reduce the density of their plots to require less water or to work the soil to better conserve moisture deep down.

Experts are also considering whether planting new grape varieties could be helpful.

At Château Olivier, which also produces Pessac-Leognan wines, Director Laurent Lebrun showed how he and his team go through the vineyards to taste grapes plot by plot to decide where and when to harvest.

The consequences of global warming are now part of daily life for vintners, Lebrun said, noting the speed of the changes.

"We need to reprogram our own way of thinking," he said. "There are many tools that are still within our reach, which are already used in warmer regions."

Further south in Europe, harvests also started weeks earlier than normal to save shriveling and scorched grapes. Production is expected to be 10% to 20% lower in some regions of Italy, Spain and Portugal, though producers are hopeful of increased quality.

Italy's Coldiretti agricultural lobby stressed that the higher cost of energy and raw materials is expected to increase costs by 35%.

Scientists have long believed that human-caused climate change makes extreme weather more frequent. They say hotter air, warmer oceans and melting sea ice alter the jet stream, which makes storms, floods, heat waves, droughts and wildfires more destructive.

As warmer winters cause grape vines to produce early buds, French vintners worry that frost will disrupt the growing season more often. Violent hailstorms can destroy a year of work in a few minutes.

At Château Carbonnieux, Perrin fears some smaller producers may not withstand the changes.

"Climatic events since 2017 have led to smaller harvests. Not everyone will be able to survive it, for sure," he said.

Taiwan: China, Russia disrupting, threatening world order

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwan's leader on Friday said China and Russia are "disrupting and threatening the world order" through Beijing's recent large-scale military exercises near the island and Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

President Tsai Ing-wen was speaking during a meeting in Taipei with U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn, who is on the second visit by members of Congress since House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip earlier this month. That visit prompted China to launch the exercises that saw it fire numerous missiles and send dozens of warplanes and ships to virtually surround the island, including across the center line in the Taiwan Strait that has long been a buffer between the sides.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary. Beijing has also boosted relations with Russia and is seen as tacitly supporting its attack on Ukraine.

"These developments demonstrate how authoritarian countries are disrupting and threatening the world order," Tsai said.

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Blackburn, a Republican from Tennessee, reaffirmed shared values between the two governments and said she "looked forward to continuing to support Taiwan as they push forward as an independent nation."

China sees high-level foreign visits to the island as interference in its affairs and de facto recognition of Taiwanese sovereignty. China's recent military drills were seen by some as a rehearsal of future military action against the island, which U.S. military leaders say could come within the next few years.

Along with staging the exercises, China cut off contacts with the United States on vital issues — including military matters and crucial climate cooperation — raising concerns over a lasting, more aggressive approach by Beijing. It also called in U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns to formally complain. He later said China was overreacting in order to manufacture a crisis.

Due to the separation of powers in the U.S. government, the executive branch has no authority to prevent legislators from making such foreign visits and Taiwan benefits from strong bipartisan support in Washington. China, whose ruling Communist Party wields total control over the country's politics, refuses to acknowledge that fundamental principle.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel said members of Congress and elected officials "have gone to Taiwan for decades and will continue to do so," saying it was in line with U.S. policy to only maintain formal diplomatic ties with Beijing.

"We're going to continue to take calm and resolute steps to uphold peace and stability in the region and to support Taiwan in line with our longstanding policy," Patel said at a briefing Thursday.

Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu told reporters Friday that "China's motivation is to destroy the Taiwan Straits' status quo, and after this they want to cut down on Taiwan's defensive space."

Taiwan is seeking stepped-up defense cooperation and additional weaponry from the U.S., along with closer economic ties.

In their meeting, Tsai and Blackburn underscored the importance of economic links, especially in the semiconductor sector, where Taiwan is a world leader and the U.S. is seeking greater investment at home.

Blackburn arrived in Taipei late Thursday after visiting Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea as part of a U.S. push to "expand our diplomatic footprint in the area," her office said in a statement.

"The Indo-Pacific region is the next frontier for the new axis of evil," Blackburn, a supporter of former President Donald Trump, was quoted as saying. "We must stand against the Chinese Communist Party."

China has been making inroads in the western Pacific, signing a broad security agreement with the Solomons that the U.S. and allies such as Australia see as an attempt to overthrow the traditional security order in the region.

Pelosi was the highest-level member of the U.S. government to visit Taiwan in 25 years. China's response was to announce six zones surrounding the island for military exercises that included firing missiles over the island, some of which landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone.

Following Pelosi's trip, a delegation of House and Senate members visited. This week, Indiana's governor made a visit focused on business and academic cooperation. U.S. politicians have called their visits a show of support for the island.

"I just landed in Taiwan to send a message to Beijing — we will not be bullied," said Blackburn in a tweet early morning Friday. "The United States remains steadfast in preserving freedom around the globe, and will not tolerate efforts to undermine our nation and our allies."

During her three-day visit, Blackburn is also due to meet with the head of Taiwan's National Security Council.

Washington has no official diplomatic ties with Taipei in deference to China, but remains the island's biggest security guarantor, with U.S. law requiring it ensure Taiwan has the means to defend itself and to regard threats to the island as matters of "grave concern."

Taiwan and China split in 1949 after a civil war and have no official relations but are bound by billions of dollars of trade and investment.

China has increased its pressure on Taiwan since it elected independence-leaning Tsai as its president. When Tsai refused to endorse the concept of a single Chinese nation, China cut off contact with the Taiwanese government.

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U.S. congressional visits to the island have stepped up in frequency in the past year.

On Thursday, the executive branch of Taiwan's government laid out plans for a 12.9% increase in the Defense Ministry's annual budget next year. The government is planning to spend an additional 47.5 billion New Taiwan dollars (\$1.6 billion), for a total of 415.1 billion NTD (\$13.8 billion) for the year.

The Defense Ministry said the increase is due to the "Chinese Communists' continued expansion of targeted military activities in recent years, the normalization of their harassment of Taiwan's nearby waters and airspace with warships and war planes."

Also Thursday, the Defense Ministry said it tracked four Chinese naval ships and 15 warplanes in the region surrounding the island.

Work permits are a lifeline for Gaza, and a lever for Israel

By FARES AKRAM and SAM McNEIL Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP) — Ibrahim Slaieh can point to three great moments of joy in his life in the Gaza Strip: his graduation from university, his wedding, and the day last year when he got a six-month permit to work inside Israel.

The permit — a little piece of paper, wrapped in protective plastic — allows the 44-year-old to work at a grocery store in southern Israel, making 10 times what he could in Gaza. It means a better education for his six children, bigger family meals and treats like pastries, fruit yogurt and chocolate milk.

Without it, he would have to seek meager wages inside the narrow coastal strip, which has been under a crippling Israeli-Egyptian blockade since the Islamic militant group Hamas seized power 15 years ago. With unemployment hovering around 50%, that might mean salvaging rubble from years of conflict or trapping birds to sell to pet shops.

"It's incomparable," Slaieh says. "One month of work there equals three years of work here."

Israel acknowledges the permits are also a powerful tool to help preserve calm or — in the eyes of its critics — control.

Israel has issued up to 15,500 work permits since last year, allowing Palestinians like Slaieh to cross into the country from the Gaza Strip and work mostly menial jobs that pay far higher wages than those available inside Gaza.

They are among the first Gazan laborers to work officially inside Israel since the Hamas takeover of the territory in 2007. More than 100,000 Palestinians from the occupied West Bank have similar permits that allow them to enter Israel for work.

The permits give Israel a form of leverage over the Palestinians who rely on them — and over Hamas. Gaza's militant rulers risk being blamed if the border is closed and the workers are forced to stay home — as they were earlier this month during the latest flare-up in violence.

Hamas, which has fought four wars and countless smaller battles with Israel over the years, sat out the latest round of fighting — apparently in order to preserve the permits and other economic understandings with Israel that have provided an economic lifeline to the territory.

Last week, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz announced 1,500 more permits "on condition that the security situation remains quiet," once again spelling out the terms on which the permits are issued.

Israel often describes the permits, and other measures that provide economic opportunities to Palestinians, as goodwill measures. Critics view the permits as another means of control, part of Israel's decades-long military rule over millions of Palestinians, which shows no sign of ending. Israel considers even peaceful forms of Palestinian protest as a threat to public order — something that could lead to a permit being cancelled.

Maher al-Tabaa, an official with the Gaza Chamber of Commerce, says the permits have had little effect on Gaza's wider economy, which remains heavily constricted by the closures. He says those working in Israel inject a total of just \$1 million a day into Gaza's economy.

Before the Hamas takeover in 2007, some 120,000 Gazans worked inside Israel. Nearly all lost their permits when Israel tightened the blockade that year. Since then, the population has doubled to around

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2.3 million even as the economy has all but collapsed.

Israel says the blockade is needed to prevent Hamas from building up its arsenal, while human rights groups view it as a form of collective punishment.

Al-Tabaa said that only doubling or tripling the current number of permits would bring about an economic recovery in Gaza.

On a Sunday morning, Slaieh awoke before dawn, kissed his girls goodbye and waved at his sons through a window as he made his way down a dirt road, bound for the fortress-like Erez crossing leading into Israel.

After he crosses, he is sometimes picked up by his employer. Other times, he shares a taxi to the southern city of Beersheba, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) away, with other workers. He spends three weeks in Israel before returning home for a week.

Before he got his permit, Slaieh said he had never been in Israel.

He has only recently begun to learn Hebrew. He works at a store in Beersheba owned by a distant relative and says many of the shoppers are Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Like many Gaza workers, Slaieh said he largely keeps to himself, partly to avoid jeopardizing his permit and partly because it's expensive to go out. He occasionally gets together with other Gazans or goes to pray at a local mosque.

"I work lengthy hours and get paid overtime, that's why I do it. In Gaza, we would work these hours for only 30 shekels (about \$10) a day," he said.

Some of the permits get renewed automatically, while other workers have to periodically reapply, hoping they remain in the good graces of Israel's security apparatus.

Slaieh's permit expires in December.

He says the prospect of not having his permit renewed is "terrifying" and that he is already losing sleep over it. He says he's saving as much as he can out of the roughly \$75 a day he brings home from his job in Israel.

If his permit is denied, he said his only hope is to start a small business in Gaza.

He said his father didn't save money when he worked in Israel some two decades ago. When Israel shuttered the border in 2007, tens of thousands of workers, including Slaieh's father, lost their jobs suddenly. His father died six years ago.

"I don't want my children to go through the experience we had," he said.

Herschel Walker skips details in bid to oust Raphael Warnock

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

KENNESAW, Ga. (AP) — Republican Herschel Walker has plenty to say about how his Democratic rival, U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock, does his job in Washington. But Walker is considerably less revealing about what he'd do with the role himself.

A former football star and friend of former President Donald Trump, Walker tells voters he supports agriculture, veterans and law enforcement. He sells cultural conservatism and his mental health advocacy. He tags Warnock as a yes-man for President Joe Biden. Yet when asked for concrete alternatives to "the Biden-Warnock agenda," Walker defaults mostly to generalities and stem-winding tangents — or he turns the question around.

"Have you asked my opponent? Don't play games. You're playing games," Walker told reporters recently when pressed to clarify his stance on exceptions to abortion bans.

The broader approach tracks the way many political challengers — including Warnock two years ago — try to put incumbents on the defensive. That method is especially salient for Republican candidates in a midterm election year when Democrats must run alongside sustained inflation. But Walker's rendition, as much as any GOP candidacy nationwide, is testing the bounds of that strategy as Democrats hammer the political novice as unfit for high office.

"There is a stark difference between me and my opponent," Warnock said at a recent campaign stop, theatrically stretching the word "stark" as he smiled. "This race," the senator continued, "is about who's

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ready to represent Georgia.”

Democrats’ paid advertising levels the same charge, without humor.

Among Warnock’s first general election ads was video of Walker claiming he knows of a cure for COVID-19. “I have something that can bring you into a building that would clean you from COVID as you walk through this dry mist,” Walker said. “This here product — they don’t want to talk about that.”

Another Warnock ad hammered Walker for not agreeing to any of three long-standing Georgia general election debates after saying he’d debate Warnock “any time, any day.”

Other ads from Warnock-aligned groups have chronicled Walker’s exaggerations about his business and academic accomplishments and his first wife’s allegations of Walker’s violent behavior.

Those spots are part of an advertising deluge that’s allowed Warnock to burnish his personal brand, explain his Senate record on his terms and launch broadsides against Walker. That reach could prove decisive in a closely divided state: Warnock won his January 2021 special election runoff by 2 percentage points out of 4.5 million votes. Polls suggest reflect another hotly contested race, with Republicans depending on Walker to tilt the balance of the 50-50 Senate.

Warnock has fueled his ad blitz with a considerable money advantage. From the closing weeks of 2020 through June 30 of this year, he’d spent more than \$85 million. Walker, by comparison, had raised \$20.2 million and spent \$13.4 million.

That leaves some Republicans fretting that Walker is behind in establishing his case. “I get really passionate about this because I know Herschel, and the left is trying to paint him into something he is not,” said Ginger Howard, a Georgia representative on the Republican National Committee.

Walker’s answer so far is to make the race a referendum on Biden and Democrats, thus avoiding direct comparisons between the Georgia nominees. Walker aides say that isn’t just the obvious course to navigate a first-time candidate’s liabilities; it also happens, they insist, to resonate with a majority of Georgians.

“This is still a center-right state in a very Republican year,” said adviser Chip Lake, noting Biden’s approval ratings lag badly behind Warnock’s standing in Georgia. “Voters aren’t asking Herschel for white papers on policy.”

Liz Marchionni, who volunteers at her local Cobb County Republican office north of Atlanta, said most voters care more about broader values than specifics. “Every candidate should answer questions,” she said. But Walker “has excellent business experience,” she added. “He’s a strong Christian. And he’s working for freedom for all Americans.”

Nonetheless, the first-time candidate has started doing more policy themed events: roundtables with farmers, meetings with business owners, gatherings with law enforcement, a panel with conservative women, including the candidate’s wife, Julie Blanchard. Walker now huddles regularly with groups of reporters.

Much of that is a shift from his shielded Republican primary campaign. He easily won that contest anyway, leveraging his fame as a former University of Georgia football star and his relationship with Trump. But Lake said the campaign recognized Walker has to “engage with as many Georgians as possible” to defeat Warnock.

In recent appearances, Walker has talked of prioritizing aid to farmers, cutting environmental regulations he says limit domestic energy sources, and championing “second chance” policies to help convicted felons get employment.

But he doesn’t get into details, and his go-to applause lines reflect standard conservative dogma. “We need spiritual warriors ... leaders who love this country ... people with common sense,” he told a standing-room-only crowd in northern Cobb County.

Lake said “it’s no different than any other campaign I’ve worked on.” And, he added, “I don’t remember Raphael Warnock’s campaign being that detailed” ahead of his victory over then-Sen. Kelly Loeffler.

Indeed, Warnock’s standard pitch this summer is more policy-heavy than in 2020, in part because he talks about measures that he’s helped get through the Senate. Yet in that campaign, Warnock did tout his activism as a Baptist pastor on Medicaid expansion and voting rights, holding forth on policy details. For example, he talked then about capping insulin costs and allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices with pharmaceutical firms. The Senate recently approved drug-price negotiations and a limited version of

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the insulin cap. Republicans restricted the cap only to Medicare; Warnock called for extending it across all consumers, including the privately insured.

Walker's latest forays into policy highlight the potential risks in trying to match Warnock.

Discussing inflation before the recent Senate votes, Walker said he endorsed capping insulin prices. Told of Warnock's efforts, he replied: "I support some of the good things he's doing, but that's just a Band-Aid. Why don't he get back and get to things that are correct?"

Walker didn't answer a follow-up question about what policies he'd pursue to combat the wider inflation he blames on Warnock. Instead, he veered into a soliloquy on border patrols and crime.

After accusing Warnock of supporting the Inflation Reduction Act without "reading the bill," Walker admitted he'd read only "some of the bill" himself.

Meeting with north Georgia farmers, he learned that a majority of the federal farm bill — a staple of federal spending for generations — finances consumer food assistance. Farmers don't necessarily oppose that consumer aid, though Congress often fights over amounts. But Walker heard the breakdown and mused that it is wasteful, even as one farmer explained that feeding a country of 330 million residents "is national security."

Walker glosses over details when attacking Warnock, as well. Talking about why women should support him, Walker said, "I will keep them safe, not like my opponent, who votes to be soft on crime and soft-on-crime judges." Walker then alluded to an unspecified local prosecution in Atlanta, alleging it involved defendants who'd been arrested more than 100 times.

"These guys have done so many crimes, and they let them out of jail," he said. "Right now, that's something that I would be tough on right there."

Asked recently which Senate committee assignments he'd seek should he win, Walker said he wants to focus on agriculture and "something with our military" and supporting veterans.

Abe murder suspect says life destroyed by mother's religion

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The brazen assassination of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with a handmade gun shocked a nation unused to high-profile political violence.

But there has been another surprise in the weeks since the murder as details have emerged about an alleged assassin who was well-off until his mother's huge donations to the controversial Unification Church left him poor, neglected and filled with rage.

Some Japanese have expressed understanding, even sympathy, for the 41-year-old suspect, especially those of a similar age who may feel pangs of recognition linked to their own suffering during three decades of economic malaise and social turmoil.

There have been suggestions on social media that care packages should be sent to suspect Tetsuya Yamagami's detention center to cheer him up. And more than 7,000 people have signed a petition requesting prosecutorial leniency for Yamagami, who told police that he killed Abe, one of Japan's most powerful and divisive politicians, because of his ties to an unnamed religious group widely believed to be the Unification Church.

Experts say the case has also illuminated the plight of thousands of other children of church adherents who have faced abuse and neglect.

"If he hadn't allegedly committed the crime, Mr. Yamagami would deserve much sympathy. There are many others who also suffer" because of their parents' faith, said Kimiaki Nishida, a Rissho University psychology professor and expert in cult studies.

There also have been serious political implications for Japan's governing party, which has kept cozy ties with the church despite controversies and a string of legal disputes.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's popularity has plunged since the killing, and he has shuffled his Cabinet to purge members with ties to the religious group. On Thursday, the national police agency chief submitted his resignation to take responsibility over Abe's assassination.

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Yamagami, who is being detained for mental evaluation until late November, has previously expressed on social media a hatred for the Unification Church, which was founded in South Korea in 1954 and has, since the 1980s, faced accusations of devious recruitment practices and brainwashing of adherents into making huge donations.

In a letter seen by The Associated Press and tweets believed to be his, Yamagami said his family and life were destroyed by the church because of his mother's huge donations. Police confirmed that a draft of Yamagami's letter was found in a computer confiscated from his one-room apartment.

"After my mother joined the church (in the 1990s), my entire teenage years were gone, with some 100 million yen (\$735,000) wasted," he wrote in the typed letter, which he sent to a blogger in western Japan the day before he allegedly assassinated Abe during a campaign speech on July 8 in Nara, western Japan. "It's not an exaggeration to say my experience during that time has kept distorting my entire life."

Yamagami was four when his father, an executive of a company founded by the suspect's grandfather, killed himself. After his mother joined the Unification Church, she began making big donations that bankrupted the family and shattered Yamagami's hope of going to college. His brother later committed suicide. After a three-year stint in the navy, Yamagami was most recently a factory worker.

Yamagami's uncle, in media interviews, said Yamagami's mother donated 60 million yen (\$440,000) within months of joining the church. When her father died in the late 1990s, she sold company property worth 40 million yen (\$293,000), bankrupting the family in 2002. The uncle said he had to stop giving money for food and school to the Yamagami children because the mother gave it to the church, not her children.

When Yamagami tried to kill himself in 2005, his mother did not return from a trip to South Korea, where the church was founded, his uncle said.

Yamagami's mother reportedly told prosecutors that she was sorry for troubling the church over her son's alleged crime. His uncle said she seemed devastated but remained a church follower. The authorities and the local bar association refused to comment. Repeated attempts to contact Yamagami, his mother, his uncle and their lawyers were unsuccessful.

Beginning in October 2019, Yamagami, who is widely reported to have tweeted under the name "Silent Hill 333," wrote about the church, his painful past and political issues.

In December 2019, he tweeted that his grandfather blamed Yamagami's mother for the family's troubles and even tried to kill her. "What's most hopeless is that my grandfather was right. But I wanted to believe my mother."

Part of the reason Yamagami's case has struck a chord is because he's a member of what the Japanese media have called a "lost generation" that's been stuck with low-paying contract jobs. He graduated from high school in 1999 during "the employment ice age" that followed the implosion of the country's 1980s bubble economy.

Despite being the world's third largest economy, Japan has faced three decades of economic turmoil and social disparity, and many of those who grew up in these years are unmarried and are stuck with unstable jobs and feelings of isolation and unease.

Some high-profile crimes in recent years, such as mass killings in Tokyo's Akihabara electronics district in 2008 and a fatal arson attack on Kyoto Animation in 2016, reportedly involved "lost generation" attackers with troubled family and work histories.

Yamagami's case also has shed light on the children of Unification Church adherents. Many are neglected, experts say, and there's been little help because government and school officials tend to resist interference on religious freedom grounds.

"If our society had paid more attention to the problems over the past few decades, (Yamagami's) attack could have been prevented," said Mafumi Usui, a Niigata Seiryō University social psychology professor and cult expert.

More than 55,000 people have joined a petition calling for legal protection for "second generation" followers who say they were forced to join the church.

Abe, in a September 2021 video message, praised the church's work for peace on the Korean Peninsula

and its focus on family values. His video appearance possibly motivated Yamagami, said Nishida, the psychology professor.

Yamagami reportedly told police he had planned to kill the church founder's wife, Hak Ja Han Moon, who has led the church since Moon's 2012 death, but switched targets because it was unlikely she'd visit Japan during the pandemic.

"Though I feel bitter, Abe is not my true enemy. He is only one of the Unification Church's most influential sympathizers," Yamagami wrote in his letter. "I've already lost the mental space to think about political meanings or the consequences Abe's death will bring."

The case has drawn attention to ties between the church, which came to Japan in 1964, and the governing Liberal Democratic Party that has almost uninterruptedly ruled post World War II Japan.

A governing lawmaker, Shigeharu Aoyama, last month said a party faction leader told him how church votes could help candidates that lack organizational backing.

Tomihiko Tanaka, head of the church's Japan branch, denied "political interference" with any particular party, but said the church has developed closer ties with governing party lawmakers than with others because of their shared anti-communist stance.

Members of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, which for decades has provided legal assistance for people with financial disputes with the church, say they've received 34,000 complaints involving lost money exceeding a total of 120 billion yen (\$900 million).

Tanaka accused the lawyers and the media of "persecuting" church followers.

A former adherent in her 40s said at a recent news conference that she and two sisters were forced to join the church when she was in high school after their mother became a follower.

After two failed marriages arranged by the church, she said she awoke from "mind-control" and returned to Japan in 2013.

As a second-generation victim "who had my life destroyed by the church, I can understand (Yamagami's) pain, though what he did was wrong," she said.

Trump search redacted affidavit set to be released

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department is set to release Friday a heavily blacked out document explaining the justification for an FBI search of former President Donald Trump's Florida estate earlier this month, when agents removed top secret government records and other classified documents.

The document, expected by noon, is likely to offer at least some new details about an ongoing criminal investigation that has brought fresh legal peril for Trump just as he lays the groundwork for another presidential run. Though Justice Department officials are expected to have removed sensitive details about witnesses, and the scope and direction of the probe, the affidavit may offer the fullest explanation yet about the events leading up to the Aug. 8 search of Mar-a-Lago.

The document being released is the redacted form of an affidavit, or sworn statement, that the FBI submitted to a judge so it could obtain a warrant to search Trump's property. Affidavits typically contain vital information about an investigation, with agents spelling out to a judge the justification for why they want to search a particular property and why they believe they're likely to find evidence of a potential crime there. But affidavits routinely remain sealed during pending investigations, making the judge's decision to reveal portions of it all the more striking.

In an acknowledgment of the extraordinary public interest in the investigation, U.S. Magistrate Judge Bruce Reinhart on Thursday ordered the department by Friday to make public a redacted version of the affidavit. The directive came hours after federal law enforcement officials submitted under seal the portions of the affidavit that they want to keep secret as their investigation moves forward.

The redactions proposed by the Justice Department are likely to be extensive given the sensitivity of the investigation, lessening the likelihood that the document will offer a comprehensive look at the basis for the unprecedented search or significant insights about the direction of the probe. Yet even a redacted

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affidavit can contain at least some fresh revelations about the investigation, and is likely to help explain why federal agents who had tried for months to recover sensitive government records from Mar-a-Lago ultimately felt compelled to obtain a search warrant.

Documents already made public show the FBI retrieved from the property 11 sets of classified documents, including information marked at the top secret level. They also show that federal agents are 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.

It's possible that the affidavit, particularly in its unredacted form, could shed light on key unanswered questions, including why sensitive presidential documents — classified documents, among them — were transported to Mar-a-Lago after Trump left the White House and why Trump and his representatives did not supply the entire tranche of material to the National Archives and Records Administration despite repeated entreaties.

It could also offer additional details on the back-and-forth between Trump and the FBI, including a subpoena for documents that was issued last spring, as well as a June visit by FBI and Justice Department officials to assess how the materials were being stored.

The Justice Department had earlier contested arguments by media organizations to make any portion of the affidavit public, saying the disclosure could contain private information about witnesses and about investigative tactics. But Reinhart, acknowledging the extraordinary public interest in the investigation, said last week that he was disinclined to keep the entire document sealed and told federal officials to submit to him in private the redactions it wanted to make.

In his order Thursday, Reinhart said the department had made compelling arguments to leave sealed broad swaths of the document that, if disclosed, would reveal grand jury information; the identities of witnesses and "uncharged parties"; and details about the investigation's "strategy, direction, scope, sources and methods."

But he also said he was satisfied "that the Government has met its burden of showing that its proposed redactions are narrowly tailored to serve the Government's legitimate interest in the integrity of the ongoing investigation and are the least onerous alternative to sealing the entire Affidavit."

Elton John and Britney Spears unite on a new dance single

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

Elton John and Britney Spears have collaborated for the first time, creating the slinky, club-ready single "Hold Me Closer" that sees the pop icons take old sounds and fashion something new.

The funky, piano-driven single uses John's 1971 hit "Tiny Dancer" as the skeleton and adds elements from his songs "The One" and "Don't Go Breaking My Heart," all with Spears voice soaring and fluttering.

While John has been releasing new music in the past few years — including the 16-track 2021 album "The Lockdown Sessions" — the song represents Spear's first new music since her 2016 album "Glory" and her first offering since the ending of her contentious conservatorship.

"She truly is an icon, one of the all-time great pop stars and she sounds amazing on this record. I love her dearly and am delighted with what we've created together," John said in a statement. Spears, in her statement, told John it was an honor to be asked: "I am so grateful that I got the opportunity to work with you and your legendary mind."

The track is produced by Andrew Watt, who has worked with such acts as Ed Sheeran, Eddie Vedder, Ozzy Osbourne, Justin Bieber, Post Malone and Miley Cyrus.

The song begins with both stars singing the opening lyrics of "The One" — "I saw you dancing out the ocean/Running fast along the sand/A spirit born of earth and water/Fire flying from your hands." It then seamlessly moves to "Tiny Dancer": "Hold me closer, tiny dancer/Count the headlights on the highway/Lay me down in sheets of linen/You had a busy day today."

The track calls to mind last year's hit "Cold Heart (PNAU Remix)," which melded John's songs "Kiss the

Bride," "Rocket Man," "Where's the Shoorah?" and "Sacrifice" into a dance bop featuring vocals by Dua Lipa. John and Spears first met in 2014 at an Oscar viewing party and she later tweeted her love of "Tiny Dancer," sowing the seeds for the latest collaboration. John is in the midst of his Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour.

Powell's Jackson Hole speech will stir speculation on rates

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

JACKSON HOLE, Wyoming (AP) — When Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell delivers what will be his most closely scrutinized speech of the year Friday, investors and economists will be turning over his remarks for any clues about how fast the Fed may continue to raise its key interest rate — and for how long.

With inflation hovering near a four-decade high — almost 9% — Powell will likely stress that the Fed is determined to bring it down to its 2% target, no matter what it takes. The Fed's rate hikes may well defeat inflation in time. But there are fears that they may cause a recession in the process.

Powell's remarks will kick off the Fed's annual economic symposium at Jackson Hole, the first time the conference of central bankers will be held in person since 2019, after it went virtual for two years during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since March, the Fed has implemented its fastest pace of rate increases in decades to combat inflation, which has punished households with soaring costs for food, gas, rent and other necessities. The central bank has lifted its benchmark rate by 2 full percentage points in just four meetings, to a range of 2.25% to 2.5%.

Those hikes have led to higher costs for mortgages, car loans and other consumer and business borrowing. Home sales have been plunging since the Fed first signaled it would raise borrowing costs.

Yet the central bank finds itself at a turning point. At a news conference after its last policy meeting in late July, Powell suggested that the Fed might decide to slow its rate hikes after having imposed two straight three-quarter-point increases — historically large moves — in June and July.

He also said the Fed's aggressive steps had raised its key short-term rate to a point at which it is neither stimulating nor slowing growth. Its benchmark rate had been held near zero from early in the pandemic until this March as the Fed sought to strengthen the economy.

Fed-watchers hope Powell will send some signal Friday of how large a rate hike the central bank will announce at its next meeting in late September or how long policymakers will keep rates elevated. They also hope to learn more about what factors the policymakers will consider in the coming months to decide when borrowing rates have gone high enough.

"He's got to kind of take on the uncertainty about the outlook and try to explain what will they be looking for to make their policy decisions," said William English, a professor at the Yale School of Management and former senior economist at the Fed.

How far, for instance, must inflation decline before Powell and his colleagues would suspend their rate hikes? What would the Fed do if unemployment, now at a half-century low, began rising? If the economy were to tip into recession, many investors think the Fed might pivot and actually cut rates again. But if inflation isn't yet under control, that would be unlikely.

In June, the Fed's policymakers signaled that they expected their key rate to end 2022 in a range of 3.25% to 3.5% and then to rise further next year to between 3.75% and 4%. If rates reached their projected level at the end of this year, they would be at the highest point since 2008. Powell is betting that he can engineer a high-risk outcome: Slow the economy enough to ease inflation pressures yet not so much as to trigger a recession.

His task has been complicated by the economy's cloudy picture: On Thursday, the government said the economy shrank at a 0.6% annual rate in the April-June period, the second straight quarter of contraction. Yet employers are still hiring rapidly, and the number of people seeking unemployment aid, a measure of layoffs, remains relatively low.

At the same time, inflation is still crushingly high, though it has shown some signs of easing, notably in

the form of declining gas prices.

"The data are pretty confusing," English said. "It's just hard to know what the exact situation is."

At its meeting in July, Fed policymakers expressed two competing concerns that highlighted their delicate task.

According to minutes from that meeting, the officials — who aren't identified by name — have prioritized their inflation fight. Still, some officials said there was a risk that the Fed would raise borrowing costs more than necessary, risking a recession. If inflation were to fall closer to the Fed's 2% target and the economy weakened further, those diverging views could become hard to reconcile.

After last month's Fed meeting, Powell told reporters that the size of the next rate hike "would depend on the data we get between now and then."

He also said that as rates rise, "it likely will become appropriate to slow the pace of increases" and assess how the Fed's actions have affected the economy. Those remarks helped ignite a stock-market rally because many investors interpreted them to mean the Fed would be less aggressive in the coming months.

Since then, though, many Fed officials have pushed back against any notion that they're close to easing up on their inflation fight.

Tom Barkin, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, told CNBC this month, "I'd like to see a period of sustained inflation under control, and until we do I think we're just going to have to continue to move rates higher."

On Friday, Powell may also address how the pandemic caused a range of supply problems for the economy and what it could mean for Fed policy. COVID-19 shutdowns led to shortages of semiconductors and other components as well as workers. Many of those supply shortages persist. And Russia's invasion of Ukraine cut off supplies of oil and agricultural commodities that raised global costs of gas and food.

Such "supply shocks" pose a particular challenge to the Fed because its policy tools involve raising or lowering rates to spur or slow demand. Traditionally, the Fed ignores the impact of supply shocks on inflation under the assumption that they will prove temporary.

In fact, at last year's Jackson Hole symposium, Powell listed five reasons why he thought inflation would be "transitory." Yet instead it has persisted.

As a result, some economists think Powell may play it safer this time and spend much of his speech reviewing the economic outlook.

"This isn't the time to roll out a big framework," said Vincent Reinhart, chief economist at Dreyfus and Mellon and a former Fed staffer. "They're trying to figure out how to keep on tightening and doing something that the Federal Reserve hadn't do in 40 years."

Powell should "repeat the facts, get the heck out of there," Reinhart said.

Student loan relief highlights burden on Black borrowers

By ANNIE MA Associated Press

Gabrielle Perry, a 29-year-old epidemiologist in New Orleans, expects \$20,000 of her \$135,000 student loan debt to be wiped out under the plan announced this week by President Joe Biden. She is happy for the relief, but disappointed he isn't fully canceling student debt that weighs especially heavy on African Americans.

For her, it's discouraging that Biden isn't doing more to help a constituency that played a critical role in his presidential campaign. Perry, who cares for and financially supports her disabled mother, said those obligations act as a societal tax on Black people, preventing the growth of generational wealth.

"You are ensuring that your little brothers and sisters have what they need for school," Perry said. "You are helping your parents pay off their rent, their house. So your quote-unquote wealth doesn't even have time to be built because you're trying to help your family survive."

Black borrowers on average carry about \$40,000 in federal student loan debt, \$10,000 more than white borrowers, according to federal education data. The disparity reflects a racial wealth gap in the U.S. — one that some advocates say the debt relief plan does not do enough to narrow.

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One in four Black borrowers would see their debt cleared entirely under the administration's plan, which cancels \$10,000 in federal student loan debt for those with incomes below \$125,000 a year, or households that earn less than \$250,000. The plan includes an additional \$10,000 in relief for Pell Grant recipients, who are more than twice as likely to be Black.

But more work needs to be done to make higher education accessible and affordable, said Wisdom Cole, national director of the NAACP Youth & College Division.

"When we think about education and higher education, fundamentally, it's the promise of an equitable future," Cole said. "We have so many Black graduates who go through the system, graduate and are not able to see that future because they disproportionately risk taking out loans."

Perry faced steep challenges to complete her education. Homeless for nearly a year, she had to drop out of school and saw the interest on her loans balloon. She also faced incarceration. Eventually, she was able to get her record expunged and earned a master's in public health from Tulane University, graduating just in time for the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic-era freeze on student loan payments, combined with raises at work, allowed Perry to achieve a sense of stability for the first time in her life. She was able to pay off her car, help her disabled mother, and start a nonprofit, the Thurman Perry Foundation, that gives college scholarships to currently or formerly incarcerated women and their daughters.

"That time with that payment pause, it didn't just build up my life," Perry said. "It even helped me pull my mother out of poverty. I got her into a safer place to live. It reverberated for people like me. Because I know that there are other people living worse than what I survived."

Black students are more likely to take on debt to finance their education, and in larger amounts, in part because of the wealth gap that makes it less likely for Black families to be able to finance their children's education.

In her first months of graduate school, before her fellowship salary kicked in, TC Headley called the university's financial aid office to ask if there was help to cover the cost of books and supplies. Instead, the woman on the phone told her to call her parents and ask for more money.

"I can't just call my parents for thousands of dollars," she said. "The only other option to get this money in time was to take out a loan. I did what I had to do to be able to support myself and stay in school."

Headley, who owes roughly \$40,000 in student debt, had put off thinking about owning a home or starting a family because she was so focused on paying that off. Now, she expects half of that will be forgiven because she was a Pell grant recipient.

While white families are more likely to see a transfer of wealth from one generation to the next, the opposite is true of Black families, where children are more likely to have to support a parent once they obtain some level of financial security, said Andre M. Perry, senior fellow at the Brookings Institute.

"For many Black women, and Black people in general, many middle income people are being missed by this policy," Andre M. Perry said. "We have done everything that we were asked to do to get ahead. Go to college, go to the best schools, we're told. And as a result, we had to take on debt."

Judge orders unsealing of redacted affidavit in Trump search

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A judge ordered the Justice Department on Thursday to make public a redacted version of the affidavit it relied on when federal agents searched the Florida estate of former President Donald Trump to look for classified documents.

The directive from U.S. Magistrate Judge Bruce Reinhart came hours after federal law enforcement officials submitted under seal the portions of the affidavit that they want to keep secret as their investigation moves forward. The judge set a deadline of noon Friday for a redacted, or blacked-out, version of the document.

The order means the public could soon learn at least some additional details about what led FBI officials to search Mar-a-Lago on Aug. 8 as part of an ongoing criminal investigation. Documents already made public show the FBI retrieved from the property 11 sets of classified documents, including information marked at the top secret level.

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Search warrant affidavits typically contain vital information about an investigation, with agents spelling out to a judge the justification for why they want to search a particular property and why they believe they're likely to find evidence of a potential crime there. But affidavits routinely remain sealed during the course of pending investigations, making the judge's decision to reveal portions of it in this investigation all the more striking.

The redactions proposed by the Justice Department are likely to be extensive given the sensitivity of the investigation, lessening the likelihood that the document will offer a comprehensive look at the basis for the unprecedented search or significant insights about the direction of the probe. Yet even a redacted affidavit can contain at least some fresh revelations about the investigation, which brings fresh legal peril just as Trump lays the groundwork for another presidential run in 2024.

Federal agents are investigating potential violations of three different federal laws, including one that governs gathering, transmitting or losing defense information under the Espionage Act, according to documents already made public. The other statutes address the concealment, mutilation or removal of records and the destruction, alteration or falsification of records in federal investigations.

The Justice Department had earlier contested arguments by media organizations to make any portion of the affidavit public, saying the disclosure could contain private information about witnesses and about investigative tactics. But Reinhart, acknowledging the extraordinary public interest in the investigation, said last week that he was disinclined to keep the entire document sealed and told federal officials to submit to him in private the redactions it wanted to make.

In his order Thursday, Reinhart said the department had made compelling arguments to leave sealed broad swaths of the document that, if disclosed, would reveal grand jury information; the identities of witnesses and "uncharged parties"; and details about the investigation's "strategy, direction, scope, sources and methods."

But he also said he was satisfied "that the Government has met its burden of showing that its proposed redactions are narrowly tailored to serve the Government's legitimate interest in the integrity of the ongoing investigation and are the least onerous alternative to sealing the entire Affidavit."

Multiple news media organizations, including The Associated Press, argued in court for the disclosure of the affidavit, citing the extraordinary public interest in the federal search of a former president's home.

After the Justice Department submitted its filing under seal on Thursday, the media coalition responded by asking the judge to unseal portions of the department's brief and to direct the government, "going forward," to file publicly a redacted version of sealed documents it submits. The groups noted that significant information about the investigation is already public.

"At a minimum, any portions of the Brief that recite those facts about the investigation, without revealing additional ones not yet publicly available — in addition to any other portions that pose no threat to the investigation — should be unsealed," the news organizations wrote.

They added, "If and when additional facts come to light and are confirmed to be accurate, or certain facts no longer pose a threat to the investigation for any other reason, there is no justification for maintaining them under seal either."

California phasing out gas vehicles in climate change fight

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California set itself on a path Thursday to end the era of gas-powered cars, with air regulators adopting the world's most stringent rules for transitioning to zero-emission vehicles.

The move by the California Air Resources Board to have all new cars, pickup trucks and SUVs be electric or hydrogen by 2035 is likely to reshape the U.S. auto market, which gets 10% of its sales from the nation's most populous state.

But such a radical transformation in what people drive will also require at least 15 times more vehicle chargers statewide, a more robust energy grid and vehicles that people of all income levels can afford.

"It's going to be very hard getting to 100%," said Daniel Sperling, a board member and founding director of the Institute of Transportation Studies at the University of California, Davis. "You can't just wave your

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wand, you can't just adopt a regulation — people actually have to buy them and use them.”

Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom told state regulators two years ago to adopt a ban on gas-powered cars by 2035, one piece of California's aggressive suite of policies designed to reduce pollution and fight climate change. If the policy works as designed, California would cut emissions from vehicles in half by 2040.

Other states are expected to follow, further accelerating the production of zero-emissions vehicles.

Washington state and Massachusetts already have said they will follow California's lead and many more are likely to — New York and Pennsylvania are among 17 states that have adopted some or all of California's tailpipe emission standards that are stricter than federal rules. The European Parliament in June backed a plan to effectively prohibit the sale of gas and diesel cars in the 27-nation European Union by 2035, and Canada has mandated the sale of zero-emission cars by the same year.

California's policy doesn't ban cars that run on gas — after 2035 people can keep their existing cars or buy used ones, and 20% of sales can be plug-in hybrids that run on batteries and gas. Though hydrogen is a fuel option under the new regulations, cars that run on fuel cells have made up less than 1% of car sales in recent years.

The switch from gas will drastically reduce emissions and air pollutants. Transportation is the single largest source of emissions in the state, accounting for about 40% of the state's greenhouse gas emissions. The air board is working on different regulations for motorcycles and larger trucks.

California envisions powering most of the economy with electricity, not fossil fuels by 2045. A plan released by the air board earlier this year predicts electricity demand will shoot up by 68%. Today, the state has about 80,000 public chargers. The California Energy Commission predicted that needs to jump to 1.2 million by 2030.

The commission says car charging will account for about 4% of energy by 2030 when use is highest, typically during hot summer evenings. That's when California sometimes struggles to provide enough energy because the amount of solar power diminishes as the sun goes down. In August 2020, hundreds of thousands of people briefly lost power due to high demand that outstripped supply.

That hasn't happened since and to ensure it doesn't going forward Newsom, a Democrat, is pushing to keep open the state's last-remaining nuclear plant beyond its planned closure in 2025 and the state may turn to diesel generators or natural gas plants as a backup when the electrical grid is strained.

More than 1 million people drive electric cars in California today and their charging habits vary, but most people end up charging their cars in the evening or overnight, said Ram Rajagopal, an associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at Stanford University who has studied car charging habits and energy grid needs.

If people's charging habits stay the same, once 30% to 40% of cars are electric, the state would need to add more energy capacity overnight to meet demand, he said. The regulations adopted Thursday require 35% of vehicle sales to be electric by 2026, up from 16% now

But if more people charged their cars during the day, that problem would be avoided, he said. Changing to daytime charging is “the biggest bang for the buck you're going to get,” he said.

Both the state and federal government are spending billions to build more chargers along public roadways, at apartment complexes and elsewhere to give people more charging options.

The oil industry believes California is going too far. It's the seventh-largest oil-producing state and shouldn't wrap its entire transportation strategy around a vehicle market powered by electricity, said Tanya DeRivi, vice president for climate policy with the Western States Petroleum Association, an industry group.

“Californians should be able to choose a vehicle technology, including electric vehicles, that best fits their needs based on availability, affordability, and personal necessity,” she said.

Many car companies, like Kia, Ford and General Motors, are already on the path to making more electric cars available for sale, but some have warned that factors outside of their control like supply chain and materials issues make Californians' goals challenging.

“Automakers could have significant difficulties meeting this target given elements outside of the control of the industry,” Kia Corp.'s Laurie Holmes told the air board before its vote.

As the requirements ramp up over time, automakers could be fined up to \$20,000 per vehicle sold that falls short of the goal, though they'll have time to comply if they miss the target in a given year.

The new rules approved by the air board say that the vehicles need to be able to travel 150 miles (241 kilometers) on one charge. Federal and state rebates are also available to people who buy electric cars, and the new rules have incentives for car companies to sell electric cars at a discount to low-income buyers.

But some representatives of business groups and rural areas said they fear electric cars will be too expensive or inconvenient.

"These regulations are a big step backwards for working families and small businesses," said Gema Gonzalez Macias of the California Hispanic Chambers of Commerce.

Air board members said they are committed to keeping a close eye on equity provisions in the rules to make sure all California residents have access.

"We will not set Californians up to fail, we will not set up the other states who want to follow this regulation to fail," said Tania Pacheco-Warner, a member of the board and co-director of the Central Valley Health Policy Institute at California State University, Fresno.

Meadows, Powell testimony sought in Georgia election probe

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The prosecutor investigating whether Donald Trump and others illegally tried to influence the 2020 election in Georgia is seeking to compel testimony from more allies of the former president, including former chief of staff Mark Meadows and lawyer Sidney Powell.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis filed petitions Thursday seeking to have Meadows and Powell, as well as James "Phil" Waldron, who met with Meadows, and former Trump campaign adviser Boris Epshteyn, testify before a special grand jury in Atlanta next month.

Meadows, Trump's final chief of staff, and Powell, a dogged advocate of the president's false claims of widespread election fraud, are among the highest-profile members of Trump's circle to be summoned to testify in the probe, joining other top figures including Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani and U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham. It further raises the legal stakes for the former president as he weighs a 2024 presidential bid.

Because they don't live in Georgia, Willis has to use a process that involves getting judges in the states where they live to order them to appear. The petitions she filed Thursday are essentially precursors to subpoenas. Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney, who's overseeing the special grand jury, signed off on the petitions, certifying that each person whose testimony is sought is a "necessary and material" witness for the investigation.

Willis wrote that each of them has unique knowledge about their communications with Trump, his campaign and others "involved in the multi-state, coordinated efforts to influence the results of the November 2020 elections in Georgia and elsewhere."

George Terwilliger, a lawyer for Meadows, declined to comment Thursday. Epshteyn didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. Powell and Waldron could not immediately be reached.

Willis last month filed similar petitions for seven other Trump associates and attorneys, including Giuliani and Graham. Giuliani, who's been told he's a target of the investigation, testified before the special grand jury last week. Graham is fighting his subpoena in court.

Also on Thursday, lawyers for Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp appeared in court to argue that he shouldn't have to testify before the special grand jury. And Kenneth Chesebro, a lawyer who was part of the earlier batch of Trump associates whom Willis sought to compel to testify, filed a motion to quash his subpoena.

In the petition seeking Meadows' testimony, Willis wrote that Meadows attended a Dec. 21, 2020, meeting at the White House with Trump and others "to discuss allegations of voter fraud and certification of electoral college votes from Georgia and other states." The next day, Willis wrote, Meadows made a "surprise visit" to Cobb County, just outside Atlanta, where an audit of signatures on absentee ballot envelopes was being conducted. He asked to observe the audit but wasn't allowed to because it wasn't open to the public, the petition says.

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Between Jan. 30, 2020, and Jan. 1, 2021, Meadows sent emails to Justice Department officials making allegations of voter fraud in Georgia and elsewhere and requesting investigations, Willis wrote. He was also on a Jan. 2, 2021, phone call with Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, during which Trump suggested the state's top elections official could "find" enough votes to overturn his narrow election loss in the state.

In the petition seeking Powell's testimony, Willis wrote that Powell is "known to be affiliated with both former President Donald Trump and the Trump Campaign." The petition says attorney Lin Wood said in a television interview that Powell was part of a group who met at his home in South Carolina "for the purpose of exploring options to influence the results of the November 2020 elections in Georgia and elsewhere." Wood, who's licensed in Georgia, said Powell asked him to help find Georgia residents to serve as plaintiffs in lawsuits contesting the state's election results, Willis wrote.

In June of this year, the U.S. House committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol released a deposition of Powell in which she said that in the weeks following the 2020 election, Trump asked her to be "special counsel to address the election issues and to collect evidence," saying he was frustrated with law enforcement agencies, Willis wrote.

Last week, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation confirmed that it is helping the Georgia secretary of state's office look into an alleged breach of elections data in Coffee County in south Georgia, Willis wrote. She noted that publicly reported emails indicate that Powell coordinated with a data solutions company to get elections data from Coffee County in early January 2021 and was involved in similar efforts in Michigan and Nevada.

Special grand juries are impaneled in Georgia to investigate complex cases with large numbers of witnesses and potential logistical concerns. They can compel evidence and subpoena witnesses for questioning, but they do not have the power to indict. When its investigation is complete, the special grand jury issues a final report and can recommend action. It's then up to the district attorney to decide whether to ask a regular grand jury for an indictment.

During the hearing Thursday on Kemp's attempt to avoid testifying, his lawyers argued that he is protected from having to testify by the principle of sovereign immunity, which says the state can't be sued without its consent. Prosecutors argued that's not applicable because Kemp is not being sued but instead is being called as a witness to provide facts for an investigation.

Kemp's attorneys accuse the district attorney of pursuing a "politically motivated" probe, something she has vehemently denied.

Kemp attorney Brian McEvoy argued that, if the governor does have to testify, it shouldn't happen until after the general election. Kemp faces a rematch with Democrat Stacey Abrams in November in one of the most high-profile and closely watched gubernatorial contests in the country.

"Your Honor is well aware of where we are, what state we're in, what race we're facing, and the governor ought not have to suffer political consequences for invoking a legal right," McEvoy said.

Prosecutor Donald Wakeford noted that Willis waited until after contentious primary elections in late May to begin calling witnesses before the special grand jury for that very reason. The governor could have quietly honored a subpoena to appear last week without any media attention, Wakeford argued, but instead, his attorneys filed the motion to quash the day before, thrusting the issue into the public eye.

"To continually insist that this is a situation engineered by the district attorney's office to the intentional detriment of the governor is just not true," Wakeford said.

Judge McBurney did not immediately rule and it wasn't clear when he would.

Broken trust still felt in Uvalde as school year approaches

By ACACIA CORONADO and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas (AP) — Even though Uvalde's school police chief is now gone, Mario Jimenez doesn't feel any safer about sending his 10-year-old son back to class for the first time since his teacher was shot at Robb Elementary School.

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"There were a lot more officers that were there and they should take responsibility for their own actions," Jimenez said.

The firing of embattled Uvalde school Police Chief Pete Arredondo, who for more than 70 minutes during the May 24 massacre made no attempt to confront a gunman firing an AR-15-style rifle inside a fourth grade classroom, did not satisfy or reassure many Uvalde residents nervously facing a fast approaching school year.

The restlessness illustrates the depths of the broken trust in Uvalde between residents and law enforcement more than three months after the slaying of 19 children and two teachers in one of the deadliest classroom shootings in U.S. history. The demands are constant: more firings, more security, more gun restrictions. But even then, some are unconvinced that any change is enough.

The first day of school in Uvalde is Sept. 6 and a big question is how many students will return.

Jimenez is putting his son back in the district, this time with an iPhone so he can track his location and have him phone for help if needed. His son's teacher, Elsa Avila, was wounded in attack.

"He just runs up to her, hugs her and starts to cry because he knows that she is okay," Jimenez said. "Everyday all he does is ask about how everybody else is doing even though his mental state is horrible."

Ronnie Garza, a Uvalde County commissioner, has five grandkids returning to class next month — three to Uvalde schools and two to a private school. He has noticed a reluctance from parents to reenroll their children in the district and said many families are switching their children to the local private Catholic school.

Virtual schooling is another option, but a new Texas law passed during the pandemic caps the number of students who can learn at home to 10% of a district's enrollment. The Uvalde school district has not requested a waiver, according to the Texas Education Agency.

The district is installing higher fences, more security cameras and spreading more than 30 state troopers on campuses across the small South Texas town. To some families, that provides little peace of mind; the Texas Department of Public Safety had more than 90 troopers, many heavily armed, who were at Robb Elementary as the massacre dragged on.

"They were on campus that day and they also didn't do anything, so I don't know how much comfort that brings to us," said Kimberly Rubio, whose 10-year-old daughter, Lexi, was among the students killed.

She has four other children between the ages of 8 and 18, the youngest of whom was also at Robb Elementary and now may do school virtually this year.

"They failed me, they failed us. I don't know that I will ever be the same after this as far as law enforcement," she said.

Arredondo's dismissal Wednesday followed months of pressure from Uvalde residents and investigations that revealed how nearly 400 law enforcement officers on the scene waited outside for more than an hour before they took down the 18-year-old gunman. Signs carried by parents into a heated school board meeting ahead of Arredondo's firing included one that read, "If you did not do your job, turn in your badge."

But it is not clear whether any officers besides Arredondo will have to do so over a fumbled response that Col. Steve McCraw, the head of the state police force, has called "an abject failure." Only one other officer, Uvalde Police Lt. Mariano Pargas — who was the city's acting police chief on the day of massacre — is known to have been placed on leave for their actions during the shooting.

An investigation into Pargas' actions is ongoing. Texas DPS also launched an internal review over the response by its troopers after a damning report by lawmakers revealed that the lengthy inaction by law enforcement went beyond Arredondo and local police.

It is not clear when either review will finish.

"Every officer that was in there that did nothing, we are going to go after them too," said Donna Torres, a Uvalde resident who since the shooting has demanded accountability at school board and city council meetings.

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott called Arredondo's dismissal "the first step for accountability." Abbott's first comments after the shooting praised the law enforcement response but said days later he had been misled, a reversal that laid bare the conflicting and at times inaccurate statements by authorities in the

days after the tragedy.

"This is a good start, but there is more work to be done," Abbott said in a statement. "There must be accountability at all levels in the response at Robb Elementary School."

Student loan crisis awaits new generation despite Biden plan

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — For millions of Americans, President Joe Biden's student loan cancellation offers a life-changing chance to escape the burden of debt. But for future generations of students, it doesn't fix the underlying reason for the crisis: the rising cost of college.

The specter of heavy debt will still loom over current high school seniors — and everyone after them — since the debt cancellation only applies to those who took out federal student loans before July 1.

Among the main causes is rising college tuition: Today's four-year universities charge an average of nearly \$17,000 a year in tuition and mandatory fees, more than double the inflation-adjusted average from 30 years ago, according to federal data.

Biden's failure to tackle the broader problem drew reproach from Republicans along with some of his fellow Democrats.

Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nev., said the loan cancellation "doesn't address the root problems that make college unaffordable." Instead she called for expanded Pell Grants reserved for low-income students, and targeted forgiveness for borrowers in need. Other critics included Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo., who said the forgiveness should have been joined by action to address the "absurd" cost of college.

"We cannot continue to trap another generation of Americans in this cruel cycle," Bennet said.

The issue is top of mind for 17-year-old Ariel Wolfe. The high-school senior in Borden, Indiana, has older siblings who qualify for forgiveness, but she won't. Wolfe has saved about \$2,000 for college and hopes to avoid loans, but she doesn't know if she can. She wishes Biden's debt plan, or something like it, would be available to her and her peers, saying it would be "an incentive to have more people go to college."

In Olathe, Kansas, high-school senior Natalie Ren said it's frustrating that today's college students will get relief but her class, less than a year away from college, won't.

"So to me, it's just like, Well, why are they getting the \$10,000 taken off of their student loan debt?" said Ren, 17. "Meanwhile, we're still going to have to take on that full responsibility."

There's no doubt that Biden's debt forgiveness plan has a big upside for many Americans, if it survives the court challenges that are likely coming. More than 20 million will be eligible to get their federal student debt erased entirely, and 23 million more could get it reduced, the administration said. The plan cancels \$10,000 per borrower and another \$10,000 for Pell Grant recipients, for those who earn less than \$125,000 a year or \$250,000 per household.

Biden also extended a pandemic-era pause on federal student loan payments for what he called the "final time." Payments are now expected to restart in January.

But without broader action, the nation's federal student loan debt will return to today's levels — \$1.6 trillion — within five years of the cancellation, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a nonprofit that advocates for lower deficits.

"This doesn't fundamentally solve the student debt problem," said Marc Goldwein, the budget group's senior policy director. "It will be a one-time clean slate that wipes a bunch of people off the rolls. But they're just going to be replaced by new borrowers."

It also creates an expectation that future presidents may forgive some share of student debt, which could make borrowers feel safer taking on debt and in turn encourage colleges to raise prices further, Goldwein said.

"This has the potential to worsen college affordability," he said.

Even higher-education leaders said Biden's plan should be seen only as a first step toward college affordability. The American Council on Education, a group that represents college and university leaders, called on Congress to simplify repayment options and limit student loan interest, among other changes.

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"To avoid forcing current and future students into the same debt morass, we must act in a comprehensive manner to modernize the federal student loan program," said Ted Mitchell, the group's president.

Mitchell pointed to state cuts in higher education as a "big reason" for tuition increases at public universities and more student debt.

Anticipating criticism, Biden's plan came with a separate proposal that aims to lower federal student debt payments in the future. The proposed regulation would create a new repayment plan with monthly payments capped at no more than 5% of a borrower's discretionary income, down from 10% in similar existing plans.

It would also forgive any remaining balance after 10 years — down from 20 years in existing options — and it would raise the floor for repayments, meaning no one earning less than 225% of the federal poverty level would need to make monthly payments.

The idea was well received even by some critics, but taken as a whole, many saw the moment as a missed chance to pursue broader changes.

Major updates to the federal student debt system would require approval from Congress, but there has been bipartisan support for an overhaul. There are disagreements about the details, but lawmakers from both parties have shown support for expanded Pell Grants, simplified loan repayment options and a system to hold colleges accountable when their students get stuck with debt they can't afford.

Instead of canceling debt, critics say the Biden administration should have brokered a deal to overhaul the federal loan system through legislation.

"It's a real disappointment that we didn't see that happen, and that instead we had this effort which to me is much more of a political solution than a policy one," said Beth Akers, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank.

Others question whether a sharply divided Congress would be able to reach an accord even on student debt. Biden previously pushed hard for free community college, which many Democrats see as an answer to rising debt, but he was ultimately unable to get unified support even from his own party.

After Biden's free community college proposal was cut from a spending bill last year, he vowed to make it happen "in the next several years," but the effort has yet to be revived.

Even without a federal program, a growing number of cities and states have experimented with free college programs of their own in recent years.

Still the momentum around student debt has sparked hope that broader change is possible. Responding to Biden's plan, Democratic Rep. Bobby Scott of Virginia, chair of the House education and labor committee, called on Congress to take the next step. He said it will take "bold action" to make sure every student gets an education that leads to a good career.

Without bigger investments in education and improvements to the federal loan system, he said, "students will continue to take on more debt and borrowers will continue to face rising debt levels."

Voting machine tampering points to concern for fall election

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY and COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — On the last day of voting in Colorado's June primary, a poll worker sent to wipe down a voting machine found a concerning error message on its screen: "USB device change detected."

The machine, used to mark ballots electronically, was taken out of use and an investigation launched. The message raised concerns that a voter had tried to tamper with it by inserting an off-the-shelf thumb drive.

The incident heightened concerns among election officials and security experts that conspiracy theories related to the 2020 presidential election could inspire some voters to meddle with — or even attempt to sabotage — election equipment. Even unsuccessful breaches, like the apparent one in the county south of Colorado Springs, could become major problems in the November general election, when turnout will be greater and the stakes higher — causing delays at polling places or sowing the seeds of misinformation campaigns.

Activists who promote the false claim that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from former Presi-

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dent Donald Trump have been traveling the country peddling a narrative that electronic voting machines are being manipulated. They have specifically targeted equipment made by Dominion Voting Systems, which has filed several defamation lawsuits and said that post-election reviews in state after state have shown its tallies to be accurate.

"This is yet another example of how lies about Dominion have damaged our company and diminished the credibility of U.S. elections," company spokesperson Stephanie Walstrom said in a statement to The Associated Press.

Despite no evidence of widespread fraud or manipulation in the 2020 election, the voting machine conspiracies have sunk in with a wide swath of Republican voters. Many of them have berated county commissions throughout the country, seeking to ditch voting equipment in favor of hand-marking and hand-counting all ballots.

The incident in Pueblo County highlights a troubling reality, that any voter propelled by conspiracy theories could try to tamper with voting machines.

"You get people motivated and activated, and who knows what they are going to come up with to fight machines they don't trust," said election technology expert Kevin Skoglund.

While it's difficult to stop such vigilante attempts, experts say the nation's election infrastructure is well-positioned to detect them quickly, as the Colorado county was able to do. Not only does election security involve layers of defenses, but a majority of the country now uses hand-marked paper ballots. That means an accurate tally can be reached in case something does go wrong and the results questioned.

Perhaps more concerning is what could happen during the time election officials are investigating a suspected attack and working to validate the results. That's when people can exploit the uncertainty and sow doubt about the election outcome.

"We've got so many layers of security and protections that have built over years," said Michigan's Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson. "The bigger threats are outside infiltration, as opposed to the machines themselves, and that's what we're trying to prepare for — because that's the greatest system of unknowns."

False claims by Trump and his allies that the 2020 presidential election was rigged have been widely debunked and discredited, with no evidence of widespread fraud or manipulation substantiated nearly two years after the election. Numerous judges, some appointed by Trump, dismissed lawsuits filed after the election, while Trump's own attorney general said the Justice Department found no fraud that would have changed the results.

Lies about the 2020 election have led to security breaches at some local election offices, including one in Mesa County, Colorado. Authorities in a handful of states are investigating whether officials provided access to their voting systems to conspiracy theorists.

Those concerns are adding to worries about the physical security of the machines, which should never be left unsecured. At polling places, the workers are trained to keep a close eye on equipment and flag anything suspicious.

Election officials also use locks and tamper-evident seals, so it becomes apparent if someone has tried to access voting equipment. Trigger alerts make machines inoperable if someone tries to tamper with them, which is what happened in Colorado on June 28.

Late in the afternoon, poll workers at the Pueblo County vote center heard noises coming from a voting booth. When a poll worker went to investigate and clean the machine, they saw the error message and notified a supervisor. Law enforcement and state election officials were immediately told of the incident.

What triggered the error message is part of the security protocols that protect voting machines.

Election officials can take measures to ensure that unauthorized devices don't infect voting equipment. They can configure their systems to recognize only proprietary devices, such as USB drives from the voting system manufacturer, or employ a system that allows connections only with devices containing a pre-authorized digital signature.

If someone attempts to insert any unauthorized USB device, an error message appears, and the machine won't work unless someone with administrator-level access overrides it.

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In the Pueblo County case, the tamper-evident seal on the voting machine appeared to be disturbed. The case remains under investigation, and prosecutors are reviewing evidence.

This year, Colorado lawmakers broadened the definition of tampering with election equipment and strengthened the penalty for it. Formerly a misdemeanor offense with a penalty of up to 364 days in jail, it is now a felony punishable by up to three years in prison.

"Lies about America's elections are causing security risks," said Colorado Secretary of State Jena Griswold. "Any actor who tries to subvert the will of the people should be held responsible under the law."

Federal officials have been working with those on the state and local levels to improve their security defenses since voting systems were designated as "critical infrastructure" after the 2016 election — along with banks, dams and nuclear power plants.

State and local election officials who weren't already doing so have added locks, video camera surveillance of equipment storage locations and door access cards to limit those who can enter secure areas. Other security steps include limiting access to voting equipment to only those who need it and ensuring that sensitive systems are not connected to the internet.

"I have high confidence that jurisdictions are putting the necessary tools in place to be able to prevent and detect any kind of nefarious activities," said Kim Wyman, who leads election security efforts at the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

In Pueblo County, election officials are preparing for every possibility during the November general election. Gilbert "Bo" Ortiz oversees elections as the clerk and recorder in Pueblo County, which Trump narrowly won in 2016 but lost four years later.

Ortiz sees a bit of irony in efforts by those who question the outcome of the 2020 presidential election, whether it's flooding his office with record requests, demanding recounts or attempting to tamper with equipment.

"All they are doing is proving the integrity of our system," Ortiz said.

2 plead guilty in scheme to sell Biden's daughter's diary

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Two Florida residents have pleaded guilty in a scheme to peddle a diary and other items stolen from President Joe Biden's daughter to the conservative group Project Veritas for \$40,000, prosecutors said Thursday.

Aimee Harris and Robert Kurlander "sought to profit from their theft of another person's personal property," Manhattan U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said in a statement.

Harris, a 40-year-old from Palm Beach, and Kurlander, 58, of nearby Jupiter, face the possibility of up to five years in prison. They pleaded guilty to conspiracy to transport stolen property across state lines.

Harris' lawyer, Sam Talkin, said she "has accepted responsibility for her conduct and looks forward to moving on with her life." Kurlander's lawyer, Florian Miedel, declined to comment.

While authorities didn't identify anyone in the case except the defendants, the details of the investigation have been public for months.

Ashley Biden, the president's daughter, was moving out of a friend's Delray Beach, Florida, home in spring 2020 when she stored the diary and other belongings there, prosecutors said in a court filing.

They said Harris then moved into the same room, found the items and got in touch with Kurlander, who enthused in a text message that he would help her make a "ton of money" from selling it, adding an expletive before "ton."

The two initially aimed to sell some of the purloined property to then-President Donald Trump's campaign, but a representative turned them down and told them to take the material to the FBI, according to the court papers.

The campaign "can't use this," Kurlander explained to Harris in a September 2020 text message, adding: "It has to be done a different way."

Their next stop was Project Veritas, which paid for the two to bring some of the material — including the

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diary and a digital device with family photos — to a New York luxury hotel, prosecutors said.

Project Veritas staffers met with Kurlander and Harris in New York and agreed to pay an initial \$10,000, saying more money could come if they retrieved more of Ashley Biden's items from the home, partly in order to authenticate the diary, according to the court filing.

Back in Florida, Kurlander texted Harris a blunt assessment of what would come of the exchange, prosecutors said.

"They are in a sketchy business and here they are taking what's literally a stolen diary and info ... and trying to make a story that will ruin" Ashley Biden's life and possibly affect the impending presidential election, he wrote, according to the court papers. He added that the two needed "to tread even more carefully" and get "anything worthwhile" out of the Delray Beach house, according to the court papers.

Prosecutors said Kurlander and Harris took Ashley Biden's stored tax documents, clothes and luggage as Kurlander pressed Project Veritas in a message to commit to a bigger payout: "We are taking huge risks. This isn't fair."

A Project Veritas staffer soon flew to Florida, the employee shipped the items to New York and the group paid Harris and Kurlander \$20,000 apiece, prosecutors said.

Project Veritas identifies itself as a news organization. It is best known for conducting hidden camera stings that have embarrassed news outlets, labor organizations and Democratic politicians.

"Project Veritas's news gathering was ethical and legal" in the diary affair, the group said in a statement Thursday. The organization said earlier that it turned the journal over to law enforcement after receiving it from "tipsters" who maintained that it had been abandoned in a room.

"A journalist's lawful receipt of material later alleged to be stolen is routine, commonplace and protected by the First Amendment," Project Veritas added Thursday.

Neither Project Veritas nor any staffers have been charged with a crime.

The FBI searched the group's New York offices and the homes of some of its employees as part of the investigation. A court in New York appointed a former federal judge to review material that was seized in those searches, so as to ensure that investigators couldn't look at material protected by journalistic or attorney-client privileges.

Generally, media organizations aren't culpable for receiving material that might have been stolen, if they weren't involved in the theft. But there can be criminal liability for orchestrating theft and then knowingly paying for stolen material.

"There is no First Amendment protection for the theft and interstate transport of stolen property," the U.S. attorney's office wrote in a court filing last year.

O'Keefe has said that Project Veritas ultimately could not confirm that the diary belonged to Ashley Biden. The group did not publish information from it.

He added that there was "no doubt Project Veritas acted appropriately at each and every step."

Ashley Biden, a 41-year-old social worker, is the daughter of the president and of first lady Jill Biden. His eldest daughter and his first wife were killed in a 1972 car accident.

Three more GOP-led states enact abortion 'trigger laws'

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Three more Republican-led states banned almost all abortions this week as yet another slate of laws severely limiting the procedure took effect following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

To date, 13 states have passed so-called trigger laws that were designed to outlaw most abortions if the high court threw out the constitutional right to end a pregnancy. The majority of those states began enforcing their bans soon after the June 24 decision, but Idaho, Tennessee and Texas had to wait 30 days beyond when the justices formally entered the judgment, which happened several weeks after the ruling was announced.

That deadline was up Thursday. A fourth state, North Dakota, had its trigger ban blocked Thursday by a

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judge who is weighing an abortion clinic's legal challenge on grounds that it violates the state constitution.

The change will not be dramatic. All of these states except North Dakota already had anti-abortion laws in place that largely blocked patients from accessing the procedure. And the majority of the clinics that provided abortions in those areas have either stopped offering those services or moved to other states where abortion remains legal.

Texas, the country's second-largest state, has banned most abortions once fetal cardiac activity has been detected, which can be as early as six weeks into pregnancy, before many women know they're pregnant. The ban has been in place for almost a year, since courts refused to stop the law last September.

While clinics were severely limited in the services they could provide during that time, they officially stopped offering abortions on the day of the Supreme Court ruling. Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton argued that state laws that banned abortion before *Roe v. Wade* could be enforced ahead of the implementation of the trigger law.

Much like Texas' current abortion ban, the trigger law does not include exceptions for rape or incest. Instead it has a loophole if a woman's life or health is in danger.

The political response to the change was swift: Democrat Beto O'Rourke chose Thursday to unveil the first TV ads in his campaign against Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who signed off on the statute.

One of the ads includes a voice-over saying some women will die because of the law.

"From this day forward," the ad begins, "women all across Texas are no longer free to make decisions about our own body."

Meanwhile, Texas has challenged a legal interpretation put forth by the federal government that was aimed at requiring Texas hospitals to provide abortion services if the life of the mother is at risk. On Wednesday, a federal judge temporarily blocked the government from enforcing that interpretation.

Texas argued that the federal guidance would have required hospitals to provide abortions before the mother's life is clearly at risk, which would have violated the state's trigger law.

A similar situation played out in Idaho, but there a federal judge ruled Wednesday that the state's abortion ban violated federal law.

U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winmill said the state could not enforce its abortion ban in cases where pregnant patients were experiencing a medical emergency that seriously threatened their lives or health. Idaho's abortion ban makes all abortions felonies, but allows physicians to defend themselves in court by arguing that the procedure was necessary to save the life of the mother or done in cases of rape or incest.

Over in Tennessee, just two of the six clinics that provide abortions continued to offer the service after *Roe* was overturned. They did so even as Tennessee enacted a "heartbeat law" similar to the one passed in Texas. Under both the new trigger law and the previous heartbeat law, doctors who violate the law risk felony convictions and up to 15 years in prison.

Operating after the high court's abortion ruling has been at times a "painful" experience, said Melissa Grant, chief operations officer of carafem, which has had a Nashville clinic since 2019. The legal environment has required difficult conversations between staffers and patients who may be unaware how early in pregnancy cardiac activity can be detected.

Because Tennessee requires patients to wait 48 hours before getting an abortion, Grant says her staff has seen some patients qualify for the procedure during an initial visit only to be turned away two days later because an ultrasound picked up fetal cardiac activity.

"When we find that we do ultimately have to turn somebody away, whether it's the first visit, the second visit, the conversations can be very emotional — primarily anger, fear, grief, sometimes disbelief," she said.

The situation is similar in Memphis, where abortion providers at the region's lone operating clinic say they turned away nearly 100 patients who did not qualify for an abortion during their second visit, said Jennifer Pepper, chief executive officer of CHOICES: Memphis Center for Reproductive Health.

That stress compounded in the days leading up to the trigger law deadline. As the last appointments took place, the staff had to weigh each patient's situation against the likelihood that they would qualify under Tennessee's already sharp restrictions and their ability to travel out of state.

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CHOICES was the first abortion clinic to open in Memphis in 1974, and on Thursday it will become the last. The clinic is bracing for the change by increasing its midwife resources, expanding the birth center and offering gender-affirming care. It is also opening a second location in Carbondale, Illinois, a three-hour drive to the north.

The staff planned to gather Friday to “celebrate how we’ve served thousands of our patients. We’re starting a new chapter, but it is not our last chapter,” Pepper said.

In Idaho, the federal government argued that Medicaid-funded hospitals must provide “stabilizing treatment” to patients experiencing medical emergencies despite its trigger law.

Much of Idaho’s law went into effect Thursday, but due to the federal judge’s ruling Wednesday, the state cannot prosecute anyone who is performing an abortion in a medical emergency.

Most abortions in Idaho were effectively banned on Aug. 12, when the Idaho Supreme Court allowed a different law to go into effect allowing potential relatives of an embryo or fetus to sue abortion providers.

In North Dakota, lawyers for the state’s only abortion clinic, which recently moved a few miles to Minnesota, won a delay Thursday as they pursue a lawsuit challenging the ban. Burleigh County District Judge Bruce Romanick said he was not ruling on the probability of the clinic winning the lawsuit, rather that more time is needed to make a proper judgment.

Tweaked COVID boosters close but how much will they help?

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

COVID-19 vaccines tweaked to better match today’s omicron threat are expected to roll out in a few weeks but still up in the air is how much benefit the booster shots will offer, who should get one -- and how soon.

Pfizer and rival Moderna both asked U.S. regulators this week to authorize modified versions of their booster vaccine — shots that are half the original recipe and half protection against BA.4 and BA.5, the newest versions of omicron.

The Food and Drug Administration ordered that recipe and now is evaluating what scientists call a “bi-valent vaccine,” with a decision expected soon.

Dr. Peter Marks, the FDA’s vaccine chief, said Thursday that once authorized, the tweaked boosters could help right away — while BA.5 infections still are too high — as well as hopefully blunt yet another winter surge.

Marks told the Associated Press that the new boosters could rev up the immune system to prevent not just serious illness but maybe milder infections, too, like the original vaccines did earlier in the pandemic, before super-contagious mutants emerged.

“The hope here is that by better matching things, not only will we get that benefit or even more, but we’ll also have that last for a longer period of time,” he said.

WHY DID FDA ORDER A RECIPE CHANGE?

BA.5 currently is causing nearly all COVID-19 infections in the U.S. and much of the world. Current COVID-19 vaccines match the coronavirus strain that circulated in early 2020. And while those vaccinations still offer strong protection against serious illness or death from COVID-19, there’s little effectiveness against infection from the wildly mutated omicron family.

The first update to the recipe is an important but expected next step — like how flu vaccines get updated every year. True next-generation vaccines are still in development.

“We need to give a clear, forward-looking set of expectations,” said University of Pennsylvania immunologist E. John Wherry, who compares vaccine tweaks to periodically updating your computer software.

The gamble is that BA.5, or something similar, still will be circulating through the winter. (Vaccines target the spike protein that coat the coronavirus, and the BA.4 and BA.5 spikes are identical although those strains vary in other ways.)

HOW WERE THE MODIFIED SHOTS TESTED?

Pfizer and Moderna both studied an earlier tweak to their vaccines that targets the original omicron,

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called BA.1, that hit last winter, as well as even earlier variants.

To evaluate the combo shots, FDA is using data from human testing of the BA.1-tweaked doses plus mice tests of the BA.5-targeted version that Marks said show “a very good immune response.”

Human data on the newest tweak will come later in the year, to help assess the value of modified shots — especially whether they offer cross-protection if a new mutant comes along, Marks said. Moderna has started a clinical trial of its BA.5 combo shot; Pfizer and its partner BioNTech expect to open a similar study soon.

WILL THEY WORK BETTER?

No one knows. Dr. Paul Offit, a vaccine expert at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and an FDA vaccine adviser, said the antibody jump from that earlier BA.1-tweaked candidate was “underwhelming.”

“What the administration is asking us to do is to accept this bivalent vaccine as significantly better” than another dose of today’s vaccine, he said. “It would be nice if there were data to support that.”

But while FDA hasn’t made a final decision, Marks said there’s evidence that the updated boosters are safe and that waiting for more study of their effectiveness would risk another mutant appearing before they could roll out.

They “essentially refresh the immune response,” he said. “Granted, it’s still a bit of a guess how long it will last but, this is doing our best.”

Given how outdated the current shots are, an update makes sense, said Dr. Walter Orenstein of Emory University, a former vaccine director at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While he’d like to see more data, he plans to get the new booster.

WHO SHOULD GET AN UPDATED SHOT?

That’s up to the CDC, which called a meeting of its influential vaccine advisers next Thursday and Friday to help decide.

Pfizer wants to open its updated boosters to everyone 12 and older who’s already had a primary series of today’s vaccine, while Moderna has applied only for adult use. CDC will determine if people at highest risk should go first. Studies of doses for younger children are expected later in the year.

A government rollout plan anticipates that people who’ve already gotten their initial vaccinations would qualify for one of the new combination shots, regardless of how many boosters they’ve already had.

WHEN SHOULD THOSE ELIGIBLE GET THE NEW BOOSTER?

Marks is aiming for a very simple message: “It’s probably going to be everyone who has not had a booster within the past X number of months should go out and get the booster in a timely manner,” he said. Officials still have to decide just how many months, though.

How long to wait after your last vaccine dose or an infection is a critical decision, immunologists agree. That’s because if you still have a lot of antibodies in your bloodstream, they’ll counteract the brand new antibodies that the vaccine dose is supposed to produce.

So if you already got a booster in July or August and then seek the new combo shot in September, “you’ll receive very little additional boosting from that,” Penn’s Wherry said. He recommends waiting four to six months.

The CDC also will weigh in after after considering how many doses will be available in early September versus later in the fall. The Biden administration has purchased more than 170 million doses.

WILL PEOPLE ROLL UP THEIR SLEEVES AGAIN?

Americans have been reluctant to keep up with COVID-19 vaccinations. While three-quarters of Americans 12 and older have gotten their initial vaccinations, only half got a first booster shot -- deemed crucial for the best protection against variants. And just a third of people 50 and older who were advised to get a second booster when omicron arrived did so.

Ukrainian nuclear plant temporarily cut off from power grid

By FRANK JORDANS and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

NIKOPOL, Ukraine (AP) — The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in the middle of the fighting in Ukraine was temporarily knocked offline Thursday because of fire damage to a transmission line, causing a black-

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out across the region and heightening fears of a catastrophe in a country still haunted by the Chernobyl disaster.

The complex, Europe's largest nuclear plant, has been occupied by Russian forces and run by Ukrainian workers since the early days of the 6-month-old war. Ukraine alleges Russia is essentially holding the plant hostage, storing weapons there and launching attacks from around it, while Moscow accuses Ukraine of recklessly firing on the facility.

On Thursday, the plant was cut off from the electrical grid after fires damaged the last operating regular transmission line, according to Ukraine's nuclear power agency, Energoatom. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy blamed Russian shelling and said the plant's emergency backup diesel generators had to be activated to supply power needed to run the plant.

"Russia has put Ukraine and all Europeans one step away from a radiation disaster," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address.

Zaporizhzhia's Russian-installed regional governor, Yevgeny Balitsky, blamed the transmission-line damage on a Ukrainian attack.

It was not immediately clear whether the damaged line carried outgoing electricity or incoming power, needed for the reactors' vital cooling systems. A backup line supplying electricity from another plant remained in place, Energoatom said.

But Zelenskyy's mention of the emergency generators being activated raised questions of whether the cooling systems were endangered. A loss of cooling could cause a nuclear meltdown.

As a result of the transmission-line damage, the two reactors still in use out of the plant's six went offline, Balitsky said, but one was quickly restored, as was electricity to the region.

Many nuclear plants are designed to automatically shut down or at least reduce reactor output in the event of a loss of outgoing transmission lines. The U.N.'s International Atomic Agency said Ukraine informed it that the reactors' emergency protection systems were triggered, and all safety systems remained operational.

The three regular transmission lines at the plant are out of service because of previous war damage. "Anybody who understands nuclear safety issues has been trembling for the last six months," Mycle Schneider, a consultant and coordinator of the World Nuclear Industry Status Report, said before the latest incident.

Ukraine cannot simply shut down its nuclear plants during the war because it is heavily reliant on them. Its 15 reactors at four stations provide about half of its electricity. Still, an armed conflict near a working atomic plant is troubling for many experts and people living nearby.

That fear is palpable just across the Dnieper River in Nikopol, where residents have been under nearly constant Russian shelling since July 12, with eight people killed, 850 buildings damaged and over half the population of 100,000 fleeing the city.

Liudmyla Shyshkina, a 74-year-old widow who lived within sight of the Zaporizhzhia plant before her apartment was bombarded and her husband killed, said she believes the Russians are capable of intentionally causing a nuclear disaster.

Zelenskyy has accused Russia of "nuclear blackmail" at Zaporizhzhia. Fighting in early March caused a brief fire at the plant's training complex that officials said did not result in the release of any radiation.

While no civilian nuclear plant is designed for a wartime situation, Zaporizhzhia's reactors are protected by reinforced concrete containment domes that could withstand an errant shell, experts say.

The more immediate concern is that a disruption in the electrical supply could knock out cooling systems essential for the reactors' safe operation. Emergency diesel generators can be unreliable.

The pools where spent fuel rods are kept while they cool are also vulnerable to shelling, which could scatter radioactive material.

Kyiv told the IAEA that shelling earlier this week damaged transformers at a nearby conventional power plant, disrupting the supplies of electricity to the Zaporizhzhia plant for several hours.

The atomic agency's head, Rafael Mariano Grossi, said Thursday he hopes to send a team to the plant within days.

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Negotiations over how the team would access the plant are complicated but advancing, he said on France-24 television.

"Kyiv accepts it. Moscow accepts it. So we need to go there," Grossi said.

At a U.N. Security Council meeting Tuesday, U.N. political chief Rosemary DiCarlo urged the withdrawal of all troops and military equipment from the plant and an agreement on a demilitarized zone around it.

Speaking before Thursday's incident, one expert explained that power is essential to cool not just the reactors but also the spent radioactive fuel.

"If we lose the last one, we are at the total mercy of emergency power generators," said Najmedin Meshkati, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Southern California.

He and Schneider expressed concern that the occupation of the plant by Russian forces is also hampering safety inspections and the replacement of critical parts, and is putting severe strain on hundreds of Ukrainian staff who operate the facility.

"Human error probability will be increased manifold by fatigue," said Meshkati, part of a committee appointed by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences to identify lessons from the 2011 nuclear disaster at Japan's Fukushima plant. "Fatigue and stress are unfortunately two big safety factors."

If an incident at the Zaporizhzhia plant were to release radiation, the scale of the crisis would be determined largely by the winds and other weather conditions.

The massive earthquake and tsunami that hit the Fukushima plant destroyed cooling systems, triggering meltdowns in three of its reactors. Much of the contaminated material was blown out to sea, limiting the damage.

The April 26, 1986, explosion and fire at one of four reactors at the Chernobyl plant north of Kyiv sent a cloud of radioactive material across a wide swath of Europe and beyond.

Zaporizhzhia's reactors are of a different model from those at Chernobyl, but unfavorable winds could still spread radioactive contamination in any direction, said Paul Dorfman, a nuclear safety expert at the University of Sussex who has advised the British and Irish governments.

"If something really went wrong, then we have a full-scale radiological catastrophe that could reach Europe, go as far as the Middle East, and certainly could reach Russia, but the most significant contamination would be in the immediate area," he said.

That's why Nikopol's emergency services department has been taking radiation measurements every hour since the Russian invasion. Before that, it was every four hours.

Putin orders troop replenishment in face of Ukraine losses

By DEREK GATOPOULOS and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a major buildup of his country's military forces Thursday in an apparent effort to replenish troops that have suffered heavy losses in six months of bloody warfare and prepare for a long, grinding fight ahead in Ukraine.

The move to increase the number of troops by 137,000, or 13%, to 1.15 million by the end of the year came amid chilling developments on the ground in Ukraine:

— Fueling fears of a nuclear catastrophe, the Zaporizhzhia power plant in the middle of the fighting in southern Ukraine was briefly knocked out of commission by fire damage to a transmission line, authorities said. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the plant's emergency backup diesel generators had to be activated to provide power needed to operate the plant.

"Russia has put Ukraine and all Europeans one step away from a radiation disaster," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address.

— The death toll from a Russian rocket attack on a train station and the surrounding area climbed to 25, Ukrainian authorities said. Russia said it targeted a military train and claimed to have killed more than 200 Ukrainian reservists in the attack, which took place Wednesday on Ukraine's Independence Day.

Putin's decree did not specify whether the expansion would be accomplished by widening the draft, recruiting more volunteers, or both. But some Russian military analysts predicted heavier reliance on vol-

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unteers because of the Kremlin's concerns about a potential domestic backlash from an expanded draft.

The move will boost Russia's armed forces overall to 2.04 million, including the 1.15 million troops.

Western estimates of Russian dead in the Ukraine war have ranged from more than 15,000 to over 20,000 — more than the Soviet Union lost during its 10-year war in Afghanistan. The Pentagon said last week that as many as 80,000 Russian troops have been killed or wounded, eroding Moscow's ability to conduct big offensives.

The Kremlin has said that only volunteer contract soldiers take part in the Ukraine war. But it may be difficult to find more willing soldiers, and military analysts said the planned troop levels may still be insufficient to sustain operations.

Retired Russian Col. Retired Viktor Murakhovsky said in comments carried by the Moscow-based RBC online news outlet that the Kremlin will probably try to keep relying on volunteers, and he predicted that will account for the bulk of the increase.

Another Russian military expert, Alexei Leonkov, noted that training on complex modern weapons normally takes three years. And draftees serve only one year.

"A draft won't help that, so there will be no increase in the number of draftees," the state RIA Novosti news agency quoted Leonkov as saying.

Fears of a Chernobyl-like disaster have been mounting in Ukraine because of fighting around the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia plant. Ukraine and Russia have accused each other of shelling the site.

In the incident on Thursday, the plant was cut off from the electrical grid, causing a blackout across the region, according to authorities. The complex was later reconnected to the grid, a local Russian-installed official said.

It was not immediately clear from Ukrainian energy authorities whether the damaged line carried outgoing electricity or incoming power to operate the plant. But Zelenskyy's mention of the emergency generators implied that incoming power was affected. Incoming electricity is needed to run the reactors' vital cooling systems.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine would have faced a radiation accident if the diesel generators had failed to turn on.

He blamed the fire that damaged the transmission line on Russian shelling. But Zaporizhzhia's Russian-installed regional governor, Yevgeny Balitsky, blamed a Ukrainian attack.

While the incident apparently didn't affect the reactors' cooling systems — whose loss could lead to a meltdown — it stoked fears of disaster.

"The situation is extremely dangerous," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said. "I'm receiving reports that there are fires in the forest near the power plant. We still have to examine this issue more."

Elsewhere on the battle front, the deadly strike on the train station in Chaplyne, a town of about 3,500 in the central Dnipropetrovsk region, came as Ukraine was bracing for attacks tied to the national holiday and the war's six-month mark, both of which fell on Wednesday.

The deputy head of the Ukrainian presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, did not say whether all of the 25 people killed were civilians. If they were, it would amount to one of the deadliest attacks on civilians in weeks. Thirty-one people were reported wounded.

Witnesses said some of the victims, including at least one child, burned to death in train cars or passing automobiles.

"Everything sank into dust," said Olena Budnyk, a 65-year-old Chaplyne resident. "There was a dust storm. We couldn't see anything. We didn't know where to run."

The dead included an 11-year-old boy found under the rubble of a house and a 6-year-old killed in a car fire near the train station, authorities said.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its forces used an Iskander missile to strike a military train carrying Ukrainian troops and equipment to the front line in eastern Ukraine. The ministry claimed more than 200 reservists "were destroyed on their way to the combat zone."

The attack served as a painful reminder of Russia's continued ability to inflict large-scale suffering. Wednesday's national holiday celebrated Ukraine's 1991 declaration of independence from the Soviet Union.

Tetyana Kvitnytska, deputy head of the Dnipropetrovsk regional health department, said those hurt in

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the train station attack suffered head injuries, broken limbs, burns and shrapnel wounds.

Following attacks in which civilians have died, the Russian government has repeatedly claimed that its forces aim only at legitimate military targets. Hours before the bloodshed at the train station, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu insisted the military was doing its best to spare civilians, even at the cost of slowing down its offensive in Ukraine.

In April, a Russian missile attack on a train station in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk killed more than 50 people as crowds of mostly women and children sought to flee the fighting. The attack was denounced as a war crime.

In Moscow on Thursday, Dmitry Medvedev, the secretary of Russia's Security Council, said Western hopes for a Ukrainian victory are futile and emphasized that the Kremlin will press home what it calls the "special military operation," leaving just two possible outcomes.

"One is reaching all goals of the special military operation and Kyiv's recognition of this outcome," Medvedev said on his messaging app channel. "The second is a military coup in Ukraine followed by the recognition of results of the special operation."

Nebraska school officials close newspaper after LGBTQ issue

GRAND ISLAND, Neb. (AP) — Administrators at a Nebraska school shuttered the school's award-winning student newspaper just days after its last edition that included articles and editorials on LGBTQ issues, leading press freedom advocates to call the move an act of censorship.

The staff of Northwest Public Schools' 54-year-old Saga newspaper was informed on May 19 of the paper's elimination, the Grand Island Independent reported. Three days earlier, the newspaper had printed its June edition, which included an article titled, "Pride and prejudice: LGBTQIA+" on the origins of Pride Month and the history of homophobia. It also included an editorial opposing a Florida law that bans some lessons on sexual orientation and gender identity and dubbed by critics as "Don't Say Gay."

Officials overseeing the district, which is based in Grand Island, have not said when or why the decision was made to eliminate the student paper. But an email from a school employee to the Independent cancelling the student paper's printing services on May 22 said it was "because the school board and superintendent are unhappy with the last issue's editorial content."

The paper's demise also came a month after its staff was reprimanded for publishing students' preferred pronouns and names. District officials told students they could only use names assigned at birth going forward.

Emma Smith, Saga's assistant editor in 2022, said the student paper was informed that the ban on preferred names was made by the school board. That decision directly affected Saga staff writer Marcus Pennell, a transgender student, who saw his byline changed against his wishes to his birth name of "Meghan" Pennell in the June issue.

"It was the first time that the school had officially been, like, 'We don't really want you here,'" Pennell said. "You know, that was a big deal for me."

Northwest Principal P.J. Smith referred the Independent's questions to district superintendent Jeff Edwards, who declined to answer the questions of when and why the student paper was eliminated, saying only that it was "an administrative decision."

Some school board members have made no secret of their objection to the Saga's LGBTQ content, including board president Dan Leiser, who said "most people were upset" with it.

Board vice president Zach Mader directly cited the pro-LGBTQ editorials, adding that if district taxpayer had read the last issue of the Saga, "they would have been like, 'Holy cow. What is going on at our school?'"

"It sounds like a ham-fisted attempt to censor students and discriminate based on disagreement with perspectives and articles that were featured in the student newspaper," said Sara Rips, an attorney for the Nebraska chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Nebraska Press Association attorney Max Kautsch, who specializes in media law in Nebraska and Kansas, noted that press freedom is protected in the U.S. Constitution.

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"The decision by the administration to eliminate the student newspaper violates students' right to free speech, unless the school can show a legitimate educational reason for removing the option to participate in a class ... that publishes award-winning material," Kautsch said. "It is hard to imagine what that legitimate reason could be."

Dangerous heat predicted to hit 3 times more often in future

BY SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

What's considered officially "dangerous heat" in coming decades will likely hit much of the world at least three times more often as climate change worsens, according to a new study.

In much of Earth's wealthy mid-latitudes, spiking temperatures and humidity that feel like 103 degrees (39.4 degrees Celsius) or higher -- now an occasional summer shock — statistically should happen 20 to 50 times a year by mid-century, said a study Monday in the journal *Communications Earth & Environment*.

By 2100, that brutal heat index may linger for most of the summer for places like the U.S. Southeast, the study's author said.

And it's far worse for the sticky tropics. The study said a heat index considered "extremely dangerous" where the feels-like heat index exceeds 124 degrees (51 degrees Celsius) — now something that rarely happens — will likely strike a tropical belt that includes India one to four weeks a year by century's end.

"So that's kind of the scary thing about this," said study author Lucas Zeppetello, a Harvard climate scientist. "That's something where potentially billions of people are going to be exposed to extremely dangerous levels of heat very regularly. So something that's gone from virtually never happening before will go to something that is happening every year."

Zeppetello and colleagues used more than 1,000 computer simulations to look at the probabilities of two different levels of high heat -- heat indexes of 103 degrees (39.4 Celsius) and above 124 degrees (51 Celsius), which are dangerous and extremely dangerous thresholds according to the U.S. National Weather Service. They calculated for the years 2050 and 2100 and compared that to how often that heat happened each year across the world from 1979 to 1998.

The study found a three- to ten-fold increase in 103-degree heat in the mid-latitudes even in the unlikely best-case scenario of global warming limited to only 3.6 degrees (2 degrees Celsius) since pre-industrial times -- the less stringent of two international goals.

There's only a 5% chance for warming to be that low and that infrequent, the study found. What's more likely, according to the study, is that the 103-degree heat will steam the tropics "during most days of each typical year" by 2100.

Chicago hit that 103 degree heat index level only four times from 1979 to 1998. But the study's most likely scenario shows Chicago hitting that hot-and-sticky threshold 11 times a year by the end of the century.

Heat waves are one of the new four horsemen of apocalyptic climate change, along with sea level rise, water scarcity and changes in the overall ecosystem, said Zeppetello, who did much of the research at University of Washington state during the warming-charged 2021 heat wave that shattered records and killed thousands.

"Sadly, the horrific predictions shown in this study are credible," climate scientist Jennifer Francis of the Woodwell Climate Research Center, who was not part of the study team, said in an email. "The past two summers have provided a window into our steamy future, with lethal heat waves in Europe, China, north-western North America, India, the south-central U.S., the U.K., central Siberia, and even New England. Already hot places will become uninhabitable as heat indices exceed dangerous thresholds, affecting humans and ecosystems alike. Areas where extreme heat is now rare will also suffer increasingly, as infrastructure and living things are ill-adapted to the crushing heat."

The study focuses on the heat index and that's smart because it's not just heat but the combination with humidity that hurts health, said Harvard School of Public Health professor Dr. Renee Salas, who is an emergency room physician.

"As the heat index rises, it becomes harder and harder to cool our bodies," Salas, who wasn't part of the

research team, said in an email. "Heat stroke is a potentially deadly form of heat illness that occurs when body temperatures rise to dangerous levels."

The study is based on mathematical probabilities instead of other climate research that looks at what happens at various carbon pollution levels. Because of that, University of Pennsylvania climate scientist Michael Mann is more skeptical of this research. It also doesn't take into account landmark U.S. climate legislation that President Joe Biden signed earlier this month or new efforts by Australia, he said.

"The obstacles at this point are political and no statistical methods, regardless of how powerful or sophisticated can predict whether we will garner the political will to overcome them," Mann said in an email. "But there is reason for cautious optimism."

Insulin cap for Medicare patients signals hope for others

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Years before he came to the Senate, Raphael Warnock spent time bedside with Georgia residents suffering from the long-term effects of diabetes, a condition made worse by limited access to life-saving drugs like insulin.

"I've seen the human face of this up close as a pastor. I've been there and witnessed what happens when diabetes goes on untreated," Warnock said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I've been there with families when they received the news that a loved one will have to receive an amputation."

That work as a pastor helped the freshman senator push Congress to take its first step in limiting the high cost of insulin for millions of Americans.

The passage of the expansive climate change and health care bill this month delivered key Democratic priorities to voters months before the midterm elections, including provisions to lower health care costs.

As a result, by 2026, Medicare will gain the power to start negotiating costs for pharmaceuticals and its beneficiaries' out-of-pocket prescription costs will be limited to \$2,000 starting in 2025.

But the most immediate relief will take effect in January when the cost of insulin for patients on Medicare will be capped at \$35 a month.

The provision, a longstanding priority for Democrats, will bring relief to an estimated nearly 2 million people across the country who currently pay an average of \$572 annually out-of-pocket for insulin, according to a recent analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

In Warnock's state, the annual average is higher, coming in at \$591 for more than 50,000 Georgia residents whose lives are dependent on the drug.

Around 7 million Americans require insulin daily and 14% of them are spending nearly half of their income after food and housing costs on the medicine, according to a Yale University study.

"It's devastating for a family to have to make those choices," Lisa Murdock, chief advocacy officer for the American Diabetes Association, told the AP. "This is a life-saving medication. You can't live without it, and we shouldn't have people in this country who are having to choose to do that."

The issue of insulin pricing is more pronounced in the U.S. than in other nations, and it has gotten worse over the past two decades. According to a 2016 study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, between 2002 and 2013, the price of insulin tripled. And between 2012 and 2016, prices continued to climb, nearly doubling, a congressional report released in March found.

The issue has been a perennial one in Congress, with a broad bipartisan consensus recognizing the problem, but little agreement on a solution. That is why organizations like the American Diabetes Association have sought to fight the battle for affordable insulin in the states, starting in 2019 when Colorado became the first state to institute a cap on copays for insulin.

"From there, we just ran with it," Murdock said. "We currently have 22 states and the District of Columbia with a monthly copay cap in place and we will continue to work on that as long as we need to raise the conversation."

While several states passed legislation that capped the price for Medicare and private insurance, the new federal law doesn't go as far. The legislation introduced by Warnock had initially included the monthly cap

both for Medicare recipients and those privately insured.

But during an hourslong voting series, Republicans stripped out the portion that would have included private insurance, which is used by the majority of those in need of insulin. Some of the GOP senators who voted for it to be removed represent states with some of the highest mortality rates for diabetes, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

At the time, Republicans who voted against the provision said it violated Senate budget rules, but Democrats intentionally did not drop it, daring their colleagues across the aisle to vote on the Senate floor to strip it out.

"In reality, the Dems wanted to break Senate rules to pass insulin pricing cap instead of going through regular order," Sen. Ron Johnson, a Wisconsin Republican, tweeted after the vote. Johnson added that he had previously "voted for an amendment, that Dems blocked, to provide insulin at cost to low-income Americans."

But Warnock said the quarrel over procedural rules meant failing on substance.

"The blocking of a provision that would have provided the same cap for folks on private insurance is yet another example of why people hate politics and, and what's wrong with Washington," he said.

The provision did however get seven Republicans on board. And while it wasn't enough to pass the broader cap, it was more support than for any previous effort to cap insulin prices in Congress. Majority Leader Chuck Schumer indicated that expanding affordable access to insulin will be a priority for the chamber in September.

Advocates say a potential legislative response to address the gaps in coverage could come in the form of the Insulin Act, a bipartisan proposal introduced last month by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, a Democrat from New Hampshire, and Sen. Susan Collins, a Republican from Maine, that would include a cap on the private marketplace. The legislation also has mechanisms in place that would lower the list price for insulin, providing relief for diabetes patients without insurance.

"We are grateful for the step forward in the Inflation Reduction Act, but now we're focused and really urging Congress to bring up the Insulin Act as soon as possible," said Campbell Hutton, vice president of regulatory and health policy at JDRF, a New York-based nonprofit that funds type 1 diabetes research.

Letter: School shooter fixated with guns, dreamed of killing

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Four years before Nikolas Cruz murdered 17 people at a Florida high school, therapists at another school wrote a letter to his psychiatrist saying he was fixated on guns and dreamed of killing others and being covered in blood, testimony at his penalty trial showed Thursday.

Dr. Brett Negin, testifying for the defense, said he never received it.

Negin and another psychiatrist who treated Cruz in the decade leading up to the Feb. 14, 2018, massacre at Parkland's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School testified during Thursday's abbreviated court session about the various medications he was given for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and other issues. Both said under cross-examination by prosecutors they never saw anything that would have led them to believe he was capable of mass murder.

But Negin, who treated Cruz from 2012 into August 2017, was then shown by the defense a June 2014 letter written to him by a psychiatrist and therapist at Cross Creek School, a campus attended by students with emotional and behavioral problems.

Dr. Nyrma N. Ortiz and therapist Rona O'Connor Kelly's two-page letter addressed to Negin says Cruz, then 15, was experiencing extreme mood swings, adding, "He is usually very irritable and reactive." They said he is "inappropriately" obsessed with guns and the military, defiant, verbally aggressive toward his teachers, paranoid and places the blame on others for the problems he creates.

"At home, he continues to be aggressive and destructive with minimal provocation," the two wrote. He destroyed a television after losing a video game, punched holes in walls and used sharp objects to cut up the furniture and carve holes in the bathroom. He had a hatchet that he used to chop a dead tree in the

back yard, but his mother reported she could no longer find it.

Cruz shared at school "he dreams of killing others and is covered in blood."

The two said he had been assessed for hospitalization, but that never happened. They said they were writing Negin so he could adjust Cruz's medication.

Negin testified Thursday he never received the letter and no one followed up with him when he didn't respond. He said Cross Creek's typical procedure if the staff was having problems with one of his patients was to have a counselor come to his office with the student and parents to discuss the issue.

"This did not happen one time with Mr. Cruz," Negin said.

Negin also testified that in 2013 he wrote a letter for Cruz's mother supporting his voluntary hospitalization. That also never happened.

Office and home numbers for Ortiz were disconnected. O'Connor Kelly did not immediately respond to an email Thursday seeking comment.

The defense is trying to show that Cruz, 23, had a long history of mental health issues that were never fully treated. He pleaded guilty in October to the murders — the trial is only to decide whether he is sentenced to death or life without parole.

The defense is trying to overcome the prosecution's case, which ended earlier this month. It featured surveillance video of Cruz, then 19, mowing down students and staff with an AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle as he stalked a three-story building for seven minutes, photos of the aftermath and a jury visit to the building.

For Cruz to receive a death sentence, the seven-man, five-woman jury must be unanimous. If one juror votes for life, that will be his sentence.

Plan for iconic California park pits housing against history

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE Associated Press

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — Berkeley, an eclectic California city renowned for tie-dyed hippies and high-brow intellectuals, is experiencing a 1960s flashback triggered by People's Park, a landmark that has served as a counterculture touchstone, political stepping stone and refuge for homeless people.

The 3-acre (1.2-hectare) site's colorful history, forged from the University of California, Berkeley's seizure of the land in 1968, has been thrust back into the spotlight as the school renews efforts to pave over People's Park, this time for a \$312 million project that includes sorely needed housing for about 1,000 students.

After a judge sided with the university in a legal scrum over the project, construction finally began Aug. 3 only to abruptly stop a few hours later after a swarm of defiant protesters, who had been sparring with police, toppled fences surrounding the park.

The delay was only supposed to last a few days, but the coalition fighting the university's plans won an appeals court stay that will prevent construction until at least October.

But the lull hasn't muted the contentious debate around a historic spot once hailed as "a trace of anarchist heaven on Earth" by former UC Berkeley professor Todd Gitlin and derided by former city Councilmember John DeBonis as a "hippy Disneyland."

The park turned into both a symbol of resistance and mayhem during a deadly 1969 confrontation known as "Bloody Thursday," emboldening then-California Gov. Ronald Reagan to send in 3,000 National Guardsmen for a two-week occupation that evoked images of war in a city that was clamoring for peace in Vietnam.

Don Mitchell, whose father was a UC Berkeley professor during the 1969 uprising, views People's Park as a social experiment worth saving as more cookie-cutter communities get built in the U.S.

"People's Park has always been a place that was made and regulated by the people who use it," said Mitchell, a professor of human geography at Uppsala University in Sweden. "It's a free and open space, a place where the rules of exclusion are very different. So people who were poor, people who didn't have housing, people who didn't fit into dominant society in all sorts of different ways could find a space there. And many did."

That ethos has long made the park a waystation for homeless people, with scattered tent clusters and

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makeshift kitchens. Drug use and violence have helped spur support for the university's development plans.

At Atmaa Das, 28, began spending time in People's Park not long after leaving Alabama in 2014 and found his way there again a couple weeks after workers left behind construction equipment, now splattered with obscene graffiti — part of \$1.5 million in recent protest damage, the university estimated. "I came here looking for the promised land and reckon I found it," he said on a recent morning, strumming his guitar while singing parts of Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land."

University officials say they are sympathetic to both the park's heritage and the needs of homeless people who have lived there since another set of fences surrounding the property were removed in 1972.

The school and city moved dozens of homeless people into a motel as part of an \$8 million relocation initiative and officials promised to keep most of the site as open space. The school also hired award-winning architect Walter Hood to design a memorial celebrating its history.

"Our plan will meet multiple interests to preserve the park, create urgently needed student housing, and provide permanent housing for unhoused and low-income individuals," UC Berkeley Chancellor Carol Christ wrote in an email sent to university alumni and other supporters earlier this week. University spokesman Dan Mogulof declined a request to interview Christ.

Not even People's Park supporters dispute more affordable housing is needed — the median sales price for a home near the university is \$1.5 million. But critics blame mismanagement for the crisis and contend the university could build on its other property.

Under a 2005 long-range plan, UC Berkeley estimated enrollment at 33,000 students by 2020. Instead, it had about 43,000 students that year and expects roughly 45,000 this academic year — with only 10,000 campus beds.

The glaring shortage is mainly why city officials back the university's plan, including city Councilmember Rigel Robinson, who represents the People's Park area.

"People's Park has been a powerful symbol of resistance against government oppression, but it has since become a symbol of something else entirely: our failure as a region to respond to the housing crisis," Robinson said. "The time has come to turn the page."

But this month's protests showed that a significant part of Berkeley isn't ready to let go, mainly because of what the park has come to symbolize since UC Berkeley seized it for \$1.3 million in 1968 under eminent domain and demolished homes there. After citing a need for an intramural soccer field, the school instead let the site deteriorate into a muddy mess mostly used for parking.

After boilermaker Michael Delacour led a grassroots group to plant vegetation, turning the eyesore into a community magnet, UC Berkeley decided to fence it off on May 15, 1969.

That set the stage for rebellion. At a rally outside UC Berkeley's administration building, incoming student body President Dan Siegel urged the crowd to "take the park."

"Some of the issues now are like 1969," Siegel, now a lawyer in nearby Oakland, recently told The Associated Press. "People's Park is both a park and a symbol of activism that is worthy of protection."

The infamous 1969 clash between hundreds of police, some of them dubbed "Blue Meanies," and protesters became a flashpoint in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements. During the hourslong melee, police fatally shot a man standing on a rooftop and blinded another who was struck in the face with birdshot. Dozens of protesters were wounded.

Then Reagan, who had vowed "to clean up the mess in Berkeley" during his victorious 1966 gubernatorial campaign, called in military troops. Before an uneasy truce was reached May 30, 1969, hundreds more were arrested and, in another infamous moment, an Army helicopter sprayed a crowd with what authorities called tear gas but others insisted was an even more dangerous substance.

Some of Reagan's detractors still believe he deliberately deployed strong-arm tactics to establish himself as a law-and-order leader while pursuing a political agenda that led to his 1980 election as president.

Harvey Smith, president of the People's Park Historic District Advocacy Group that is spearheading the legal fight for preservation, likens UC Berkeley's plan to Reagan's 1969 crackdown.

Reagan "wanted to wipe out the social and political history of Berkeley and now the university is carrying it forward," Smith said Aug. 3 while construction crews used bulldozers and buzz saws to topple most of

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the park's trees, including some that predated the school's purchase 54 years ago.

The clear-cutting depressed Bertha Jones, who lived in People's Park for several years before accepting the university's offer to move into a nearby Rodeway Inn.

"My grandparents got married at one of those trees. My mom got married at one of those trees," Jones, 43, said. "I wanted to keep the tradition going, but obviously that isn't going to work out now."

Other former People's Park inhabitants told the AP they moved into the motel reluctantly, though they like having their own bed and bathroom. What they don't like is not being given room keys, or being banned from leaving the premises from midnight to 6 a.m.

After spending most of his time in People's Park for seven years, Eric Morales moved in early June to the Rodeway Inn with his dog, Bonita. But he will always consider People's Park home.

"It's not like any other park," Morales, 54, said. "You can go to other parks and you say, 'Hi' and 'Bye,' then you won't ever see them again. But People's Park is a community, you know? We are a family."

British sewage overflows stink up relations across Channel

PARIS (AP) — EU lawmakers have a new, post-Brexit reason to be annoyed with the U.K.: British sewage overflows seeping into the English Channel and the North Sea.

Heavy rainfall after weeks of dry weather overwhelmed parts of Britain's sewage system last week, causing untreated wastewater to be discharged into rivers and seas. The problem is a long-running issue in Britain, where regulators are investigating possible permit violations by six major water companies and environmental groups allege the firms have failed to make needed repairs.

This is mainly a problem for the U.K., where people were warned to stay away from dozens of beaches last week, raising concerns about public health and the damage to wildlife. The activist group Surfers Against Sewage reported 654 alerts of sewer overflows spilling sewage into bathing waters this summer from 171 locations in England and Wales.

But three French members of the European Parliament sent a letter to the European Commission on Wednesday warning that the sewage could also threaten bathing waters, fishing grounds and biodiversity in the European Union.

"The English Channel and the North Sea are not dumping grounds," said Stephanie Yon-Courtin, a member of the European Parliament's fishing committee and a local lawmaker in Normandy.

"We can't tolerate that the environment, the economic activity of our fishers and the health of our citizens is put into grave danger by repeated negligence of the United Kingdom in the management of its sewage water," she said.

The lawmakers asked the Commission "to use all the political and legal means in its possession" to find a solution, accusing the U.K. of violating its post-Brexit trade deal with the EU. They said while the U.K. is no longer held to EU environmental standards, it is still a signatory to the U.N. convention on maritime rights and obligated to protect shared seawater.

The European Commission said it had not contacted London so far about the complaints. "We will take further the matter as appropriate," Commission spokeswoman Dana Spinant said Thursday.

Britain's Conservative government has rejected the criticism, saying it has strengthened water quality regulations since Brexit.

"Unhelpful and ill-informed comments like this shouldn't distract from the work we are doing to further protect our rivers and sea," said Steve Double, the U.K. water minister. "We have already made it law for water companies to reduce the frequency and volume of sewage discharges, and our upcoming Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan will require water companies to deliver the largest infrastructure program in water company history."

But last week the opposition Liberal Democrats released a report alleging that wastewater discharges weren't being properly recorded because many of the required monitoring devices either weren't working properly or hadn't been installed yet.

While U.K. water companies are barred from dumping untreated wastewater in normal circumstances, they are allowed to make such releases when heavy rains threaten to overwhelm sewage treatment plants.

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Environmental groups allege some companies exploit this exception to save money and avoid upgrading their systems.

During the Brexit breakup negotiations, the EU repeatedly expressed fears that the UK would ditch the bloc's stringent environmental standards and yield to business pressures for a more deregulated system that could put their shared environment in danger.

The trade agreement that took effect in 2021 after Britain left the EU contains no specific provision on how to deal with storm water overflows.

Water UK, which represents water and wastewater companies, said its members were investing 3 billion pounds to tackle overflows as part of a national program to improve the environment between 2020 and 2025. It acknowledged "an urgent need for action to tackle the harm caused to the environment by spills from storm overflows and wastewater treatment works."

"Water companies can't do this alone, which why we're also calling for government, regulators, water companies, agriculture and other sectors to come together as soon as possible to deliver a comprehensive national plan," the water industry group said.

Student loan forgiveness could help more than 40 million

By COLLIN BINKLEY, SEUNG MIN KIM and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — More than 40 million Americans could see their student loan debt reduced — and in many cases eliminated — under the long-awaited forgiveness plan President Joe Biden announced Wednesday, a historic but politically divisive move in the run-up to the midterm elections.

Fulfilling a campaign promise, Biden is erasing \$10,000 in federal student loan debt for those with incomes below \$125,000 a year, or households that earn less than \$250,000. He's canceling an additional \$10,000 for those who received federal Pell Grants to attend college.

It's seen as an unprecedented attempt to stem the tide of America's rapidly rising student debt, but it doesn't address the broader issue — the high cost of college.

Republicans quickly denounced the plan as an insult to Americans who have repaid their debt and to those who didn't attend college. Critics across the political spectrum also questioned whether Biden has authority for the move, and legal challenges are virtually certain.

Biden also extended a pause on federal student loan payments for what he called the "final time." The pause is now set to run through the end of the year, with repayments to restart in January.

"Both of these targeted actions are for families who need it the most: working and middle-class people hit especially hard during the pandemic," Biden said at the White House on Wednesday afternoon.

The cancellation applies to federal student loans used to attend undergraduate and graduate school, along with Parent Plus loans. Current college students qualify if their loans were issued before July 1. For dependent students, their parents' household income must be below \$250,000.

Most people will need to apply for the relief. The Education Department has income data for a small share of borrowers, but the vast majority will need to prove their incomes through an application process. Officials said applications will be available before the end of the year.

Biden's plan makes 43 million borrowers eligible for some debt forgiveness, with 20 million who could get their debt erased entirely, according to the administration. About 60% of borrowers are recipients of federal Pell Grants, which are reserved for undergraduates with the most significant financial need, meaning more than half can get \$20,000 in relief.

Sabrina Cartan, a 29-year-old media strategist in New York City, is expecting her federal debt to get wiped out entirely. When she checked the balance Wednesday, it was \$9,940.

Cartan used the loans to attend Tufts University, and with Biden's plan she will be able to help her parents repay the additional thousands they borrowed for her education. As a first-generation college student, she called it a "leveling moment."

"I know there are people who feel that this isn't enough, and that is true for a lot of people," said Cartan, who already has repaid about \$10,000 of her loans. "I can say for me personally and for a lot of people,

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that is a lot of money.”

For Braxton Simpson, Biden’s plan is a great first step, but it’s not enough. The 23-year-old MBA student at North Carolina Central University has more than \$40,000 in student loans. As an undergraduate student she took jobs to minimize her debt, but at \$10,000 a semester, the costs piled up.

As a Black woman, she felt higher education was a requirement to obtain a more stable financial future, even if that meant taking on large amounts of debt, she said.

“In order for us to get out of a lot of the situations that have been systemically a part of our lives, we have to go to school,” Simpson said. “And so we end up in debt.”

The plan doesn’t apply to future college students, but Biden is proposing a separate rule that would reduce monthly payments on federal student debt.

The proposal would create a new payment plan requiring borrowers to pay no more than 5% of their earnings, down from 10% in similar existing plans. It would forgive any remaining balance after 10 years, down from 20 years now.

It would also raise the floor for repayments, meaning no one earning less than 225% of the federal poverty level would need to make monthly payments.

As a regulation, it would not require congressional approval. But it can take more than a year to finalize.

Biden’s plan comes after more than a year of deliberation, with the president facing strong lobbying from liberals who wanted sweeping debt forgiveness, and from moderates and conservatives who questioned its basic fairness or said it does nothing to fix the debt crisis.

“In my view, the administration should have further targeted the relief, and proposed a way to pay for this plan,” said Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo. “While immediate relief to families is important, one-time debt cancellation does not solve the underlying problem.”

Once a popular campaign promise during the presidential primary, the issue created an almost unwinnable situation. Still, many Democrats rallied around it, including support from those who wanted Biden to go beyond \$10,000.

“I will keep pushing for more because I think it’s the right thing to do,” said Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., who had urged Biden to forgive up to \$50,000 a person. “But we need to take a deep breath here and recognize what it means for the president of the United States to touch so many hard-working middle class families so directly.”

Proponents see cancellation as a matter of racial justice. Black students are more likely to take out federal student loans and at higher amounts than their white peers.

The NAACP, which pressed Biden to cancel at least \$50,000 per person, said the plan is “one step closer” to lifting the burden of student debt.

Derrick Johnson, the group’s president, urged Biden to cancel the debt quickly and without bureaucratic hurdles for borrowers.

Biden’s decision to impose an income cap goes against objections from some who say adding the detailed application process to verify incomes could deter some borrowers who need help the most.

The Biden administration defended the cap as a gate against wealthier borrowers. Politically, it’s designed to counter arguments from critics who call debt cancellation a handout for the wealthy. Republicans hit hard with that argument on Wednesday despite the cap.

“President Biden’s inflation is crushing working families, and his answer is to give away even more government money to elites with higher salaries,” Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell said. “Democrats are literally using working Americans’ money to try to buy themselves some enthusiasm from their political base.”

One of the chief political sticking points has been the cost: Biden’s new plan, including debt cancellation, a new repayment plan and the payment freeze, will cost between \$400 billion to \$600 billion, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a nonprofit that advocates for lower deficits.

Asked about the cost Wednesday, Susan Rice, Biden’s domestic policy adviser, said, “I can’t give you that off the top of my head.”

There are also lingering questions about the administration’s authority to cancel student loan debt. The

Justice Department released a legal opinion concluding that the Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act gives the education secretary the "authority to reduce or eliminate the obligation to repay the principal balance of federal student loan debt."

The legal opinion also concluded that the forgiveness could be applied on a "class-wide" basis in response to the coronavirus pandemic, a national emergency.

Lawsuits are likely nonetheless. The Job Creators Network, which promotes conservative economic policies, said it was considering legal options, with president and CEO Alfredo Ortiz calling the president's effort "fundamentally unfair" to those who never took out loans for college.

Scientists use stem cells to create synthetic mouse embryos

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

Scientists have created "synthetic" mouse embryos from stem cells without a dad's sperm or a mom's egg or womb.

The lab-created embryos mirror a natural mouse embryo up to 8 ½ days after fertilization, containing the same structures, including one like a beating heart.

In the near term, researchers hope to use these so-called embryoids to better understand early stages of development and study mechanisms behind disease without the need for as many lab animals. The feat could also lay the foundation for creating synthetic human embryos for research in the future.

"We are undoubtedly facing a new technological revolution, still very inefficient ... but with enormous potential," said Lluís Montoliu, a research professor at the National Biotechnology Centre in Spain who is not part of the research. "It is reminiscent of such spectacular scientific advances as the birth of Dolly the sheep" and others.

A study published Thursday in the journal *Nature*, by Magdalena Zernicka-Goetz at the California Institute of Technology and her colleagues, was the latest to describe the synthetic mouse embryos. A similar study, by Jacob Hanna at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel and his colleagues, was published earlier this month in the journal *Cell*. Hanna was also a coauthor on the *Nature* paper.

Zernicka-Goetz, an expert in stem cell biology, said one reason to study the early stages of development is to get more insight into why the majority of human pregnancies are lost at an early stage and embryos created for in vitro fertilization fail to implant and develop in up to 70% of cases. Studying natural development is difficult for many reasons, she said, including the fact that very few human embryos are donated for research and scientists face ethical constraints.

Building embryo models is an alternative way to study these issues.

To create the synthetic embryos, or "embryoids," described in the *Nature* paper, scientists combined embryonic stem cells and two other types of stem cells – all from mice. They did this in the lab, using a particular type of dish that allowed the three types of cells to come together. While the embryoids they created weren't all perfect, Zernicka-Goetz said, the best ones were "indistinguishable" from natural mouse embryos. Besides the heart-like structure, they also develop head-like structures.

"This is really the first model that allows you to study brain development in the context of the whole developing mouse embryo," she said.

The roots of this work go back decades, and both Zernicka-Goetz and Hanna said their groups were working on this line of research for many years. Zernicka-Goetz said her group submitted its study to *Nature* in November.

Scientists said next steps include trying to coax the synthetic mouse embryos to develop past 8 ½ days – with the eventual goal of getting them to term, which is 20 days for a mouse.

At this point, they "struggle to go past" the 8 1/2-day mark, said Gianluca Amadei, a coauthor on the *Nature* paper based at the University of Cambridge. "We think that we will be able to get them over the hump, so to speak, so they can continue developing."

The scientists expect that after about 11 days of development the embryo will fail without a placenta, but they hope researchers can someday also find a way to create a synthetic placenta. At this point, they

don't know if they will be able to get the synthetic embryos all the way to term without a mouse womb. Researchers said they don't see creating human versions of these synthetic embryos soon but do see it happening in time. Hanna called it "the next obvious thing."

Other scientists have already used human stem cells to create a "blastoid," a structure mimicking a pre-embryo, that can serve as a research alternative to a real one.

Such work is subject to ethical concerns. For decades, a "14-day rule" on growing human embryos in the lab has guided researchers. Last year, the International Society for Stem Cell Research recommended relaxing the rule under limited circumstances.

Scientists stress that growing a baby from a synthetic human embryo is neither possible nor under consideration.

"Perspective on this report is important since, without it, the headline that a mammalian embryo has been built in vitro can lead to the thought that the same can be done with humans soon," said developmental biologist Alfonso Martinez Arias of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Spain, whose group has developed alternative stem cell based models of animal development.

"In the future, similar experiments will be done with human cells and that, at some point, will yield similar results," he said. "This should encourage considerations of the ethics and societal impact of these experiments before they happen."

Oklahoma executes James Coddington for 1997 hammer killing

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

McALESTER, Okla. (AP) — Oklahoma executed a man Thursday for a 1997 killing, despite a recommendation from the state's Pardon and Parole Board that his life be spared.

James Coddington, 50, received a lethal injection at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester and was pronounced dead at 10:16 a.m. Gov. Kevin Stitt declined to commute Coddington's sentence to life in prison without parole and rejected his petition for clemency. Coddington was the fifth Oklahoma inmate to be put to death since the state resumed executions last year.

"To all my family and friends, lawyers, everyone who's been around me and loved me, thank you," Coddington said while strapped to a gurney inside the death chamber. "Gov. Stitt, I don't blame you and I forgive you."

After delivering his last words, Coddington lifted his head and flashed a thumbs up to his attorney, Emma Rolls, who cried quietly in the witness room.

After the first drug, midazolam, was administered, Coddington's breathing became labored and his chest hitched several times. A doctor on the execution team declared him unconscious at 10:08 a.m., and Coddington could be heard snoring inside the chamber.

Coddington was convicted and sentenced to die for beating 73-year-old Albert Hale to death with a hammer. Prosecutors say Coddington, then 24, became enraged when Hale refused to give him money to buy cocaine.

During a clemency hearing this month before the state's five-member Pardon and Parole Board, an emotional Coddington apologized to Hale's family and said he was a different man today.

But Mitch Hale, Albert Hale's son who witnessed the execution, said he didn't believe Coddington was sincerely remorseful, noting that he never mentioned his father or the Hale family during his last words.

"He proved today it wasn't genuine. He never apologized," Hale said. "He didn't bring up my dad."

Hale added: "I forgive him, but that doesn't release him from the consequences of his actions."

Rolls, Coddington's attorney, said during the clemency hearing that Coddington was impaired by years of alcohol and drug abuse that began as an infant when his father put beer and whiskey into his baby bottles.

Coddington was twice sentenced to death for Hale's killing, the second time in 2008 after his initial sentence was overturned on appeal.

After killing Hale, Coddington committed at least six armed robberies at gas stations and convenience stores across Oklahoma City.

"When the full circumstances of the murder, related robberies, and extensive history of violence on Mr. Coddington's part are considered, one thing is clear: death is the only just punishment for him," prosecutors in the state attorney general's office wrote to the Pardon and Parole Board.

The state had halted executions in September 2015 when prison officials realized they had received the wrong lethal drug. It later came to light that the same wrong drug had been used to execute an inmate, and executions in the state were put on hold.

Unvaccinated Djokovic out of US Open; can't travel to States

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Novak Djokovic will not play in the U.S. Open, as expected, because he is not vaccinated against COVID-19 and thus is not allowed to travel to the United States.

Djokovic announced his withdrawal from the year's last Grand Slam tournament on Twitter on Thursday, hours before the draw for the event was revealed.

"Sadly, I will not be able to travel to NY this time for US Open," Djokovic wrote, wishing luck to his fellow players, and said he would "keep in good shape and positive spirit and wait for an opportunity to compete again."

Play is scheduled to begin at Flushing Meadows on Monday.

Djokovic is a 35-year-old from Serbia who owns 21 major championships, one behind Rafael Nadal for the men's record. Three of Djokovic's Slam trophies came at the U.S. Open, in 2011, 2015 and 2018.

He also was the runner-up there a half-dozen times, including last season, when his pursuit of the first calendar-year Grand Slam in men's tennis since 1969 ended with a loss in the final to Daniil Medvedev.

Foreign citizens who have not been vaccinated against COVID-19 are currently unable to enter the U.S. or Canada, and Djokovic has said he won't get the shots, even if that prevents him from playing in certain tournaments.

The U.S. Tennis Association has said all along it will follow government rules about vaccination status for this year's Open. There is no vaccine mandate at the tournament for players or their support teams — meaning that an unvaccinated American would be allowed to compete — and spectators will not be required to wear masks.

"Novak is a great champion and it is very unfortunate that he will be unable to compete at the 2022 U.S. Open, as he is unable to enter the country due to the federal government's vaccination policy for non-U.S. citizens," said Stacey Allaster, the U.S. Open tournament director. "We look forward to welcoming Novak back at the 2023 U.S. Open."

Djokovic missed the Australian Open in January after a protracted legal saga ended with his deportation from that country because he isn't vaccinated against COVID-19. He also sat out four significant tournaments in North America in 2022, including in Montreal and Cincinnati recently.

He did play in the French Open, where he lost in the quarterfinals to Nadal, and at Wimbledon, where Djokovic won the title.

After beating Nick Kyrgios in the Wimbledon final on July 10, Djokovic said he "would love" to participate in the last Grand Slam tournament of the year at Flushing Meadows, but he also acknowledged, "I'm not planning to get vaccinated."

About three weeks later, Djokovic posted on social media that he was holding out hope of getting the chance to play in the U.S. Open, writing: "I am preparing as if I will be allowed to compete, while I await to hear if there is any room for me to travel to US. Fingers crossed!"

Djokovic has spent more weeks at No. 1 than anyone else in the history of the ATP rankings. He is No. 6 this week, in part because no rankings points were awarded at Wimbledon this year.

Among the other players who will not be at the U.S. Open for various reasons are No. 2-ranked Alexander Zverev, the 2020 runner-up in New York; 2016 champion Angelique Kerber; 2019 French Open finalist Marketa Vondrousova; Gael Monfils and Reilly Opelka.

Uvalde school police chief fired for response to shooting

By ACACIA CORONADO Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas (AP) — The Uvalde school district has fired police chief Pete Arredondo under mounting pressure in the grieving Texas town to punish officers for hesitating for over an hour to storm a classroom and take down the gunman who killed 19 children and two teachers.

In a unanimous vote Wednesday evening, the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District's board of trustees fired Arredondo during a meeting also attended by parents and survivors of the May 24 massacre. Arredondo, who was not present, is the first officer to lose his job following one of the deadliest classroom shootings in U.S. history.

His ouster came three months to the day after the tragedy and less than two weeks before students return to school in Uvalde, where some children are still too scared or scarred to go back inside a classroom.

The board faced withering criticism, with one young girl approaching a microphone to ask why law enforcement hadn't protected her friends and teachers. "Turn in your badge," she demanded.

The crowd cheered following the vote, and some parents walked away in tears. Outside, several Uvalde residents called for other officers to be held accountable.

"Coward!" some in the audience yelled as the meeting got underway.

Arredondo, who has been on leave from the district since June 22, has come under the most intense scrutiny of the nearly 400 officers who rushed to school but waited more than 70 minutes to confront the 18-year-old gunman in the fourth-grade classroom at Robb Elementary School.

Most notably, Arredondo was criticized for not ordering officers to act sooner. Col. Steve McCraw, director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, has said Arredondo was in charge of the law enforcement response to the attack.

Minutes before the school board meeting got underway, Arredondo's attorney released a scathing 4,500-word letter that amounted to the police chief's fullest defense to date of his actions. Over 17 defiant pages, Arredondo was described not as a fumbling chief blamed in a damning state investigation for not taking command and wasting time searching for keys to a likely unlocked door, but instead as a brave officer whose level-headed decisions saved the lives of other students.

It alleges that Arredondo warned the district about a variety of security issues in the schools a year before the shooting and asserted he wasn't in charge of the scene. The letter also accused Uvalde school officials of putting his safety at risk by not allowing him to carry a weapon to the school board meeting, citing "legitimate risks of harm to the public and to Chief Arredondo."

"Chief Arredondo is a leader and a courageous officer who with all of the other law enforcement officers who responded to the scene, should be celebrated for the lives saved, instead of vilified for those they couldn't reach in time," George Hyde wrote.

Hyde's office has not responded to a request for comment.

Uvalde school officials have been under increasing pressure from victims' families and members of the community, many of whom had called for Arredondo's termination. Superintendent Hal Harrell first moved to fire Arredondo in July but postponed the decision at the request of Arredondo's attorney.

At the meeting was Ruben Torres, father of Chloe Torres, who survived the shooting in room 112 of the school.

"Right now, being young, she is having a hard time handling this horrific event," Torres said.

Shirley Zamora, the mother of a student at Robb Elementary, said accountability shouldn't end with Arredondo's dismissal.

"This is just going to be the beginning. It's a long process," she said.

Only one other officer — Uvalde Police Department Lt. Mariano Pargas, who was the city's acting police chief on the day of massacre — is known to have been placed on leave for their actions during the shooting.

The Texas Department of Public Safety, which had more than 90 state troopers at the scene, is conducting an investigation into the response by state police. State Sen. Roland Gutierrez, a Democrat who represents Uvalde, said McCraw, the state police chief, also deserves scrutiny.

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"You fail at something so badly that people are getting hurt, then certainly we have to have some greater accountability," he said.

School officials have said the Robb Elementary campus will no longer be used when students return Sept 6. Instead, campuses elsewhere in Uvalde will serve as temporary classrooms for elementary school students, not all of whom are willing to return to school in-person following the shooting.

School officials say a virtual academy will be offered for students. The district has not said how many students will attend virtually, but a new state law passed last year in Texas following the pandemic limits the number of eligible students receiving remote instruction to "10% of all enrolled students within a given school system."

Schools can seek a waiver to exceed the limit but Uvalde has not done so, according to the Texas Education Agency.

New measures to improve school safety in Uvalde include "8-foot, non-scalable perimeter fencing" at elementary, middle and high school campuses, according to the school district. Officials say they have also installed additional security cameras, upgraded locks, enhanced training for district staff and improving communication.

Fall books a broad mix of literary and commercial favorites

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Anticipation for one of the fall's likeliest bestsellers has been growing all year.

For months, Colleen Hoover's millions of fans on TikTok, Instagram and elsewhere have been talking up and posting early excerpts from her novel "It Starts With Us." By summer, the author's sequel to her bestselling "It Ends With Us" had already reached the top 10 Amazon.com. It might have climbed higher but for competition from other Hoover novels, including "Ugly Love," "Verity" and, of course, "It Ends With Us," the dramatic tale of a love triangle and a woman's endurance of domestic abuse that young TikTok users have embraced and helped make Hoover the country's most popular fiction writer.

Hoover's extraordinary run on bestseller lists, from Amazon.com to The New York Times, has been Beatle-esque for much of 2022, with four or more books likely to appear in the top 10 at a given moment. "It Starts With Us" had been so eagerly desired by her admirers — CoHorts, some call themselves — that she broke a personal rule: Don't let "outside influences" determine her next book.

"I never allowed myself to entertain a sequel, but with the amount of people emailing me every day and tagging me in an online petition to write about (those characters), their story began to build in my head in the same way my other books begin," she told The Associated Press in a recent email. "Eventually I craved telling this story as much as I did my other stories, so I owe the readers a big thank you for the nudging."

Hoover's new book should help extend what has been another solid year for the industry. Booksellers are looking forward to a mix of commercial favorites such as Hoover, Anthony Horowitz, Beverly Jenkins and Veronica Roth alongside what Barnes & Noble CEO James Daunt calls a "really strong" lineup of literary releases, including novels by Ian McEwan and Kate Atkinson.

The fall also will feature new fiction from Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk and Pulitzer Prize-winners Elizabeth Strout and Andrew Sean Greer. Celeste Ng's "Our Missing Hearts" is her first novel since "Little Fires Everywhere." Story collections are expected from George Saunders, Andrea Barrett and Ling Ma, along with novels by Percival Everett, Barbara Kingsolver, Kevin Wilson, N.K. Jemisin, Lydia Millet and Yiyun Li.

Joe Concha's "Come On, Man!: The Truth About Joe Biden's Terrible, Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Presidency" is the most colorfully named of the latest round of books attacking an incumbent president — a long and profitable publishing tradition. But the most high-profile works of political reporting dwell on Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, among them "Confidence Man," by The New York Times' Maggie Haberman, and "The Divider: Trump in the White House, 2017–2021," by Peter Baker of the Times and Susan Glasser of The New Yorker.

Michelle Obama's "The Light We Carry" is her first entirely new book since her worldwide bestseller from 2018, "Becoming." Benjamin Netanyahu's "Bibi" is the first memoir by the former Israeli Prime Minister,

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while American politicians with new books include Rep. Cori Bush of Missouri, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and Texas gubernatorial candidate Beto O'Rourke.

Celebrity books include Bono's "Surrender," Matthew Perry's "Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing" and Geena Davis' "Dying of Politeness." Bob Dylan reflects upon an art form he helped reinvent in "The Philosophy of Modern Song," while the title of Jan Wenner's memoir invokes the Dylan classic that helped inspire the name of the magazine he founded, "Like a Rolling Stone."

History books will cover the famous and the overlooked. Among the former are Pulitzer-winner Jon Meacham's "And There Was Light," the latest entry into the canon of Abraham Lincoln scholarship, and Pulitzer-winner Stacy Schiff's biography of Samuel Adams, "The Revolutionary." Fred Kaplan, who focused on Lincoln's prose in "Lincoln: The Biography of a Writer," now assesses Thomas Jefferson in "His Masterly Pen: A Biography of Jefferson the Writer."

Releases highlighting those less remembered include Kevin Hazzard's "American Sirens: The Incredible Story of the Black Men Who Became America's First Paramedics," and Katie Hickman's "Brave Hearted: The Women of the American West." With the overturning last summer of Roe v. Wade, Laura Kaplan's "The Story of Jane" is a timely reissue of her 1995 book about the underground abortion counseling service founded in Chicago in 1969, four years before the Supreme Court's historic Roe ruling.

Bruce Henderson's "Bridge to the Sun" centers on the recruitment of Japanese-Americans, some of whom had been in internment camps, to assist in U.S. intelligence gathering during World War II.

"It was really hard to research because many of them had been working on top secret projects, and, even after they had been discharged, were reminded that they were under the National Security Act and that military secrets had to be kept," Henderson says. "We had to do a lot of digging and contact families and see what the veterans had left behind. Of the six guys that I follow in my book, only one was still alive."

Fall books a broad mix of literary and commercial favorites

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Anticipation for one of the fall's likeliest bestsellers has been growing all year.

For months, Colleen Hoover's millions of fans on TikTok, Instagram and elsewhere have been talking up and posting early excerpts from her novel "It Starts With Us." By summer, the author's sequel to her bestselling "It Ends With Us" had already reached the top 10 Amazon.com. It might have climbed higher but for competition from other Hoover novels, including "Ugly Love," "Verity" and, of course, "It Ends With Us," the dramatic tale of a love triangle and a woman's endurance of domestic abuse that young TikTok users have embraced and helped make Hoover the country's most popular fiction writer.

Hoover's extraordinary run on bestseller lists, from Amazon.com to The New York Times, has been Beatle-esque for much of 2022, with four or more books likely to appear in the top 10 at a given moment. "It Starts With Us" had been so eagerly desired by her admirers — CoHorts, some call themselves — that she broke a personal rule: Don't let "outside influences" determine her next book.

"I never allowed myself to entertain a sequel, but with the amount of people emailing me every day and tagging me in an online petition to write about (those characters), their story began to build in my head in the same way my other books begin," she told The Associated Press in a recent email. "Eventually I craved telling this story as much as I did my other stories, so I owe the readers a big thank you for the nudging."

Hoover's new book should help extend what has been another solid year for the industry. Booksellers are looking forward to a mix of commercial favorites such as Hoover, Anthony Horowitz, Beverly Jenkins and Veronica Roth alongside what Barnes & Noble CEO James Daunt calls a "really strong" lineup of literary releases, including novels by Ian McEwan and Kate Atkinson.

The fall also will feature new fiction from Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk and Pulitzer Prize-winners Elizabeth Strout and Andrew Sean Greer. Celeste Ng's "Our Missing Hearts" is her first novel since "Little Fires Everywhere." Story collections are expected from George Saunders, Andrea Barrett and Ling Ma, along with novels by Percival Everett, Barbara Kingsolver, Kevin Wilson, N.K. Jemisin, Lydia Millet and Yiyun Li.

Cormac McCarthy, 89, has new fiction coming for the first time in more than a decade with "The Pas-

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senger," and its companion "Stella Maris." John Irving, who turned 80 this year, is calling the 900-page "The Last Chairlift" his last "long novel," a description which could apply to much of his career.

Russell Banks, 82, has completed the elegiac novel "The Magic Kingdom," and former U.S. poet laureate Robert Pinsky, 81, has written the autobiography "Jersey Breaks," in which he addresses what he calls the "tribalism" and "nationalism" of the current moment by reflecting on his childhood in Long Branch, New Jersey.

"I realized that I am not a great sociologist or political sage, but I thought I could deal with this by going back to growing up in a town that was segregated, biracial and lower middle class," Pinsky says. "I felt that whatever answers I might have would be found there."

Joe Concha's "Come On, Man!: The Truth About Joe Biden's Terrible, Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Presidency" is the most colorfully named of the latest round of books attacking an incumbent president — a long and profitable publishing tradition. But the most high-profile works of political reporting dwell on Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, among them "Confidence Man," by The New York Times' Maggie Haberman, and "The Divider: Trump in the White House, 2017–2021," by Peter Baker of the Times and Susan Glasser of The New Yorker.

Michelle Obama's "The Light We Carry" is her first entirely new book since her worldwide bestseller from 2018, "Becoming." Benjamin Netanyahu's "Bibi" is the first memoir by the former Israeli Prime Minister, while American politicians with new books include Rep. Cori Bush of Missouri, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and Texas gubernatorial candidate Beto O'Rourke.

The fall will feature numerous posthumous releases, from the letters of John le Carré and the diaries of Alan Rickman to fiction by Leonard Cohen and memoirs by Michael K. Williams and Paul Newman, whose "The Extraordinary Life of an Ordinary Man" restores a project the actor abandoned years before his death in 2008.

"Victory Is Assured" compiles essays by the late critic and novelist Stanley Crouch, and "Ain't But a Few of Us: Black Music Writers Tell Their Story" includes the influential Greg Tate, who died last year. Assorted works by Randall Kenan, the award-winning fiction writer who died in 2020, are collected in "Black Folk Could Fly." His friend Tayari Jones, author of the acclaimed novel "An American Marriage," wrote the introduction.

"Reading over the manuscript pages, I sometimes spoke to him, asking why he never told me this or that thing," Jones told the AP. "Sometimes I laughed out loud and said, 'Randall you are so crazy!' — as though we were having a drink — boulevardiers! — and he had just related a hilarious anecdote. Other times, his brilliance underscored the breadth and depth of our loss, and I sat at my kitchen table and wept."

Celebrity books include Bono's "Surrender," Matthew Perry's "Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing" and Geena Davis' "Dying of Politeness." Bob Dylan reflects upon an art form he helped reinvent in "The Philosophy of Modern Song," while the title of Jan Wenner's memoir invokes the Dylan classic that helped inspire the name of the magazine he founded, "Like a Rolling Stone."

Memoirs also are scheduled from Steve Martin, Linda Ronstadt, Constance Wu and Brian Johnson. Patti Smith's "A Book of Days" builds upon the words and images of her widely followed Instagram account, on which she might post anything from a statue of Leonardo da Vinci to her cat staring at the cover of Dostoevsky's "The Idiot."

"I love doing my Instagram; it's the only social media I really engage in," Smith says. "The book was actually quite laborious. It takes time to write a short caption. You have to find a way to impart a lot in a few sentences."

In poetry, one notable release is a work of narrative prose: Nobel laureate Louise Glück's "Marigold and Rose" is a brief exploration into the minds of infant twins, inspired by the author's grandchildren. It's the first published fiction by the 79-year-old Glück, whose previous releases include more than 10 poetry collections and two books of essays.

New poetry includes works by Pulitzer-winners Jorie Graham and Sharon Olds, Saeed Jones, Jenny Xie, former U.S. poet laureates Billy Collins and Joy Harjo, Linda Pastan and Wang Yin, the Chinese poet whose

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"A Summer Day in the Company of Ghosts" is his first work to come out in English.

History books will cover the famous and the overlooked. Among the former are Pulitzer-winner Jon Meacham's "And There Was Light," the latest entry into the canon of Abraham Lincoln scholarship, and Pulitzer-winner Stacy Schiff's biography of Samuel Adams, "The Revolutionary." Fred Kaplan, who focused on Lincoln's prose in "Lincoln: The Biography of a Writer," now assesses Thomas Jefferson in "His Masterly Pen: A Biography of Jefferson the Writer."

Releases highlighting those less remembered include Kevin Hazzard's "American Sirens: The Incredible Story of the Black Men Who Became America's First Paramedics," and Katie Hickman's "Brave Hearted: The Women of the American West." With the overturning last summer of Roe v. Wade, Laura Kaplan's "The Story of Jane" is a timely reissue of her 1995 book about the underground abortion counseling service founded in Chicago in 1969, four years before the Supreme Court's historic Roe ruling.

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Fewer Americans claim jobless benefits last week

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Fewer Americans filed for unemployment benefits last week as the labor market continues to stand out as one of the strongest segments of the U.S. economy.

Applications for jobless aid for the week ending Aug. 20 fell by 2,000 to 243,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

The four-week average for claims, which evens out some of the week-to-week volatility, rose by 1,500 to 247,000.

The number of Americans collecting traditional unemployment benefits fell by 19,000 the week that ended Aug. 13, to 1.42 million.

First-time applications generally reflect layoffs and are often seen as an early indicator of where the job market is headed.

Hiring in the United States in 2022 has been remarkably strong even as the country faces rising interest rates and weak economic growth.

U.S. employers added 528,000 jobs in July, according to the Labor Department, more than double what forecasters had expected. The unemployment rate dipped to 3.5%, tying a 50-year low reached just before coronavirus pandemic slammed the U.S. economy in early 2020.

But there are other challenges. Consumer prices have been surging, rising 8.5% in July from a year earlier — down slightly from June's 40-year high 9.1%. To combat inflation, the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark short-term interest rate four times this year.

On Friday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell will deliver a speech that could shed more light on how high or how fast the central bank may raise interest rates in the coming months.

Higher borrowing costs have taken a toll. The economy contracted in the first half of the year — one measure suggesting the onset of a recession. But the strength of the job market has been inconsistent with an economic downturn.

Today in History: August 26, de Gaulle's victory march

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Aug. 26, the 238th day of 2022. There are 127 days left in the year.

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Today's Highlight in History:

On Aug. 26, 1968, the Democratic National Convention opened in Chicago; the four-day event that resulted in the nomination of Hubert H. Humphrey for president was marked by a bloody police crackdown on antiwar protesters in the streets.

On this date:

In 55 B.C., Roman forces under Julius Caesar invaded Britain, with only limited success.

In 1910, Thomas Edison demonstrated for reporters an improved version of his Kinetophone, a device for showing a movie with synchronized sound.

In 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, guaranteeing American women's right to vote, was certified in effect by Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby.

In 1939, the first televised major league baseball games were shown on experimental station W2XBS: a double-header between the Cincinnati Reds and the Brooklyn Dodgers at Ebbets Field. (The Reds won the first game, 5-2, the Dodgers the second, 6-1.)

In 1944, French Gen. Charles de Gaulle braved the threat of German snipers as he led a victory march in Paris, which had just been liberated by the Allies from Nazi occupation.

In 1957, the Soviet Union announced it had successfully tested an intercontinental ballistic missile.

In 1958, Alaskans went to the polls to overwhelmingly vote in favor of statehood.

In 1972, the summer Olympics opened in Munich, West Germany.

In 1978, Cardinal Albino Luciani (al-BEE'-noh loo-CHYAH'-nee) of Venice was elected pope following the death of Paul VI; the new pontiff took the name Pope John Paul I. (However, he died just over a month later.)

In 1985, 13-year-old AIDS patient Ryan White began "attending" classes at Western Middle School in Kokomo, Indiana, via a telephone hook-up at his home -- school officials had barred Ryan from attending classes in person.

In 2018, a gunman opened fire on fellow gamers at a video game tournament in Jacksonville, Fla., killing two men and wounding 10 others before taking his own life. Playwright Neil Simon, whose comedies included "The Odd Couple" and "Barefoot in the Park," died at the age of 91.

In 2020, 17-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse was arrested in Illinois in the shooting deaths of two people and the wounding of another during a third night of protests in Kenosha, Wisconsin, over the police shooting of a Black man, Jacob Blake. (Rittenhouse, who said he was defending himself after the three men attacked him, would be acquitted on all charges, including homicide.) All three scheduled NBA playoff games were postponed, with players choosing to boycott in their strongest statement yet against racial injustice. (The games resumed three days later, after players and owners agreed to expand initiatives, many tied to increased voting awareness and opportunities.)

Ten years ago: In the face of approaching Tropical Storm Isaac, Republicans pushed back the start of their national convention in Tampa, Florida, by a day. Lydia Ko, a 15-year-old South Korean-born New Zealander, won the Canadian Women's Open to become the youngest winner in LPGA Tour history and only the fifth amateur champion. Japan limited Tennessee's potent lineup to two hits in a 12-2 victory in the Little League World Series title game.

Five years ago: Hurricane Harvey spun into Texas, unloading extraordinary amounts of rain. Iraq's military said it had driven Islamic State militants out of 90 percent of the northern town of Tal Afar. Boxer Floyd Mayweather Jr. beat UFC fighter Conor McGregor in a boxing match in Las Vegas that was stopped by the referee in the 10th round; it was the last fight of Mayweather's career and earned him an estimated \$200 million. Spotify said Taylor Swift had set a new global first-day streaming record with more than 8 million same-day streams for Swift's new single, "Look What You Made Me Do."

One year ago: An Islamic State suicide bomber detonated two dozen pounds of explosives in a crowd of Afghans pushing to get into Kabul airport to flee the Taliban, killing more than 170 Afghans and 13 U.S. service members. The Supreme Court allowed evictions to resume across the United States, blocking the Biden administration from enforcing a temporary ban that was put in place because of the coronavirus pandemic.

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Today's Birthdays: Pop singer Vic Dana is 82. Former Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge is 77. R&B singer Valerie Simpson is 77. Pop singer Bob Cowsill is 73. Broadcast journalist Bill Whitaker is 71. Actor Brett Cullen is 66. Former NBA coach Stan Van Gundy is 63. Jazz musician Branford Marsalis is 62. Country musician Jimmy Olander (Diamond Rio) is 61. Actor Chris Burke is 57. Actor-singer Shirley Manson (Garbage) is 56. Rock musician Dan Vickrey (Counting Crows) is 56. TV writer-actor Riley Weston is 56. Rock musician Adrian Young (No Doubt) is 53. Actor Melissa McCarthy is 52. Latin pop singer Thalia is 51. Actor Meredith Eaton is 48. Rock singer-musician Tyler Connolly (Theory of a Deadman) is 47. Actor Mike Colter is 46. Actor Macaulay Culkin is 42. Actor Chris Pine is 42. Comedian/actor/writer John Mulaney is 40. Actor Johnny Ray Gill is 38. Country singer Brian Kelley (Florida Georgia Line) is 37. R&B singer Cassie (AKA Cassie Ventura) is 36. Actor Evan Ross is 34. Actor Danielle Savre is 34. Actor Dylan O'Brien is 31. Actor Keke Palmer is 29.