

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 1 of 79

[1- Upcoming Events](#)

[2- Netters have clean sweep over Sisseton](#)

[3-Northern State Skunks the Peacocks in 2022](#)

[Opener](#)

[4- Weather Pages](#)

[8- Daily Devotional](#)

[9- 2022 Community Events](#)

[10- Subscription Form](#)

[11- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Friday, Sept. 2

NO SCHOOL

Senior Menu: Chili, corn bread, coleslaw, lime pear Jell-O.

4 p.m.: Girls Soccer hosts Dakota Valley

7 p.m.: Football hosts Dakota Hills Coop



Groton Ag James Valley Keller Ken's Hardware

Be Kind  
TO ONE ANOTHER, TO THE ANIMALS, TO THE ENVIRONMENT, TO THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.

**Groton Community Transit**

**~JOB OPENING AVAILABLE~**  
Groton Community Transit is currently seeking an office dispatcher/driver..15-25 hours/week. Position includes scheduling daily transportation and drivers, some office work and driving. Starting wage \$14.00 /hr.  
Application can be picked up at Groton Community Transit, 205 E 2nd Ave, Groton, SD 57445.. Applications accepted through September 2, 2022. Call 605-397-8661 for any questions or more information...EQE.

**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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## Netters have clean sweep over Sisseton

Groton Area posted a clean sweep over Sisseton Thursday in volleyball action played in Sisseton.

Both junior high teams won their matches. The eighth grade match was broadcast on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Beauty Brew Coffee and Boutique. Groton Area won the first set, 25-18, and the second, 25-4. A third set was played and Groton Area won that as well, 26-18.

MaKenna Tietz had four ace serves, Sydney Locke had a kill and an ace serve, Ashlyn Warrington had five ace serves, Kella Tracy had five kills and five ace serves, Taryn Traphagen had two kills and six ace serves, Leah Jones had four kills and Emerge Jones had 11 ace serves and eight kills.

The Tigers won the C match, 25-21 and 25-12. Talli Wright and Kayla Lehr each had a kill, Kella Tracy had three kills and an ace serve, Chesney Weber had five kills and two ace serves, Cali Tollifson had a kill, Rylee Dunker had six kills and two ace serves, Carly Gilbert had two ace serves and a kill and London Bahr had two ace serves. The C Team Match was broadcast on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Beauty Brew Coffee and Boutique.

As the evening wore on, the sets got more competitive. The Tigers won the junior varsity match, 25-20 and 25-23. The match was tied a total of 17 times and the lead changed hands eight times. Jaedyn Penning had nine kills and three ace serves, Rylee Dunker had five kills and a block, Faith Traphagen had five kills and an ace serve, Talli Wright had four kills and an ace serve, Emma Kutter and Lydia Meier each had two kills, Chesney Weber had a kill and Jerica Locke had an ace serve. The JV match was broadcast on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Rutgear605.com.

Groton Area won the varsity match, 3-1. The Tigers won the first set, 25-19. Sisseton had the early 5-0 lead and led it, 9-5 before Groton Area scored nine unanswered points to take a 14-9 lead and went on for the win. In that set, Lydia Meier had four ace serves, Aspen Johnson had five kills, Sydney Leicht two kills, Anna Fjeldheim three kills and Elizabeth Fliehs and Emma Kutter each had one kill.

The second set was tied at 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 before Groton Area got the upper hand, leading 12-8. Sisseton battled back and tied the set at 18 and took a 19-18 lead. Groton Area tied the set at 22. Sisseton scored two to take a 24-22 lead. The Tigers tied the set at 24 but Sisseton would score the last two points for the 26-24 win. In that set, Leicht had six kills, Kutter had four and Meier, Fliehs and Johnson each had one kill.

Coach Chelsea Hanson said she told her team to be disciplined, disciplined, disciplined. "I don't have to coach much with these girls. They are smart and they work so well together as a team," she said. The Tigers then dominated the third set, winning, 25-8, which included a 10-point run. Fjeldheim had an ace serve, Leicht had three kills and a once serve, Carly Guthmiller had two ace serves, Meier and three kills, Fliehs had a kill and an ace serve, Johnson had two kills and Kutter had a kill and a block.

Groton Area had the upper had for most of the fourth set. After the set was tied at one, three and four, the Tigers took a 12-7 lead. Leading 20-13, the Redmen staged a comeback and tied the set at 22 and took a 23-22 lead. Groton Area tied the set at 23 and scored the final two points including the match winning kill by Leicht for the 25-23 win. In that set, Leicht had three kills and an ace serve, Meier had three kills and two ace serves, Fliehs had two kills and Johnson had four kills.

For the match, Groton Area was 86 of 96 in serving with seven ace serves. Meier was 17 of 19 with four aces, Fliehs was 13 of 13 with an ace and Guthmiller was 18 of 20 with an ace.

On the attacks, Groton Area was 138 of 158 with 44 kills. Leicht had a total of 15 kills while Johnson had 10 and Meier seven.

Fliehs had 36 assists and Guthmiller had two. The Tigers had 86 digs with Guthmiller having 24, Fliehs 16 and Leicht 16. Kutter had one block.

Krista Langager led the Redmen with 14 kills and one ace serve while Sidney Johnson had eight kills, Emmalee Nielsen had two kills, one ace and one block, Ruby Rice had three kills and an ace, Rylie Huff had three kills, Sadie Medenwald, Annika Estwick and Tara Nelson each had an ace.

Groton Area, now 3-1, will host Webster on Tuesday.

The varsity match 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.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 3 of 79

## Northern State Skunks the Peacocks in 2022 Opener

Aberdeen, S.D. – The Northern State University football team shutout Upper Iowa in the 2022 season opener for Dacotah Bank Stadium. The Wolves scored in three of the four quarters and shut down the Peacock offense, which tallied just seven yards rushing and 132 yards passing in the game.

### THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 30, UIU 0

Records: NSU 1-0, UIU 0-1

Attendance: 4237

### HOW IT HAPPENED

- Michael Bonds hit Ben Noland for a 5-yard touchdown, putting the Wolves on the board at 4:38 in the first quarter
- Bonds tallied his second passing touchdown of the evening in the second, connecting with Caleb Schentzel for a 22-yard score; the first of Schentzel's career
- Payton Eue closed out the half for the Wolves hitting a 49-yarder just as the clock read 00:00
- Northern State held a 16-0 lead and that score held through the entire third quarter
- At 13:33 in the fourth, Bonds connected with Jacob Van Landingham for a 7-yard reception touchdown; the third of the night for the ace and first of Van Landingham's Northern State career
- The Wolves were done, as Brett Brenton scored on an 11-yard run on the following drive, sealing the 30-0 victory for NSU
- Northern out-played Upper Iowa on both sides of the ball more than doubling the Peacocks totals for first downs, rushing yards, total offense, punt return yards, and sacks
- In total the Wolves tallied 405 yards of total offense, 261 yards passing and 144 yards rushing, to the Peacocks 139 yards of total offense, 132 yards passing and seven yards rushing
- The NSU offense averaged 7.1 yards per reception and 3.7 yards per carry with nine different rushers and 11 different receivers in the mix
- Northern converted on 7-of-16 third downs and scored three of the four times they entered the red zone
- The defense dominated up front and in the back field, notching 12 tackles for a loss, three sacks, and two interceptions
- The Wolves held the Peacocks twice in the red zone and forced a combined third and fourth down conversion rate of 15.4%

### NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

- Michael Bonds: 21-of-30, 207 yards passing, 3 touchdowns, 36-yard long
- Brett Brenton: 50 yards rushing, 1 touchdown, 11-yard long
- Dominick Fiscelli: 94 yards receiving, 11.8 yards per reception
- Ian Marshall: 6 tackles, 4.0 tackles for a loss, 2.0 sacks
- Nate Robinson: 3 tackles, 1 interception
- Luke Choul: 1 sack for a loss of 10 yards
- Ar'Shon Willis: 1 interception
- Payton Eue: 49-yard field goal, 47.7 yards per punt, 63.4 yards per kickoff

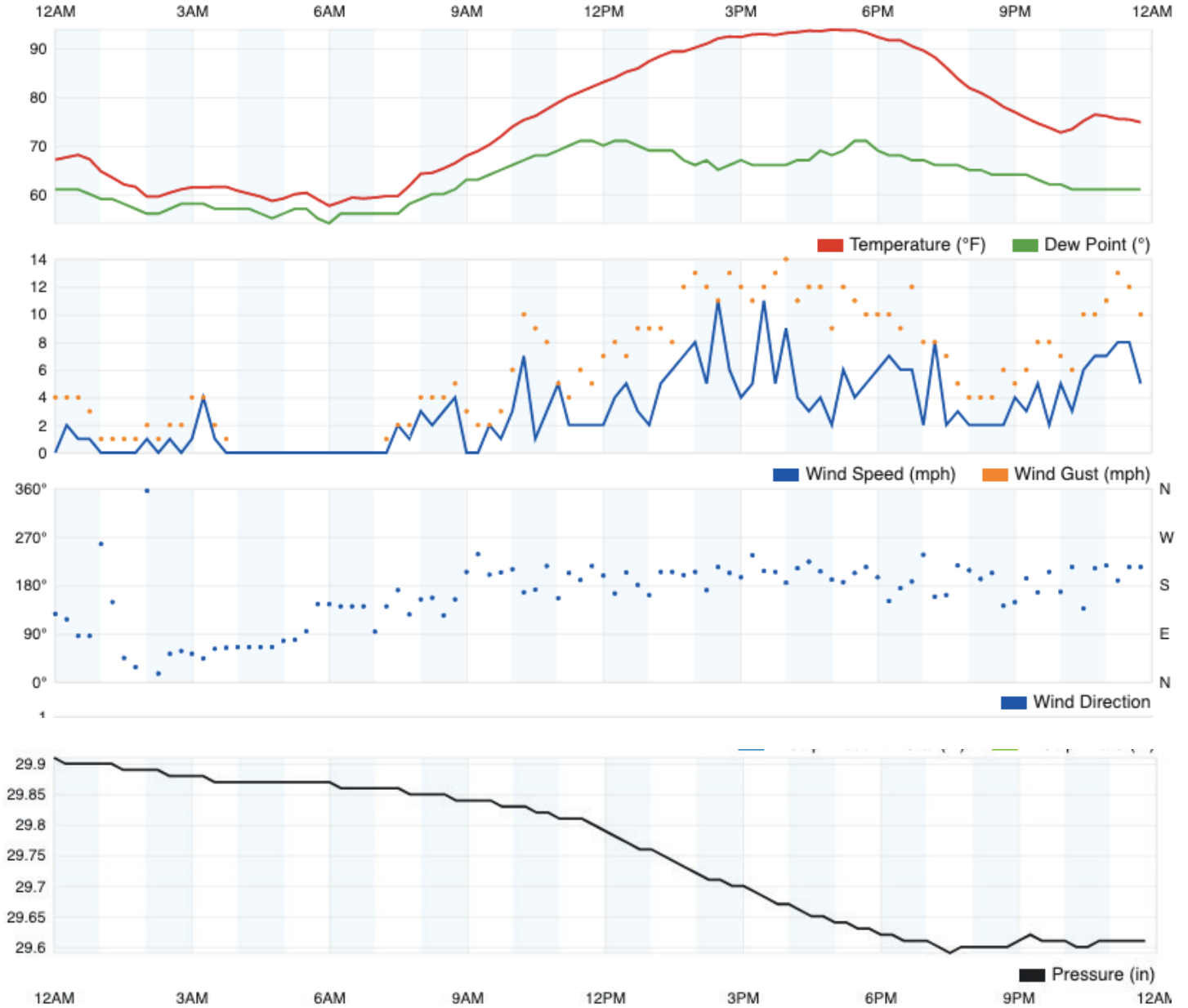
### UP NEXT

Northern travels to Wayne State next Saturday for a 6 p.m. kick versus the Wildcats. The Wolves then return to Dacotah Bank Stadium on September 17th versus Minnesota State. Fans are reminded that all game day information and protocols are posted on the Dacotah Bank Stadium homepage.

# Groton Daily Independent

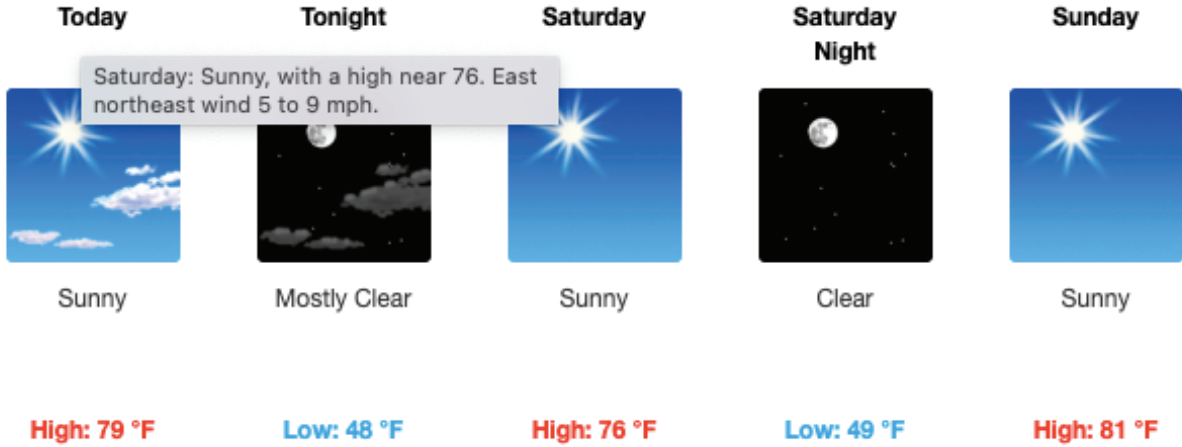
Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 4 of 79

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 5 of 79



## Behind the Cold Front



Gusty north winds of 25 to 30 mph. There may be a few higher gusts over north central South Dakota.



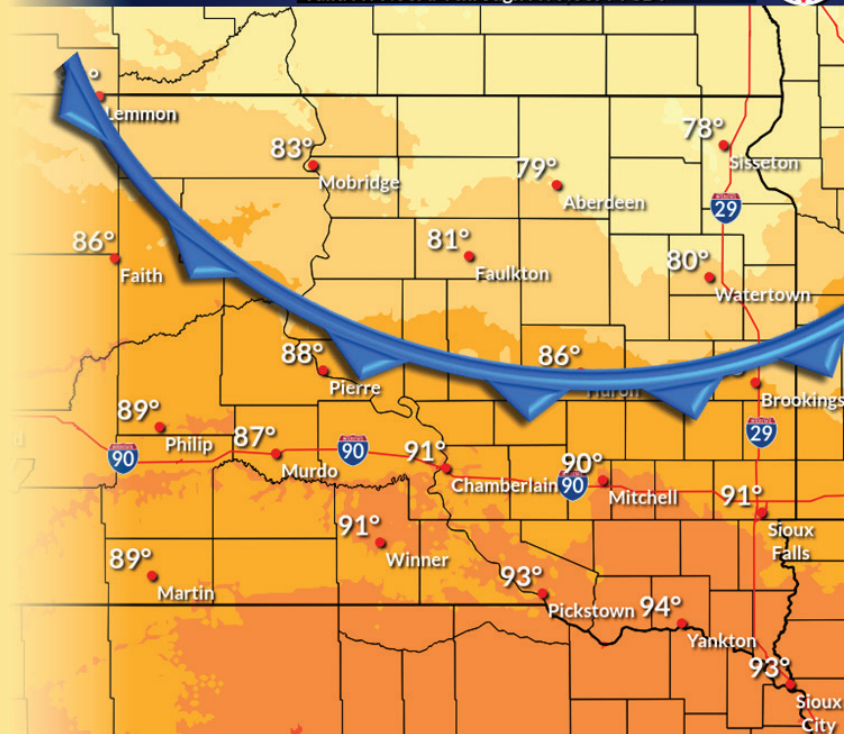
Combination of dry air and gusty winds will result in high fire danger across western & central South Dakota.



Updated: 9/2/2022 5:13 AM Central

## High Temperature Friday

Valid Fri 9:00AM through Fri 9:00PM CDT



A cold front will slide across the region today. This will result in (relatively) cooler temperatures, gusty northerly winds and drier air. The combination of dry air and breezy winds will also result in high fire danger for much of central South Dakota.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 6 of 79

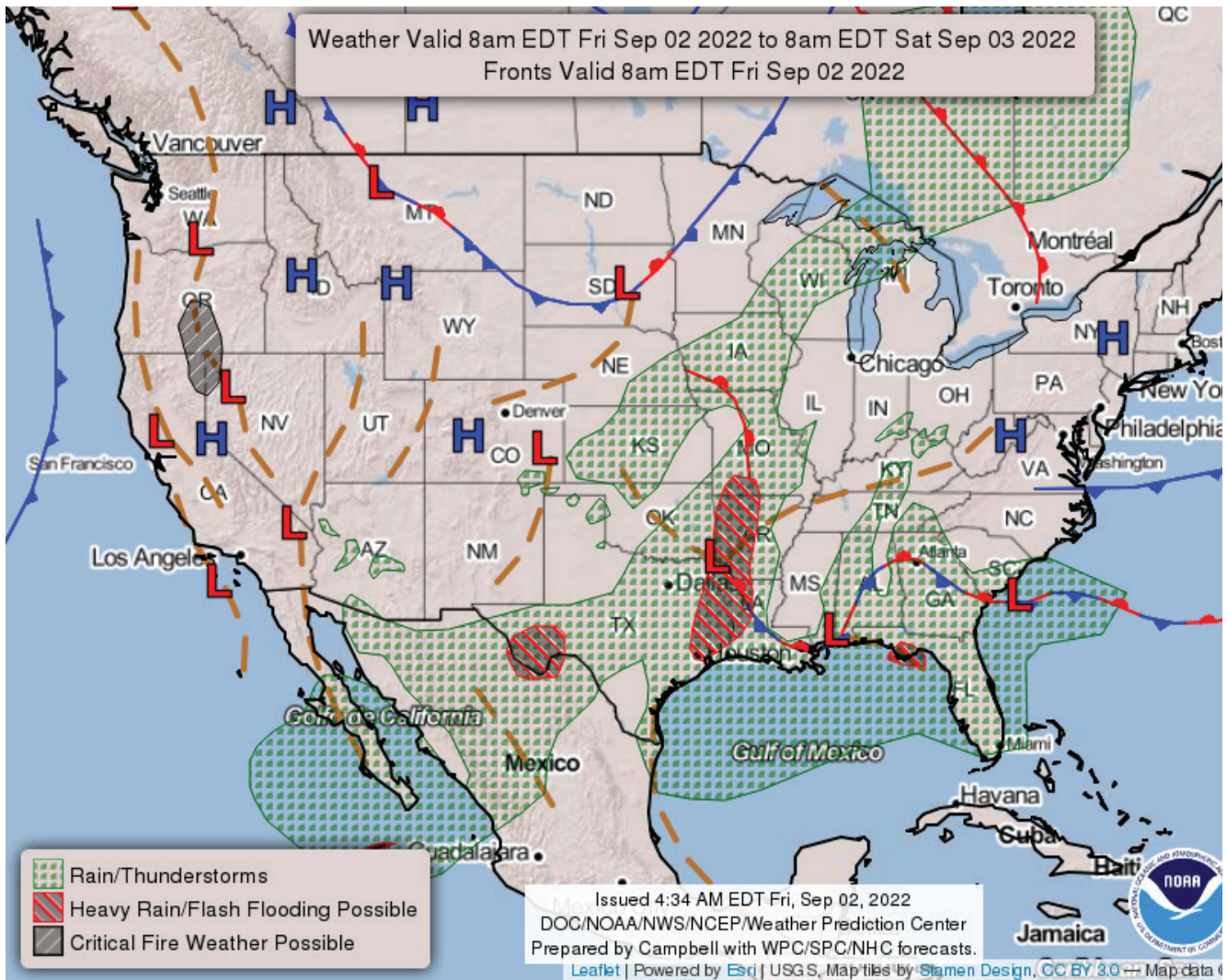
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 94 °F at 4:54 PM**  
**Low Temp: 58 °F at 5:59 AM**  
**Wind: 14 mph at 3:52 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 13 hours, 16 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1913  
Record Low: 35 in 1896  
Average High: 80°F  
Average Low: 52°F  
Average Precip in Sept.: 0.14  
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 16.48  
Precip Year to Date: 15.96  
Sunset Tonight: 8:10:00 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:10:00 PM



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 7 of 79

## Today in Weather History

September 2, 1962: From 315 to 445 pm, hail fell in and around the Mobridge area. The hail ranged from 1 1/2 to 4 inches in diameter. The ground was covered up to 3 inches deep with drifts of 2-3 feet. At this time, the storm was one of the worst in recent history for damage.

September 2, 1983: A tornado touched down in the late afternoon 3 miles west and 1 mile south of Polo in Hand County damaging buildings, machinery, and trees. The roof of a hog house was torn off, and the north side of the building was destroyed. A barn was pulled several inches off of its foundation, and numerous trees were destroyed. At a nearby farm, two outbuildings were damaged, with two cows injured along with two calves killed.

September 2, 1985: Intense thunderstorms moved from south-central South Dakota to northeast South Dakota during the evening. Winds gusted to 60 to 70 mph over the area. Southwest of Presho, three small buildings were destroyed, and barns were damaged. Power lines and other property were damaged near Vayland, Miller, Wessington, Wolsey, Kimball, White Lake, Armour, and Castlewood. Large hail caused considerable damage to crops.

1775: The 1775 Newfoundland hurricane, also known as the Independence Hurricane, was a storm that hit the Colony of Newfoundland. It is believed to have killed at least 4,000 people, making it one of the deadliest Atlantic hurricanes of all time. The death toll in Virginia and North Carolina was 163 lives.

1882: Possibly the first photograph of a lightning strike was taken on this day by William Jennings in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

1887: The U.S. Army Signal Service station in Greenville, SC reported a minimum temperature of 50°F. This observation at Greenville still stands as the record low for the day. Additional stations across the state recorded low temps in the low 50's.

1935 - Perhaps the most intense hurricane ever to hit the U.S. struck the Florida Keys with 200 mph winds. The hurricane produced a fifteen foot tide and waves thirty feet high. 400 persons perished in the storm on that Labor Day. The barometric pressure at Matecumbe Bay FL hits a record low for the U.S. of 26.35 inches. (David Ludlum)

1950 - The temperature at Mecca, CA, soared to 126 degrees to establish a U.S. record for the month of September. The low that morning was 89 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1985 - After teasing residents along the Gulf of Mexico for two days, Hurricane Elena finally came ashore at Biloxi MS. The hurricane, packing winds of 127 mph, caused more than a billion dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Late evening thunderstorms in the Northern Plains Region produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Jordan MT, and a ""hot flash"" at Redig SD. The temperature at Redig rose from 66 degrees at 10 PM to 86 degrees at 11 PM as thunderstorm winds gusted to 36 mph. Nine cities in the Upper Ohio Valley, the Tennessee Valley and the Central Gulf Coast States reported record low temperatures for the date, including Elkins WV with a reading of 38 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the northwestern U.S. Afternoon highs of 98 degrees at Olympia WA, 98 degrees at Seattle WA, 105 degrees at Portland OR, and 110 degrees at Medford OR, established records for the month of September. Quillayute WA equalled their September record with an afternoon high of 97 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Eight cities in the Gulf Coast Region reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the upper 90s. Houston TX and Port Arthur TX hit 99 degrees. Late evening thunderstorms, developing ahead of a cold front, produced wind gusts to 63 mph at Dickinson ND, and golf ball size hail in North Dakota and Nebraska. Winds along the cold front itself gusted to 62 mph at Buffalo SD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2002: An F3 tornado destroyed much of the downtown area of Ladysmith, Wisconsin. Overall damage was estimated at \$20 million, but there were no fatalities.



## Lighting Candles

### Scripture: Luke 12:35–40 (NIV)

#### Watchfulness

35 “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36 like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. 37 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. 38 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. 39 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

#### Insight By: Arthur Jackson

In Luke 12:35–40, Jesus used two illustrations from the ancient world to stress how crucial it is for His followers to be ready for His return. Verse 35 helps us to visualize what Christ taught in the first illustration: “Be dressed ready for service.” Servants expecting the return of their master needed to be clothed, alert, and ready to welcome him regardless of the time of his return (v. 38). The reward for readiness is quite surprising, for it’s a reversal of roles—the servants are pronounced “blessed” (*makarios*) (or “it will be good,” vv. 37–38). This is the same word Jesus used to describe His followers in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2–12; Luke 6:20–23). Houseowners are the focus of the second readiness illustration; they’re to be alert so thieves don’t break into their homes. The teaching for believers in Christ is clear: always be ready..

#### Comment By: James Banks

It was noon, but the sun wasn’t visible. New England’s Dark Day began the morning of May 19, 1780, and lasted for hours. The cause of the surreal darkness was likely heavy clouds of smoke from massive wildfires in Canada, but many wondered if it might be judgment day.

The Connecticut governor’s council (senate) was in session, and when some considered adjourning because of the darkness, Abraham Davenport responded, “I am against adjournment. The day of judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for an adjournment; if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish therefore that candles may be brought.”

Davenport’s desire to be found faithfully performing the work God had given him to do on the day He returns is illustrative of Jesus’ words: “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes” (Luke 12:35–37).

Day or night, it’s always good to serve our Savior. Even when darkness encroaches, His promises for all who look forward to Him will stand. Like candles in the darkness, may our “light shine before others, that they may see” (Matthew 5:16) and love and serve Him too.

**Reflect and Prayer:** What would you do differently if you knew Jesus was coming tomorrow? How will you shine His light today?

Come soon, Jesus! I pray You’ll find me ready on that day, and that the way I live now will draw others to You.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 9 of 79

## 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)

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 10 of 79

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## News from the Associated Press

### **Biden administration awards \$1 billion for economic projects**

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo is announcing Friday \$1 billion worth of federal grants for manufacturing, clean energy, farming, biotech and other sectors that will go to 21 regional partnerships.

The winners were chosen from 529 initial applicants vying for grants that were part of last year's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package. The Biden administration has repeatedly laid out a vision for the economy that is more self-sufficient and driven by high-tech manufacturing and the development of renewable energy.

"The whole point of this is we're not going to let you get left behind as we transition to a more digital economy, to a more technical economy, to a green economy," Raimondo told The Associated Press. "People want to work where they live. People want to know there is a place for them in the changing economy."

Unlike much of the pandemic aid that was meant to address immediate needs, the \$1 billion in grants is part of a longer-term effort to revitalize parts of the country that have needed an economic jolt for existing industries and capital for new ventures. The mission is personal for Raimondo, whose father lost his job at a watch factory in Rhode Island. She said the grants are the largest ever for local economic development provided by the Commerce Department.

The grants include \$65.1 million in California to improve farm production and \$25 million for a robotics cluster in Nebraska. Georgia gets \$65 million for artificial intelligence. There is \$63.7 million for lithium-based battery development in New York. Coal counties in West Virginia would receive \$62.8 million to help with the shift to solar power and find new uses for abandoned mines.

Raimondo said the winners were chosen based on merit rather than politics. She estimated that the investments, which will be provided over five years as reimbursements, will result in at least 100,000 jobs.

Solidly Republican states such as Oklahoma and South Dakota received funding, and money also is going ahead of November's midterm elections toward political battlegrounds that could decide control of Congress. There is \$44 million for regenerative medicine in New Hampshire, where Democrat Maggie Hassan is defending her U.S. Senate seat. Pennsylvania, which has an open Senate seat, is set to receive \$62.7 million for robotics and artificial intelligence.

The massive amount of coronavirus aid at the start of President Joe Biden's tenure helped to accelerate job growth as the U.S. recovered from the pandemic. But accompanying the hiring was a burst of inflation that hit a 40-year peak this summer, crushing consumer sentiment and putting the administration on the defensive to show how its policies are helping the economy.

Even as much of the coronavirus money has been disbursed, the administration has said it still needs more money to contain the disease and its variations. Biden unsuccessfully sought to get \$22.5 billion from Congress to address and prevent outbreaks, a figure that lawmakers reduced to \$10 billion in negotiations. But additional funding was never passed by Congress despite confirmed cases that are now averaging about 90,000 daily.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre tried to minimize the lack of funding after the Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday approved modified booster shots of the vaccines. Jean-Pierre said booster shots would be available after the Labor Day holiday as the administration has worked with local partners.

Still, the grants for economic development indicate that the relief package could have a multi-decade impact that goes beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. The New Orleans area will receive \$50 million to use hydrogen produced by wind power that does not cause carbon emissions, a meaningful change in Louisiana, a state that has long depended on fossil fuels.

"With clean hydrogen, we can remain an energy state — but become an energy state of the future that has less impact on the environment," said Michael Hecht, president and CEO of Greater New Orleans Inc.,

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 12 of 79

an economic development nonprofit. "When money and morality come together, you get stuff done."

## Thursday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli def. Tiospa Zina Tribal, 25-11, 25-10, 25-19

Avon def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-20, 25-21, 24-26, 15-25, 15-12

Baltic def. Garretson, 25-21, 25-22, 25-18

Beresford def. Yankton, 25-15, 17-25, 25-20, 21-25, 15-13

Burke def. Kimball/White Lake, 25-17, 25-22, 25-18

Canton def. Irene-Wakonda, 25-6, 25-10, 25-23

Castlewood def. Deubrook, 3-1

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte def. Crow Creek, 25-13, 22-25, 25-23, 27-25

Colman-Egan def. DeSmet, 25-13, 25-17, 25-13

Estelline/Hendricks def. Wilmot, 25-14, 25-12, 25-5

Ethan def. Sanborn Central/Woonsocket, 25-17, 26-24, 25-23

Faulkton def. North Central Co-Op, 25-13, 25-15, 25-14

Florence/Henry def. Arlington, 25-10, 25-20, 25-15

Gregory def. Lyman, 25-23, 25-12, 25-19

Groton Area def. Sisseton, 25-19, 24-26, 25-8, 25-23

Hamlin def. Flandreau, 25-15, 15-25, 22-25, 25-15, 15-7

Howard def. Freeman, 19-25, 19-25, 25-22, 25-22, 15-7

Huron def. Aberdeen Central, 25-17, 20-25, 25-21, 25-27, 15-9

Ipswich def. Waubay/Summit, 25-11, 25-8, 25-15

James Valley Christian def. Hitchcock-Tulare, 25-21, 25-14, 25-20

Madison def. West Central, 27-25, 25-11, 25-18

McCook Central/Montrose def. Parker, 25-10, 25-15, 25-21

Menno def. Freeman Academy/Marion, 25-12, 25-13, 25-16

Milbank def. Clark/Willow Lake, 25-21, 23-25, 25-14, 25-15

Miller def. Sully Buttes, 25-19, 25-10, 25-10

Mobridge-Pollock def. Potter County, 25-18, 30-28, 25-9

New Underwood def. White River, 25-17, 25-17, 25-18

Northwestern def. Langford, 25-11, 25-8, 25-9

Philip def. Kadoka Area, 22-25, 25-23, 25-18, 25-20

Pierre def. Douglas, 25-15, 25-16, 25-8

Platte-Geddes def. Colome, 25-15, 25-5, 25-14

Rapid City Christian def. Sturgis Brown, 25-4, 25-18, 25-15

Redfield def. Deuel, 25-7, 25-18, 25-17

Sioux Falls Christian def. Dell Rapids, 25-15, 25-17, 25-23

Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-20, 25-21, 25-14

Tri-State, N.D. def. Great Plains Lutheran, 27-25, 19-25, 15-25, 25-19, 15-12

Tri-Valley def. Lennox, 22-25, 25-13, 20-25, 28-26, 15-8

Wagner def. Chamberlain, 25-5, 25-6, 25-8

Wall def. Lead-Deadwood, 25-19, 25-11, 25-18

Warner def. Leola/Frederick, 25-16, 25-6, 25-9

Watertown def. Brookings, 25-16, 25-19, 25-21

Webster def. Britton-Hecla, 25-22, 25-18, 26-24

Wessington Springs def. Bridgewater-Emery, 20-25, 25-23, 25-23, 25-17

Omaha Duchesne Triangular=

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 13 of 79

Vermillion def. South Sioux City, Neb., 25-23, 25-10, 29-27

## PREP FOOTBALL

Crow Creek 28, Omaha Nation, Neb. 0  
Elkton-Lake Benton 30, Bon Homme 14  
Hanson 50, Chester 0  
Leola/Frederick 46, Northwestern 0  
Standing Rock, N.D. 48, Marty Indian 8

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

## FCS power South Dakota St. to test Hawkeyes in season opener

By The Associated Press undefined

South Dakota State (0-0) at Iowa (0-0), Saturday, 1 p.m. ET (FS1)

Line: No early line on FanDuel Sports Book.

Series record: First meeting.

### WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Iowa is flying under the radar despite winning the Big Ten West last year. It's not an unfamiliar position for the Hawkeyes, who often win ugly year in and year out. The Hawkeyes can't count on their defense generating as many takeaways as it did a year ago, so offensive improvement is a must. South Dakota State presents a big challenge. The Jackrabbits are ranked in the top three of the FCS polls and one of two programs to make the FCS playoffs each of the last 10 seasons, including the semifinals or final four of the last five years.

### KEY MATCHUP

Iowa running game vs. South Dakota State front seven. Gavin Williams and Leshon Williams (not related) form a 1-2 punch at running back after Tyler Goodson declared for the NFL draft. They'll need to produce against a front seven that returns four veteran starters. The Jackrabbits want to force Spencer Petras into passing situations. Petras' passer rating last year ranked 98th nationally, and his receiver corps is not deep. SDSU led the FCS with 21 interceptions.

### PLAYERS TO WATCH

South Dakota State: QB Mark Gronowski, who missed last season because of injury, returns as the starter. He led the Jackrabbits to the FCS title game in the 2021 spring season and was named Missouri Valley Conference offensive player of the year.

Iowa: WR Alec Wick is a walk-on who made a fast rise on the depth chart and could get significant playing time if Keagan Johnson is limited or can't play. The Hawkeyes already are missing injured starter Nico Ragaini.

### FACTS & FIGURES

Iowa has won 19 of its last 21 openers. ... The Hawkeyes are playing an FCS opponent for the first time since 2018 (Northern Iowa). ... Iowa has intercepted 89 passes since 2017, most of any team. The Hawkeyes picked off a school-record 25 passes last season. ... SDSU is 2-9 against Bowl Subdivision opponents since moving to Division I in 2008. The Jackrabbits beat Colorado State 42-23 in last year's opener. ... SDSU LB Adam Bock, who grew up 12 miles north of Iowa City in Solon, made a team-leading 125 tackles with 9.5 tackles for loss and 2.5 sacks.

## K-State opens against South Dakota with big expectations

By The Associated Press undefined

South Dakota (0-0) at Kansas State (0-0), Saturday, 7 p.m. ET (ESPN+)

Line: No early line on FanDuel Sportsbook.

Series record: Kansas State leads 5-0.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 14 of 79

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Kansas State begins a season of high expectations against South Dakota before facing Missouri next week in a showdown against an ex-Big 12 rival. South Dakota took the Wildcats to the wire in their last meeting in 2018. K-State will lean on Nebraska transfer quarterback Adrian Martinez and returning running back Deuce Vaughn. Vaughn is a preseason All-America all-purpose player who had nearly 2,000 yards total offense last season. The Coyotes have arguably the toughest schedule in the Football Championship Subdivision with four games against preseason top-10 teams following their opening trip to Manhattan.

## KEY MATCHUP

Martinez is coming off shoulder surgery that limited him in spring ball, but the prolific passer has earned raves throughout fall camp. He set 17 school records with the Cornhuskers, including 10,792 yards total offense and 670 completions, but will try to cut down on the turnovers that frequently spoiled his big days. The Coyotes should provide a good early test after three years of rebuilding under defensive coordinator Travis Johansen.

## PLAYERS TO WATCH

South Dakota: RB Travis Theis returns to the Sunflower State, where he starred for Pratt High School, after a big game against Kansas to open last season. He ran for 96 yards and a touchdown against the Jayhawks, and went on to finish eighth in the Missouri Valley with 677 yards rushing and eight touchdowns.

Kansas State: Vaughn is coming off a season in which he was one of only three players nationally with at least 1,000 yards rushing and 400 yards receiving. He also was fourth in the nation with 22 total TDs. Vaughn has 2,043 yards on the ground and needs 97 yards receiving in his next three games to become the second-fastest player behind Tulane's Mewelde Moore to eclipse the 2,000-1,000 mark since at least 1996.

## FACTS & FIGURES

South Dakota led the Wildcats 24-12 in the fourth quarter in 2018 before losing 27-24. Eight players on the Coyotes' roster played in that game. ... South Dakota QB Carson Camp is entering his third year as the starter and has thrown for more than 3,200 yards with 20 TD passes. ... The Coyotes have faced an FBS program every year since 2010, not counting the COVID-19 season in 2020, and has wins over Minnesota in 2010 and Bowling Green in 2017. ... Kansas State allowed 21 points per game last season, when it switched to a 3-3-5 system, after allowing 32.2 per game in 2020. ... The Wildcats return seven starters on defense, including All-American candidate Felix Anudike-Uzomah. ... Kansas State committed four penalties for 41 yards over its final three regular-season games last season. ... Collin Klein, a Heisman Trophy finalist for Kansas State in 2012, is beginning his first season as offensive coordinator. He held the interim title for part of last season.

## Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

Yankton Press & Dakotan. August 29, 2022.

Editorial: College Alcohol Sales: Making The Rules Clear

The arrival of alcohol sales during events at South Dakota's public universities is a move that's probably long overdue, and it's now up to both the schools and the patrons to make this change work.

In June the South Dakota Board of Regents (SDBOR) approved an expanded alcohol sales policy, starting with the new school year. "The change allows the state's public universities to permit alcohol sales in the general admission areas of performing arts and athletic events," the Press & Dakotan reported earlier this month.

The issue has been on the regent radar for several years, with the SDBOR holding out until this year.

Alcohol sales at college venues are an expanding business, particularly on NCAA Division I campuses.

Last week, the University of South Dakota announced it had finalized its policy regarding alcohol sales at both the DakotaDome and the Sanford Coyote Sports Center.

Alcohol will only be sold in specific areas, according to a press release, and there will be areas that will be specifically designated as alcohol-free zones where no such beverages can be either purchased or

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 15 of 79

consumed.

The process for purchasing alcohol will also be thorough. "Fans must show a valid ID to purchase alcohol and will receive a wristband after their first purchase," the press release said. "Fans may be asked to show their ID again, even if they have a wristband, so they should plan to have their valid ID on them at all times."

The press release added, "Alcohol will not be sold to anyone who is visibly intoxicated, and anyone exhibiting unruly, disruptive or illegal behavior can be ejected from the facility without a refund."

Also, alcohol sales will only be available for USD events at those two facilities. There will be no alcohol sold for high school events, including Vermillion High School football games or the South Dakota high school football championships.

With that, USD is now entering a new age in which adults will be treated like adults, even if some of them are college kids.

More importantly, they will be expected to act like responsible adults.

The new rules for serving alcohol in what has been previously a family-oriented, alcohol-free environment must be strictly enforced, which is something that school officials appear to understand.

And it will be up to fans to adhere to those new rules or face the consequences, which is something the school will strive to make clear once sales commence early next month.

As we said, it's probably an overdue move, but we understand any trepidation in the transition.

However, with alcohol sales increasingly becoming a fact of life at NCAA venues, it's good to see South Dakota schools stay in step with the times, especially armed with clear rules and consequences.

END

## Argentina: Attempt to kill VP fails when handgun misfires

By DÉBORA REY and ALMUDENA CALATRAVA Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — A man tried to kill Argentina's politically powerful Vice President Cristina Fernández outside her home, but the handgun misfired, the country's president said.

The man was quickly overpowered by her security officers in the incident Thursday night, officials said.

President Alberto Fernández, who is not related to the vice president, a former president herself, said the pistol did not discharge when the man tried to fire it.

"A man pointed a firearm at her head and pulled the trigger," the president said in a national broadcast following the incident. He said the firearm was loaded with five bullets but "didn't fire even though the trigger was pulled."

The vice president did not appear to have suffered any injury, and the man was overpowered within seconds as he stood among a crowd of her supporters.

Gina De Bai, a witness who was near the vice president during the incident, told The Associated Press she heard "the sound of the trigger being pulled." She said she didn't realize it was a handgun until the man was rushed by security personnel.

President Fernández called it "the most serious incident since we recovered democracy" in 1983 after a military dictatorship and urged political leaders, and society at large, to repudiate the attempted shooting.

The attack came as the vice president is facing a trial for alleged acts of corruption during her 2007-2015 presidency — charges that she vehemently denies and that have led her supporters to surround her home in the upscale Recoleta neighborhood of Argentina's capital.

Video broadcast on local television channels showed Fernández exiting her vehicle surrounded by supporters when a man is seen extending his hand with what looks like a pistol. The vice president ducks as people around the apparent gunman appear shocked at what is happening.

Unverified video posted on social media shows the pistol almost touched Fernández's face.

The alleged gunman was identified as Fernando André Sabag Montiel, a Brazilian citizen, said an official at the Security Ministry, who spoke on condition of anonymity. He does not have a criminal record, the official said, adding that the weapon was a .32-caliber Bersa.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 16 of 79

The president declared Friday a holiday "so the Argentine people can, in peace and harmony, express itself in defense of life, democracy and in solidarity with our vice president."

Supporters of the vice president have been gathering in the streets surrounding her home since last week, when a prosecutor called for a 12-year sentence for Fernández as well as a life-long prohibition in holding public office in the corruption case.

Shortly after the incident, government officials were quick to decry what they called an assassination attempt.

"When hate and violence are imposed over the debate of ideas, societies are destroyed and generate situations like the one seen today: an assassination attempt," Economy Minister Sergio Massa said.

Cabinet ministers issued a news release saying they "energetically condemn the attempted homicide" of the vice president. "What happened tonight is of extreme gravity and threatens democracy, institutions and the rule of law."

Former President Mauricio Macri, a conservative who succeeded the left-of-center Fernández in the presidency, also condemned the attack. "This very serious event demands an immediate and profound clarification by the judiciary and security forces," Macri wrote on Twitter.

Patricia Bullrich, president of the opposition Republican Proposal party, criticized President Fernández's reaction to the attack, accusing him of "playing with fire." She said that "instead of seriously investigating a serious incident, he accuses the opposition and the press, decreeing a national holiday to mobilize activists."

Tensions have been running high in the Recoleta neighborhood since the weekend, when the vice president's supporters clashed with police in the streets surrounding her apartment amid an effort by law enforcement officers to clear the area. Following the clashes, what had been a strong police presence around the vice president's apartment was reduced.

When Fernández leaves her apartment every day at around noon, she greets supporters and signs autographs before getting in her vehicle to go to the Senate. She repeats the same routine every evening.

Following the incident, allies of the vice president quickly pointed the finger at the opposition for what they said is hateful speech that promotes violence. In recent days, several key officials have said opposition leaders were looking for a fatality.

"This is a historic event in Argentina that must be a before-and-after," Buenos Aires Gov. Axel Kicillof said. Regional leaders also condemned the attack.

"We send our solidarity to the vice president in this attempt against her life," Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro said on Twitter.

Former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva, who is a candidate in that nation's presidential election next month, also expressed solidarity with Fernández, calling her a "victim of a fascist criminal who doesn't know how to respect differences and diversity."

## Fighting goes on near Ukraine nuclear plant; IAEA on site

By YESICA FISCH Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — Heavy fighting continued Friday near Europe's largest nuclear power plant in a Russian-controlled area of eastern Ukraine, a day after experts from the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog agency voiced concerns about structural damage to the sprawling Zaporizhzhia site.

Britain's Defense Ministry says shelling continued in the district where the Zaporizhzhia power plant sits. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office said Russian shelling damaged houses, gas pipelines and other infrastructure in the Nikopol region on the other bank of the Dnieper River.

The team of inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, braving gunfire and artillery blasts along their route, crossed the frontlines to reach the Zaporizhzhia plant on Thursday in a mission to help safeguard the plant against catastrophe. Fighting Thursday prompted the shutdown of one reactor — underscoring the urgency of their task.

The 14-member delegation arrived in a convoy of SUVs and vans after months of negotiations to enable the experts to pass through the front lines. Speaking to reporters after leaving colleagues inside, IAEA



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 17 of 79

director Rafael Grossi, said the agency was “not moving” from the plant from now on, and vowed Thursday a “continued presence” of agency experts.

Grossi said it was “obvious that the plant and the physical integrity of the plant has been violated several times” — but couldn’t assess whether by chance or on purpose. “I will continue to be worried about the plant until we have a situation which is more stable,” he said.

Grossi said IAEA experts toured the entire site, including control rooms, emergency systems and diesel generators, and met with the plant’s staff.

The plant has been occupied by Russian forces but run by Ukrainian engineers since the early days of the 6-month war. Ukraine alleges Russia is using it as a shield to launch attacks, while Moscow accuses Ukraine of recklessly firing on the area.

Before the IAEA team arrived, Energoatom, Ukraine’s state nuclear power company, said Russian mortar shelling had led to the shutdown of one of its reactors by its emergency protection system and had damaged a backup power supply line used for in-house needs.

IAEA announced plans for a news conference later Friday from its headquarters in Vienna to discuss the mission.

Energoatom on Friday accused Russian forces of “making every effort” to prevent the IAEA mission from getting to know the facts on the ground. On Thursday, Russian Foreign Ministry Sergey Lavrov said Russia was making sure that the plant was secure and safe, and that mission “accomplishes all of its plans there.”

Elsewhere in Ukraine on Friday, Zelenskyy’s office said four people were killed and 10 injured over the last day in the eastern Donetsk region, a key hub of the Russian invasion, and reported rocket attacks on Sloviansk that destroyed a kindergarten. It said heavy fighting continues in two districts of the Kherson region to the south.

## Fighting at 40: Older fans take heart in Serena’s success

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Imagine if they could bottle a potion called “Just Serena.”

That was Serena Williams’ succinct, smiling explanation for how she’d managed — at nearly 41, and match-rusty — to defeat the world’s second-ranked player and advance Wednesday to the third round of a U.S. Open that so far, doesn’t feel much like a farewell. “I’m just Serena,” she said, to roaring fans.

Clearly there’s only one Serena. But as superhuman as many found her achievement, some older fans in particular — middle-aged, or beyond — said they saw in Williams’ latest run a very human and relatable takeaway, too. Namely the idea that they, also, could perform better and longer than they once thought possible — through fitness, practice and grit.

“It makes me feel good about what I’m doing still at my age,” said Bess Brodsky Goldstein, 63, a lifelong tennis enthusiast who was attending the Open on Thursday, the day after Williams’ triumph over 26-year-old Anett Kontaveit.

Goldstein pursues her passion for the sport more vigorously than most women her age. She plays several times a week and participates in an age 55-and-up USTA mixed-doubles league in New England. (She also plays competitive golf.)

Yet Goldstein, like any athlete, suffers her share of aches and injuries, like a recent knee issue that set her back a few weeks. Watching Williams, she said, shows ordinary folks that injuries — or, in Williams’ case, a life-threatening childbirth experience five years ago — can be overcome. “She gives you inspiration that you can achieve your best, even in your early 60s,” said Goldstein, who also had high praise for Venus Williams, Serena’s older sister, competing this year at 42.

Evelyn David was also watching tennis at the Open on Thursday. And she, too, was thinking about the night before.

“Everybody is going, ‘WHOA!’” said David, who smilingly gave her age as “older than my 60s” and is the site director for New York Junior Tennis Learning, which works with children and teens. She cited the physicality of Williams’ play, and the role of fitness in today’s tennis. “The rigorous training that athletes

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 18 of 79

go through now is different," David said. "She's going, 'I'm not falling over. I can get to the ball.'"

"A total inspiration," David termed Williams' performance — and she had some prominent company.

"Can I put something in perspective here?" former champion and ESPN commentator Chris Evert said during Wednesday's broadcast. "This is a 40-year-old mother. It is blowing me away."

Evert retired at age 34 in 1989, well before fitness and nutrition were the prominent factors in tennis they are now. They were even less so when pioneering player Billie Jean King, now 78, was in her heyday.

"For us older ones, it gives us hope and it's fun," King said Thursday in an interview about Williams. "Puts a pep in your step. Gives you energy." She noted how fitness on the tour has changed since the 1960s and 1970s.

"We didn't have the information and we didn't have the money," King said. "When people win a tournament now, they say, 'Thank you to my team.' They're so lucky to have all those people. We didn't even have a coach."

Jessica Pegula, the No. 8 seed who won on Thursday, is at 28 a half-century younger than King. She knows well the difference fitness has made.

"It's been a huge part of it," she said. "Athletes, how they take care of their bodies, sports nutrition, the science behind training and nutrition — (it) has changed so much. Back in the day, you saw a player drinking a Coke on the sideline or they had a beer after their match. Now ... health has been the No. 1 priority, whether it's physical or mental." She said she remembered thinking Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Williams were all going to retire, but "they kept pushing the boundaries."

Federer, 41, hasn't played since Wimbledon last year because of operations to his right knee, but has said he'll try to play Wimbledon next year, shortly before his 42nd birthday. And Nadal, 36, known for his intense devotion to fitness, has won two Grand Slam titles this year to raise his total to a men's-record 22. Nobody would be surprised if he won another major. In contrast, Jimmy Connors' famous run to the 1991 semis of the U.S. Open when he was 39 was considered an event for the history books.

Of course, fitness is only one building block to greatness — in any sport. Denver Broncos safety Justin Simmons, who like Pegula is 28, noted that even though it's inspiring to see Williams keep an athletic advantage partly through preparation, "not everybody is Serena and Venus Williams. Maybe there's some genes in there that not everybody else is blessed enough to have, but it's still cool to know that, hey, even though she is genetically gifted, there are some things that she's done that have helped her in a tremendous way prolong her career."

Dr. Michael J. Joyner, who studies human performance at the Mayo Clinic, said Williams shares many traits with other superstar athletes (from baseball's Ted Williams to golfer Gary Player and star quarterback Tom Brady, 45 and famously un-retired ) who have enjoyed long careers.

"What you see with all of these people is they stay motivated, they've avoided catastrophic injury ... or they've been able to come back because they've recovered," he said. Also key: they live in "the modern era of sports medicine."

The question, he asked, is can Williams perform at the same level every other day to win a whole tournament? He hopes so.

Williams fan Jamie Martin, who has worked in physical therapy since 1985 and owns a chain of clinics in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, said she's seeing many women playing vigorous, competitive sports into middle age and beyond. Some return to their sport, or take up a new one, after years of focusing on work or family.

Williams' pursuit of another U.S. Open title at 40 is a reminder that women can not only remain competitive longer, but can compete now for the joy of it, she notes.

"She's really enjoying playing," said Martin, 59. "That's what's fun to watch about it now."

Brooklyn teacher Mwezi Pugh says both Williams sisters are great examples of living life on their own terms — which includes deciding how long they want to play.

"They are still following their own playbook," said Pugh, 51. "Are you ready to retire yet, Serena?' 'I don't like that word. I would rather say evolution.' 'Are you ready to retire, Venus?' 'Not today.'"

"The older you are, the more you should be able to set up your life in the way you like, and what works

best for you," Pugh said. "That's what the sisters are doing, and they are teaching all of us a lesson."

## Wave of bull runner deaths turns focus on Spain's fiestas

By RAQUEL REDONDO Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — The shrieks of fear-infused excitement as bulls charge through the streets of many Spanish towns during wildly popular summer festivals echo in sharp contrast to the number of people who have died after being gored this year.

Bull runs may be a beloved spectacle for locals and visitors in thousands of summer festivals across Spain, but this year's macabre, record-tying toll of eight deaths has politicians and animal rights defenders heaping much criticism on the practice.

There were no fatalities or injuries in Atanzón when revelers on foot and on horseback recently ran with the rampaging animal. But last week in Alalpardo, less than an hour's drive away, a steer fatally gored a 60-year-old man.

A week earlier a 73-year-old French woman who was a regular in bull events died in the eastern town of Beniarbeig after being gored in the chest. Six men were fatally gored in other Valencia festivals and more than 380 participants have been injured. The season doesn't end until November.

Despite the concern, authorities appear at a loss as to what additional safety measures they can take.

"Some people have lost any fear of the bull," says regional emergency chief José María Angel. He urges revelers to be more cautious — the primary recommendation to come out a safety review meeting.

Valencia regional government Deputy President Aitana Mas has left the door open to debate whether to prohibit these kinds of fiestas, saying that the current legislation is "not enough."

Only a few villages have canceled such festivals. Tavernes de la Valldigna is one that has, and sees it as a matter of staying in step with its policy of defending animal rights.

"I hope our decision brings further into the streets the debate and leads to the end of this tradition," Mayor Sergi González told The Associated Press, even as he acknowledged the tradition's deep cultural roots.

While the public debate in Spain has largely focused on the loss of human lives, activists are demanding a total ban on events where animals are used for entertainment.

Animal rights groups are particularly opposed to events they say are deliberately more cruel to the animals, such as when cotton balls are lit on the horns of bulls or when the animal is forced into the sea and is then brought back to shore.

Events known in the Valencian dialect as "Bous al carrer," (Bulls on the street) involve bulls or calves released into the streets to waiting crowds who try to provoke them into charging.

Alejandro Cano, President of Defense of Bous al Carrer Associations doesn't see cause any for alarm, telling the AP that the casualties are "part of the festival."

Some bulls are fought and killed by matadors but most return to their farms.

According to the Culture Ministry, some 2,700 such spectacles were held last year. The amount was reduced compared to a regular season due to some pandemic restrictions still in place. In 2019, there were 17,000. This year around 9,000 are expected to take place until the end of November.

Pamplona's San Fermin running of the bulls, immortalized by Literature Nobel Prize winner and novelist Ernest Hemingway, is the prime event but there has not been a death there in 13 years. Safety measures, public investment and the professionalism of the runners are unmatched in any other smaller Spanish festival.

Atanzón will continue celebrating its patron saint, San Agustín, in the same fashion as Pamplona does — praying to the saint that no one is killed by the bulls for another summer.

## Extremist lawmaker surges ahead of elections in Israel

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israeli lawmaker Itamar Ben-Gvir calls his Arab colleagues "terrorists." He wants

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 20 of 79

to deport his political opponents, and in his youth, his views were so extreme that the army banned him from compulsory military service.

Yet today, the populist lawmaker who was once relegated to the margins of Israeli politics is surging ahead in the polls ahead of November elections. He has received the blessing of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and is poised to emerge as a major force that could propel the onetime premier back to power.

Ben-Gvir's stunning rise is the culmination of years of efforts by the media-savvy lawmaker to gain legitimacy. But it also reflects a rightward shift in the Israeli electorate that has brought his religious, ultranationalist ideology into the mainstream and all but extinguished hopes for Palestinian independence.

"Over the last year I've been on a mission to save Israel," Ben-Gvir recently told reporters. "Millions of citizens are waiting for a real right-wing government. The time has come to give them one."

Ben-Gvir, 46, has been a fixture of Israel's extreme right for more than two decades, gaining notoriety in his youth as a disciple of the late radical rabbi, Meir Kahane. He first became a national figure when he famously broke a hood ornament off then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's car in 1995.

"We got to his car, and we'll get to him too," he said, just weeks before Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish extremist opposed to his peace efforts with the Palestinians.

Kahane's violent anti-Arab ideology -- which included calls to ban Jewish-Arab intermarriage and for the mass expulsion of Palestinians -- was considered so repugnant that Israel banned him from parliament and the U.S. listed his party as a terrorist group. Kahane himself was assassinated by an Arab assailant in New York in 1990.

But in recent years, his followers and some of his ideas have made their way to the Israeli mainstream — in large part thanks to Ben-Gvir.

He transitioned into politics last year after a career as a lawyer defending radical Jewish West Bank settlers. His intimate knowledge of the law has helped him test the boundaries of the country's incitement laws and avoid sanctions that have prevented some of his closest associates from running in elections.

Ben-Gvir, for instance, calls Kahane "righteous and holy" but also says he doesn't agree with everything his former mentor said. He's careful to limit his own calls for expulsion to those who engage in violence and lawmakers — Jewish or Arab — who he says undermine the state.

Before entering politics, he removed a photo of Baruch Goldstein -- a Jewish militant who gunned down 29 Palestinians in a mosque in 1994 -- from his living room. He no longer allows his supporters to chant "Death to Arabs" at political rallies. Instead, they are told to say, "Death to terrorists!"

Supporters say Ben-Gvir has changed, been misunderstood, or wrongly painted an extremist.

"People mature. People develop," said Nevo Cohen, Ben-Gvir's campaign manager. "They stuck a label on Ben-Gvir that is totally wrong."

Ben-Gvir's office turned down an interview request. But he makes frequent appearances on Israeli TV and radio, displaying a cheerful demeanor, quit wit and knack for deflecting criticism as he banters with his hosts.

He also has tapped into a wave of anti-Arab and nationalist sentiment driven by years of violence, failed peace efforts and demographic changes. Ben-Gvir's supporters are largely religious and ultra-Orthodox Jews, who tend to have large families, and also come from the influential West Bank settler movement. Ben-Gvir himself lives in a hard-line settlement next to the West Bank city of Hebron, home to more than 200,000 Palestinians.

"He is a populist demagogue. He plays on the sentiments of hate and fear of Arabs," said Shuki Friedman, an expert on Israel's far right at the Jewish People Policy Institute. "He interviews well, he is good on camera and he has had plenty of screen time that has given him legitimacy."

In the opposition over the past year, Ben-Gvir has positioned himself as a rabble rouser against the government -- the first ever to have an Arab party as a member. He publicly quarreled with Arab lawmakers in scenes captured on camera and widely broadcast.

In the tense run-up to last year's Gaza war, he staged provocative visits to Arab neighborhoods, rallying ultranationalist supporters to confront Palestinians and assert "Jewish Power" — the name of his party.

He set up an outdoor parliamentary "office" in an Arab neighborhood of east Jerusalem where Jewish

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 21 of 79

settlers are trying to expel Palestinians from their homes, setting off a melee. He later called for police to use live fire against Palestinian protesters at a flashpoint holy site.

His surge in the polls has made him a central figure in Netanyahu's comeback strategy.

Netanyahu is on trial for corruption, and the public is again torn over his fitness to rule. After four consecutive inconclusive elections, Netanyahu and his Likud party hope to break the logjam with Ben-Gvir's support.

"Yes, Ben-Gvir is someone very militant and yes, sometimes a little provocative, but he is someone who cares about Israel," said Likud lawmaker and Netanyahu confidant Miki Zohar, who insisted Ben-Gvir would fall in line under a Netanyahu-led government.

Last week, Netanyahu personally brokered a deal between Ben-Gvir and a rival far-right leader, Bezalel Smotrich, to ensure they run together. If they hadn't, Smotrich might not have made it into parliament, depriving Netanyahu of a critical source of support.

"Joining forces is the order of the day," Netanyahu said.

One recent poll forecast Ben-Gvir's alliance with 12 seats, which would make it parliament's fourth-largest. That means Netanyahu almost certainly would make Ben-Gvir a Cabinet minister if he can form a government.

Ben-Gvir has said his first order of business would be to pass a law allowing deportations of those who allegedly subvert the country and its security forces. He has proposed imposing the death penalty for "terrorists" and granting immunity to soldiers accused of committing violent crimes against Palestinians.

Thabet Abu Rass, the Arab co-director of the Abraham Initiatives, which promotes Jewish-Arab coexistence, said the mainstreaming of figures like Ben-Gvir is not only a threat to Israel's Arab citizens, but to the country as a whole.

By branding Arab members of parliament as traitors who should be expelled, Ben Gvir delegitimizes the political participation of Arab citizens — who make up around 20% of Israel's population — and the possibility of Jewish-Arab partnerships, Abu Rass said.

"It's very dangerous for the whole Israeli society," he said. "It's going to bring about the collapse of democracy."

## Big reveal: Biden to help unveil Obama White House portrait

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's been more than a decade since President Barack Obama and his wife, Michelle, welcomed back George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, for the unveiling of their White House portraits, part of a beloved Washington tradition that for decades managed to transcend partisan politics.

President Joe Biden and his wife, Jill, are set to revive that ritual — after an awkward and anomalous gap in the Trump years — when they host the Obamas on Wednesday for the big reveal of their portraits in front of scores of friends, family and staff.

The Obama paintings will not look like any in the White House portrait collection to which they will be added. They were America's first Black president and first lady.

The ceremony will also mark Michelle Obama's first visit to the White House since Obama's presidency ended in January 2017, and only the second visit for Barack Obama. He was at the White House in April to mark the 12th anniversary of the health care law he signed in 2010.

Portrait ceremonies often give past presidents an opportunity to showcase their comedic timing.

"I am pleased that my portrait brings an interesting symmetry to the White House collection. It now starts and ends with a George W," Bush quipped at his ceremony in 2012.

Bill Clinton joked in 2004 that "most of the time, till you get your picture hung like this, the only artists that draw you are cartoonists."

Recent tradition, no matter the party affiliation, has had the current president genially hosting his immediate predecessor for the unveiling — as Clinton did for George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush did for Clinton and Obama did for the younger Bush.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 22 of 79

Then there was an unexplained pause when Donald Trump did not host Obama.

Two spokespeople for Trump did not respond to emailed requests for comment on the lack of a ceremony for Obama, and whether artists are working on portraits of Trump and former first lady Melania Trump.

The White House portrait collection starts with George Washington, America's first president. Congress bought his portrait.

Other portraits of early presidents and first ladies often came to the White House as gifts. Since the middle of the last century, the White House Historical Association has paid for the paintings.

The first portraits financed by the association were of Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird Johnson, and John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline Kennedy, said Stewart McLaurin, president of the private, nonprofit organization established by first lady Kennedy.

Before presidents and first ladies leave office, the association explains the portrait process. The former president and first lady choose the artist or artists, and offer guidance on how they want to be portrayed.

"It really involves how that president and first lady see themselves," McLaurin said in an interview with The Associated Press.

The collection includes an iconic, full-length portrait of Washington that adorns the East Room. It is the only item still in the White House that was in the executive mansion in November 1800 when John Adams and Abigail Adams became the first president and first lady to live in the White House.

Years later, first lady Dolley Madison saved Gilbert Stuart's portrait of Washington from almost certain ruin. She had White House staff take it out of the city before advancing British forces burned the mansion in 1814. The painting was held in storage until the White House was rebuilt.

President and first lady portraits are seen by millions of White House visitors, though not all are on display. Some are undergoing conservation or are in storage.

Those that are on display line hallways and rooms in public areas of the mansion, such as the Ground Floor and its Vermeil and China Rooms, and the State Floor one level above, which has the famous Green, Blue and Red Rooms, the East Room and State Dining Room.

Portraits of Mamie Eisenhower, Pat Nixon, Lady Bird Johnson and Lou Henry Hoover grace the Vermeil Room, along with a full-length image of Jacqueline Kennedy. Michelle Obama's portrait likely will join Barbara Bush, Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush along the Ground Floor hallway.

The State Floor hallway one floor above features recent presidents: John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Gerald Ford's portrait and the likeness of Richard Nixon — the only president to resign from office — are on view on the Grand Staircase leading to the private living quarters on the second floor.

Past presidents' images move around the White House, depending on their standing with the current occupants. Ronald Reagan, for example, moved Thomas Jefferson and Harry S. Truman out of the Cabinet Room and swapped in Dwight Eisenhower and Calvin Coolidge.

In the Clinton era, portraits of Richard Nixon and Reagan, idols of the Republican Party, lost their showcase spot in the Grand Foyer and were replaced with pictures of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Truman, heroes of the Democrats. Nancy Reagan temporarily moved Eleanor Roosevelt to a place of prominence in the East Room in 1984 to mark the centennial of her birth.

One of the most prominent spots for a portrait is above the mantle in the State Dining Room and it has been occupied for decades by a painting of a seated Abraham Lincoln, hand supporting his chin. It was placed there by Franklin Roosevelt.

Bill Clinton's and George W. Bush's portraits hang on opposing walls in the Grand Foyer.

Clinton's would be relocated to make room for Barack Obama's if the White House sticks to tradition and keeps the two most recent Oval Office occupants there, McLaurin said.

"That's up to the White House, to the curators," he said.

The association, which is funded through private donations and the sale of books and an annual White House Christmas ornament, keeps the portrait price well below market value because of the "extraordinary honor" an artist derives from having "their work of art hanging perpetually in the White House,"

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 23 of 79

McLaurin said.

Details about the Obamas' portraits will stay under wraps until Wednesday.

Biden will be the rare president to host a former boss for the unveiling; he was Obama's vice president. George H.W. Bush, who held Ronald Reagan's ceremony, was Reagan's No. 2.

Betty Monkman, a former White House curator, said during a 2017 podcast for the White House Historical Association that the ceremony is a "statement of generosity" by the president and first lady. "It's a very warm, lovely moment."

The White House portraits are one of two sets of portraits of presidents and first ladies. The National Portrait Gallery, a Smithsonian museum, maintains its own collection and those portraits are unveiled before the White House pair. The Obamas' unveiled their museum portraits in February 2018.

Linda St. Thomas, chief spokesperson for the Smithsonian Institution, said in an email that a \$650,000 donation in July from Save America, Trump's political action committee, was earmarked for the couple's museum portraits. Two artists have been commissioned, one for each painting, and work has begun, St. Thomas said.

## Covering Gorbachev: AP remembers his wit, wisdom, warmth

The Associated Press undefined

When news hit that Mikhail Gorbachev had died at age 91, Associated Press journalists around the world began sharing their "Gorby" stories from covering the last Soviet leader or interviewing him in Russia or abroad in the three decades that followed. They remember his temper and sense of humor, his sharp intellect even in his later years, when he was willing to talk at length about his hopes and his regrets.

That is if you could follow his long, rambling sentences in his southern Russian accent and his annoying tendency to refer to himself in the third person. For some of them, though, it was the warmth of an aging Gorbachev that they remember. The shared tea, the arm around the shoulder. Gorbachev was a man who changed the world, and the AP was there.

Gorbachev came to power in 1985 with no less of a goal than to transform the Soviet Union and the lives of his fellow citizens, many still desperately poor. The obstacles he faced were monumental.

For AP correspondents in Moscow at the time, "it was like covering sports," remembers Andrew Katell. "What was the score? Was the development we were reporting good or bad for Gorbachev, a win or a loss?"

It was hard for reporters in Moscow to get close enough to Gorbachev to ask those questions. When he traveled abroad, however, he was usually eager to press the flesh and talk to the press. So, when Katell was covering Gorbachev's official trip to Madrid in 1989, he thought his chance had come.

He raised his hand repeatedly at a news conference, but was ignored. Afterward, he rushed the stage and asked the Soviet leader if he could ask one more question. Gorbachev "smiled, said nothing, extended his hand for a shake, then walked away."

AP correspondent Brian Friedman also got the Gorbachev treatment. In summer 1992, less than a year after the Soviet Union disintegrated, Friedman trailed him as he left the Fourth of July party at the U.S. ambassador's residence. Shorn of his security detail and big limousine, Gorbachev was carrying his suit coat over his shoulder as he walked back to a simple Volga sedan.

"I tried to politely ask him a question about the upcoming court case the following week over the legacy of the banned Communist Party. I then extended my tape recorder to get his response," Friedman said. "Gorbachev, the former president of the USSR, looked at me, looked at my tape recorder and said, 'This we don't need!' and knocked my recorder out of my hand to the ground. He then stormed off."

Friedman had seen a more amiable, if wistful, Gorbachev at a going-away party for his staff on Dec. 26, 1991, the day after his nationally televised address in which he announced his resignation as president.

"He held a small glass of lemon-flavored vodka. Known in his career as a teetotaler and for his anti-alcohol campaigns, Gorbachev said with a twinkle in his eye, 'You think I can't do it? Now I can afford to!' And he then gulped it down."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 24 of 79

It was mostly the amiable Gorbachev who greeted correspondents in his years out of power.

In the early 1990s, he sent out a press release inviting journalists to a news conference at the airport before he embarked on one of his many international speaking tours. Larry Ryckman remembers that most everyone in the AP's Moscow bureau rolled their eyes, busy with covering the emergence of a new chaotic Russia. But he was game and headed out to the airport. He was one of only a couple of journalists.

"Gorbachev's wife, Raisa, gave me a look that seemed to be a mix of gratitude that I had bothered to show up and embarrassment at the pitiful turnout," Ryckman said. "We ended up sitting around a small table in the airport lounge chatting for a few minutes -- with just Gorbachev, his wife and a couple of aides. He didn't end up saying anything particularly newsworthy, but it's one of my favorite memories from my time in Moscow."

During the next few years, Gorbachev built his foundation, a think tank designed to defend his legacy, and he toured the world, often drawing huge enthusiastic crowds. At home he struggled to stay relevant.

For journalists working in Moscow, Gorbachev was of interest mainly as the anniversaries of the 1991 pivotal events rolled around. But even in August 1996, only five years after a failed coup mounted by a group of communist hardliners, the AP story quoted only two sentences from an interview with him.

"These five years have proved all that I said — that the breakup of the Soviet Union would bring grave calamity for Russia and all the other republics," Gorbachev said. "I find myself in the role of a Cassandra."

His long-shot, comeback candidacy for the presidency had been crushed earlier that year. Julia Rubin, who interviewed him then, remembers him as genial and friendly, joking with the AP's television camera operators about getting the angles right. But he was also a little testy about being sidelined politically. "He had strong opinions and still wanted to be part of the conversation" about where the countries of the former Soviet Union were headed.

He also wanted his voice heard on the dangers posed by the steadily deteriorating relations between Russia and the U.S.

When Barack Obama was elected in 2008, Russians called him the American Gorbachev because of his promises to bring change. Interested to hear what the real Gorbachev had to say, the AP sat down with him one evening at his foundation. And, yes, he agreed that America was ready for its own perestroika.

What interested him more was whether Obama would "muster his courage" to ease tensions with the Kremlin. Gorbachev was proud of his part in bringing an end to the Cold War and the nuclear arms race, and wanted that legacy preserved. At the end of the interview, Lynn Berry remembers that he mused about the possibility of a feature film to tell his story to coming generations. Perhaps he could be played by Leonardo DiCaprio?

"When we posed for a photograph before leaving, Gorbachev linked his arm around mine," Berry said. "It was awkward and the picture shows my arm hanging limply by my side. Later, though, I really wished I had returned the kind gesture."

While largely ignored in Russia, Gorbachev remained a figure of historical importance to the rest of the world. When he traveled to Berlin in 2011, David Rising leapt at the opportunity to interview him.

Gorbachev, then 80, talked animatedly about the Arab Spring demonstrations in Egypt following the ouster of Hosni Mubarak. In a break with the Kremlin, he said the demonstrations seeking democratic reforms in Egypt and across the region were of "vital importance." At the same time, he lamented the backsliding of democracy in his own country under Vladimir Putin.

"As genial as he was thoughtful, after our formal interview was over Gorbachev seemed in no hurry to wrap up, putting his arm warmly over my shoulder and continued to share his thoughts on the end of the Cold War and the current state of democracy in Russia," Rising said.

Rising was struck that he was speaking to the last Soviet leader in an office in former East Berlin not far from where President Ronald Reagan in 1987 stood on the other side of the Berlin Wall and implored him to "tear down this wall."

"The privilege of talking with the man whose policies of perestroika and glasnost helped lead to the fall of that wall only two years later is one I'll never forget," Rising said.

The AP caught up with Gorbachev again in February 2014 in the city of Sharjah, in the United Arab Emir-



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 25 of 79

ates, where he was speaking at a conference. For Adam Schreck, as for Rising, this was a chance to talk to a man who had "earned a place solidly in the history books."

The Moscow-friendly president of Ukraine had just been ousted after months of protests, which Gorbachev attributed to the president's failure "to act democratically." Over tea served with lemon in a darkened and ornate hotel room, Gorbachev shared his fears for Ukraine. He said the situation was "a real mess" and it was "important not to tear it apart."

Schreck remembers thinking at the time that Gorbachev was hinting at something deeper, "that Ukraine's future as an independent, democratic state might not be smooth. I'd return to those words on my way to Kyiv to cover the war earlier this year."

Within days of the interview, Russia seized control of the Crimean Peninsula, helping lay the groundwork for the current conflict.

In December 2016, the 25th anniversary of the Soviet collapse, Gorbachev spoke bitterly of the West's failure to provide vital aid in the 1990s, calling it a wasted chance to build a safer world. In a lengthy interview with the AP in Moscow, he made an urgent plea for Russia and the U.S. to work together. "Together, they could lead the world to a new path."

By the time Russia invaded Ukraine in February of this year, Gorbachev's health was too poor for him to tell the world what he thought.

## Red flag laws get little use as shootings, gun deaths soar

By BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

Chicago is one of the nation's gun violence hotspots and a seemingly ideal place to employ Illinois' "red flag" law that allows police to step in and take firearms away from people who threaten to kill. But amid more than 8,500 shootings resulting in 1,800 deaths since 2020, the law was used there just four times.

It's a pattern that's played out in New Mexico, with nearly 600 gun homicides during that period and a mere eight uses of its red flag law. And in Massachusetts, with nearly 300 shooting homicides and just 12 uses of its law.

An Associated Press analysis found many U.S. states barely use the red flag laws touted as the most powerful tool to stop gun violence before it happens, a trend blamed on a lack of awareness of the laws and resistance by some authorities to enforce them even as shootings and gun deaths soar.

AP found such laws in 19 states and the District of Columbia were used to remove firearms from people 15,049 times since 2020, fewer than 10 per 100,000 adult residents. Experts called that woefully low and not nearly enough to make a dent in gun violence, considering the millions of firearms in circulation and countless potential warning signs law enforcement officers encounter from gun owners every day.

"It's too small a pebble to make a ripple," Duke University psychologist Jeffrey Swanson, who has studied red flag gun surrender orders across the nation, said of the AP tally. "It's as if the law doesn't exist."

"The number of people we are catching with red flags is likely infinitesimal," added Indiana University law professor Jody Madeira, who like other experts who reviewed AP's findings wouldn't speculate how many red flag removal orders would be necessary to make a difference.

The search for solutions comes amid a string of mass shootings in Buffalo, New York, Uvalde, Texas, and Highland Park, Illinois, and a spike in gun violence not seen in decades: 27,000 deaths so far this year, following 45,000 deaths each of the past two years.

AP's count, compiled from inquiries and Freedom of Information Law requests, showed wide disparities in how the laws were applied from state to state, county to county, most without regard to population or crime rates.

Florida led with 5,800 such orders, or 34 per 100,000 adult residents, but that is due mostly to aggressive enforcement in a few counties that don't include Miami-Dade and others with more gun killings. More than a quarter of Illinois' slim 154 orders came from one suburban county that makes up just 7% of the state's population. California had 3,197 orders but was working through a backlog of three times that number of people barred from owning guns under a variety of measures who had not yet surrendered them.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 26 of 79

And a national movement among politicians and sheriffs that has declared nearly 2,000 counties as "Second Amendment Sanctuaries," opposing laws that infringe on gun rights, may have affected red flag enforcement in several states. In Colorado, 37 counties that consider themselves "sanctuaries" issued just 45 surrender orders in the two years through last year, a fifth fewer than non-sanctuary counties did per resident. New Mexico and Nevada reported only about 20 orders combined.

"The law shouldn't even be there in the first place," argued Richard Mack, a former Arizona sheriff who heads the pro-gun Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association. "You're taking away someone's property and means of self-defense."

Red flag laws, most of which came into effect over the last four years, allow police officers who believe gun owners are an imminent danger to themselves or others to petition a judge to order firearms surrendered or, barring that, seized for an "emergency" period, typically two weeks. The judge can then convene a court hearing in which petitioners present evidence to withhold weapons longer, typically a year, and the owner can argue against that.

AP's tally counts an emergency order that is followed by a longer one as a single order if they involve the same gun owner. In rare cases where no one asked for an emergency order and only a longer one was requested and granted, that also counts as a single order. Several states reported incomplete data.

Some states also allow family members of gun owners, school officials, work colleagues or doctors to ask for gun removal orders, also known as extreme risk protection orders. But data reviewed by the AP show nearly all petitions in several states were initiated by police, possibly because, as several surveys have shown, few people outside law enforcement are even aware the laws exist.

The recent spike in shootings has brought renewed attention to red flag laws, with states including Alaska, Pennsylvania and Kentucky introducing legislation to add them. The Biden administration is seeking to foster wider use of red flag laws by allocating money in a newly passed federal gun law to help spread the word about such measures.

An AP-NORC poll in late July found 78% of U.S. adults strongly or somewhat favor red flag laws, but the backlash against them has been intense in some states, particularly in rural areas. Opponents argue that allowing judges to rule on gun seizures in initial emergency petitions before full hearings violates due process rights, though court cases claiming this have generally found the laws constitutional.

Many police believe seizing guns can also be dangerous and unnecessary, even as a last resort, especially in sparsely populated areas where they know many of the residents with mental health issues, said Tony Mace, head of the New Mexico Sheriffs' Association, which lobbied against the state's law.

"You're showing up with 10 to 15 law enforcement officers and coming in the middle of the night and kicking in the door, and it's already a dangerous environment," said Mace, sheriff of Cibola County, a sanctuary county with just one order since 2020. "You're dealing with someone in crisis and elevating it even more."

One fierce gun rights defender who still aggressively uses the law is Polk County, Florida, Sheriff Grady Judd, who says he doesn't let his beliefs stand in the way of moving fast when gun owners threaten violence.

"We're not going to wait for an Uvalde, Texas, or a Parkland or a Columbine if we have the information and people say that they're going to shoot or kill," said Judd, who enforced 752 orders since 2020 in a county of 725,000 residents, a tally that's more than the total orders for 15 entire states. "We're going to use the tools that the state gave us."

Florida's traditionally pro-gun Republican-led legislature passed its red flag law in 2019 following revelations police failed to act on repeated threats by an expelled student who would go on to carry out the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland that left 17 people dead.

A recent high-profile example of a red flag law not being used was for the 21-year-old gunman accused of fatally shooting seven people and injuring dozens more at a Fourth of July parade in the Chicago suburb of Highland Park. Robert E. Crimo III drew police attention three years earlier when he threatened to "kill everyone" in his house and officers acknowledged going to the home several times previously because of a "history of attempts" to take his own life.

But Highland Park police never requested a gun surrender order, saying there was no gun belonging to

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 27 of 79

Crimo to take away at the time, even though the law has a provision to block threatening people from making future purchases, too.

Illinois state Rep. Denyse Stoneback said there has clearly been a problem with awareness of the law among those tasked with carrying it out. "We'd go to police departments and they didn't know anything about it," said the Democrat who helped push through a bill last year providing \$1 million in police red flag law training.

Asked why Chicago had so few red flag firearm restraining orders, police spokesman Thomas Ahern said many of the city's gun killings are committed with illegally owned firearms.

But Ahern emphasized it remained a priority of the department to increase its awareness and use of the red flag law. "If we are able to prevent one citizen from getting hurt or killed that's a law worth having and definitely not a low priority," he said.

In New York, a red flag-type situation that wasn't covered under the state's law nonetheless led to a spike in red flag gun surrender orders.

Payton Gendron was a 17-year-old high school senior last year when he was investigated by New York's State Police and ordered hospitalized for a mental health evaluation for typing into an economics class online program that his future plans included "murder-suicide." But since he was a minor, he wasn't covered under the state's red flag law and it didn't prevent him from later buying the high-powered rifle authorities say he used to kill 10 Black people in a racially-motivated shooting at Buffalo supermarket in May.

Since then, New York has seen 779 gun surrender orders under its red flag law, equal to nearly half of all its orders since the measure took effect three years ago.

Several experts said it's impossible to come up with an ideal number of red flag orders and misleading to compare states by orders because of the widely varying rates of gun ownership and gun homicides and suicides, among other stats.

Another complicating factor is that some states have stricter gun ownerships rules and multiple ways to seize firearms. In California, for instance, guns can be taken away through domestic violence restraining orders, civil harassment protection orders and school violence prevention orders in addition to the red flag law.

Still, experts consulted by AP agreed more could be done to enforce red flag laws given the prevalence of guns and the millions of gun owners that national studies suggest could be dangerous to themselves and others. In red flag states alone, figures compiled by the Gun Violence Archive show at least 21,100 homicides and 47,000 injuries during the 2½ years covered by AP's count.

Several studies suggest red flag laws can be particularly effective in preventing gun suicides, which kill about 20,000 people a year. A Duke University study of Connecticut's-first-in-the-nation red flag law in 1999 estimated that for every 10 to 20 surrender orders a life from a potential suicide was saved. A study of Indiana's law came up with a similar ratio.

While the impact of red flag laws on homicides is less well researched, studies suggest many mass shootings could be avoided if the laws were implemented aggressively. A study by the gun-control advocacy group Everytown for Gun Safety showed perpetrators exhibited dangerous warning signs before more than half of the mass shootings in the dozen years through 2020 that accounted for 596 deaths.

Such warning signs have led to many opportunities to stop gun violence, as well as missed chances.

In Colorado in 2020, police seized 59 guns from a man who complained of hit men coming to get him, bragged about shooting someone and repeatedly threatened his ex-wife.

In New Jersey in 2019, police took seven guns from a man threatening on Facebook to attack a Walmart.

And in Washington state in 2018, police removed 12 guns from the home of a man who posted on social media about killing Jews in a synagogue and kids in a school.

None of those threatened shootings happened.

But in Indianapolis in 2020, failure to employ all aspects of a red flag law resulted in disaster. After 18-year-old Brandon Hole's mother alerted police that he was threatening to commit "suicide by cop," police seized his pump-action shotgun. A county prosecutor could have gone further under the law to argue before a judge that Hole should be barred from possessing or buying a gun, but that never happened.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 28 of 79

A few months later, Hole bought two AR-style rifles at a gun store, turning to his mother and saying, "They don't have a flag on me." Several months after that, he fatally shot eight employees in a FedEx warehouse where he had worked and injured seven more before killing himself.

"I feel the state of Indiana is an accessory to murder," a wounded Angela Hughley told the Indianapolis Star shortly after the shooting.

Amber Clark, a librarian in Sacramento, California, might still be alive today if police had acted on a tip that Ronald Seay was armed and dangerous.

The gunman's twin brother called police in 2018 warning that Seay, who had a history of mental illness and trouble with police, was making violent threats and had two semiautomatic pistols. But the police never went to a judge to ask for a gun surrender order or tell the sibling that he could do that himself.

A few weeks later, Seay unloaded 11 bullets into Clark's face and head at pointblank range outside the Sacramento library.

"It is obvious to me and my family that the application of California's red flag law in this case would have saved two lives – Amber's and the shooter's – and prevented immeasurable grief," said her husband, Kelly Clark. "My wife would still be alive and the killer would have received the help he needed instead of being condemned to life in prison."

## 'Devastating': Mass shootings obscure daily U.S. gun toll

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Cameron Taylor was watching an illegal street race that had attracted hundreds to an intersection in Portland, Oregon, but decided to leave as the crowd got increasingly unruly. Moments later, gunfire erupted and Taylor was hit by a stray bullet as he and a friend headed to their car.

Police, who were overwhelmed with 911 calls about other shootings, couldn't control multiple street takeovers in the city that night and had trouble finding the victims of three shootings that occurred during the chaos.

"His friend who was with him put him in the car and drove him out to get him to the hospital, but he was not able to make it and that friend called his parents" to say Taylor was dead, family friend Erin Russell told The Associated Press.

Taylor, 20, died Sunday the same day that four high-profile, public shooting rampages in Bend, Oregon, Phoenix, Detroit and Houston drew national headlines. His slaying went largely unnoticed amid the daily toll of gun violence that has come to define Portland and a number of other American cities since the pandemic.

Homicide rates appear to be dropping in some major U.S. cities, such as New York and Chicago, but in others killings are on the rise, particularly from guns. In Portland, the homicide rate surged 207% since 2019 and there have been more than 800 shootings so far this year. In Phoenix, police Chief Jeri Williams said this week the gun violence was the worst she'd seen in 33 years on the job.

"How many more officers have to be shot? How many more community members have to be killed before those in our community take a stand? This is not only a Phoenix police issue, this is a community issue," she said after a weekend that tallied 17 shootings and 11 homicides citywide.

Now, police are on edge heading into Labor Day weekend, with its traditional end-of-summer festivities, and some are adding extra patrols as they brace for more potential violence.

In Portland, police busy with three killings and nine non-fatal shootings in 48 hours couldn't control three illegal street races last weekend that attracted hundreds and shut down major intersections for hours. In Houston, the day after a gunman shot five neighbors, killing three, another man shot two sisters before killing himself.

In the past two weeks, authorities in Phoenix have confiscated 711 guns and made 525 gun-related arrests as part of a targeted crackdown. Nearly 90% of homicides there this year were by gun, police said. In Detroit, where a man is accused of shooting three people at random on city streets last weekend, authorities are also cracking down on gun violence in high-crime neighborhoods through Labor Day.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 29 of 79

"Let's stop talking about our inability to respond to crime in the community. Let's stop advertising to criminals that they're going to get away with it," Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler said, using an expletive at a City Council meeting this week after police Chief Chuck Lovell once more asked for more officers.

"I think we should stop using the messaging at every turn, that the reason we can't help our citizens with basic criminal justice issues is because we don't have the personnel," Wheeler said. "We've got to figure out better ways to address this crisis."

Last weekend's rampages — which included a heavily armed assailant who stormed a central Oregon supermarket, random shootings on Detroit streets and a Phoenix man who opened fire while wearing body armor — were shocking and scary, but they aren't representative of the broader toll gun violence is taking on American society, experts said.

Victims killed in mass shootings make up about 1% of all those killed in gun homicides nationwide, despite headlines that instill fear in many Americans, said James Fox, a professor at Northeastern University who has created a database of mass killings stretching back to 2006 with The Associated Press and USA Today.

All four shootings last weekend didn't even meet the database's definition of a mass killing — four or more people, excluding the assailant, killed in a 24-hour period — but they nonetheless sowed fear because of the random nature of the violence, he added.

"Those don't tend to make news. They don't tend to scare people because people say, 'Well, that's not my family,'" Fox said. "We have as many as 20,000 gun homicides a year, and most of those are one victim. Sometimes two, sometimes three, (but) rarely four or more."

The pandemic and the social unrest it caused has also played a role. Eight million Americans became first-time gun owners between 2019 and 2021, said Jeffrey Butts, director of the research and evaluation center for the John Jay College of Criminal Justice at City University of New York.

"We already had 400 million guns in circulation. So when you bump that up and include a lot of first-timers in the population, you get accidents, you get precipitous behavior, you get people reacting to small insults and conflicts with their guns because they're in their pocket now," he said.

Meanwhile Taylor's friends and family mourn his death in Portland.

The car aficionado and beloved big brother who loved barbecues and spending time with his family was "at the wrong place at the wrong time," Russell said.

"He has a lot of friends and a lot of family who love him dearly, and this is a devastating loss."

## Argentine president says man tried to shoot vice president

By DÉBORA REY and ALMUDENA CALATRAVA Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — A man was detained Thursday night after he aimed a handgun at point-blank range toward Argentina's politically powerful Vice President Cristina Fernández, and President Alberto Fernández said the assassination attempt failed because the gun did not fire.

"A man pointed a firearm at her head and pulled the trigger," the president said in a national broadcast. He called it "the most serious incident since we recovered democracy" in 1983 and urged political leaders, and society at large, to repudiate the incident.

Supporters of the vice president have been gathering in the streets surrounding her home since last week, when a prosecutor called for a 12-year sentence for Fernández as well as a life-long prohibition in holding public office as part of a case involving alleged corruption in public works during her 2007-2015 presidency. Fernández, who is not related to the current president, has denied all charges.

The president spoke shortly after video from the scene broadcast on local television channels showed Fernández exiting her vehicle surrounded by supporters outside her home when a man could be seen extending his hand with what looked like a pistol.

The vice president ducked as supporters surrounding the person appeared shocked at what was happening amid the commotion in the Recoleta neighborhood of Argentina's capital.

The man, whose identity was not released by authorities, was detained seconds into the incident.

The president said the firearm had five bullets "and didn't fire even though the trigger was pulled."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 30 of 79

There was no indication that the vice president suffered any harm. Her whereabouts were unknown. "A person who was identified by those who were close to him who had a gun was detained by (the vice president's) security personnel," Security Minister Aníbal Fernández told local cable news channel C5N. The minister said he wanted to be careful in providing details until the investigation learned more. Unverified video posted on social media shows the pistol almost touched Fernández's face. State-run news agency Télam identified the alleged gunman as Fernando Andrés Zabak, a Brazilian citizen. Officials had not confirmed the information.

Government officials were quick to describe the incident as an assassination attempt.

"When hate and violence are imposed over the debate of ideas, societies are destroyed and generate situations like the one seen today: an assassination attempt," Economy Minister Sergio Massa said.

Ministers in President Alberto Fernández's government issued a news release saying they "energetically condemn the attempted homicide" of the vice president. "What happened tonight is of extreme gravity and threatens democracy, institutions and the rule of law," reads the release.

Former President Mauricio Macri also repudiated the attack. "This very serious event demands an immediate and profound clarification by the judiciary and security forces," Macri wrote on Twitter.

Patricia Bullrich, president of the opposition Republican Proposal party, criticized the president, saying he is "playing with fire" because "instead of seriously investigating a serious incident, he accuses the opposition and the press, decreeing a national holiday to mobilize activists."

Tensions have been running high in the upper class Recoleta neighborhood since the weekend, when the vice president's supporters clashed with police in the streets surrounding her apartment amid an effort by law enforcement officers to clear the area. Following the clashes what had been a strong police presence around the vice president's apartment was reduced.

When Fernández leaves her apartment every day at around noon, she greets supporters and signs autographs before getting in her vehicle to go to the Senate. She repeats the same routine every evening.

Following the incident, allies of the vice president quickly pointed the finger at the opposition for what they say is hateful speech that promotes violence. In recent days, several key officials have said opposition leaders were looking for a fatality.

"This is a historic event in Argentina that must be a before-and-after," Buenos Aires Gov. Axel Kicillof said.

Regional leaders also condemned the attack.

"We send our solidarity to the vice president in this attempt against her life," Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro said on Twitter.

Former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva, who is a candidate in that nation's presidential election next month, also expressed solidarity with Fernández, calling her a "victim of a fascist criminal who doesn't know how to respect differences and diversity."

## **Biden sounds newly strong alarm: Trumpism menaces democracy**

By ZEKE MILLER and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — President Joe Biden charged in a prime-time address that the "extreme ideology" of Donald Trump and his adherents "threatens the very foundation of our republic," as he summoned Americans of all stripes to help counter what he sketched as dark forces within the Republican Party trying to subvert democracy.

In his speech Thursday at Philadelphia's Independence Hall, Biden unleashed the trappings of the presidency in an unusually strong and sweeping indictment of Trump and what he said has become the dominant strain of the opposition party. His broadside came barely two months before Americans head to the polls in bitterly contested midterm elections that Biden calls a crossroads for the nation.

"Too much of what's happening in our country today is not normal," he said before an audience of hundreds, raising his voice over pro-Trump hecklers outside the building where the nation's founding was debated. He said he wasn't condemning the 74 million people who voted for Trump in 2020, but added, "There's no question that the Republican Party today is dominated by Donald Trump and the MAGA Re-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 31 of 79

publicans," using the acronym for Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan.

The explicit effort by Biden to marginalize Trump and his followers marks a sharp recent turn for the president, who preached his desire to bring about national unity in his Inaugural address.

Biden, who largely avoided even referring to "the former guy" by name during his first year in office, has grown increasingly vocal in calling out Trump personally. Now, emboldened by his party's summertime legislative wins and wary of Trump's return to the headlines, he has sharpened his attacks, last week likening the "MAGA philosophy" to "semi-fascism."

Wading into risky political terrain, Biden strained to balance his criticism with an appeal to more traditional Republicans to make their voices heard. Meanwhile, GOP leaders swiftly accused him of only furthering political divisions.

Delivering a preemptive rebuttal from Scranton, Pennsylvania, where Biden was born, House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy said it is the Democratic president, not Republicans, trying to divide Americans.

"In the past two years, Joe Biden has launched an assault on the soul of America, on its people, on its laws, on its most sacred values," McCarthy said. "He has launched an assault on our democracy. His policies have severely wounded America's soul, diminished America's spirit and betrayed America's trust."

Asked about McCarthy's criticism, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said earlier Thursday that "we understand we hit a nerve" with the GOP leader, and quoted the Republican's prior statements saying Trump bore responsibility for the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Trump plans a rally this weekend in the Scranton area.

White House officials said the sharp tenor of Biden's remarks reflected his mounting concern about Trump allies' ideological proposals and relentless denial of the nation's 2020 election results.

"Equality and democracy are under assault" in the U.S., Biden charged, casting Trump and his backers in the GOP as a menace to the nation's system of government, its standing abroad and its citizens' way of life.

Trump and the MAGA Republicans "promote authoritarian leaders and they fan the flames of political violence," he said. They "are determined to take this country backwards."

"Backwards to an America where there is no right to choose, no right to privacy, no right to contraception, no right to marry who you love," he said, referencing the social issues that Democrats have looked to place front-and-center for voters this fall.

Biden's appearance was promoted as an official, taxpayer-funded event, a mark of how the president views defeating the Trump agenda as a policy aim as much as a political one. Red and blue lights illuminated the brick of Independence Hall, as the Marine Band played "Hail to the Chief" and a pair of Marine sentries stood at parade rest in the backdrop. Still, the major broadcast television networks did not carry the address live.

The president appealed for citizens to "vote, vote, vote" to protect their democracy. "For a long time, we've reassured ourselves that American democracy is guaranteed. But it is not."

Biden harked back to the 2017 white supremacist protest in Charlottesville, Virginia, which he said brought him out of political retirement to challenge Trump. Biden argued that the country faces a similar crossroads in the coming months, and he cast defending the "soul of the nation" as "the work of my presidency — a mission I believe in with my whole soul."

But Iowa GOP chair Jeff Kaufman said in a statement that Biden was using the tactics of an authoritarian regime, "trying to turn his political opponents into an enemy of the state."

Larry Diamond, an expert on democracy and senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, said calling Trump out for attacks on democracy "can be manipulated or framed as being partisan. And if you don't call it out, you are shrinking from an important challenge in the defense of democracy."

The White House has tried to keep Biden removed from the legal and political maelstrom surrounding the Department of Justice's discovery of classified documents in Trump's Florida home. Still, Biden has pointed to some Republicans' quick condemnation of federal law enforcement, to argue "you can't be pro-insurrectionist and pro-American."

His trip to Philadelphia was just one of his three to the state within a week, a sign of Pennsylvania's importance in the midterms, with competitive Senate and governor's races. However, neither Lt. Gov. John

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 32 of 79

Fetterman, the Democrats' Senate nominee, nor Attorney General Josh Shapiro, their pick for governor, attended Thursday night.

The White House intended the speech to unite familiar themes: holding out bipartisan legislative wins on guns and infrastructure as evidence that democracies "can deliver," pushing back on GOP policies on guns and abortion that Biden says are out of step with most people's views.

The challenges have only increased since the tumult surrounding the 2020 election and the Capitol attack.

Lies surrounding that presidential race have triggered harassment and death threats against state and local election officials and new restrictions on mail voting in Republican-dominated states. County election officials have faced pressure to ban the use of voting equipment, efforts generated by conspiracy theories that voting machines were somehow manipulated to steal the election.

Candidates who dispute Trump's loss have been inspired to run for state and local election posts, promising to restore integrity to a system that has been undermined by false claims.

There is no evidence of any widespread fraud or manipulation of voting machines. Judges, including ones appointed by Trump, dismissed dozens of lawsuits filed after the election, and Trump's own attorney general called the claims bogus. Yet Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research polling has shown about two-thirds of Republicans say they do not think Biden was legitimately elected president.

## **Yoga sect allegedly exploited women to lure men like Domingo**

By DANIEL POLITI, JOCELYN GECKER and ALMUDENA CALATRAVA Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES (AP) — An Argentina-based yoga group sexually exploited vulnerable women it called "geishas" to get money and influence from wealthy and powerful men around the world, including opera star Placido Domingo, who knew the organization's leaders for more than two decades, according to interviews with former members and local authorities.

A sprawling investigation into the sect-like Buenos Aires Yoga School, which operated for over 30 years in Argentina's capital, has uncovered what authorities are calling a criminal organization involved in sex trafficking, money laundering, involuntary servitude, illegal practice of medicine and other crimes. Nineteen members have been arrested in the investigation that reaches into the U.S., where six more suspects are sought.

Despite its name, the school did not offer yoga classes. Leaders are accused of preying on people to join its ranks with promises of eternal happiness and then exploiting them sexually and financially, according to charging documents.

Former members of the school and officials investigating the case told The Associated Press that the group forced female members to work as "geishas" who were assigned to make guests feel welcome at the school, with sex part of the expectations. Influential or wealthy men were matched up with members of the "Geishado VIP," one of many groups of women that were forced to have sexual encounters in exchange for money and influence that benefited sect leaders, according to the charging documents. Some of the women were sent to the United States and Uruguay to have sex with men, a practice that amounted to slavery, authorities said.

Former member Pablo Salum said his mother and sister were among the women exploited in Argentina, and described orgies and sexual abuse of children.

"When you reached 11 or 12 years old, the leader told you who you had to have sexual relations with," he said, adding that younger children were made to watch sexual activity. Salum says he was brought into the organization by his mother at age eight and left at 14. His accusations helped spark the current investigation.

Some members of the group were reduced to "a situation of slavery," forced to have sexual encounters and tasked with menial chores at the school like cleaning and cooking, according to the investigative documents and a police official. Male and female "slaves" were required to follow instructions without asking any questions, said a former member named Carlos, who asked to be identified only by his first name because he left the group many years ago and couldn't confirm details from the current investigation.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 33 of 79

Domingo found himself embroiled in the scandal after law enforcement officers carried out dozens of raids in Buenos Aires in August targeting the school. The famed tenor was "a consumer of prostitution" but isn't accused of a crime because prostitution is legal in Argentina, said a law enforcement source in Argentina who, like other police and judicial sources in Buenos Aires, spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the investigation is ongoing.

Authorities released wiretapped phone conversations from earlier this year in which a man they identified as Domingo appears to be arranging a sexual meetup at his hotel in April in Buenos Aires with Susana Mendelievich, a concert pianist who prosecutors say was a sect leader in charge of the "Geishado VIP."

In one of the wiretaps, Mendelievich talks with another sect leader about how the group had tried unsuccessfully for years to use its music connections to recruit Domingo into the group but it was worth trying again while he was in Buenos Aires in April for a series of concerts. In another wiretap, Mendelievich asks sect leader Juan Percowicz if she can take Domingo to "the museum," the moniker used to refer to the top floor of their 10-story building where influential men had sex with group members. Mendelievich, 75, and Percowicz, 84, were detained in the raids in August; both were released this week to house arrest.

Domingo has publicly tried to distance himself from the group, which allegedly had multiple offices in the United States.

"Of course, I have nothing to do with that," Domingo, 81, said last week in reference to the organization's allegedly illegal activities. In comments to a television station in Mexico, where he was performing, Domingo did not deny he was the man in the wiretapped recordings but said he felt betrayed by musicians he had considered to be friends. "It makes me sad when you've had friends for many years and you realize you have been used."

Domingo has not responded to numerous requests through his representatives for an interview or comment from the AP.

In 2019, numerous women told the AP they were sexually harassed by Domingo, considered one of the greatest opera singers of all time. More than 20 women came forward to accuse Domingo of inappropriate and sexually charged conduct that included groping and other unwanted touching, persistent late night phone calls, stalking them in dressing rooms and pressuring them into sexual relationships by offering advancement in the opera world. Several of the women said he punished them professionally when they refused his advances.

The Spanish opera singer denied wrongdoing at the time, and he said it pained him to think he made women uncomfortable. Investigations by the American Guild of Musical Artists and the Los Angeles Opera, where Domingo had served as general director, found sexual harassment allegations against him to be credible. The allegations and subsequent findings halted Domingo's career in the United States, though he still performs in other parts of the world.

The revelations out of Argentina have again brought unwanted attention to the opera star.

The promoter of a concert in neighboring Chile announced last week that a Domingo concert scheduled for Oct. 16 at an arena in the capital, Santiago, was canceled, although the group said it was due to logistical reasons.

Authorities have not released names of other powerful men they say the group allegedly targeted. But investigators say they are poring over hard drives and "boxes and boxes" of erotic photographs and videotapes seized in the raids. Judicial officials say that many sexual encounters arranged by the group took place at its Buenos Aires school and were videotaped.

Carlos told the AP that he saw Domingo visit the school several times in the 1990s, including once as the guest of honor at a dinner party inside the school. Carlos said he was a waiter at the party, held in Domingo's honor, where the singer made a generous offer at the end of the evening to fly several of the group's leaders with him to Europe on an upcoming trip.

"At the dinner Placido Domingo said 'let's all go to Europe,'" said Carlos, who left the group after 10 years in 1999. "He was inviting them all, the whole table, to Europe."

At Domingo's table were classical musicians who police say were part of the group's leadership: Rubén

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 34 of 79

D'Artagnan González, Verónica Iacono and Mendelievich among others, according to Carlos who said it was common knowledge at the school that the three accompanied Domingo on his trip.

González, who died in 2018, served as concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1986 until 1996 and is accused of playing a key role in the group's U.S. operations. Iacono was a New York-based soprano, who used the stage name "Loiacono," and is the subject of an international arrest warrant. Another alleged leader named Mariano Krawczyk, was an oboist who goes by the artistic name Mariano Krauz.

The extent of Domingo's professional or personal ties to the musicians in the group are not known, and he has declined comment on that. But Domingo has performed with several of the people who've been arrested, including at a 1996 concert that featured the three he allegedly invited to Europe and Krawczyk.

During that Buenos Aires concert, Domingo and Iacono sang a portion of "Marked Cards" an opera that Iacono, Mendelievich, González and Krawczyk wrote together based on a book by Percowicz, the founder and leader of the Buenos Aires Yoga School.

Sexual encounters were touted to members as a form of "healing" and offered a path to scaling the seven levels of the school's strict hierarchy that had Percowicz at the top, according to charging documents.

Former members interviewed by AP say Percowicz was known as "El Maestro." Others ranked at the seventh level were Iacono, Krawczyk and Mendelievich, according to prosecutors' documents. A judicial source says she has seen documents that show González was at a top level of the organization before he died. Krawczyk was among those arrested.

To advance quickly, members could also donate money and sign over assets. The group had revenues of around half a million dollars per month, according to a judicial official.

Cult members included lawyers and accountants who advised leaders on a complex money laundering network that included starting businesses and buying real estate in Argentina and the United States, the investigative documents said.

Members also allegedly sold medical treatments for several ailments, including AIDS and drug addiction, that involved "sleep cures," which essentially meant giving people drugs to help them sleep for days at a time. Authorities say the pseudo medical treatments were also done in the United States, where the group's clinic CMI Abasto, had subsidiaries.

## Fed is hoping August hiring report will show slowdown

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Raging inflation has so scrambled the economy that it's come to this: If Friday's jobs report for August were to show a significant hiring slowdown, the Federal Reserve — and even the White House — would likely welcome it.

The government is expected to report that employers added 300,000 jobs last month, according to a survey of economists by the data provider FactSet. That would be down from a blockbuster gain of 528,000 in July and an average of about 440,000 over the past three months. The unemployment rate is expected to remain at 3.5%, FactSet says, matching a half-century low.

The August jobs report will be issued at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time.

A weaker pace of hiring should help moderate wage increases and lift hopes that inflation pressures are starting to ease. That, in turn, would help the Fed make progress toward its goal of conquering high inflation, which is near a four-decade high.

Many companies pass along their higher labor costs to customers through price increases. Conversely, when wages rise more slowly, businesses have less need to raise prices.

Chair Jerome Powell and other Fed officials have increasingly stressed their determination to tame inflation even at the cost of damaging the economy. In a major speech in Jackson Hole, Wyoming last week, Powell underscored the Fed's tight focus on curbing inflation and said he was prepared to continue raising short-term interest rates and keep them elevated to achieve that goal. He warned that the Fed's inflation fight would likely cause pain for Americans in the form of a weaker economy and job losses.

The stock market has fallen every day since that speech as fears that the Fed may cause a recession have escalated.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 35 of 79

Powell also said the job market is “clearly out of balance,” with demand for workers “substantially exceeding” the available supply. Indeed, the government reported this week that the number of available jobs rose in July to a near-record high, after three months of declines. There are roughly two open jobs for every unemployed worker, a sign that many companies are still desperate to hire and may keep raising wages to do so.

“I don’t think the Fed is rooting for a poor jobs report, but they are certainly not rooting for a repeat of July,” when hiring accelerated and wage increases were strong, said Gregory Daco, chief economist at Parthenon-EY. “They are going to want to see some moderation.”

The central bank has raised its short-term rate to a range of 2.25% to 2.5% this year, after the fastest series of increases since it began using its short-term rate to influence the economy in the early 1990s. It has projected that its key rate will reach a range of 3.25% to 3.5% by year’s end. Those rate hikes have made borrowing and spending steadily more expensive for individuals and businesses. The housing market, in particular, has been weakened by higher loan rates.

If Friday’s jobs report is another strong one, with substantial hiring and rapid wage growth, the Fed could opt to announce another sizable three-quarter-point hike when it meets later this month, after similar rate increases in June and July.

The jobs figures will also help fill out the economic backdrop as this fall’s congressional elections intensify. Republicans have pointed to high inflation to try to pummel Democrats in midterm campaigns. The Biden administration has pushed back and claimed credit for a robust pace of job growth.

Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House press secretary, told reporters this week that “we’re expecting job numbers to cool off a bit.” The administration has been saying for months that it expects the economy to move to slower but still-steady growth after a swift economic rebound from the pandemic that came with a burst of inflation.

Wages are rising at the fastest pace in decades as employers scramble to fill jobs at a time when fewer Americans are working or seeking work in the aftermath of the pandemic. Average hourly pay jumped 5.2% in July from a year earlier. Still, that was less than the 5.6% year-over-year in March, which was the largest annual increase in 15 years of records outside of the spring of 2020, when the pandemic struck.

Higher wages aren’t necessarily inflationary if they are accompanied by greater efficiencies — if, for example, workers use machines or technology to produce more output. But worker efficiency, or productivity, has tumbled in the past year.

Loretta Mester, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, said Wednesday that “current wage increases are not consistent with inflation returning to our 2% goal” and that she thought with worker productivity so low, wage growth would have to slow to 3.5% or so to reduce inflation.

Yet some skeptics warn that the Fed may be focusing excessively on the strength of the job market when other indicators indicate that the economy is noticeably weakening. Consumer spending, for example, and manufacturing have slowed. The central bank might raise rates too far as a result, to the point where it causes a deeper recession than might be needed to conquer inflation.

“They run a risk of not realizing how much those rate hikes are restraining economic growth, if they’re just looking at the really strong employment gains,” said Jonathan Pingle, chief U.S. economist at Swiss bank UBS. “You could end up risking over tightening or moving too fast, too soon.”

The economic picture is highly uncertain, with the healthy pace of hiring and low unemployment at odds with the government’s estimate that the economy shrank in the first six months of this year, which is one informal definition of a recession.

Yet a related measure of the economy’s growth, which focuses on incomes, shows that it is still expanding, if at a weak pace.

So far, the Fed’s rate hikes have severely dented the housing market. With the average rate on a thirty-year mortgage reaching 5.66% last week — double the level of a year ago — sales of existing homes have fallen for six straight months.

Consumers have moderated their spending in the face of much higher prices, though they spent more in July even after adjusting for inflation. But companies’ investment in new equipment has slowed, indicating

they have an increasingly cautious outlook on the economy.

## **Pecan farmers get caught in power vacuum on Texas border**

By ACACIA CORONADO Associated Press

EAGLE PASS, Texas (AP) — A Texas pecan farm nearly the size of Disneyland has become entangled in a turf war between the Biden administration and Republican Gov. Greg Abbott over immigration enforcement on the southern border.

Hugo and Magali Urbina, who bought Heavenly Farms in April 2021, at first welcomed the state footing the bill for a new chain-link fence through their property earlier this year as part of Abbott's multibillion-dollar crackdown on border crossings along the Rio Grande. But then, one day, they found the fence's main gate unexpectedly locked.

The lock was put there, the couple says, by Texas authorities who have spent months arresting thousands of migrants on trespassing charges on private land. But the Urbinas didn't want the lock and neither did the U.S. Border Patrol, which found it impeded with the agency's own immigration enforcement and had it removed.

Now a single gate on the 1,200-mile Texas border has swung open a new dust-up over how to address near-record levels of migration on America's southern doorstep, a fight the Urbinas say they want no part of.

"Unbelievable," Abbott lashed out on social media last month after the lock was removed. "While Texas secures the border, the federal government is enabling illegal immigration."

The dispute is the latest example of how Texas' unprecedented challenge to the federal government's authority on the border has created a clash among agencies working at cross purposes.

The Border Patrol's Del Rio sector, which includes Eagle Pass where most of the nearly 470-acre farm is located, is fast becoming the busiest corridor for illegal crossings, with thousands passing each week onto the farm alone. The sector may soon surpass Texas' Rio Grande Valley, which has been the focus for the last decade.

The Urbinas do not oppose Abbott's massive border mission. But in the case of the lock, they say it went too far. They blamed what they see as a lack of single command in an area saturated with state troopers, Texas National Guard members, U.S. Border Patrol agents and local authorities, all of whom constantly cross paths and often work in tandem.

"They are all doing what they are being told," Magali Urbina said. "It is really not their fault, but there is nobody running or telling them. There is no boss."

It isn't an isolated case.

In September 2021, Texas troopers told Border Patrol agents on horseback to block migrants from crossing the river to a camp of nearly 16,000 predominantly Haitians in Del Rio, about an hour's drive north of Eagle Pass. Images of Border Patrol agents twirling reins at overpowered migrants sparked widespread criticism, including from President Joe Biden.

The internal investigation found that agents acted against Border Patrol objectives and "resulted in the unnecessary use of force against migrants who were attempting to reenter the United States with food." The agents had been "instructed to help where needed" and not told anything more specific about how to respond to requests from another agency.

Abbott, who is seeking a third term, launched his multibillion-dollar "Operation Lone Star" last year, creating an overwhelming presence on the border. The size and cost of the mission has grown in defiance of the Democratic administration in Washington:

— Since July, the state has picked up 5,600 migrants who have entered the country illegally in Texas and returned them to ports of entry on the border, a role that has been reserved for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

In Eagle Pass, state buses drop off migrants throughout the day at a border crossing with Piedras Negras, Mexico, as far as they can go. CBP releases them, creating a circular flow.

Since April, Texas has bused more than 7,000 migrants to Washington and New York on free, voluntary

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 37 of 79

trips, attempting to call attention to what it considers Biden's failed policies. This week, Abbott began sending buses to Chicago, with the first arriving Thursday at Union Station. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre has called the move a "political ploy."

— Since last year, the state has charged more than 4,800 migrants with trespassing, a misdemeanor that carries a maximum penalty of a year in jail.

The Urbinas' farm, which winds along the river, includes an old house that the couple is restoring for visitors to sample pecans, coffee and wine. They were inspired by Fredericksburg, a town of German heritage near Austin that draws tourists.

The farm of neatly manicured rows of trees had long drawn migrants but was relatively peaceful before the lifelong Eagle Pass resident couple bought it. It is located at the end of a stretch of new border fencing that was built on Abbott's orders, on the edge of the 30,000-resident town that is dotted with warehouses, decaying houses and chain stores.

Agents stopped migrants nearly 50,000 times in the Del Rio sector in July, with Rio Grande Valley a distant second at about 35,000. About 6 of 10 stops in the Del Rio sector were migrants from Venezuela, Cuba or Nicaragua, who are likely to be released to pursue their immigration cases because poor diplomatic relations with those countries means the U.S. can't send them home.

Migrants cross the river and climb a few feet uphill amidst overgrown Carrizo cane and concertina wire to surrender on the farm's edge, expecting they will be released. U.S. Border Patrol agents, state troopers and journalists are a regular presence.

Border Patrol unlocked the gate and took migrants in for processing, a regular procedure for the federal officials in any situation involving a lock within 25 miles of the border, said Jon Anfinson, president of the National Border Patrol Council union chapter that includes agents in Eagle Pass.

"The governor is telling everyone, 'Secure the border.' I have no doubt that is the intent but the reality of it is that it's just not that simple," Anfinson said. "We've been doing this forever and it hasn't been fixed yet. So it's a noble attempt, I suppose, but we're going to have to take these people into custody."

Border Patrol officials declined comment.

Ericka Miller, a spokeswoman for the Texas Department of Public Safety, said the agency is accommodating the Urbina's request to have the gate unlocked. She said DPS is also working to have carrizo cane on the property removed but said the Urbinas are allowing concertina wiring to stay on the property.

"All landowner agreements are voluntary and can be eliminated at any time. Again, DPS is there to assist the landowner," Miller said in an email.

The chain-link fence, which rises over the cane intertwined with the razor wire, makes it easier for the Urbinas to pursue trespassing charges against people crossing into their farm. However, they haven't, although they know cattle ranchers who have.

The state and federal governments are each "wanting to pull all the levers" and not working together, Hugo Urbina said. The couple regrets what they see as a disconnect.

"The president is not here, the governor is not here, but this is our land," Magali Urbina said.

## Crews face heat wave along with California wildfires

CASTAIC, Calif. (AP) — Firefighters battling a Southern California wildfire were pulled back at times to find rest and shade on Thursday, a day after seven were sent to the hospital in the midst of a grueling heat wave.

Progress on the Route Fire in northwestern Los Angeles County gave strike team leaders the luxury of splitting and rotating their crews for breaks fire Capt. Sheila Kelliher-Berkoh said.

"There's no slowdown work order but they're really pacing the work," with some firefighters able to take 20-minute breaks and find shade back of the fire line before returning to the the job of stamping out hot spots, Kelliher-Berkoh said.

Firefighters are "industrial athletes" who might be hauling up to 50 pounds of gear in addition to their boots, clothing and helmets, and keeping them safe is a priority, especially as they work in steep terrain

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 38 of 79

in extreme heat, Kelliher-Berkoh said.

No one suffered heat exhaustion on Friday so "the strategy seems to be working," she said.

The blaze in Castaic was 27% contained Thursday night.

Progress also was made on a fire in eastern San Diego County near the U.S.-Mexico border that left two people hospitalized with critical second- and third-degree burns, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said.

The victims were burned after apparently crossing the border, and five other people had to be rescued, Tony Mecham, Cal Fire unit chief in San Diego County, said at a news conference.

"Those people ran for their lives," he said. "They had a very close call."

The blaze also destroyed three homes and seven other buildings.

"It wiped everything out, the only thing I have left is the clothes on my back, so far I saved one of my dogs and two of the cats," Ronnie Fukuda, who lost his home in the community of Potrero, told KSWB-TV.

The Border 32 Fire in the Dulzura area grew to nearly 7 square miles (18 square kilometers) on Wednesday and prompting evacuation orders for about 1,500 people in hundreds of residences. However, the fire had stalled on Thursday. It was 14% contained and some people were allowed to return home, fire officials said.

The fires erupted as California broiled under a heat wave that was expected to last through Labor Day, sparking concerns about the threat of new blazes in tinder-dry brush. Triple-digit forecasts also prompted worries about straining the state's electrical grid as people turned to their air conditioners. The California Independent System Operator, which oversees the grid, issued a "Flex Alert" call for voluntary conservation between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m. Friday — the third alert in a row.

At the Route Fire in Castaic, seven firefighters were sent to the hospital on Wednesday with heat-related problems before being released. Temperatures remained torrid on Friday, topping out at 112 degrees in Castaic.

However, about 400 firefighters aided by aircraft managed to quell the explosive growth of the blaze, which had scorched more than 8 square miles (21 square kilometers) and destroyed a house. No homes remained threatened and evacuations were lifted, fire officials said.

The fire closed Interstate 5, a major north-south route but some lanes had reopened, although the highway remained jammed, especially by big-rigs.

Wildfires have sprung up this summer throughout the Western states. The largest and deadliest blaze in California so far this year erupted in July in Siskiyou County. It killed four people and destroyed much of the small community of Klamath River.

Scientists say climate change has made the West warmer and drier over the last three decades and will continue to make weather more extreme and wildfires more frequent and destructive.

## Trump documents probe: Judge appears open to special master

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — A federal judge Thursday appeared to give a boost to former President Donald Trump's hopes for appointing an outside legal expert to review government records seized by the FBI, questioning the Justice Department's arguments that Trump couldn't make the request and that a special master would needlessly delay its investigation.

"Ultimately, what is the harm" in such an appointment, U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon asked department lawyers. But she did not rule on the request, saying she would do so later.

Lawyers for Trump say the appointment of a special master is necessary to ensure an independent inspection of the documents seized by the FBI during the Aug. 8 search of Mar-a-Lago.

This kind of review, they say, would allow for "highly personal information" such as diaries or journals to be filtered out from the investigation and returned to Trump, along with any other documents that may be protected by claims of attorney-client privilege or executive privilege.

Chris Kise, a Trump lawyer and former Florida solicitor general, told Cannon that appointing a neutral

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 39 of 79

party would restore public faith in the investigation.

"This is an unprecedented situation. We need to lower the temperature," Kise said. "We need to take a deep breath."

The Justice Department has said an appointment is unwarranted because investigators have completed their review of potentially privileged records and already identified "a limited set of materials that potentially contain attorney-client privileged information." The government also says Trump lacks legal grounds to demand the return of presidential documents because they do not belong to him since he no longer occupies the White House.

"He is no longer president, said Jay Bratt, the head of the Justice Department's counterintelligence section. "He is unlawfully in possession of them."

The department has also expressed concerns that the appointment could delay the investigation, in part because a special master probably would need to obtain a security clearance to review the records and special authorization from intelligence agencies.

But Cannon, who said she would issue a written ruling at some point, pressed the government on its resistance, asking, "Ultimately what is the harm?"

The request for a special master last week opened the door for the Justice Department to disclose additional information from its investigation that might not otherwise have become public at this point. Late Tuesday, for instance, the department filed a document that cited efforts to obstruct the investigation, saying documents were "likely concealed and removed" from a storage room at Mar-a-Lago.

Cannon had said on Saturday, before the latest arguments in the matter, that her "preliminary intent" was to appoint a special master. It was not clear whether she might make a final determination Thursday or how her view might be affected by the fact that the Justice Department says it has already reviewed potentially privileged documents.

It was also not clear who might be serve as that outside expert. In some past high-profile cases, the role has been filled by a former federal judge.

Cannon was nominated by Trump in 2020 and confirmed by the Senate 56-21 later that year. She is a former assistant U.S. attorney in Florida, handling mainly criminal appeals.

## Alaska Natives celebrate Peltola's historic House election

By BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — Bernadette Demientieff said she cried when she learned of Democrat Mary Peltola's win in Alaska's U.S. House special election, making Peltola the first Alaska Native to be elected to Congress.

"I feel a little bit of relief knowing that somebody will be down there that can really relate and understand what it is to be Alaskan, to be an Alaska Native and to have that connection to our homeland," said Demientieff, executive director of the Gwich'in Steering Committee. The indigenous Gwich'in have fought for years against efforts to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and she hopes to lay out their concerns with Peltola.

Peltola, 49, who is Yup'ik, is set to serve the remainder of the late Republican Rep. Don Young's term, which ends in January.

Young, who died in March, held the seat for 49 years. Zack Brown, a former spokesperson in Young's office, said that "many staffers over the years heard the Congressman express that he'd like to see the seat one day held by an Alaska Native woman."

But even as Peltola celebrated Wednesday, when results of the Aug. 16 ranked choice special election were released, she was looking toward November, when she will once again face Republicans Sarah Palin and Nick Begich, her competitors in the special election. The November general election will decide who wins a full two-year term.

Peltola sought to stay above the fray during a campaign in which Begich cast Palin, the 2008 Republican vice presidential nominee and a former governor, as unserious and chasing fame.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 40 of 79

Palin, who touted widespread name recognition and former President Donald Trump's endorsement, questioned Begich's Republican credentials and issued perhaps her strongest rebuke of him Thursday, saying "Negative Nick" had divided Republicans with his "dirty campaigning" and should drop out of the race. Begich comes from a family of prominent Democrats but has said he's a lifelong Republican.

This was the first statewide ranked voting election in Alaska. Supporters of ranked voting say it encourages candidates to run positive campaigns to earn support from beyond their traditional bases. Scott Kendall, who helped write the ballot measure passed by voters in 2020 that scrapped party primaries and instituted ranked voting in general elections, said Begich "ran a clinic on how to perform poorly in a ranked choice election."

"He was negative," he said. "And what do you know? When you tell your supporters that the other Republican is worthless, maybe they believe you."

Begich finished third in first choice votes, meaning he was eliminated. Voters who ranked him first had their votes count for their next choice. Of the Begich voters who ranked a second candidate, about 36% chose Peltola and 64% chose Palin, according to preliminary figures.

Peltola said she is "very excited to work for Alaskans" over the next few months but also "very committed to staying focused to the campaign for the two-year seat and really focused on November."

She acknowledged the historic nature of her win, which Peltola said Wednesday was "still sinking in," but said she is "much more than just my ethnicity or gender." Peltola also will be the first woman to hold Alaska's House seat.

Alaska is a diverse state, she noted, and "we really need to be focused on all working together to overcome our challenges."

Peltola served five terms in the Alaska House, ending in 2009, and most recently worked for a commission aimed at rebuilding salmon resources on the Kuskokwim River. Her time in the Legislature overlapped with Palin's time as governor and the two have been cordial.

Peltola said she began fishing as a child with her father. The self-described salmon advocate said she was motivated to run for the U.S. House by environmental issues facing Alaska and wanted to draw attention to issues of ocean productivity and food insecurity. She has raised concerns over low salmon runs.

With the Supreme Court overturning *Roe v. Wade* in June, Peltola has said she wanted to be "an advocate for safe and legal abortions."

Peltola said any additional leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge "should proceed as long as there is support by the people that live there and protections in place for our natural resources, including the caribou."

Joe Nelson, board chairman at Sealaska, an Alaska Native corporation, said Peltola understands the importance of a subsistence way of life — living off the land and harvesting fish, berries and wildlife. Sealaska had encouraged voters to support Peltola and on Wednesday lauded her win as a "historic moment."

Nelson, who is also Peltola's ex-husband, said having an Alaska Native in Congress is "long overdue" and said more Native voices in leadership roles are needed.

Andrew Halcro, a Republican, said he ranked Peltola first in the special election and Republican write-in candidate Tara Sweeney second. Halcro and Peltola served in the state Legislature together, he from Anchorage and Peltola from the rural hub community of Bethel. He said he was a "know-nothing guy" who made some "unfortunate comments" around a program that provides economic assistance to communities where electricity costs can be far higher than in more urban areas.

He said this was at a time when the "urban/rural divide was raging" in the Legislature and that Peltola came to his office saying, "Hey, if you're interested, I'd be happy to educate you on this."

Peltola "was really one of the rural lawmakers in my freshman year that really changed my outlook on rural Alaska and really helped me get educated on the challenges that they face," he said.

Supporters of Peltola say she has a knack for connecting with people. Peltola said one thing she's learned during the campaign that she hopes to build on is "how much we all need positivity and hope and inspiration."



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 41 of 79

Beth Kerttula, a Democrat who served in the Legislature with Peltola, said Peltola's victory is not a "fluke." "Sometimes it's the right person in the right place at the right time, and that's Mary," she said, calling Peltola a gifted speaker and coalition builder who "just shines."

"If you didn't know who she was, then it's like, wow, look at that," she said of Peltola's win. "But that was no mistake. People believed in Mary."

## Mississippi capital's water disaster developed over decades

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — For at least the third time in a dozen years, portable toilets are parked outside the ornate Mississippi Capitol because Jackson's water system is in crisis.

The big "Gotta Go" trailer is just one example of the city's desperation. Many homes, businesses and government offices have had little or no running water this week, forcing people to wait in long lines for drinking water or water to flush toilets.

The scenes testify to the near collapse of a water system that residents could not trust even in the best of times. The failure to provide such an essential service reflects decades of government dysfunction, population change and decaying infrastructure. It has also fueled a political battle in which largely white GOP state lawmakers have shown little interest in helping a mostly Black city run by Democrats.

"We're on a budget, and we have to go buy water all the time. All the time," said Mary Huard, whose child has been forced to shift to online schooling because in-person classes were called off due to weak water pressure.

Even before the pressure dropped, Jackson's system was fragile, and officials had warned for years that widespread loss of service was possible. A cold snap in 2021 froze pipes and left tens of thousands of people without running water. Similar problems happened again early this year, on a smaller scale.

Broken water and sewer pipes are also common in Mississippi's largest city. The Environmental Protection Agency told Jackson months ago that its water system violates the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

The crisis deepened after heavy rain last week flooded the Pearl River and exacerbated trouble at the main water-treatment plant during the weekend.

The lines for water formed at churches, fire stations, community centers and outside big-box stores.

Outside a high school, volunteers used a pump connected to a tanker to distribute water to people who showed up with whatever empty containers they could find. One woman brought a truck bed full of empty paint buckets. A school maintenance worker hauled away a garbage container with water sloshing over the sides.

When Gov. Tate Reeves and President Joe Biden declared the situation an emergency, residents had already been advised for a month to boil their water before doing everything from brushing teeth to boiling pasta.

Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba said fixing the problems could cost billions of dollars — far beyond Jackson's ability to pay. That ability has been limited by a shrinking tax base that resulted from white flight, which began about a decade after public schools were integrated in 1970.

The population peaked in 1980 at nearly 203,000. It currently stands at about 150,000, with about 25% of residents living in poverty.

In the past half-century, the racial composition of Jackson has also changed. Once majority white, it is now more than 80% Black. The suburbs encircling Jackson are generally whiter and more prosperous and have newer infrastructure.

The mostly white, Republican-dominated Mississippi Legislature has been reluctant to offer assistance, even though the problems have disrupted daily life in the Capitol where lawmakers work for at least a few months every year.

The Democratic mayor and the Republican governor rarely speak to each other. And when Reeves held a news conference Monday to announce a state of emergency, Lumumba was nowhere to be seen. Reeves said he did not invite the mayor.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 42 of 79

They held separate news conferences again Tuesday and Wednesday, although Lumumba insisted they are working as a team. By Thursday, the two finally appeared together.

"Right now, what we're focused on is the operational unity that we have," Lumumba said as he stood by Reeves. "Operational unity means that we're focused more on our common ends and objectives than any differences that we may have revealed at some point in time."

Reeves frequently criticizes Jackson for its crime rate and has said the city's water problems stem from shoddy management.

"I know that the team at the state Department of Health as well as the EPA has been working tirelessly since 2016 trying to convince the city to come into compliance with the orders that have been put forth. They were generally unsuccessful at that," Reeves said Monday.

Cecil Brown is a Democrat who represented part of Jackson in the Mississippi House for 16 years before serving on the state Public Service Commission. He urged city, state and congressional leaders to work together.

"If you don't like each other, it's OK, let's say, 'If we can't work together, let's put our staff together,'" Brown said in an interview Thursday.

The governor has blocked some efforts to alleviate the water woes. After the city hired a private contractor to handle water billing, some customers went months without receiving bills, while others skipped payments.

In 2020, Reeves vetoed legislation that would have let Jackson forgive at least a portion of the unpaid water bills for poor people. He took a more passive approach in 2021, allowing water-payment legislation to become law by letting the proposal sit for five days without his signature.

Lumumba has complained that Mississippi, a state with almost a 40% Black population, is often overlooked by national Democrats and taken for granted by Republicans.

Criticism about the Jackson water debacle is not strictly partisan.

U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson, a Democrat whose district includes most of Jackson, said in mid-August that Jackson leaders had not provided specific proposals for improvements.

"The city fathers and mothers will have to step up, produce that plan that we can begin to sell from Jackson to Washington," Thompson told television station WJTV.

An infrastructure bill signed into law last year by Biden is designed to address problems like Jackson's, but it's unclear how much of that money the Mississippi capital will receive.

At the same time, Mississippi is slashing taxes. This year, Reeves signed the state's largest-ever tax cut, which will reduce revenue by an estimated \$185 million the first year and \$525 million the final year.

The governor argued that cutting the income tax would "lead to more wealth for all Mississippians," even as one of the poorest states in the nation struggles to support schools and rural hospitals.

Reeves has not said whether he will call a special session of the Legislature before January to consider aid for Jackson. Any proposals will face opposition from some Republicans who say the state should not rescue Jackson from its predicament.

But Republican state Sen. Brice Wiggins of Pascagoula, along the Gulf Coast, said he is willing to help if the aid includes an accountability plan.

"The state 'bailing out' the city after what appears to be decades long neglect & failed leadership violates my sense of accountability & conservative principles," Wiggins wrote on Twitter. He added that he remembers government aid after Hurricane Katrina.

"In the end, it's about the safety of Jackson's citizens & its economic viability," Wiggins said.

Even when Jackson is not under a boil-water notice, Sharon Epps said she buys bottled water for her family because she doesn't trust the tap water. She said her landlord replaced a broken line that spewed raw sewage into the back yard.

"When you can't use the bathroom like you want to, and it's floating in your back yard, that's the saddest part about it. And then you can't sit out in the back yard because it smells so bad," Epps said. "It's a disaster, baby."

## Jan. 6 panel asks former Speaker Gingrich for information

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House panel investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection is seeking information from former House Speaker Newt Gingrich about his communications with senior advisers to then-President Donald Trump in the days leading up to the 2021 attack on the Capitol.

The committee's chairman, Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, wrote in a letter sent to Gingrich on Thursday that the panel has obtained emails Gingrich exchanged with Trump's associates about television advertisements that "repeated and relied upon false claims about fraud in the 2020 election" and were designed to cast doubt on the voting after it had already taken place.

Thompson wrote that Gingrich also appeared to be involved in Trump's scheme to appoint fake electors and emailed Trump's chief of staff, Mark Meadows, about those efforts on the evening of Jan. 6, after Trump supporters had attacked the Capitol.

"Information obtained by the Select Committee suggests that you provided detailed directives about the television advertisements that perpetuated false claims about fraud in the 2020 election, that you sought ways to expand the reach of this messaging, and that you were likely in direct conversations with President Trump about these efforts," Thompson wrote to Gingrich.

The request for Gingrich to cooperate voluntarily comes as the committee has been quietly continuing its investigation and preparing for a new set of hearings next month. Lawmakers and staff have been interviewing witnesses and compiling a final report in recent weeks after a series of hearings in June and July shed new light on Trump's actions before and after the deadly rioting -- and his lack of a response as the violence was underway at the Capitol.

If he cooperates, Gingrich would be one of more than 1,000 witnesses interviewed by the committee, including dozens of Trump allies. The committee's eight hearings this summer featured not only live witness testimony but also clips of video interviews with some of the former president's closest aides, Cabinet secretaries and even family members. The panel is expected to resume the hearings in September, ahead of the midterm elections.

In the letter to Gingrich, Thompson said the former Georgia lawmaker exchanged emails with top Trump aides in which he provided "detailed input" into the television advertisements that encouraged members of the public to contact state officials and pressure them to overturn Trump's loss to Joe Biden. "To that end, these advertisements were intentionally aired in the days leading up to December 14, 2020, the day electors from each state met to cast their votes for president and vice president," Thompson wrote.

That came as Georgia election officials were facing intimidation and threats of violence.

In an Dec. 8, 2020, email to the White House aides, according to the committee, Gingrich wrote: "The goal is to arouse the country's anger through new verifiable information the American people have never seen before. ... If we inform the American people in a way they find convincing and it arouses their anger, they will then bring pressure on legislators and governors."

The panel also cited a Nov. 12, 2020, email from Gingrich, just days after the election, to Meadows and then-White House counsel Pat Cipollone: "Is someone in charge of coordinating all the electors? ... the contested electors must meet on (D)ecember 14 and send in ballots to force contests which the house would have to settle."

On the evening of Jan. 6, Gingrich wrote Meadows at 10:42 p.m., after the Capitol had been cleared and after Congress had resumed certifying Biden's win. He asked about letters from state legislators concerning "decertifying electors," the committee says.

"Surprisingly, the attack on Congress and the activities prescribed by the Constitution did not even pause your relentless pursuit," Thompson wrote.

## Tech tool offers police 'mass surveillance on a budget'

By GARANCE BURKE and JASON DEAREN Associated Press

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 44 of 79

Local law enforcement agencies from suburban Southern California to rural North Carolina have been using an obscure cellphone tracking tool, at times without search warrants, that gives them the power to follow people's movements months back in time, according to public records and internal emails obtained by The Associated Press.

Police have used "Fog Reveal" to search hundreds of billions of records from 250 million mobile devices, and harnessed the data to create location analyses known among law enforcement as "patterns of life," according to thousands of pages of records about the company.

Sold by Virginia-based Fog Data Science LLC, Fog Reveal has been used since at least 2018 in criminal investigations ranging from the murder of a nurse in Arkansas to tracing the movements of a potential participant in the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol. The tool is rarely, if ever, mentioned in court records, something that defense attorneys say makes it harder for them to properly defend their clients in cases in which the technology was used.

The company was developed by two former high-ranking Department of Homeland Security officials under former President George W. Bush. It relies on advertising identification numbers, which Fog officials say are culled from popular cellphone apps such as Waze, Starbucks and hundreds of others that target ads based on a person's movements and interests, according to police emails. That information is then sold to companies like Fog.

"It's sort of a mass surveillance program on a budget," said Bennett Cyphers, a special adviser at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a digital privacy rights advocacy group.

This story, supported by the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, is part of an ongoing Associated Press series, "Tracked," that investigates the power and consequences of decisions driven by algorithms on people's everyday lives.

The documents and emails were obtained by EFF through Freedom of Information Act requests. The group shared the files with The AP, which independently found that Fog sold its software in about 40 contracts to nearly two dozen agencies, according to GovSpend, a company that keeps tabs on government spending. The records and AP's reporting provide the first public account of the extensive use of Fog Reveal by local police, according to analysts and legal experts who scrutinize such technologies.

Federal oversight of companies like Fog is an evolving legal landscape. On Monday, the Federal Trade Commission sued a data broker called Kochava that, like Fog, provides its clients with advertising IDs that authorities say can easily be used to find where a mobile device user lives, which violates rules the commission enforces. And there are bills before Congress now that, if passed, would regulate the industry.

"Local law enforcement is at the front lines of trafficking and missing persons cases, yet these departments are often behind in technology adoption," Matthew Broderick, a Fog managing partner, said in an email. "We fill a gap for underfunded and understaffed departments."

Because of the secrecy surrounding Fog, however, there are scant details about its use and most law enforcement agencies won't discuss it, raising concerns among privacy advocates that it violates the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which protects against unreasonable search and seizure.

What distinguishes Fog Reveal from other cellphone location technologies used by police is that it follows the devices through their advertising IDs, unique numbers assigned to each device. These numbers do not contain the name of the phone's user, but can be traced to homes and workplaces to help police establish pattern-of-life analyses.

"The capability that it had for bringing up just anybody in an area whether they were in public or at home seemed to me to be a very clear violation of the Fourth Amendment," said Davin Hall, a former crime data analysis supervisor for the Greensboro, North Carolina, Police Department. "I just feel angry and betrayed and lied to."

Hall resigned in late 2020 after months of voicing concerns about the department's use of Fog to police attorneys and the city council.

While Greensboro officials acknowledged Fog's use and initially defended it, the police department said

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 45 of 79

it allowed its subscription to expire earlier this year because it didn't "independently benefit investigations."

But federal, state and local police agencies around the U.S. continue to use Fog with very little public accountability. Local police agencies have been enticed by Fog's affordable price: It can start as low as \$7,500 a year. And some departments that license it have shared access with other nearby law enforcement agencies, the emails show.

Police departments also like how quickly they can access detailed location information from Fog. Geofence warrants, which tap into GPS and other sources to track a device, are accessed by obtaining such data from companies, like Google or Apple. This requires police to obtain a warrant and ask the tech companies for the specific data they want, which can take days or weeks.

Using Fog's data, which the company claims is anonymized, police can geofence an area or search by a specific device's ad ID numbers, according to a user agreement obtained by AP. But, Fog maintains that "we have no way of linking signals back to a specific device or owner," according to a sales representative who emailed the California Highway Patrol in 2018, after a lieutenant asked whether the tool could be legally used.

Despite such privacy assurances, the records show that law enforcement can use Fog's data as a clue to find identifying information. "There is no (personal information) linked to the (ad ID)," wrote a Missouri official about Fog in 2019. "But if we are good at what we do, we should be able to figure out the owner."

Fog's Broderick said in an email that the company does not have access to people's personal information, and draws from "commercially available data without restrictions to use," from data brokers "that legitimately purchase data from apps in accordance with their legal agreements." The company refused to share information about how many police agencies it works with.

"We are confident Law Enforcement has the responsible leadership, constraints, and political guidance at the municipal, state, and federal level to ensure that any law enforcement tool and method is appropriately used in accordance with the laws in their respective jurisdictions," Broderick said in the email.

"Search warrants are not required for the use of the public data," he added Thursday, saying that the data his product offers law enforcement is "lead data" and should not be used to establish probable cause.

Kevin Metcalf, a prosecutor in Washington County, Arkansas, said he has used Fog Reveal without a warrant, especially in "exigent circumstances." In these cases, the law provides a warrant exemption when a crime-in-process endangers people or an officer.

Metcalf also leads the National Child Protection Task Force, a nonprofit that combats child exploitation and trafficking. Fog is listed on its website as a task force sponsor and a company executive chairs the nonprofit's board. Metcalf said Fog has been invaluable to cracking missing children cases and homicides.

"We push the limits, but we do them in a way that we target the bad guys," he said. "Time is of the essence in those situations. We can't wait on the traditional search warrant route."

Fog was used successfully in the murder case of 25-year-old nurse Sydney Sutherland, who had last been seen jogging near Newport, Arkansas, before she disappeared, Metcalf said.

Police had little evidence to go on when they found her phone in a ditch, so Metcalf said he shared his agency's access to Fog with the U.S. Marshals Service to figure out which other devices had been nearby at the time she was killed. He said Fog helped lead authorities to arrest a farmer in Sutherland's rape and murder in August 2020, but its use was not documented in court records reviewed by AP.

Cyphers, who led EFF's public records work, said there hasn't been any previous record of companies selling this kind of granular data directly to local law enforcement.

"We're seeing counties with less than 100,000 people where the sheriff is using this extremely high tech, extremely invasive, secretive surveillance tool to chase down local crime," Cyphers said.

One such customer is the sheriff's office in rural Rockingham County, North Carolina, population 91,000 and just north of Greensboro, where Hall still lives. The county bought a one-year license for \$9,000 last year and recently renewed it.

"Rockingham County is tiny in terms of population. It never ceases to amaze me how small agencies will

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 46 of 79

scoop up tools that they just absolutely don't need, and nobody needs this one," Hall said.

Sheriff's spokesman Lt. Kevin Suthard confirmed the department recently renewed its license but declined to offer specifics about the use of Fog Reveal or how the office protects individuals' rights.

"Because it would then be less effective as criminals could be cognizant that we have the device and adjust their commission of the crimes accordingly. Make sense?" Suthard said.

Fog has aggressively marketed its tool to police, even beta testing it with law enforcement, records show. The Dallas Police Department bought a Fog license in February after getting a free trial and "seeing a demonstration and hearing of success stories from the company," Senior Cpl. Melinda Gutierrez, a department spokeswoman, said in an email.

Fog's tool is accessed through a web portal. Investigators can enter a crime scene's coordinates into the database, which brings back search results showing a device's Fog ID, which is based on its unique ad ID number.

Police can see which device IDs were found near the location of the crime. Detectives or other officers can also search the location for IDs going forward from the time of the crime and back at least 180 days, according to the company's user license agreement.

The emails and Fog's Broderick contend the tool can actually search back years, however. Emails from a Fog representative to Florida and California law enforcement agencies said the tool's data stretched back as far as June 2017. On Thursday Broderick, who had previously refused to address the question, said it "only has a three year reach back."

While the data does not directly identify who owns a device, the company often gives law enforcement information it needs to connect it to addresses and other clues that help detectives figure out people's identities, according to company representatives' emails.

It is unclear how Fog makes these connections, but a company it refers to as its "data partner" called Venntel, Inc. has access to an even greater trove of users' mobile data.

Venntel is a large broker that has supplied location data to agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the FBI. The Department of Homeland Security's watchdog is auditing how the offices under its control have used commercial data. That comes after some Democratic lawmakers asked it to investigate U.S. Customs and Border Protection's use of Venntel data to track people without a search warrant in 2020. The company also has faced congressional inquiries about privacy concerns tied to federal law enforcement agencies' use of its data.

Venntel and Fog work closely together to aid police detectives during investigations, emails show. Their marketing brochures are nearly identical, too, and Venntel staff has recommended Fog to law enforcement, according to the emails. Venntel said "the confidential nature of our business relationships" prevented it from responding to AP's specific questions, and Fog would not comment on the relationship.

While Fog says in its marketing materials that it collects data from thousands of apps, like Starbucks and Waze, companies are not always aware of who is using their data. Venntel and Fog can collect billions of data points filled with detailed information because many apps embed invisible tracking software that follows users' behavior. This software also lets the apps sell customized ads that are targeted to a person's current location. In turn, data brokers' software can Hoover up personal data that can be used for other purposes.

Prior to publication, Fog's Broderick refused to say how the company got data from Starbucks and Waze. But on Thursday, he said he did not know how data aggregators collected the information Fog Reveal draws from, or the specific apps from which the data was drawn.

For their part, Starbucks and Waze denied any relationship to Fog. Starbucks said it had not given permission to its business partners to share customer information with Fog.

"Starbucks has not approved Ad ID data generated by our app to be used in this way by Fog Data Science LLC. In our review to date, we have no relationship with this company," said Megan Adams, a Starbucks spokesperson.

"We have never had a relationship with Fog Data Science, have not worked with them in any capacity, and have not shared information with them," a Waze spokesperson said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 47 of 79

Fog Data Science LLC is headquartered in a nondescript brick building in Leesburg, Virginia. It also has related entities in New Jersey, Ohio and Texas.

It was founded in 2016 by Robert Liscouski, who led the Department of Homeland Security's National Cyber Security Division in the George W. Bush administration. His colleague, Broderick, is a former U.S. Marine brigadier general who ran DHS' tech hub, the Homeland Security Operations Center, during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. A House bipartisan committee report cited Broderick among others for failing to coordinate a swift federal response to the deadly hurricane. Broderick resigned from DHS shortly thereafter.

In marketing materials, Fog also has touted its ability to offer police "predictive analytics," a buzzword often used to describe high-tech policing tools that purport to predict crime hotspots. Liscouski and another Fog official have worked at companies focused on predictive analytics, machine learning and software platforms supporting artificial intelligence.

"It is capable of delivering both forensic and predictive analytics and near real-time insights on the daily movements of the people identified with those mobile devices," reads an email announcing a Fog training last year for members of the National Fusion Center Association, which represents a network of intelligence-sharing partnerships created after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Fog's Broderick said the company had not invested in predictive applications, and provided no details about any uses the tool had for predicting crime.

Despite privacy advocates' concerns about warrantless surveillance, Fog Reveal has caught on with local and state police forces. It's been used in a number of high-profile criminal cases, including one that was the subject of the television program "48 Hours."

In 2017, a world-renowned exotic snake breeder was found dead, lying in a pool of blood in his reptile breeding facility in rural Missouri. Police initially thought the breeder, Ben Renick, might have died from a poisonous snake bite. But the evidence soon pointed to murder.

During its investigation, emails show the Missouri State Highway Patrol used Fog's portal to search for cellphones at Renick's home and breeding facility and zeroed in on a mobile device. Working with Fog, investigators used the data to identify the phone owner's identity: it was the Renicks' babysitter.

Police were able to log the babysitter's whereabouts over time to create a pattern of life analysis.

It turned out to be a dead-end lead. Renick's wife, Lynlee, later was charged and convicted of the murder.

Prosecutors did not cite Fog in a list of other tools they used in the investigation, according to trial exhibits examined by the AP.

But Missouri officials seemed pleased with Fog's capabilities, even though it didn't directly lead to an arrest. "It was interesting to see that the system did pick up a device that was absolutely in the area that day. Too bad it did not belong to a suspect!" a Missouri State Highway Patrol analyst wrote in an email to Fog.

In another high-profile criminal probe, records show the FBI asked state intelligence officials in Iowa for help with Fog as it investigated potential participants in the events at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

"Not definitive but still waiting to talk things over with a FOG rep," wrote Justin Parker, deputy director of the Iowa Department of Public Safety, in an email to an FBI official in September 2021. It was unclear from the emails if Fog's data factored into an arrest. Iowa officials did not respond and the FBI declined to comment.

Metcalfe, the Arkansas prosecutor, has argued against congressional efforts to require search warrants when using technologies like Fog Reveal.

He believes Americans have given up any reasonable expectation of privacy when they use free apps and likens EFF's objections to tech like Fog to a "cult of privacy."

"I think people are going to have to make a decision on whether we want all this free technology, we want all this free stuff, we want all the selfies," he said. "But we can't have that and at the same time say, 'I'm a private person, so you can't look at any of that.' That just seems crazy."

Although he is not an official Fog employee, Metcalfe said he would step in to lead training sessions including the tool for federal prosecutors, federal agencies and police, including the Chicago Police Department, the emails show.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 48 of 79

That kind of hands-on service and word-of-mouth marketing in tight-knit law enforcement circles seems to have helped increase Fog's popularity.

The Maryland State Police is among the many agencies that have had contracts for Fog Reveal, and records show investigators believed it had a lot of potential.

"Companies have receptors all over. Malls, shopping centers, etc. They're all around you," wrote Sgt. John Bedell of the Criminal Enforcement Division, in an email to a colleague. The agency purchased a year of access to Fog in 2018.

"Picture getting a suspect's phone then in the extraction being able to see everyplace they'd been in the last 18 months plotted on a map you filter by date ranges," wrote Bedell. "The success lies in the secrecy."

Elena Russo, a spokesperson for the agency, confirmed it had a Fog license previously but that it had lapsed. "Unfortunately, it was not helpful in solving any crimes," she wrote in an email.

Still, as more local policing agencies sign up for Fog, some elected officials said they have been left in the dark. Several officials said there wasn't enough information to grasp what services Fog actually provides.

"Who is this company? What are the track records? What are the privacy protections?" asked Anaheim council member Jose Moreno, remembering his confusion about Fog during a 2020 council meeting. "That night our chief had very little information for us."

In Anaheim, the Fog license was paid for by a federal "Urban Area Security Initiative," DHS grants that help localities fund efforts to prevent terrorism. A police spokesman said the department has not used it.

Defense attorneys worry there are few legal restrictions on law enforcement's use of location data.

It's a gap police agencies exploit, and often don't disclose in court, said Michael Price, litigation director of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers' Fourth Amendment Center.

"(Fog) is exceedingly rare to see in the wild because the cops often don't get warrants," said Price.

"Even if you do ask for (information) sometimes they say 'We don't know what you are talking about.'"

Privacy advocates worry Fog's location tracking could be put to other novel uses, like keeping tabs on people who seek abortions in states where it is now illegal. These concerns were heightened when a Nebraska woman was charged in August with helping her teenage daughter end a pregnancy after investigators got hold of their Facebook messages.

Government's use of location data is still being weighed by the courts, too. In 2018, the Supreme Court ruled that police generally need a warrant to look at records that reveal where cellphone users have been.

Nearly two years after walking off the crime data supervisor job with the Greensboro police force, Hall still worries about police surveillance in neighboring communities.

"Anyone with that login information can do as many searches as they want," Hall said. "I don't believe the police have earned the trust to use that, and I don't believe it should be legal."

## AP source: Cavaliers acquiring All-Star G Mitchell from Jazz

By TOM WITHERS AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Donovan Mitchell is going east.

The All-Star guard is on his way to the Cleveland Cavaliers, who acquired one of the NBA's best scorers Thursday in a blockbuster trade with the Utah Jazz, a person familiar with the deal told The Associated Press.

Cleveland is sending guard Collin Sexton, forward Lauri Markkanen and rookie guard Ochai Agbaji along with three unprotected first-round picks to the Jazz, said the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity because it still must be approved by the league.

ESPN was the first to report Mitchell's exit from Utah.

Sexton, who played in just 11 games last season before undergoing knee surgery, will sign a four-year, \$72 million contract as part of a sign-and-trade agreement with Utah, his agent Rich Paul confirmed for AP.

There had been speculation for months that Mitchell might get moved, and it appeared the New York Knicks were the frontrunner for him. But when talks with Utah broke down, Cleveland jumped in and general manager Koby Altman added a player capable of pushing the Cavs into title contention.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 49 of 79

Cleveland hasn't made the playoffs since 2018, when LeBron James led the Cavs to their fourth straight Finals.

The 6-foot-1 Mitchell can take over a game, and he'll give Cavs coach J.B. Bickerstaff a player to run his offense through as well as another late-game option.

The Cavs are also giving up unprotected first-round picks in 2025, 2027 and 2029 and swapping picks in 2026 and 2028, said the person.

A three-time All-Star in five seasons with Utah, the 25-year-old Mitchell is one of the league's elite backcourt players and his acquisition could push the Cavs, who won 44 games last season — a 22-game improvement — with a young nucleus, among the top teams in the loaded Eastern Conference.

Mitchell, who averaged 25.9 points per game last season, will pair in Cleveland with All-Star point guard Darius Garland. He'll also play with All-Star center Jarett Allen and forward Evan Mobley, who had a strong rookie season averaging 15.0 points, 8.3 rebounds and 1.7 blocks.

Mitchell signed a five-year, \$163 million contract in 2020 and is under contract through the 2026 season.

Cleveland also has Garland and Allen locked up to long-term deals.

The 23-year-old Sexton was hoping to make a comeback this season with the Cavs, who couldn't work out an extension with him last season. He was a restricted free agent this summer, but there was little market for him.

Sexton's a proven scorer (he averaged 24.3 in 2020), but became expendable for Cleveland due to Garland's development and the club's talented frontline.

The 7-foot Markkanen averaged 14.8 points and 5.7 rebounds in his first season with the Cavs, who made the play-in round last season before losing to Brooklyn and Atlanta.

Agbaji was drafted by Cleveland with the No. 14 overall pick this year after helping Kansas win a national championship.

This is the second major trade during this offseason for Utah, which started its rebuild in July by trading All-Star center Rudy Gobert to Minnesota.

The Mitchell trade gives Utah even more draft capital. The Jazz now have at least 13 first-round picks, plus the two swaps that were part of this deal, over the next seven drafts. The Jazz currently have three first-round picks in 2023, 2025, 2027 and 2029.

But the Jazz are starting over now, in so many ways.

The re-do in Utah started in early June when Quin Snyder -- who had guided the Jazz to six consecutive playoff appearances, but never got them out of the second round -- decided to end his eight-year run as coach.

The last straw may have been how this past season started with great promise before fizzling. Utah started 7-1 and was 26-9 at one point but went just 25-28 after Jan. 1.

Utah eventually hired Will Hardy to coach, though there was still speculation then about whether the Jazz would break up the 1-2 punch of Mitchell and Gobert. Now, they're both gone.

The Mitchell-Gobert relationship was clearly strained at times, going back to at least the start of the pandemic, when Gobert was the first NBA player to test positive for COVID-19 and Mitchell tested positive a day later.

They now get new starts elsewhere, and the Jazz are in the full throes of a rebuild -- just as Cleveland was not long ago.

## R. Kelly's lawyers start defense; he says he won't testify

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — R. Kelly's lawyers began mounting a defense Thursday in Chicago against federal charges of child pornography, enticement of minors for sex and fixing his 2008 state trial, with an initial witness contending the singer was himself a victim of blackmail.

The presentation to jurors won't include Kelly taking the witness stand.

Judge Harry Leinenweber asked Kelly directly on Thursday morning if he would testify, and the Grammy

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 50 of 79

Award winner responded that he would not.

The judge raised the issue minutes before attorneys for Kelly and two co-defendants began calling their first witnesses, endeavoring to counter two weeks of government testimony — including from four women who accused Kelly of sexual abuse.

Co-defendant Derrel McDavid, a longtime Kelly business manager, is accused of helping Kelly rig the 2008 trial, at which Kelly was acquitted. McDavid said he will testify. Co-defendant Milton Brown is charged with receiving child pornography. Like Kelly, he said he wouldn't testify.

Testifying would have been risky. At times, Kelly has exploded in anger under tough questioning, which could hurt his defense.

He lost his cool in a 2019 interview with Gayle King on "CBS This Morning." As she pressed him about accusations of sexual abuse, he jumped up, crying and gesticulating. "I didn't do this stuff!" he shouted. "This is not me! I'm fighting for my ... life!"

Lawyers for all three defendants are essentially sharing witnesses. McDavid's legal team called the first defense witness, McDavid friend and former police officer Christopher G. Wilson. He testified that McDavid told him in 2001 that a merchandizing agent for Kelly, Charles Freeman, was trying to blackmail the R&B star.

Freeman testified earlier for the government that Kelly and his associates agreed to pay him \$1 million to hunt down and return a video that featured Kelly, describing how he was handed bags full of cash as payment. He said the money was for services rendered, not an extortion bid. Prosecutors say the payments were part of a conspiracy to obstruct investigators leading up to Kelly's 2008 trial.

Under cross-examination, Wilson conceded he didn't directly witness anyone trying to extort Kelly, saying he was relying on what McDavid told him.

A conviction on just one or two of the charges at the Chicago trial could add years to a 30-year sentence Kelly already received from a New York federal judge in June for convictions on racketeering and sex trafficking charges.

Via witnesses Thursday, the defense also sought to raise doubts about the ages of a few accusers, saying at least one may have been 17, the age of consent in Illinois, at the time Kelly pursued her for sex.

There was nothing necessarily sinister about Kelly or his workers dealing in cash, another defense witness, former Kelly studio intern Tom Arnold, told jurors. Kelly rarely used his own credit cards and preferred cash transactions, added Arnold, who said he once carried \$125,000 to Kelly in a backpack.

The highlight of prosecutors' presentation was the testimony two weeks ago of a 37-year-old woman who used the pseudonym "Jane." She described Kelly sexually abusing her hundreds of times starting in 1998 when she was 14 and Kelly was around 30.

Closing arguments are expected to happen in the middle of next week.

## Ex-NYPD officer sentenced to record 10 years for Jan. 6 riot

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A retired New York Police Department officer was sentenced on Thursday to a record-setting 10 years in prison for attacking the U.S. Capitol and using a metal flagpole to assault one of the police officers trying to hold off a mob of Donald Trump supporters.

Thomas Webster's prison sentence is the longest so far among roughly 250 people who have been punished for their conduct during the riot on Jan. 6, 2021. The previous longest was shared by two other rioters, who were sentenced separately to seven years and three months in prison.

Webster, a 20-year NYPD veteran, was the first Capitol riot defendant to be tried on an assault charge and the first to present a self-defense argument. A jury rejected Webster's claim that he was defending himself when he tackled Metropolitan Police Department officer Noah Rathbun and grabbed his gas mask outside the Capitol on Jan. 6.

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta sentenced Webster, 56, to 10 years in prison plus three years of supervised release. He allowed Webster to report to prison at a date to be determined instead of immediately

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 51 of 79

ordering him into custody.

"Mr. Webster, I don't think you're a bad person," the judge said. "I think you were caught up in a moment. But as you know, even getting caught up in a moment has consequences."

Webster turned to apologize to Rathbun, who was in the courtroom but didn't address the judge. Webster said he wishes he had never come to Washington, D.C.

"I wish the horrible events of that day had never happened," he told the judge.

The judge said Rathbun wasn't Webster's only victim on Jan. 6.

"The other victim was democracy, and that is not something that can be taken lightly," Mehta added.

Federal prosecutors had recommended a prison sentence of 17 years and six months. The court's probation department had recommended a 10-year prison sentence. Mehta wasn't bound by the recommendations.

In a court filing, prosecutors accused Webster of "disgracing a democracy that he once fought honorably to protect and serve." Webster led the charge against police barricades at the Capitol's Lower West Plaza, prosecutors said. They compared the attack to a medieval battle, with rioters pelting officers with makeshift projectiles and engaging in hand-to-hand combat.

"Nothing can explain or justify Mr. Webster's rage. Nothing can explain or justify his violence," Assistant U.S. Attorney Hava Mirell said Thursday.

Defense attorney James Monroe said in a court filing that the mob was "guided by unscrupulous politicians" and others promoting the lie that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from the Republican incumbent. He questioned why prosecutors argued that Webster didn't deserve leniency for his 25 years of service to his country and New York City.

"That is not how we measure justice. That is revenge," Monroe said.

In May, jurors deliberated for less than three hours before they convicted Webster of all six counts in his indictment, including a charge that he assaulted Rathbun with a dangerous weapon, the flagpole.

Also Thursday, a New Jersey man pleaded guilty to using pepper spray on police officers, including one who later died. Officer Brian Sicknick suffered a stroke the day after the riot and died of natural causes. He and other officers were standing guard behind metal bicycle racks as the mob of pro-Trump supporters stormed the Capitol.

Julian Khater, 33, pleaded guilty to two counts of assaulting or impeding officers with a dangerous weapon. He could face up to 20 years in prison, though will likely face a sentence ranging from about 6 1/2 to 8 years at a hearing set for December.

The case against Khater and a second man have been among the more notable brought by the Justice Department. George Pierre Tanios brought the pepper spray in a backpack. Tanios previously pleaded guilty and is also set to be sentenced in December.

Webster had testified at trial that he was trying to protect himself from a "rogue cop" who punched him in the face. He also accused Rathbun of instigating the confrontation.

Rathbun testified that he didn't punch or pick a fight with Webster. Rathbun said he was trying to move Webster back from a security perimeter that he and other officers were struggling to maintain.

Rathbun's body camera captured Webster shouting profanities and insults before they made any physical contact. The video shows that Webster slammed one of the bike racks at Rathbun before the officer reached out with an open left hand and struck the right side of Webster's face.

After Rathbun struck his face, Webster swung a metal flag pole at the officer in a downward chopping motion, striking a bike rack. Rathbun grabbed the broken pole from Webster, who charged at the officer, tackled him to the ground and grabbed his gas mask, choking him by the chin strap.

Webster drove alone to Washington, D.C., from his home near Goshen, New York, on the eve of the Jan. 6 "Stop the Steal" rally, where Trump addressed thousands of supporters. Webster was wearing a bulletproof vest and carrying a Marine Corps flag on a metal pole when he joined the mob that stormed the Capitol.

Webster said he went to the Capitol to "petition" lawmakers to "relook" at the results of the 2020 presidential election. But he testified that he didn't intend to interfere with Congress' joint session to certify

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 52 of 79

President Joe Biden 's victory.

Webster retired from the NYPD in 2011 after 20 years of service, which included a stint on then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg's private security detail. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1985 to 1989 before joining the NYPD in 1991.

## Judge: Jury can see swastikas school shooter drew in class

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — In a failed attempt to bar the admission into evidence several swastikas Florida school shooter Nikolas Cruz drew on assignments, his attorneys made an unusual argument Thursday at his penalty trial: he was an equal opportunity killer who shot his victims without regard to race or religion.

The attorneys told Circuit Judge Elizabeth Scherer outside the jury's presence that the Nazi symbol creates such strong anger and revulsion that allowing the panel to see those drawings violates his right to a fair trial because there is no evidence that his 2018 murder of 17 people at Parkland's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High was driven by bigotry. Those killed and the 17 wounded included white, Black, Hispanic and Asian people, Christians and Jews.

They also listed the numerous times they asked Scherer before jury selection to rule on whether the swastikas would be admitted, saying her failure affected the questions they asked prospective jurors and their trial strategy. They asked for a mistrial, which Scherer angrily rejected, calling their argument "disingenuous."

She and prosecutors pointed out that the defense was not against admitting drawings Cruz made that included a gross slur used against Black people, which they said is equally offensive. The 12 jurors and 10 alternates include people who are white, Black, Asian and Hispanic.

Cruz, 23, pleaded guilty in October; the trial will only determine whether he is sentenced to death or life without parole. The jury must be unanimous to impose a death sentence.

His public defenders are in their second week of presenting testimony about Cruz's troubled life — from his birth to a crack-addicted, hard-drinking prostitute who put him up for adoption to a childhood filled with emotional and psychological problems that witnesses said were never adequately addressed.

Their strategy is aimed at counteracting the emotional, gruesome and graphic evidence and testimony the prosecution presented over three weeks as it laid out the killings and how Cruz planned the attack.

The swastikas were drawn on English assignments presented by the defense — they wanted the symbols blacked out while maintaining other troubling drawings they contained. After Scherer rejected the lawyers' attempt to redact the swastikas, they still presented the assignments. The jury saw the swastikas, but neither side singled them out.

The assignments were given by Carrie Yon, who taught Cruz in eighth grade at Westglades Middle School four years before the shooting. Cruz had been in special education classes for his behavior problems, but was now being allowed into some mainstream classes like Yon's.

Yon testified Thursday she usually returned a student's material, but kept Cruz's because she wanted to document his behavior thinking it might be needed at some point. She also made contemporaneous notes. She turned the material over to the lawyers after the shootings.

On assignments shown in court Thursday, Cruz wrote obscenities and gay slurs and drew photos of stick figures shooting each other and having sex. He once wrote to Yon, "I hate you. I hate America."

She said Cruz would yell in class, flash his middle fingers, throw objects and make threats. He once told her "You better give me a good grade on this assignment" and another time lunged at her and then laughed. He hit other children during one fire drill and ran into the street in another, almost getting struck by a car.

She tried working with Cruz by giving him candy and compliments when he behaved. One time, she praised him for doing his assignment, telling him she knew he could be a good student. He replied, "I'm a bad kid. I want to kill."

On one assessment, Yon wrote, "I strongly feel Nikolas is a danger to the students and faculty at this

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 53 of 79

school. He does not understand the difference between his violent feelings and reality.”

She said she originally thought Cruz wanted attention from teachers and other students, but eventually believed he wanted to get kicked out of Westglades because he had no friends and couldn't do the work.

She frequently complained about Cruz to administrators and showed them his assignments, but some were not helpful. She said one told her, “He has a right to an education. He has a right to be here like any other kid.”

A special education teacher told Yon she was too fearful of Cruz, that she needed to “get in his face” and tell him, “Hit me, go ahead and hit me.” She refused to do that.

When asked if in her 12 years as a teacher if she ever had another student who acted like Cruz, she had a simple response.

“No.”

John Vesey, the then-Westglades principal, said in 35 years in education he also never had another student like Cruz.

“He was a much more needy kid than any kid I had ever seen,” Vesey said.

Before the end of eighth grade, Cruz was sent to a school, Cross Creek, that is for students with emotional and disciplinary problems. Cruz did relatively well there, which allowed him to eventually attend Stoneman Douglas. He was expelled from there a year before the shooting.

Vesey said success at Cross Creek is not necessarily predictive that a student like Cruz will succeed at a school like Stoneman Douglas with more than 3,000 students.

Cross Creek is “150 kids with support built in and you can make sure they are much more medication compliant,” Vesey said.

Vesey wishes he had warned Stoneman Douglas administrators about Cruz before he arrived.

“I feel very guilty about it,” he said.

## **‘Tragic outcomes’: Mentally ill face fatal risk with police**

By ANDREW SELSKY and LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — One summer night, Misty Castillo stepped out of her house in Salem, Oregon, called 911 and asked for the police, saying her son was mentally ill, was assaulting her and her husband and had a knife.

“He’s drunk and he’s high and he’s mentally ill,” Castillo told the emergency dispatcher, emphasizing again her son’s mental condition. Less than five minutes later, a police officer burst into the house and shot Arcadio Castillo III dead as he stood, his mother said later, “frozen like a deer in headlights.”

“He didn’t try to calm him down. He just came in and immediately shot my son,” Castillo said.

Time and time again across the U.S., people experiencing mental health crises are being killed by police, but the exact number remains unknown because of a yawning governmental information gap.

The 21st Century Cures Act, passed by Congress with bipartisan votes in 2016, requires the Department of Justice to collect and publish data on how often federal, state and local officers use force, how many times that force ends up being fatal and how often the deceased had a mental illness. But the law doesn’t require police departments to tell the DOJ how many people their officers killed.

The FBI tries to collect the statistics, but for the first quarter of this year it estimated that only 40% of all sworn law enforcement agencies submitted use-of-force numbers. That figure is far below the participation level necessary to justify policy changes.

Arcadio’s parents had sought mental health treatment for their 23-year-old son, but the system, such as it is, failed them. In the weeks before he was killed, they couldn’t get him diagnosed or committed.

Across the country, in West Virginia, another system failure, another death.

Matt Jones was apparently suffering from a severe manic episode while standing on a highway with a handgun. Police were everywhere, sirens wailing. The scene on July 6 in the community of Bradley was captured by a bystander on video. One officer took a shot and then others opened fire, killing Jones in a hail of bullets.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 54 of 79

The 36-year-old had been unable to get his medication refilled and was experiencing delusions and hallucinations, his fiancée, Dreamer Marquis, said.

"He desperately wanted help," Marquis said. "He knew that he needed the medication in order to live a normal life because he knew that he would have manic episodes that would get him in trouble."

Advocates for people with mental illness say it's clear they face greater risk of a police encounter resulting in their death.

Hannah Wesolowski, chief advocacy officer of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, said the deaths of Castillo and Jones "highlight a larger systemic problem that we have in helping people who are struggling with their mental health or are in a mental health crisis."

Many communities lack a mental health crisis infrastructure, with nearly 130 million people in the United States living in an area with a shortage of mental health providers, she said.

"So when somebody might be acting out as a result of their symptoms, the only option often is to send police, and that can escalate the situation and lead to these tragic outcomes," she said. "I think we are failing people much earlier in the process because we're letting it get to the point of crisis."

The launch in July of 1988, a national hotline for mental health emergencies, is an enormous step forward, she said.

"It's really spurring this development of a crisis system, but it's going to take years to get there," Wesolowski said. "I think we're closer to the starting line than the finish line of reimagining our crisis response in this country."

Nearly one in five U.S. adults has a mental illness, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Yet people with untreated mental illness are 16 times more likely to be killed during a police encounter than other people approached by law enforcement, the Treatment Advocacy Center said in a 2015 report.

In Portland, Oregon, for example, 72% of the 85 people who were shot to death by police from 1975 to 2020 were affected by mental illness, drugs or alcohol, or some combination thereof, according to Jason Renaud of the Mental Health Association of Portland. The group does not have the numbers for those affected by mental illness alone, but sometimes they're intertwined. Long-term methamphetamine use, for instance, can cause psychosis.

In 2012, the federal government sued the city of Portland over the Portland Police Bureau's disproportionate use of violence against people with mental illness. But since then, use of force on the mentally impaired actually increased, according to an analysis presented in federal court.

Renaud said that of 25 people shot and killed by law enforcement officers from various agencies in the Portland metro area since 2012, every one was suffering from mental illness, substance-abuse disorders, or both.

Lt. Nathan Sheppard, a Portland Police Bureau spokesperson, said he couldn't confirm those numbers. He emphasized that all Portland police officers receive crisis intervention training. The department also established a unit to coordinate the response of law enforcement and the behavioral health system to people in crisis from mental illness and drug or alcohol addiction.

But Sheppard said more must be done to address what he described as a "public health emergency that has existed for decades in which services and treatment are not readily available or easily accessible for those in need of mental health treatment."

"There is need for more proactive, appropriate, individual-person-centered approaches to assisting persons with mental illness," Sheppard said.

A year after Arcadio Castillo III was killed by a police officer on July 9, 2021, his mother is suing the officer and the city of Salem in federal court for the failure to use crisis intervention tactics and training before resorting to deadly force.

A grand jury found the shooting was justified. The Marion County district attorney's office said Arcadio rushed towards the officer, who was not wearing a body camera, with a knife raised in a stabbing position.

"He never did that. He never rushed him," Arcadio's mother said as she stood over the spot in the living room where her son died after being hit by four bullets. She said the family "feels betrayed because a person who is supposed to serve and protect us in a time of crisis took away my child."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 55 of 79

After symptoms of mental illness emerged in Arcadio's teens, Marion County mental health workers diagnosed him with attention deficit disorder and prescribed Ritalin, but the anxiety only got worse, his mother said. He began using drugs and alcohol to cope. A case worker at a psychiatric crisis center said she couldn't diagnose Arcadio because of the drug and alcohol use, according to Castillo.

Arcadio's parents tried to have him committed to a psychiatric institution, "but everywhere we turned we were told he wasn't sick enough to be committed," Castillo said. "And one week later he was killed."

"It was so frustrating to me because he just wasn't getting the right diagnosis, treatment, or medication that he desperately needed, and his anxiety kept getting worse and worse," she said.

Arcadio's ashes are kept in a teardrop-shaped blue urn on the mantelpiece in the family's rental house. His mother plans to have some of the remains placed in cremation necklaces for his loved ones.

A video of the West Virginia killing hit social media before Jones' loved ones were informed about his death.

Nicole Jones, his sister-in-law, was scrolling through Facebook when she clicked on a video that showed a man with red shoulder-length hair walking on a highway, pursued by at least eight police officers with guns drawn. The man held his arms above his head, a pistol in one hand as he backed away from the officers. He pointed the gun at his own head briefly.

Jones' heart dropped as she recognized the man's mannerisms — his walk, the way he flipped his hair over his shoulder with the shake of his head — and realized it was her husband's brother.

State police have concluded their investigation into the shooting and sent their report to Raleigh County Prosecuting Attorney Ben Hatfield, who will determine whether the deadly force was justified. Hatfield said Matt Jones had carjacked at least one vehicle at gunpoint shortly before he was shot.

He had been in and out of incarceration for almost two decades. His brother, Mark Jones, said it was clear to the family that Matt, who was a star baseball player and wrestler, struggled with mental health since childhood. His parents took him to counseling and tried to find a medication that would help.

Matt built a landscaping and tree removal company but was also getting in trouble — often DUIs or driving without a license. Most of his charges stemmed from violating probation, his family said.

In jail, Matt was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and placed on medication, which helped. But he got trapped in a cycle where he'd struggle to get care, experience a mental health crisis and get arrested again.

He lived for a while at his brother and sister-in-law's house in Culpeper, Virginia. Nicole Jones recalls him spending hours playing with her kids on a tire swing. But after a while he had trouble sleeping and said he was hearing voices. He asked her to help him schedule an appointment with a psychiatrist, but the counselor never called back.

Weeks before his death, Matt was running low on pills and broke down crying, his fiancée said.

Matt didn't have a driver's license. His social security card and birth certificate were elsewhere. That made it difficult to make medical appointments, Marquis said. They eventually went to a walk-in clinic that would tend to people without ID, but left after waiting for eight hours without being seen, she said.

Mark Jones was at work landscaping when he saw the video of his brother being shot.

"I was trying to understand, 'What was he thinking?'" he said. "What I keep coming back to is that he was lost and he really wanted help — not just one time, but his whole life."

## UN inspectors arrive at Ukraine nuclear plant amid fighting

By YESICA FISCH and DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — A U.N. inspection team entered Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant Thursday on a mission to safeguard it against catastrophe, reaching the site amid fighting between Russian and Ukrainian forces that prompted the shutdown of one reactor and underscored the urgency of the task.

The 14-member delegation from the International Atomic Energy Agency arrived in a convoy of SUVs and vans after months of negotiations to enable the experts to pass through the front lines and get inside Europe's biggest nuclear plant.

"The IAEA is now there at the plant and it's not moving. It's going to stay there. We're going to have a

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 56 of 79

continued presence there at the plant with some of my experts," IAEA director Rafael Grossi, the mission leader, declared after the group got its first look at conditions inside.

But he added: "I will continue to be worried about the plant until we have a situation which is more stable."

As the experts made their way through the war zone toward the complex, Russia and Ukraine accused each other of shelling the area and trying to derail the visit. The fighting delayed the team's progress.

"There were moments when fire was obvious — heavy machine guns, artillery, mortars at two or three times were really very concerning, I would say, for all of us," Grossi said.

Just before the IAEA team arrived, Energoatom, Ukraine's state nuclear power company, said Russian mortar shelling had led to the shutdown of one of its reactors by its emergency protection system and had damaged a backup power supply line used for in-house needs.

One of the plant's reactors that wasn't operating was switched to diesel generators, Energoatom said.

Once inside the plant, Grossi said, his experts were able to tour the entire site, including control rooms, emergency systems and diesel generators. He said he met with the plant's staff and residents of the nearby village, Energodar, who asked him for help from the agency.

He reported that the team had collected important information in its initial inspection and will remain there to continue its assessment.

"It is obvious that the plant and the physical integrity of the plant has been violated several times by chance, deliberately — we don't have the elements to assess that," Grossi said. "And this is why we are trying to put in place certain mechanisms and the presence, as I said, of our people there."

The Zaporizhzhia plant has been occupied by Russian forces but run by Ukrainian engineers since the early days of the 6-month-old war. Ukraine alleges Russia is using it as a shield to launch attacks, while Moscow accuses Ukraine of recklessly firing on the area.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had tough words for the IAEA delegation. While applauding its arrival at the plant, he said independent journalists were kept from covering the visit, allowing the Russians to present a one-sided, "futile tour."

And he said that while Grossi agreed to support Ukrainian demands for the demilitarization of the plant — including the withdrawal of Russian forces from it — the IAEA has yet to issue such a call publicly.

Fighting in early March caused a brief fire at its training complex, and in recent days, the plant was briefly knocked offline because of damage, heightening fears of a radiation leak or a reactor meltdown. Officials have begun distributing anti-radiation iodine tablets to nearby residents.

Experts have also expressed concern that the Ukrainian staff is overworked and stressed out from the occupation of the plant by Russian forces — conditions they say could lead to dangerous errors.

Grossi said after his initial tour that the Ukrainian employees are "in a difficult situation, but they have an incredible degree of professionalism. And I see them calm and moving on."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Moscow expects "impartiality" from the team.

"We are taking all the necessary measures to ensure that the plant is secure, that it functions safely and that the mission accomplishes all of its plans there," he said.

Ahead of the visit, Russia's Defense Ministry reported that Ukrainian forces unleashed an artillery barrage on the area and sent a group of up to 60 scouts to try to seize the plant on the Dnieper River. It said that the Ukrainian troops arrived in seven speedboats but that Russian forces "took steps to destroy the enemy," using warplanes.

Some of the Ukrainian shells landed 400 meters (yards) from the plant's No. 1 reactor, Russian authorities said.

The Russian-installed administration in Enerhodar reported that at least three residents were killed early Thursday by Ukrainian shelling.

Ukrainian officials, meanwhile, accused Russian forces of shelling Enerhodar and a corridor that the IAEA team was set to go through.

Neither side's version of events could immediately be independently verified.

The fighting came as Ukraine endeavored to start the new school year in the middle of a war. Just over half of the country's schools are reopening to in-person classes despite the risks.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 57 of 79

In other developments, authorities with the Russian-backed separatist government in the eastern region of Donetsk said 13 emergency responders were killed by Ukrainian shelling in Rubtsi, a village in neighboring Kharkiv province. Much of the fighting in recent weeks and months has centered on the area.

## Hawaii quits coal in bid to fight climate change

By CALEB JONES Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — The last bits of ash and greenhouse gases from Hawaii's only remaining coal-fired power plant slipped into the environment this week when the state's dirtiest source of electricity burned its final pieces of fuel.

The last coal shipment arrived in the islands at the end of July, and the AES Corporation coal plant closed Thursday after 30 years in operation. The facility produced up to one-fifth of the electricity on Oahu — the most populous island in a state of nearly 1.5 million people.

"It really is about reducing greenhouse gases," Hawaii Gov. David Ige said in an interview with The Associated Press. "And this coal facility is one of the largest emitters. Taking it offline means that we'll stop the 1.5 million metric tons of greenhouse gases that were emitted annually."

Like other Pacific islands, the Hawaiian chain has suffered the cascading impacts of climate change. The state is experiencing the destruction of coral reefs from bleaching associated with increased ocean temperatures, rapid sea level rise, more intense storms and drought that is increasing the state's wildfire risk.

In 2020, Hawaii's Legislature passed a law banning the use of coal for energy production at the start of 2023. Hawaii has mandated a transition to 100% renewable energy by 2045, and was the first state to set such a goal.

But critics say that while ending the state's dirtiest source of energy is ultimately a good move, doing so now is not. Renewable sources meant to replace coal energy are not yet on line because of permitting delays, contract issues and pandemic-related supply-chain problems. So the state will instead burn more costly oil that is only slightly less polluting than coal.

"If you are a believer that climate change is going to end because we shut down this coal plant, this is a great day for you," said Democratic state Sen. Glenn Wakai, chair of the Committee on Economic Development, Tourism and Technology. "But if you pay an electricity bill, this is a disastrous day for you."

The end of coal and the additional cost of oil will translate to an increase in electricity bills for consumers who already face the nation's highest energy and living costs. Hawaiian Electric Company had projected ratepayers would see a 7% spike in their bills, but Thursday revised that to 4% because of a drop in oil prices.

"What we're doing ... is transitioning from the cheapest fossil fuel to the most expensive fossil fuel," Wakai said. "And we're going to be subjected to geopolitical issues on pricing for oil as well as access to oil."

The AES coal plant closure means Hawaii joins 10 other states with no major coal-fired power facilities, according to data from Global Energy Monitor, a nonprofit advocating for a global transition to clean energy. Rhode Island and Vermont never had any coal-fired power plants.

While Hawaii is the first state to fully implement a ban on coal, a handful of others previously passed laws. The 2015 law in Oregon, the first state to pass a ban, isn't effective until 2035. Washington state's 2020 coal ban starts in 2025. California, Maine and Texas are among states that have restricted construction of new coal-fired plants.

The number of coal-burning units in the United States peaked in 2001 at about 1,100. More than half have stopped operating since then, with most switching to more cost-effective natural gas.

U.S. Energy Information Administration data shows oil generated about two-thirds of Hawaii's electricity in 2021. That makes Hawaii the most petroleum-dependent state, even as it tries to make a rapid transition to renewables.

Hawaii already gets about 40% of its power from sustainable sources including wind, solar, hydroelectric and geothermal.

State Sen. Kurt Fevella, a Republican and the Senate Minority Leader, suggested that Hawaiian Electric Company and other energy corporations should absorb the additional cost of shifting to renewables.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 58 of 79

"The fact that Hawaii's families are already doing what is necessary to reduce their energy uses while still paying the most in the nation for household electricity is unsustainable," said Fevella. "While I believe utility companies like HECO can do more to reduce the energy burden passed on to Hawaii's ratepayers, I also believe developers of renewal energy projects should also bear a greater portion of the transmission costs."

Hawaiian Electric Company, the primary distributor of electricity for the state, said it can do little to change the prices to consumers.

"We're a regulated monopoly," said Vice President of Government and Community Relations and Corporate Communications Jim Kelly. "So we don't set the prices. We don't make any money on the fuels that we use to generate electricity."

AES, the operator of Hawaii's last coal plant, has transitioned to creating clean energy and is working on large solar farms across the state, including one in West Oahu that will replace some lost coal energy when completed next year.

"Renewables are getting cheaper by the day," said Leonardo Moreno, president of AES Corporation's clean energy division. "I envision a future where energy is very, very cheap, abundant and renewable."

Sustainable energy experts say getting rid of coal is critical in curbing climate change. While the current renewable landscape is not perfect, they say technologies are improving.

"This is the decade of climate action that we really need to be moving on right now," said Makena Coffman, University of Hawaii professor and director for the Institute for Sustainability and Resilience. "And so these are available technologies and they might get incrementally better, but let's not wait 10 years to do it."

Profits from the increased electricity costs to Hawaii consumers will go mostly to overseas oil producers, said Hawaii's Chief Energy Officer Scott Glenn.

Hawaii's petroleum is distributed by Par Pacific, a Houston-based company which has traditionally sourced the state's oil from Libya and Russia. But after the invasion of Ukraine, Hawaii halted oil shipments from Russia and replaced it with products from Argentina.

Extending the coal plant's operation would be complicated and costly, Glenn said, noting that the plant has been planning decommissioning for years and would now have to buy coal at market price.

"Coal is going up. It's getting more expensive," he said of the supply Hawaii gets from clearcut rainforests in Indonesia. "If we were using U.S. coal, it would not be the cheapest energy source on the grid."

Why would Hawaii, a small U.S. state in the middle of the Pacific, try to lead the way in moving to sustainable energy?

"We are already feeling the effects of climate change," Glenn said. "It's not fair or right to ask other nations or states to act on our behalf if we are not willing and able to do it ourselves. If we don't, we drown."

## Russia launches war games with China amid tensions with US

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia on Thursday launched weeklong war games involving forces from China and other nations in a show of growing defense cooperation between Moscow and Beijing, as they both face tensions with the United States.

The maneuvers are also intended to demonstrate that Moscow has sufficient military might for massive drills even as its troops are engaged in military action in Ukraine.

The Russian Defense Ministry said that the Vostok 2022 (East 2022) exercise will be held until Sept. 7 at seven firing ranges in Russia's Far East and the Sea of Japan and involve more than 50,000 troops and over 5,000 weapons units, including 140 aircraft and 60 warships.

Russian General Staff chief, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, will personally oversee the drills involving troops from several ex-Soviet nations, China, India, Laos, Mongolia, Nicaragua and Syria.

The Defense Ministry noted that as part of the maneuvers, the Russian and Chinese navies in the Sea of Japan will "practice joint action to protect sea communications, areas of marine economic activity and

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 59 of 79

support for ground troops in littoral areas.”

Beijing sent more than 2,000 troops along with more than 300 military vehicles, 21 combat aircraft and three warships to take part in the drills, Chinese news reports said.

China’s Global Times newspaper noted that the maneuvers marked the first time that China has sent forces from three branches of its military to take part in a single Russian drill, in what it described as a show of the breadth and depth of China-Russia military cooperation and mutual trust.

The drills showcase increasing defense ties between Moscow and Beijing, which have grown stronger since Russian President Vladimir Putin sent his troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24. China has pointedly refused to criticize Russia’s actions, blaming the U.S. and NATO for provoking Moscow, and has blasted the punishing sanctions imposed on Moscow.

Russia, in turn, has strongly backed China amid the tensions with the U.S. that followed a recent visit to Taiwan by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Putin has drawn parallels between U.S. support for Ukraine and Pelosi’s trip, describing them both as part of alleged efforts by Washington to foment global instability.

Alexander Gabuyev, a political analyst who closely follows Russia-China ties, noted that “it’s very important for Beijing to show to the U.S. that it has levers to pressure America and its global interests.”

“The joint maneuvers with Moscow, including the naval drills, are intended to signal that if the pressure on Beijing continues it will have no other choice but to strengthen the military partnership with Russia,” Gabuyev said. “It will have a direct impact on the interests of the U.S. and its allies, including Japan.”

He noted that the Kremlin, for its part, wants to show that the country’s military is powerful enough to flex its muscle elsewhere despite the campaign in Ukraine.

“The Russian leadership demonstrates that everything goes according to plan and the country and its military have resources to conduct the maneuvers along with the special military operation,” Gabuyev said.

The exercise continues a series of joint war games by Russia and China in recent years, including naval drills and patrols by long-range bombers over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea. Last year, Russian troops for the first time deployed to Chinese territory for joint maneuvers.

China’s participation in the drills “aims to deepen pragmatic and friendly cooperation between the militaries of the participating countries, enhance the level of strategic cooperation among all participating parties, and enhance the ability to jointly respond to various security threats,” Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Col. Tan Kefei said last week.

Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping have developed strong personal ties to bolster a “strategic partnership” between the former Communist rivals as they both are locked in rivalry with the U.S.

Even though Moscow and Beijing in the past rejected the possibility of forging a military alliance, Putin has said that such a prospect can’t be ruled out. He also has noted that Russia has been sharing highly sensitive military technologies with China that helped significantly bolster its defense capability.

## Lawyer: Ohio man’s police shooting death reckless, senseless

By ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Columbus police came under criticism Thursday for the killing of a man who was lying on his bed when an officer attempting to serve warrants fatally shot him, as a lawyer representing the slain man’s family demanded immediate changes to policing in the city and promised a lawsuit.

Not enough has happened in Ohio’s capital city to alter policing practices despite several instances of white officers in the city shooting Black people, added attorney Rex Elliott, representing the family of Donovan Lewis, the Black man killed Tuesday.

“How many more lives are going to be lost to this type of reckless activity? How many more young Black lives will be lost?” Elliott said at a press event attended by multiple members of Lewis’ family.

“How many more families like Donovan’s will need to appear at news conferences like this one before our leaders do enough to put a stop to these barbaric killings?” Elliott said.

The U.S. Justice Department agreed in 2021 to review Columbus police department practices after a

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 60 of 79

series of fatal police shootings of Black people — including the April 2021 killing of 16-year-old Ma'Khia Bryant — and the city's response to 2020 racial injustice protests.

In addition, a three-year police contract approved last year provided \$200,000 buyouts for up to 100 officers with at least 25 years of experience, with a goal of clearing the decks of employees who might not be on board with the department's new direction.

"If you're going to police in the city of Columbus, you have to buy into the vision and leadership of Chief Bryant around change and reform," Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther said at the time.

The city also approved a first-ever civilian review board. Elliott acknowledged these actions, but said it's not enough.

"Whatever they're doing, it's not working," Elliott said.

Elliott questioned on Thursday the speed of the shooting, which appears in bodycam footage to happen within a second or less of Officer Ricky Anderson opening the door to a bedroom where Lewis slept. Elliott made the point in criticizing suggestions by the police chief that Lewis had something in his hand when he was shot. No weapon was found.

"There is absolutely no way in the timeframe between when the door was opened and the gun was fired that Officer Anderson perceived a potential gun in his hand, got through to his brain, and then reacted by shooting his weapon," Elliott said.

Lewis, 20, died at a hospital following the shooting early Tuesday morning. Columbus police say officers had gone to the apartment around 2 a.m. to arrest Lewis on multiple warrants including domestic violence, assault and felony improper handling of a firearm. Lewis was Black and the officers were white.

Police took two other men in the apartment into custody without incident. A police dog was unleashed in the apartment during the search.

Police bodycam footage shows Anderson opening a bedroom door in an apartment and in a second or less shooting Lewis, who was in bed. Columbus Police Chief Elaine Bryant has said Lewis appeared to be holding a vape pen before he was shot, a notion disputed by Elliott.

Bryant has not addressed whether police believed the device was a weapon, a determination that will come during the probe by the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Anderson has been placed on leave under city procedure.

In the bodycam footage, Anderson is seen after the shooting raising a hand in demonstration to another officer and saying Lewis lifted his hand "like this."

Elliott disputed this version of events, saying it's unclear from the bodycam footage if Lewis was holding anything. He said Anderson shot well before he could have perceived a threat.

The investigation must look at "the totality of the circumstances," Mark Collins, an attorney representing Anderson, said Thursday.

In such cases, "we are expressly forbidden from using 20/20 hindsight, because unlike all of us, officers are not afforded the luxury of armchair reflection when they are faced with rapidly evolving, volatile encounters in dangerous situations," Collins said.

In his remarks, Elliott also questioned the need for an early-morning operation. "The reality is that felony warrants are executed every day in daylight hours," he said.

Bryant has said the city is committed to holding officers responsible if there was any wrongdoing but the state investigation needs to play out.

Ginther, who hired Bryant last year, has said that "regardless of the circumstances, a mother has lost her son in the city of Columbus."

Elliott said he plans a civil lawsuit in the future against Anderson and the city.

In May 2021, Columbus reached a \$10 million settlement with the family of Andre Hill, shot and killed in December 2020 as he emerged from a garage holding his cellphone. Officer Adam Coy has pleaded not guilty to murder charges and is set for trial in November.

In December, the city agreed to pay \$5.75 million to people injured during the 2020 racial injustice and police brutality protests.

## Ginni Thomas emails urged new 2020 electors in Wisconsin

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — The wife of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas contacted at least two Wisconsin state lawmakers, including the chair of the Senate elections committee, urging them to overturn President Joe Biden's 2020 election win in the tightly contested state, emails obtained Thursday by The Associated Press show.

Virginia "Ginni" Thomas, a conservative activist, also had sent messages to more than two dozen lawmakers in Arizona.

In her communications with lawmakers in both states, Thomas urged Republicans to choose their own slate of electors after the election, arguing that results giving Biden a victory in the states were marred by fraud. Despite numerous reviews, lawsuits and recounts, no widespread fraud calling into question the results has been discovered in either state.

The emails received at the exact same time on Nov. 9, 2020, by Wisconsin state Sen. Kathy Bernier and state Rep. Gary Tauchen were first reported Thursday by The Washington Post. The AP obtained the email from Bernier, and the watchdog group Documented posted the email Tauchen received.

The emails were sent at almost the exact same time as the ones Thomas sent to lawmakers in Arizona.

Thomas did not immediately respond to a request for comment, made to the court Thursday.

Bernier, in a telephone interview with the AP, said she did not recall receiving the email from Thomas, which was one of thousands her office and other Wisconsin lawmakers received around that time. The message was sent over the FreeRoots platform that allows for mass mailing of prewritten emails. Bernier said she had no contact with Thomas aside from receiving the email.

"Please stand strong in the face of political and media pressure," Thomas wrote in the emails received by the Wisconsin lawmakers. "Please reflect on the awesome authority granted to you by our Constitution. And then please take action to ensure that a clean slate of Electors is chosen for our state."

Thomas also asks the Wisconsin lawmakers to meet with her, either virtually or in person, "so I can learn more about what you are doing to ensure our state's vote count is audited and our certification is clean."

Bernier said Thursday that she didn't fault Thomas for sending the message, which she doesn't recall reading at the time.

"Ginni is not a constituent, so therefore not top priority to respond to," Bernier said. "And so I am sure we did not respond to her."

Bernier, who has been outspoken in saying there was no widespread voter fraud in Wisconsin's election that Biden fairly won, said she had no issue with Thomas contacting her about the election.

"I don't believe this is hair raising crazy stuff that everybody's making it out to be," she said of the Thomas email. "There were a lot of Republicans at the time that thought there was massive voter fraud. ... I'm sure she would have preferred taking it back, especially after all of the evidence."

Tauchen declined comment through a spokesperson.

Clarence Thomas was the only member of the Supreme Court who voted against the court's order allowing the U.S. House committee investigating the Capitol riot on Jan. 6, 2021, to obtain Trump records that were held by the National Archives and Records Administration. The court voted in January to allow the committee to get the documents.

Ginni Thomas's role in the plot to overturn the 2020 election won by Biden is being looked at by members of the House committee investigating the riot. The committee asked her in June to sit for an interview.

## More kids are repeating a grade. Is it good for them?

By BROOKE SCHULTZ and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press/Report for America

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — As Braylon Price remembers it, he struggled with pretty much everything the first full school year of the pandemic. With minimal guidance and frequent disruptions, he had trouble staying on top of assignments and finishing homework on time.

It was so rocky his parents asked for him to repeat sixth grade — a decision they credit with getting

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 62 of 79

him on a better track.

"At first I didn't really want to do it," said Braylon, now 13. "But then later in the year I thought it would probably be better for me if I did."

The number of students held back for a year of school has surged around the country. Traditionally, experts have said repeating a grade can hurt kids social lives and academic futures. But many parents, empowered by new pandemic-era laws, have asked for do-overs to help their children recover from the tumult of remote learning, quarantines and school staff shortages.

Twenty-two of the 26 states that provided data for the recent academic year, as well as Washington, D.C., saw an increase in the number of students who were held back, according to an Associated Press analysis. Three states — South Carolina, West Virginia and Delaware — saw retention more than double.

Pennsylvania, where the Price family lives, passed a pandemic-era law allowing parents to elect to have a redo for their kids. The following year, the number of retained students in the state jumped by about 20,000, to over 45,000 students.

Braylon's mother has no regrets about taking advantage of the new law.

"Best decision we could have made for him," said Kristi Price, who lives in Bellefonte, in central Pennsylvania.

While the family's two daughters managed to keep up with school despite limited supervision, Braylon struggled. He went back to in-person school for the first full academic year of the pandemic but it was "wishy-washy," his mother said. Students were quarantined on and off, and teachers tried to keep up with students learning at home, online and in hybrid models. That winter, Braylon suffered a spinal cord injury from wrestling that forced him to go back to remote learning.

On his repeat of sixth grade, Braylon had an individualized education program that helped him build more focus. Having more one-on-one attention from teachers helped too. Socially, he said the transition was easy, since most of his friends had been in lower grades or attended different schools already.

Research in the education world has been critical of making students repeat grades.

The risk is students who've been retained have a two-fold increased risk of dropping out, said Arthur Reynolds, a professor at the University of Minnesota's Human Capital Research Collaborative, citing studies of students in Chicago and Baltimore.

"Kids see it as punishment," Reynolds said. "It reduces their academic motivation, and it doesn't increase their instructional advancement."

But backers of retention say none of the research was conducted in a pandemic, when many children wrestled with Zoom lessons and some stopped logging in entirely.

"So many children have struggled and have had a lot of problems," said Florida state Sen. Lori Berman, a Delray Beach Democrat. Berman authored a law aimed at making it easier for parents to ask for kindergarten to fifth graders to repeat a grade in the 2021-22 school year. "I don't think there is any stigma to holding your child back at this point."

Generally, parents can ask for children to be held back, but the final decision is up to principals, who make decisions based on factors including academic progress. California and New Jersey also passed laws that made it easier for parents to demand their children repeat a grade, although the option was only available last year.

In suburban Kansas City, Celeste Roberts decided last year for another round of second grade for her son, who she said was struggling even before the pandemic. When virtual learning was a bust, he spent the year learning at a slower pace with his grandmother, a retired teacher who bought goats to keep things fun.

Roberts said repeating the year helped her son academically and his friends hardly noticed.

"Even with peers, some of them were like, 'Wait, shouldn't you be in third grade?' And he's just like, 'Well, I didn't go to school because of COVID,'" she said. "And they're kind of like, 'OK, cool.' You know, they move on. It's not a thing. So it's been really great socially. Even with the parent circles. Everybody's just like, 'Great. Do what your kid needs to do.'"

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 63 of 79

Ultimately, there shouldn't be just two options of repeating a grade or going on to the next, said Alex Lamb, who has been looking at research on grade retention as part of her work with the Center for Education, Policy Analysis, Research and Evaluation at the University of Connecticut to help advise school districts.

"Neither of those options are good," she said. "A great option is letting students move on, and then introducing some of these supports that are research-backed, that are effective and that allow for academic and social-emotional growth of students and then communities."

In Pennsylvania's Fox Chapel Area School District, two students were retained at the behest of educators, while eight families decided their students would repeat a grade. Another six discussed the new legislation with the school and ultimately decided against holding their students back.

"As a school district, we take retention very seriously," Superintendent Mary Catherine Reljac said. She said the district involves parents, a team of educators, school counselors and principals to help decide what is best for each child.

Price says Braylon's retention helped him obtain an individualized education program, or IEP. The special ed plan gave him more support as he navigated sixth grade again. When he thinks about the difference between rounds one and two of sixth grade, Braylon said he felt like the extra support was instrumental, noting he likes having one-on-one aid from teachers sometimes.

"In online school, you didn't really do that," he said. "You did the work and then you just turned it in."

He doesn't want to be given the answer, he said, but guided enough that he can figure it out on his own.

"I think because of the pandemic, we, as parents, were able to see how much he was struggling and we were able to recognize that he was barely keeping his head above water, and that he needed more help in order to be successful on his own," Price said.

## House committee reaches deal to get Trump financial records

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A House committee seeking financial records from former President Donald Trump has reached an agreement that ends litigation on the matter and requires an accounting firm to turn over some of the material, the panel's leader announced Thursday.

The long-running case began in April 2019, when the House Committee on Oversight and Reform first subpoenaed a wealth of records from Trump's then-accounting firm, Mazars USA. The committee cited testimony from Trump's former attorney, Michael Cohen, that it said raised questions about the president's representation of his financial affairs when it came to seeking loans and paying taxes.

Under the agreement, Trump has agreed to end his legal challenges to the subpoena and Mazars USA has agreed to produce responsive documents to the committee as expeditiously as possible, said Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., who heads the committee.

"After numerous court victories, I am pleased that my committee has now reached an agreement to obtain key financial documents that former President Trump fought for years to hide from Congress," Maloney said.

Trump is facing investigations on several fronts, including the storage of top-secret government information discovered at Trump's Mar-a-Lago home and whether the former president's team criminally obstructed the inquiry. In Georgia, prosecutors are investigating whether he and allies illegally tried to interfere in the 2020 presidential election. Meanwhile, congressional committees are following through on investigations that began when he was president.

The settlement over Mazars follows a July decision by a federal appeals court in Washington that narrowed what records Congress is entitled to obtain. The court said the committee should be given records pertinent to financial ties between foreign countries and Trump or any of his businesses for 2017-18.

The appeals court also ordered Mazars to turn over documents between November 2016 and 2018 relating to the Trump company that held the lease granted by the federal government for the former Trump International Hotel, located between the White House and the Capitol.

In the decision, the court said Trump's financial records would "advance the Committee's consideration

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 64 of 79

of ethics reform legislation across all three of its investigative tracks," including on presidential ethics and conflicts of interest, presidential financial disclosures, and presidential adherence to Constitutional safeguards against foreign interference and undue influence.

The House investigation dates February 2019, when Trump's former personal attorney, Cohen, testified to the committee that Trump had a history of misrepresenting the value of assets to gain favorable loan terms and tax benefits.

Cohen served time in federal prison after pleading guilty in 2018 to tax crimes, lying to Congress and campaign finance violations, some of which involved his role in orchestrating payments to two women to keep them from talking about alleged affairs with Trump.

But his testimony prompted the committee to seek key financial documents from Mazars, and in April 2019, the committee issued a subpoena to Mazars seeking four targeted categories of documents.

The following month, Trump sued to prevent Mazars from complying with the subpoena. The case has been winding its way through the court system since.

Mazars earlier this year said it had cut ties with Trump and warned that financial statements the firm had prepared for Trump "should no longer be relied upon" by anyone doing business with him.

Another House committee, the House Ways and Means Committee, has been seeking Trump's tax returns and waging its own litigation. In that case, a three-judge appellate court panel agreed last month with a lower court's decision in favor of Congress and that the Treasury Department should provide the tax returns to the committee.

The Justice Department, under the Trump administration, had defended a decision by then-Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to withhold the tax returns from Congress. Mnuchin argued that he could withhold the documents because he concluded they were being sought by Democrats for partisan reasons. A lawsuit ensued.

After Biden took office, the committee renewed the request, seeking Trump's tax returns and additional information from 2015-2020. The White House took the position that the request was a valid one and that the Treasury Department had no choice but to comply. Trump then attempted to halt the handover in court.

## Microsoft's Activision Blizzard deal gets global scrutiny

By MATT O'BRIEN and KELVIN CHAN AP Technology Writers

Microsoft's plan to buy video game giant Activision Blizzard for \$68.7 billion could have major effects on the gaming industry, transforming the Xbox maker into something like a Netflix for video games by giving it control of many more popular titles.

But to get to the next level, Microsoft must first survive a barrage of government inquiries from New Zealand to Brazil, and from U.S. regulators emboldened by President Joe Biden to strengthen their enforcement of antitrust laws.

In the United Kingdom, regulators on Thursday threatened to escalate their investigation unless both companies come up with proposals within five days to ease competition concerns. More than seven months after Microsoft announced the deal, only Saudi Arabia has approved it.

"A growing number of countries are subjecting major global transactions to deeper scrutiny," said William Kovacic, a former chairman of the five-member U.S. Federal Trade Commission. "Many of the jurisdictions that are exercising that scrutiny are significant economies and can't be brushed off."

Microsoft has faced antitrust scrutiny before, mostly notably more than two decades ago when a federal judge ordered its breakup following the company's anticompetitive actions related to its dominant Windows software. That verdict was overturned on appeal, although the court imposed other, less drastic, penalties on the company.

In recent years, however, Microsoft has largely escaped the more intense regulatory backlash its Big Tech rivals such as Amazon, Google and Facebook's parent company Meta have endured. But the sheer size of the Activision Blizzard merger has drawn global attention.

The all-cash deal is set to be the largest in the history of the tech industry. It would give Microsoft,



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 65 of 79

maker of the Xbox console and gaming system, control of popular game franchises such as Call of Duty, World of Warcraft and Candy Crush. There's also a growing sense that past review of Big Tech mergers was too lax — such as when Facebook bought Instagram in 2012 and WhatsApp in 2014.

"Collectively, that means that the kinds of concessions you're going to have to make become more difficult," Kovacic said.

The possibility of Microsoft gaining control of Call of Duty has been particularly worrisome to Sony, maker of the PlayStation console that competes with Microsoft's Xbox. In a letter to Brazilian regulators, Sony emphasized Call of Duty as an "essential" game — a blockbuster so popular and ingrained that it would be impossible for a competitor to develop a rival product even if they had the budget to do so.

The U.K. watchdog's preliminary inquiry raised similar worries. It said Microsoft's control of popular Activision Blizzard games raised concerns that the deal would hurt rivals in multi-game subscription services and the cloud gaming market.

One solution could be a settlement in which Microsoft agrees to ensure that console-making rivals such as Sony or Nintendo won't be cut off from popular Activision Blizzard games. Microsoft has already publicly signaled its openness to that concept.

Microsoft's president, Brad Smith, has said the company committed to Sony to make Activision games like Call of Duty "available on PlayStation beyond the existing agreement and into the future" -- although many are skeptical about how long those promises would last if not set into regulatory consent decrees.

On the other hand, Microsoft also has a much better reputation in Washington than it did in 2000. It is "seen as more reasonable and sensible" on issues such as data privacy, Kovacic said.

Microsoft has also been working to win over skeptics in the U.S., starting with a labor union that's been trying to organize Activision Blizzard employees. Democratic lawmakers have also expressed concern about allegations of Activision's toxic workplace culture for women, which led to employee walkouts last year as well as discrimination lawsuits brought by California and federal civil rights enforcers.

In March, the Communications Workers of America had issued a call seeking tougher oversight of the deal from the U.S. Department of Justice, the FTC and state attorneys general. But a June 30 letter from the union to the FTC said it had switched to supporting the deal after Microsoft agreed "to ensure the workers of Activision Blizzard have a clear path to collective bargaining."

Gaming represents a growing portion of Microsoft's business, despite the company's efforts to portray itself and Activision Blizzard as "small players in a highly fragmented publishing space," per a document filed with New Zealand's Commerce Commission.

In 2021, Microsoft spent \$7.5 billion to acquire ZeniMax Media, the parent company of video game publisher Bethesda Softworks, which is behind popular video games The Elder Scrolls, Doom and Fallout. Microsoft's properties also include the hit game Minecraft after it bought Swedish game studio Mojang for \$2.5 billion in 2014.

The Redmond, Washington, tech giant has said the gaming acquisitions will help beef up its Xbox Game Pass game subscription service and its mobile offerings, particularly from Activision Blizzard's King division, which makes Candy Crush.

Dutch game developer Rami Ismail said Microsoft's subscription-based service has thus far been a positive for smaller game studios trying to get their content to users. But he's unsure about the long-term impact of the merger.

"Xbox Game Pass as a product has been really good in getting interesting, creative games funded that might not have the normal market reach to be successful," Ismail said. "On the flip side, as power consolidates, there is less of an incentive to do anything like that."

Microsoft rivals are also consolidating. Sony in July closed on a \$3.6 billion deal to buy Bungie Inc., maker of the popular game franchise Destiny and the original developer of Xbox-owned Halo. Take-Two Interactive, maker of Grand Theft Auto and Red Dead Redemption, in May completed a \$12.7 billion deal to acquire mobile gaming company Zynga, maker of FarmVille and Words With Friends.

## Putin pays tribute to Gorbachev but won't attend his funeral

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin privately laid flowers at Mikhail Gorbachev's coffin on Thursday, snubbing the weekend's public funeral in a move reflecting the Kremlin's uneasiness about Gorbachev's legacy.

Just before departing for a working trip to Russia's western-most Baltic exclave of Kaliningrad, Putin visited a Moscow hospital where Gorbachev's body was being kept before Saturday's funeral.

Russian state television showed Putin walking to Gorbachev's open casket and putting a bouquet of red roses next to it. He stood in silence for a few moments, bowed his head, touched the coffin, crossed himself and walked away.

"Regrettably, the president's working schedule wouldn't allow him to do that on Saturday, so he decided to do that today," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a conference call with reporters.

Gorbachev, who died Tuesday at the age of 91, will be buried at Moscow's Novodevichy cemetery next to his wife, Raisa, following a farewell ceremony at the Pillar Hall of the House of the Unions, an iconic mansion near the Kremlin that has served as the venue for state funerals since Soviet times.

The Kremlin stopped short of declaring a state funeral, with Peskov saying the ceremony will have "elements" of one, such as honorary guards, and the government will help organize it. He wouldn't elaborate, however, on how the ceremony will differ from a full-fledged state funeral.

If the Kremlin had declared a state funeral for Gorbachev, it would have made it awkward for Putin to snub the official ceremony. A state funeral would also oblige the Kremlin to send invitations to foreign leaders, something that Moscow would be reluctant to do amid soaring tensions with the West after sending troops into Ukraine.

Putin's decision to pay a private visit to the hospital while staying away from Saturday's public ceremony, combined with uncertainty surrounding the funeral's status, reflect the Kremlin's dichotomy about the legacy of Gorbachev. The late leader has been lauded in the West for reforms that put an end to the Cold War but reviled by many at home for actions that led to the 1991 Soviet collapse and plunged millions into poverty.

While avoiding explicit criticism of Gorbachev, Putin in the past has repeatedly blamed him for failing to secure written commitments from the West that would rule out NATO's expansion eastward — an issue that became a major irritant in Russia-West ties for decades and fomented tensions that exploded when the Russian leader sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24.

In Wednesday's letter of condolence released by the Kremlin, Putin praised Gorbachev as a man who left "an enormous impact on the course of world history."

"He led the country during difficult and dramatic changes, amid large-scale foreign policy, economic and society challenges," Putin said. "He deeply realized that reforms were necessary and tried to offer his solutions for the acute problems."

Sergei Markov, a pro-Kremlin political analyst, observed that Putin's decision to privately pay tribute to Gorbachev reflected both "security problems and utter unpopularity of Mikhail Gorbachev's policies." At the same time, Putin wanted to show his respect to the former head of state, Markov said.

The Kremlin's ambivalent view of Gorbachev was mirrored by state television broadcasts, which paid tribute to Gorbachev as a historic figure but described his reforms as poorly planned and held him responsible for failing to safeguard the country's interests in dialogue with the West.

The criticism echoed earlier assessments by Putin, who has famously lamented the collapse of the Soviet Union as the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."

On Wednesday, Peskov said that Gorbachev was an "extraordinary" statesman who will "always remain in the country's history," but noted what he described as his idealistic view of the West.

"Gorbachev gave an impulse for ending the Cold War and he sincerely wanted to believe that it would be over and an eternal romance would start between the renewed Soviet Union and the collective West," Peskov said. "This romanticism failed to materialize. The bloodthirsty nature of our opponents has come

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 67 of 79

to light, and it's good that we realized that in time."

The Russian public has remained deeply divided over Gorbachev's legacy, with some praising him for ending the Cold War and offering political freedoms after seven decades of totalitarian rule and others accusing him of betrayal.

Mikhail Khodorkovsky, once Russia's richest man who spent a decade in prison on fraud and tax evasion charges widely seen as a political vendetta for challenging Putin's power, hailed Gorbachev for dismantling the repressive Communist system.

"In Russia, Gorbachev will be remembered, on the one hand as the man who was able to give the country freedom; on the other hand, he will be remembered as the man who was not able to help Russia make use of this freedom," Khodorkovsky, who lives in London, said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Khodorkovsky described the Russian military action in Ukraine as a redux of the Russian imperial past that Gorbachev sought to demolish.

"What is happening now, the war between Russia and Ukraine, is an extension of the process of imperial collapse," Khodorkovsky said.

## It's back to school in Ukraine — but far from normal

By HANNA ARHIROVA and YESICA FISCH Associated Press

MYKHAILO-KOTSYUBYNSKE, Ukraine (AP) — It was the first day of school in Ukraine on Thursday but children weren't sharing memories of fun vacations with their families. Their stories were of surviving war. For many, their last day of school was the day before the Feb. 24 Russian invasion of their country.

At least 379 children have been killed since the war began, while the whereabouts of 223 others are unknown, according to Ukraine's General Prosecutors office. Another 7,013 children were among Ukrainians forcibly transferred to Russia from Russian-occupied areas.

Six months of war damaged 2,400 schools across the country, including 269 that were completely destroyed, officials said.

Civilian areas and schools continue to be hit, and children keep being killed. But after the first months of shock, 51% of schools in Ukraine, despite the risk, are reopening to in-person education, with an option to study online if the parents prefer.

But safety remains the priority. At schools that don't have quick access to shelters or are located close to the borders with Belarus and Russia, or near active military zones, children will only study online.

That's the case for the seventh graders in Mykhailo-Kotsyubynske, just 20 miles (35 kilometers) from the Belarus border, who gathered at their badly damaged school this week to pick up textbooks for studying online.

"We haven't seen each other for such a long time. You all have grown so much," said their teacher, Olena Serdiuk, standing in a corner of the classroom, where windows were covered with thick black polythene instead of glass.

Oleksii Lytvyn, 13, remembers very well the day Russian missiles hit the school twice. It was March 4, and he was in the school's bomb shelter with his family and dozens of other people.

Just minutes before the blast, he had been playing with a friend. After the loud explosion, the walls began shaking and he couldn't see anything but a huge cloud of debris. One person was killed, a woman who worked at the school.

"We were sleeping in the corridor, and there was a corpse of a dead person behind the wall," Oleksii recalled. His family stayed one more night before fleeing town, though they have since returned for the start of the school year.

Oleksii's classmates shared similar stories about that day and the monthlong Russian occupation that followed.

"When I'm at school, I think about the person who died in the debris. I feel deeply sorry for her," 12-year-old Mykola Kravchenko said.

Their school is still badly damaged. Debris fills the second floor, and the roof and heating system need

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 68 of 79

to be repaired — money the school doesn't have.

Even though they will be studying online, the students had to undergo security training. Serdiuk told the class to follow her to the same bomb shelter where many survived the blast in March.

In the dimly lit shelter were water supplies and long benches with labeled seats for each classroom. When the children took the seats assigned to their class, Serdiuk told them they had to go there whenever they heard a siren.

She said many parents tell her their children are begging to return to school, but for now that isn't allowed because of the danger of being so close to the Belarus border.

"It does become kind of the new normal for children," UNICEF Executive Director Catherine M. Russell, told The Associated Press. "That's not the way children should go through life, thinking that they are going to get attacked at any moment."

Schools in the Kyiv and Lviv regions were among those welcoming students back to classrooms Thursday, including more than 7,300 displaced students forced to flee their hometowns.

In a neighborhood of Irpin, north of Kyiv, still bearing the scars of war, with destroyed homes and shrapnel-marked fences and walls, first-grade children lined up excitedly for their first day of classes in their newly renovated school.

Hit by a missile during the early days of the war, Irpin School Number 17 was rebuilt with the help of UNICEF, the faint smell of fresh paint still lingering as the students walked into their classrooms hand-in-hand.

"This year is different to the others. We are in a war situation," said first grade teacher Olga Malyovana. "We were really worried about the children and their safety, but we fixed all the facilities, we have a shelter."

First order of the day was an evacuation drill, with a fire alarm going off and all the children lining up to head to the basement bomb shelter or designated safe — and windowless — areas in the corridors.

Oleksandra Urban came to drop off her 6-year-old daughter, Veronika, the normal trepidation of the first day of school mingling with worry about classes during wartime, even though strikes on Kyiv and nearby areas are now rare.

She's explained to Veronica how to evacuate to a bomb shelter, she said. "She is worried only when I am worried. That's why I am trying to be calm."

Urban and her husband discussed distance learning for Veronika, but decided physical presence in school was essential, both for contact with other children and with the teacher.

"I believe that school will save the life of my kid," Urban said.

Murat Sahin, UNICEF representative in Ukraine, agreed.

"Two years of Covid and ... six months of war, it is having disastrous impact on children's growth and learning and mental health," Sahin said. "So we need to bring that normalcy."

In Kramatorsk in the Donetsk region, there's no hope for schools to open their doors — the city has been under constant shelling since the beginning of the war.

In one school, the first-grade classroom was all ready: tables, chairs, a clean blackboard, the alphabet and numbers hanging on the wall. The only thing missing was the students.

Seated in the empty room was Oleksandr Novikov, the school's director for 12 years and a teacher for more than 20.

"It is very depressing, it is very unpleasant to feel that you come to an empty school," he said. "There will be no children laughing at school."

While Ukraine tries to defend itself from the Russian invasion, Novikov dreams of better times.

"I would like a real first bell, a real meeting with children and teachers, a real lesson, when eyes look at you with inspiration, trust and a desire to hear something new, to learn something new."

"This is what I would like to see," he said.

## Watering while Black: anatomy of a pastor's Alabama arrest

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

CHILDERSBURG, Ala. (AP) — Michael Jennings wasn't breaking any laws or doing anything that was obvi-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 69 of 79

ously suspicious; the Black minister was simply watering the flowers of a neighbor who was out of town.

Yet there was a problem: Around the corner, Amber Roberson, who is white, thought she was helping that same neighbor when she saw a vehicle she didn't recognize at the house and called police.

Within minutes, Jennings was in handcuffs, Roberson was apologizing for calling 911 and three officers were talking among themselves about how everything might have been different.

Harry Daniels, an attorney representing Jennings, said he plans to submit a claim to the city of Childersburg seeking damages and then file a lawsuit. "This should be a learned lesson and a training tool for law enforcement about what not to do," he said.

A 20-minute video of the episode recorded on one of the officers' body cameras shows how quickly an uneventful evening on a quiet residential street devolved into yet another potentially explosive situation involving a Black man and white law enforcement authorities.

"Whatcha doing here, man?" Officer Chris Smith asked as he walked up to Jennings, who held a hose with a stream of water falling on plants beside the driveway outside a small, white house.

"Watering flowers," Jennings replied from a few feet away. Lawn decorations stood around a mailbox; fresh mulch covered the beds. It was more than an hour before sunset on a Sunday in late May, the kind of spring evening when people often are out tending plants.

But moments before, a woman had dialed 911 about a "younger Black male" and gold SUV that she saw at the house even though the owners were away, according to a call transcript obtained by The Associated Press.

Walking toward Jennings, Smith told him that a caller said she saw a strange vehicle and a person who "wasn't supposed to be here" at the house.

Jennings told him the SUV he was talking about belonged to the neighbor who lives there.

"I'm supposed to be here," he added. "I'm Pastor Jennings. I live across the street."

"You're Pastor Jennings?"

"Yes. I'm looking out for their house while they're gone, watering their flowers," said Jennings, still spraying water.

"OK, well, that's cool. Do you have, like, ID?" Smith asked.

"Oh, no. Man, I'm not going to give you ID," Jennings said, turning away.

"Why not?" Smith asked.

"I ain't did nothing wrong," the pastor replied.

Jennings, 56, was born in rural Alabama just three years after George C. Wallace pledged "segregation forever" at the first of his four inaugurations as governor. His parents grew up during a time when racial segregation was the law and Black people were expected to act with deference to white people in the South.

"I know the backdrop," Jennings said in an interview with AP.

Meanwhile, the officers who confronted him on May 22 work for a majority-white city of about 4,700 people that's located 55 miles (88 kilometers) southeast of Birmingham down U.S. 280. Most members of the city council and police department are white, as is the mayor, past police chief and current acting chief.

Jennings went into the ministry not long after graduating from high school and hasn't strayed far from his birthplace of nearby Sylacauga, where he leads Vision of Abundant Life Ministries, a small, nondenominational church, when not doing landscaping work or selling items online. In 1991, he said, he worked security and then trained to be a police officer in a nearby town but left before taking the job full time.

"That's how I knew the law," he said.

As Jennings and Smith argued over whether the pastor needed to show an ID, another officer walked into view.

His voice rising, Jennings asked who called the police.

"You see a Black man out here watering his neighbor's flowers and you think it's something illegal," Jennings said loudly.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 70 of 79

"I'm not saying nothing about ..., " Smith responded.

"You have no right to approach me if I ain't did nothing suspicious or nothing wrong," Jennings said, gesturing with his right hand and continuing to hold the garden hose with his left. With the officers also talking, he added: "You want to lock me up? Lock me up. I'm not showing y'all anything. I'm going to continue watering these flowers."

About 35 seconds later, after warning that Jennings could be charged with obstruction for walking away, officer No. 2, identified in a police report as J. Gable, put the preacher in handcuffs.

"I like this," Jennings told them. He added: "It's already a lawsuit."

Alabama law allows police to ask for the name of someone in a public place when there's reasonable suspicion the person has committed or is about to commit a crime. But that doesn't mean a man innocently watering flowers at a neighbor's home must provide identification when asked by an officer, according to Hank Sherrod, a civil rights lawyer who reviewed the full police video at the request of the AP.

"This is an area of the law that is pretty clear," said Sherrod, who has handled similar cases in north Alabama, where he practices.

Giving police the same name he routinely uses as the minister of a Black church, where ecclesiastical titles are important, Jennings identified himself, without any prompting, as "Pastor Jennings" within seconds of Smith's approach. That might have been adequate for someone steeped in the culture of Black Christianity, but it wasn't for white police officers.

The video shows the officers repeatedly accusing Jennings of failing to identify himself.

Cuffed and seated between two shrubs on the front stoop of his neighbor's home, Jennings told Smith and Gable that his son, a university athletics administrator, had been wrongly detained recently in Michigan after a young woman at a cheerleading competition said a Black man had hugged her.

"My son just got arrested and profiled," he said. The incident, which didn't result in any charges, happened about two months before Jennings' confrontation with Alabama police, he told the AP.

A third Childersburg officer, identified as Sgt. Jeremy Brooks in a report, arrived while Smith was complaining loudly that Jennings wouldn't listen and Gable was all but screaming at the pastor.

"You have to identify yourself to me," Gable yelled.

"No, I don't," Jennings retorted repeatedly.

Smith returned to his patrol car while the argument continued. What Jennings said then is inaudible on the video, but a police report quotes him as telling Brooks: "Stop talking to me like I'm a boy." But Jennings told the AP that he said something very different: "I told him, 'I'm a full-grown man. You don't talk to me like that, boy.'"

Whatever was said, it was enough for Smith.

"You know what? 10-15," he shouted, using the police radio code for a prisoner in custody. "I ain't going to sit there and have that, dude."

Apart from the recent experience of his son, Jennings said he felt "anger and fear" during the entire episode because of the accumulated weight of past police killings — George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others — plus lower-profile incidents and shootings in Alabama.

"That's why I didn't resist," he said.

And, Jennings said, he already had experience dealing with suspicious white police officers in the racially integrated neighborhood where he and his family have lived for seven years.

Not long after moving in, he said, an officer cruised down the street while Jennings was out by the street checking the mail. The officer pulled over to question Jennings, explaining that he was responding to a caller's claim that a Black man was going through mailboxes in the area, according to the preacher.

"I told him it was my house," Jennings said. "He just went on."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 71 of 79

Jennings was already in the back of a patrol car by the time Roberson, the white woman who called police, emerged. Jennings, she told officers, was a neighbor and a friend of the home's owner, Roy Milam. "OK. Does he have permission here to be watering flowers?" Smith asked.

"He may, because they are friends," she replied. "They went out of town today. He may be watering their flowers. It would be completely normal."

Milam told the AP that was exactly what happened: He'd asked Jennings to water his wife's flowers while they were camping in the Tennessee mountains for a few days.

Watering flowers wasn't the problem, Smith told Roberson. The issue, he said, was Jennings' refusal to provide identification after acting "suspicious."

Realizing that she'd called police because one neighbor was watering another's flowers, Roberson said: "This is probably my fault."

A few moments later, officers told Roberson that a license plate check showed the gold sport utility vehicle that prompted her call in the first place belonged to Milam. They got Jennings out of the patrol car and he told them his first and last name.

"I didn't know it was him," Roberson told police. "I'm sorry about that."

The officers spent much of their remaining time on the scene in a discussion that began with a question from Smith: "What are we going to do with him?"

After weighing different options, they settled on a charge of obstructing governmental operations that was thrown out within days in city court. The police chief who sought the dismissal after reviewing the 911 call and bodycam video, Richard McClelland, resigned earlier this month. Officials haven't said why he quit, but city attorney Reagan Rumsey said it had nothing to do with what happened to Jennings.

Childersburg's interim police chief, Capt. Kevin Koss, didn't return emails seeking comment.

But the three officers, standing along the street as Jennings sat handcuffed in a police vehicle, talked among themselves about what happened.

"I said, 'If you'll just listen to me. You're being audio and video recorded, and what we're trying to do is identify yourself and find out what's going on,'" Brooks, Smith's supervisor, said on the video. "He wouldn't even let me. He wanted to yell over me and say we're racial profiling and talking to him like he's a boy."

Moments later, Smith walked around the house to the spot where Jennings had been watering flowers and shut off the spigot to the hose.

"I mean, all he had to do was identify himself," he told Brooks.

"That's it," Brooks said.

"Jesus," Smith muttered.

Michael Jennings is still friends with Milam, the neighbor with the flowers. Milam, who is white, said he feels bad about what happened, and the two men will continue watching out for each other's homes, just as they've done for years.

"He is a good neighbor, definitely. No doubt about it," Milam said.

Jennings also spoke recently with Roberson for the first time since the arrest. In the video, the handcuffed pastor assured her he would still be buying a graduation present for her son even though he wasn't going to be able to make the party she invited him to.

Jennings, who lives less than a third of a mile from the police station, said he hasn't seen any of the three officers who were involved in his arrest since that day. He believes all three should be fired or at least disciplined.

"I feel a little paranoid," he said.

Nonetheless, he still waves at police cars passing through his neighborhood, partly out of the Christian call to be kind to others.

"You're supposed to love your neighbor, no matter what," he said. "But you've heard the saying, 'Keep your enemies close to you, too.'"

## For exiled Uyghurs, UN report is long-awaited vindication

By DAKE KANG Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — When Zumret Dawut heard that the United Nations had declared that China's crackdown in its far-western Xinjiang region may constitute crimes against humanity, she burst into tears.

Her mind flashed back to her cellmates in the camp she was detained in, to her father who died while in Xinjiang police custody. She felt vindicated.

"I felt there was justice, that there are people who care in this world," she said. "I felt like our testimonies, our efforts to raise awareness have finally paid off."

For Dawut and other camp survivors now outside China, the U.N.'s report on mass detentions and other rights abuses against Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim ethnic groups in Xinjiang was the culmination of years of advocacy, a welcome acknowledgement of abuses they say they faced at the hands of the Chinese state.

The long-delayed assessment released late Wednesday by the U.N. human rights office in Geneva concluded that China has committed serious human rights violations under its anti-terrorism and anti-extremism policies and called for "urgent attention" from the U.N., the world community and China itself to address them.

The report was at the center of a tug-of-war between rights groups and the Chinese government, which had repeatedly sought to stymie its publication. It largely corroborates earlier reporting by researchers, activist groups and the news media, while steering away from estimates and other findings that cannot be definitively proven.

The significance of the assessment, survivors say, is the weight and authority of the United Nations. Though individual governments, including the United States and the parliaments of France and the U.K., have criticized the crackdown before, such declarations were brushed aside by Beijing as political attacks by Western countries.

"This time, China can't avoid this accusation," said Tahir Imin, a Uyghur publisher in exile with dozens of relatives in prison. "The United Nations is a neutral organization, the highest organization. ... It's a stain on the Communist Party."

The Chinese government swiftly denounced the report, with Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin calling it "a patchwork of false information that serves as a political tool for the U.S. and other Western countries" to contain China.

Beijing has spent years trying to control the narrative, vilifying people who have spoken against the crackdown while organizing tours and news conferences promoting its position. State media have interviewed Xinjiang residents who denounced accusations against the Chinese government as lies, though evidence shows that such statements are often scripted and coerced.

Many camp survivors faced years of threats by Chinese police in attempts to silence them, leaving them with a stark choice: speak out and face the consequences, or stay quiet to protect their loved ones.

Dawut made her choice on a fateful Friday in New York three years ago. That day, she was on her way to the United Nations to share her story for the first time when she got a call.

It was her brother, telling her that the police had come for their father and urging her not to speak. She froze with fear.

"But I thought of so many fathers and mothers in the camp, how I needed to speak up for them," she said. "I thought, I will not change my mind. I will go."

The consequences were immediate. Relatives in Xinjiang blocked her calls and texts. Two weeks later, an ex-neighbor called, saying her father had died while in police custody. The exact circumstances are unclear.

Now, Dawut said, it was all worth it.

"I felt like I did the right thing," she said. "I am walking the path of truth."

The U.N. report corroborated different aspects of the crackdown reported over the years, including forced labor, pervasivesurveillance, family separations and coercive birth control measures.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 73 of 79

But the focus of the report was squarely on the mass detentions. The rights office said it could not confirm estimates that a million or more people were detained in the internment camps in Xinjiang, but that it was "reasonable to conclude that a pattern of large-scale arbitrary detention occurred" at least between 2017 and 2019.

Interviews and AP visits to the region show that China appears to have closed many of the camps, which it called vocational training and education centers. But hundreds of thousands of people continue to languish in prison on vague, secret charges, with leaked data showing one county in Xinjiang has the highest known imprisonment rate in the world.

Among those who fled Xinjiang, there was a palpable sense of relief, as they had worried that the U.N. report would be suppressed or watered down. U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet had said little after visiting Xinjiang on a government-organized tour in May, prompting criticism and concern from Uyghur groups.

Dina Nurdybay, an ethnic Kazakh who spent almost a year in detention, said she was worried when she heard Bachelet had visited Xinjiang at Beijing's invitation. Nurdybay said she had been forced in the camps to sing and dance for journalists and officials, parrot propaganda and pretend life was great there. She worried that outside investigators would be tricked.

"It's all lies," she said. "You think it's voluntary?"

Now, she said, she hopes the U.N. will help people like her escape harassment and live in peace. Every time she speaks to journalists, she said, Chinese police haul away her uncle and interrogate him for days at a time, telling him he should make her "shut up."

Mihrigul Tursun, who testified about the camps before the U.S. Congress in November 2018, said the price she paid for speaking out was constant threats to her safety and a state-sponsored smear campaign. She's been called a liar, followed by cars, photographed at restaurants by strangers. She is now under FBI watch, she said, after men dressed in hoodies broke her window and slipped a threatening letter under her door, forcing her to move seven times.

Before she went public, she spent sleepless nights sobbing, pondering whether to speak out. If she did, she knew she could never go back home, that she might never see her parents again.

But she remembered the women held in the cell with her. They had sworn an oath together: Whoever made it out would speak out about what they had witnessed inside, no matter the consequences.

"I feel like a dead person. They killed my dreams, they killed my hopes. I lost everything when I was in the camps," Tursun said. "But today I feel a little better, because all that hard work has born some fruit."

But, she added, the report is just the beginning. She won't be satisfied, she said, until all the detention facilities are closed.

"We need results, we need action," she said. "I need to know after the U.N. report, what can we do after that?"

## No more 'nuance': Democrats slam GOP abortion-rights backers

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — The anxious-looking women talk directly to the camera, warning that the Colorado Republican running for the U.S. Senate opposes the state's reproductive rights law and supports the conservative Supreme Court justices who revoked the constitutional right to abortion this summer.

"It's not even close," one says as the ad for the Democratic senator wraps up. "We need Michael Bennet fighting for us."

The spot is significant because the man it slams on abortion, businessman Joe O'Dea, is a rare Republican supporter of at least some abortion rights. O'Dea said he would back a law to codify the protections of Roe v. Wade, though he opposes abortions after 20 weeks except in cases of rape, incest or to protect the life of the mother.

Analysts say similarly nuanced positions were once considered the political sweet spot in the complex world of abortion politics, coming closest to representing the views of the typical conflicted voter. But that

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 74 of 79

may be changing as abortion restrictions kick in following the fall of Roe with the high court's ruling in June.

"We are here in this country, right now, with patients traveling thousands of miles for care because politicians have been given the room for the least little bit of nuance," said Adrienne Mansanares of Planned Parenthood Action Colorado during a recent news conference to back Bennet.

The message from Democrats: Republicans can't be trusted on the issue, regardless of their personal beliefs.

In New Hampshire, Democrats are going after Republican Chris Sununu, who is running for reelection as a self-described "pro-choice governor," for supporting a ban on abortions after 23 weeks of pregnancy.

In Connecticut, Democrats slammed as "extreme" former state Sen. George Logan in his race against Democratic U.S. Rep. Jahana Hayes — despite Logan receiving an "A" rating in 2017 and 2018 from the Connecticut chapter of NARAL, an abortion rights group. Democrats note the rating was based on Logan's statehouse votes on other issues of importance to NARAL such as paid family medical leave, rather than abortion.

Also in Connecticut, the Republican candidate for governor, Bob Stefanowski, is out with a television ad highlighting how he and his Democratic opponent "are both pro-choice." In an interview, Stefanowski said he was responding to repeated Democratic attacks on abortion, which he compared to lies.

"I don't know how many times I can say I'm not going to change Connecticut law," Stefanowski said in an interview. "I'm going to support a woman's right to choose."

Abortion has become an increasingly partisan issue over recent decades, but public views have always been more shades of gray.

Typically, support for abortion rights is highest for women in the earliest stages of pregnancy and tapers off as the pregnancy advances, until it is lowest for abortions very close to delivery, said Jocelyn Kiley of the Pew Research Center. Still, exceptions for rape, incest and to protect the life of the mother are popular at all stages.

"Most Americans see this as a nuanced issue and not legal all the time or illegal all the time," Kiley said. But, she noted, "it's possible that Americans' underlying opinions about this are shifting in the past couple of months."

On June 24, in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the Supreme Court's Republican-appointed majority overturned Roe and triggered abortion bans in at least 13 states, many of which don't provide exceptions for rape, incest and to protect the life of the mother.

The reason this is happening, said Republican pollster Whit Ayres, is "you now have state legislatures that have taken positions opposed by 9 out of 10 Americans."

"What the Dobbs decision has done along with these trigger laws is focus attention on the early part of pregnancy, not late term," Ayres said.

While many people back some restrictions on abortion, especially after the first trimester, the most extreme measures introduced in some Republican-led states are at odds with public opinion, according to an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll in July.

There are several signs that momentum is with abortion-rights backers. In conservative Kansas, a ballot measure to remove that state's right to abortion lost by more than 150,000 votes. Democrats won a special election in a narrowly divided upstate New York swing district last week after their candidate focused on abortion. In a survey shortly after the Supreme Court ruling, Pew found that 62% of U.S. adults say abortion should be legal in all or most cases, the highest share in nearly 30 years of tracking the issue.

That's emboldened Democrats to go after any Republican on abortion, regardless of the details of their position, said Jennifer Lawless, a politics professor at the University of Virginia who has long tracked the politics of reproductive health.

"Although the nuance on the issue is largely gone, the nuance of the case Democrats can make is stronger," Lawless said.

She noted that Democrats can now make the more technical argument that any Republican elected increases the power of the party that overturned Roe and could spread abortion bans further across the country.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 75 of 79

That's an argument Colorado Democrats have tried to make, unsuccessfully, before. In 2014, Democratic Sen. Mark Udall lost his race to Republican Cory Gardner, an abortion rights opponent who defused the issue by backing over-the-counter women's contraception to demonstrate he wasn't hostile to reproductive health.

Gardner's supporters mocked Udall as "Mark Uterus" for hammering relentlessly on abortion and they assured voters that Roe wasn't at risk. Gardner lost his reelection bid in 2020, when Colorado voters replaced him with a Democrat supporting abortion rights after then-President Donald Trump picked now-Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett, the deciding vote in Dobbs, in the campaign's final weeks.

Now Democrats are trying again with O'Dea. In an interview, the first-time candidate said of his opponent's attack: "It's pretty dishonest, pretty disingenuous."

Yet in 2020, O'Dea voted for a statewide ballot measure to bar abortions after 22 weeks that failed by 18 percentage points. The measure didn't contain exceptions for rape, incest or to protect the mother's life. He now says he thinks those exceptions are essential and added that he would support allowing the termination of nonviable pregnancies.

He noted he wasn't a candidate for office when the measure was on the ballot.

"I didn't look at all the nuances," O'Dea said.

Colorado has a long history of backing abortion rights. It was the first state to legalize the procedure in cases of rape, incest and to protect the mother, taking that step in 1967. Earlier this year, the Democratic-controlled Legislature passed one of the most sweeping laws protecting abortion rights, guaranteeing no restrictions on abortions regardless of when in the pregnancy they occur. O'Dea opposes that law because of his belief that abortions should be outlawed past 20 weeks.

The race is playing out as Colorado has become a refuge for women seeking care after the Dobbs decision activated trigger laws in nearby states, especially Texas.

Karen Middleton, a former Democratic state lawmaker who runs the reproductive rights group Cobalt, recalled in an interview talking to a woman with an ectopic pregnancy driving hundreds of miles from Texas to Colorado to obtain an abortion who began bleeding in a remote area between the states.

"We're a lot less willing to compromise," she said.

## Low on water, prep football adapts in Mississippi's capital

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

Marcus Gibson never realized how much water a high school football program used until it was gone.

Even so, he considers his team one of the lucky ones as a water crisis roils Mississippi's largest city.

The football coach at Murrah High School — right in the middle of Jackson, Mississippi, not far from the state capitol — says that his fieldhouse has about 40 to 50 cases of bottled water stacked along the walls thanks to players' parents, administration and other benefactors. That should be plenty for his team to drink over the next few days at practice.

"Hydration isn't much of a problem," he said "It's everything else."

Many Jackson residents have been without running water in their homes and businesses this week because of breakdowns in the city's main water treatment plant. Torrential rains caused the Pearl River to flood, exacerbating problems with pumps.

Jackson schools moved to online classes and canceled some of this weekend's high school football games because of uncertainty about water. Some restaurants closed, while others are bringing in tankers of clean water from the suburbs. People are waiting in long lines to receive bottled water for drinking or non-potable water for flushing toilets.

Even before the water pressure dropped perilously low, Jackson's water system was fragile and officials had warned for years that widespread loss of service was possible.

Now it's happened — right in the middle of the hottest part of football season. While there are certainly more important things to worry about during a crisis, football is a staple of the state's cultural identity. Coaches and players are trying to find ways to press forward, even in less than optimal conditions.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 76 of 79

"We're kind of used to it," said Murrah receiver Christian Jackson before Wednesday's practice. "After two years of COVID-19, we just make it work. You bring your own water to practice if you can and make the most of opportunities, because some of our practices have been canceled."

Gibson said keeping everything clean is the biggest challenge. He said assistant coaches are working out plans to wash practice and game uniforms at laundromats outside the city or at any other place with enough water pressure.

Callaway High School coach Dameon Jones said he just takes his team's clothes home and washes them himself since he lives a few miles outside of the city.

"We're taking it one day at a time," Jones said. "What I tell my kids — adversity is going to come. It's how you're going to deal with it."

Murrah and Callaway are among four of the biggest city schools preparing to play in a "Graduation Classic," which was originally expected to be at Mississippi Veterans Memorial Stadium. That's been canceled due to the lack of water, though there's hope the games can be moved elsewhere. Thousands of fans were expected.

Three high school football games remained on schedule for Thursday and Friday nights as of Wednesday.

"We will certainly have plenty of hand sanitizer and different things," said Sherwin Johnson, executive director of public engagement for Jackson Public Schools. "Although our restrooms don't have water, we are reserving and will have portable restrooms at each of our stadiums, enough to accommodate the crowds that we anticipate."

Johnson added that no other sports were affected by the water shortage.

The inconveniences weren't limited to high school sports. Jackson State football coach Deion Sanders said Tuesday that the water crisis left his players without air conditioning or ice at their practice facility. In a video that one of his sons posted to social media, Sanders said he wanted to move players into a hotel so they could shower.

"We're going to find somewhere to practice, find somewhere that can accommodate every darn thing that we need and desire to be who we desire to be, and that's dominate," Sanders said. "The devil is a lie. He ain't going to get us today, baby."

The make-do attitude is common these days around Jackson. Gibson and Jones — the high school coaches — said they're still optimistic their games will be played.

"We're just waiting to hear where the game is going to be," Jones said. "Give us a time, a field and we'll be ready."

## History's bookends: Putin reversed many Gorbachev reforms

By ANDREW KATELL Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — One stood for freedom, openness, peace and closer ties with the outside world. The other is jailing critics, muzzling journalists, pushing his country deeper into isolation and waging Europe's bloodiest conflict since World War II.

Such are history's bookends between Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union's last leader, and Vladimir Putin, Russia's president.

In many ways, Gorbachev, who died Tuesday, unwittingly enabled Putin. The forces Gorbachev unleashed spun out of control, led to his downfall and the Soviet Union's collapse.

Since coming to power in 1999, Putin has been taking a hard line that resulted in a near-complete reversal of Gorbachev's reforms.

When Gorbachev came to power as Soviet leader in 1985, he was younger and more vibrant than his predecessors. He broke with the past by moving away from a police state, embracing freedom of the press, ending his country's war in Afghanistan and letting go of Eastern European countries that had been locked in Moscow's communist orbit. He ended the isolation that had gripped the USSR since its founding.

It was an exciting, hopeful time for Soviet citizens and the world. Gorbachev brought the promise of a brighter future.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 77 of 79

He believed in integration with the West, multilateralism and globalism to solve the world's problems, including ending armed conflicts and reducing the danger of nuclear weapons.

In marked contrast, Putin's worldview holds that the West is an "empire of lies," and democracy is chaotic, uncontrolled and dangerous. While mostly refraining from direct criticism, Putin implies that Gorbachev sold out to the West.

Returning to a communist-style mindset, Putin believes the West is imperialistic and arrogant, trying to impose its liberal values and policies on Russia and using the country as a scapegoat for its own problems.

He accuses Western leaders of trying to restart the Cold War and restrain Russia's development. He seeks a world order with Russia on equal footing with the United States and other major powers, and in some respects is trying to rebuild an empire.

Gorbachev sometimes bowed to Western pressure. Two years after U.S. President Ronald Reagan implored him to "tear down this wall" in a speech at the Berlin Wall, Gorbachev did so, indirectly, by not intervening in populist anti-communist revolutions in Eastern Europe. The dropping of the Iron Curtain and end of the Cold War followed.

At home, Gorbachev introduced two sweeping and dramatic policies — "glasnost" or openness — and "perestroika," a restructuring of Soviet society. Previously taboo subjects could now be discussed, in literature, the news media and society in general. He undertook economic reforms to allow private enterprise, moving away from a state-run economy.

He also loosened up on the dreaded police state, freed political prisoners such as Andrei Sakharov, and ended the Communist Party's monopoly on political power. Freer foreign travel, emigration and religious observances were also part of the mix.

Putin has veered away from Gorbachev's changes. He focused on restoring order and rebuilding the police state. An increasingly severe crackdown on dissent has involved jailing critics, branding them traitors and extremists, including for merely calling the "special military operation" in Ukraine a war. He sees some critics as foreign-funded collaborators of Russia's enemies.

In his quest for control, he's shut down independent news organizations and banned human rights and humanitarian organizations. He demands complete loyalty to the state and emphasizes traditional Russian family, religious and nationalistic values.

Gorbachev's leadership was not without failures. His more liberal policies were uneven, such as a bloody 1991 Soviet crackdown on the independence movement in the Soviet Baltic republic of Lithuania and the attempted early coverup of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster.

By 1988, he realized that trying to hide bad events wasn't working, so when a massive earthquake hit Armenia in December 1988, he opened the borders to emergency international help and allowed transparency about the destruction.

After nearly a decade of fighting in Afghanistan, Gorbachev ordered the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989, entered into multiple arms-control and disarmament agreements with the United States and other countries, and helped end the Cold War. For those efforts, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990.

But at home, Gorbachev's economic reforms didn't go well. Freeing industries from state control and allowing private enterprise too quickly and haphazardly created widespread shortages of food and consumer goods, worsened corruption and spawned a class of oligarchs.

The burgeoning independence movements in Soviet republics and other problems so angered Communist Party hard-liners that they attempted a coup against him in August 1991, further weakening his grip on power and leading to his resignation four months later.

In the end, many in Russia felt Gorbachev had left them with broken promises, dashed hopes and a weakened, humiliated country.

One who felt that way was Putin. For him, much of what Gorbachev did was a mistake. The biggest was the Soviet Union's collapse, what Putin called "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."

The Soviet Union was disrespected, defeated and broken into pieces – 15 countries. For Putin, it was also personal, because as a KGB officer stationed in East Germany, he watched in horror as massive crowds

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 78 of 79

staged the popular uprising that led to the removal of the Berlin Wall and Germany's reunification, at one point besieging his KGB office in Dresden.

To this day, Putin's perceptions about threats to his country and popular revolutions color his foreign policy and his deep mistrust of the West. They underpin his decision to invade Ukraine on Feb. 24.

As one justification for the war, he cites what he believes was a broken U.S. promise to Gorbachev – a supposed 1990 pledge that NATO would not expand into Eastern Europe. U.S. officials have denied making such a pledge, but Putin believes NATO's expansion, and specifically the prospect of neighboring Ukraine joining the alliance, pose an existential threat to Russia.

Critics allege that Putin distorts the facts and ignores local sentiments to claim Ukrainians want to be liberated from the Kyiv government and align with Moscow.

He has embarked on a massive effort to modernize and expand Russia's military might, moving away from arms-control accords that Gorbachev agreed to.

Putin's war in Ukraine, alleged human rights violations and the 2014 annexation of Crimea have drawn massive international sanctions that are reversing the cultural and economic ties that Gorbachev fostered. But for a few allies, Russia is isolated.

While one might expect Gorbachev to have been more critical of Putin, he supported Russia's annexation of Crimea, condemned NATO's eastward expansion and said the West bungled the opportunities the Cold War's end offered.

But in many other ways, the historic bookends between the two leaders are set far apart.

One observer who sees Gorbachev's business as unfinished is Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a Russian tycoon who moved to London after spending a decade in a Russian prison on charges widely seen as political revenge for challenging Putin.

"Gorbachev gave freedom not only to Baltic and Eastern European states, he also gave freedom to the Russian nation," Khodorkovsky said after Gorbachev's passing. "It's a different matter that we haven't quite managed to make use of that freedom."

## Today in History: September 2, Japan surrenders

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Sept. 2, the 245th day of 2022. There are 120 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 2, 1945, Japan formally surrendered in ceremonies aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, ending World War II.

On this date:

In 1789, the United States Treasury Department was established.

In 1864, during the Civil War, Union Gen. William T. Sherman's forces occupied Atlanta.

In 1935, a Labor Day hurricane slammed into the Florida Keys, claiming more than 400 lives.

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the National Defense Education Act, which provided aid to public and private education to promote learning in such fields as math and science.

In 1963, Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace prevented the integration of Tuskegee High School by encircling the building with state troopers.

In 1964, one of America's most decorated military heroes of World War I, Medal of Honor recipient Alvin C. York, died in Nashville at age 76.

In 1969, in what some regard as the birth of the Internet, two connected computers at the University of California, Los Angeles, passed test data through a 15-foot cable.

In 1998, a Swissair MD-11 jetliner crashed off Nova Scotia, killing all 229 people aboard.

In 2005, a National Guard convoy packed with food, water and medicine rolled into New Orleans four days after Hurricane Katrina.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Sept. 02, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 057 ~ 79 of 79

In 2008, Republicans assailed Barack Obama as the most liberal, least experienced White House nominee in history at their convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, and enthusiastically extolled their own man, John McCain, as ready to lead the nation.

In 2018, Sen. John McCain was laid to rest on a grassy hill at the U.S. Naval Academy, after a horse-drawn caisson carrying the senator's casket led a procession of mourners from the academy's chapel to its cemetery.

In 2019, a fire swept a boat carrying recreational scuba divers that was anchored near an island off the Southern California coast; the captain and four other crew members were able to escape the flames, but 34 people who were trapped below died.

Ten years ago: Campaigning his way toward the Democratic National Convention, President Barack Obama slapped a "Romney doesn't care" label on his rival's health-care views and said Republicans wanted to repeal new protections for millions without offering a plan of their own.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump visited with survivors of Hurricane Harvey, touring a Houston shelter housing hundreds of displaced people and meeting with emergency responders in Lake Charles, Louisiana; it was Trump's second visit to the region in the wake of the storm. Astronaut Peggy Whitson returned to Earth after 288 days on the International Space Station; the trip gave Whitson a total of 665 days in space, a record for any American and any woman worldwide.

One year ago: A divided Supreme Court allowed a Texas law that banned most abortions to remain in effect; it prohibited abortions once medical professionals could detect cardiac activity, usually around six weeks and before most women know they're pregnant. (The law allowed private citizens to sue providers and anyone involved in facilitating an abortion.) House Democrats promoted Republican Liz Cheney to vice chairwoman of a committee investigating the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, even as some Republicans threatened to oust her from the GOP conference for taking part in the probe. Virginia's Supreme Court ruled that the state could remove a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee from a prominent spot in the state's capital city, Richmond, which was also the Confederate capital. (The statue was cut into pieces and hauled away days later.) Former Georgia prosecutor Jackie Johnson was indicted on misconduct charges alleging she used her position to shield the men who killed Ahmaud Arbery from being charged immediately after the shootings.

Today's Birthdays: Former Sen. Alan K. Simpson, R-Wyo., is 91. Former United States Olympic Committee Chairman Peter Ueberroth is 85. Singer Jimmy Clanton is 84. R&B singer Rosalind Ashford (Martha & the Vandellas) is 79. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Terry Bradshaw is 74. Basketball Hall of Famer Nate Archibald is 74. Actor Mark Harmon is 71. Former Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., is 71. International Tennis Hall of Famer Jimmy Connors is 70. Actor Linda Purl is 67. Rock musician Jerry Augustyniak (10,000 Maniacs) is 64. Country musician Paul Deakin (The Mavericks) is 63. Pro Football Hall of Famer Eric Dickerson is 62. Actor Keanu Reeves is 58. International Boxing Hall of Famer Lennox Lewis is 57. Actor Salma Hayek is 56. Actor Tuc Watkins is 56. Actor Kristen Cloke is 54. Actor Cynthia Watros is 54. R&B singer K-Ci is 53. Actor-comedian Katt Williams is 49. Actor Nicholas Pinnock is 49. Actor Michael Lombardi is 48. Actor Tiffany Hines is 45. Rock musician Sam Rivers (Limp Bizkit) is 45. Actor Jonathan Kite is 43. Actor Joshua Henry is 38. Actor Allison Miller is 37. Rock musician Spencer Smith is 35. Electronic music DJ/producer Zedd is 33.