

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Monday, Sept. 12

Senior Menu: Chicken rice casserole, green beans, lettuce salad, chocolate pudding with bananas, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Mini pancakes.

School Lunch: Tangerine chicken, cooked carrots.

2 p.m.: Cross Country at Webster

Emmanuel: 6:30 am Bible Study

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

The Pantry open at the Groton Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

1 p.m.: Senior Citizens Meet at the Groton Community Center.

4 p.m. - 6 p.m.: Carnival of Silver Skates Registration at the warming house

## Tuesday, Sept. 13

Senior Menu: Swiss steak with gravy, mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast Sandwich

School Lunch: Corndogs, fries.

6 p.m.: 3/4 and 5/6 football at Warner

10 a.m.: Golf Meet at Redfield

6:30 p.m.: Senior Scholarship Info Night

The Pantry open at the Groton Community Center, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Emmanuel: 7 pm Church Council

## Wednesday, Sept. 14

Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, au grain potatoes, carrots, apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Eggs and breakfast potatoes.

School Lunch: Grilled cheese sandwich, corn.

Emmanuel: 6 – 7:15 pm Confirmation with 7th & 8th graders & parents; 6:30 pm League

**NO OUTDOOR WATERING!**

**Effective immediately, no outdoor watering is permitted in the City of Groton until further notice. (About 4-6 weeks)**

**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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## Sunflower Golf Tournament Olive Grove Golf Course

### Championship Flight

1st - Reid Johnson and Carlee Johnson – 67  
2nd – Brad and Dar Larson – 72  
3rd – Derek White and Sophia McDermott – 72  
4th – Brad and Brenda Waage – 74  
Blake and Leah Ronning – 74  
Dustin and Brynn Pickrel – 77  
Brett and Baily Hoffmann – 78  
Mike Siegler and Sue Stanley – 79  
Jake and Tiffany Unzen – 82

### First Flight

1st Place – Troy Fust and Kristy Poppen – 72  
2nd Place – Connor and Carleen Hanson – 73  
3rd Place – James and Jordan Torigian – 74  
4th Place – Chad and Haley Ellingson – 75  
Doug and Vicki Jorgensen – 76  
Jarod and Kristie Fliehs – 78  
Tony and Brenda Madsen – 80  
Eric and Amber Borge – 83

### Second Flight

1st – Steve and Betty Dunker – 80  
2nd – Tom Mahan and Mavis Rossow – 80  
3rd – Jonathon and Mandilyn Fliehs – 81  
4th – Torre and Denise Raap – 82  
Pat Martin and Tami Doerr – 82  
Clayton and Mikayla Nutting – 82  
Tony and Mandy Grohs – 83  
Turner Webb and Lauren Johnson – 83  
Lance and Cindy Frohling – 85  
Matt and Jessica Kiefer – 85

### Third Flight

1st – Paul and Stacey Vikander – 76  
2nd – Scott Kettering and Suzie Easthouse – 79  
3rd – Lorin and Julie Fliehs – 83  
4th – Josh and Josey Heupel – 85  
Josh and Madison Claymore – 85  
Larry and Shirlee Frohling – 86  
Greyson and Jamie Cutler – 87  
Ryan Fair and Kaitlyn Lundebrek – 90  
Bruce Babcock and Michelle Johnson – 93  
Casey Hutchison and Deb Fredrickson – 99

### Pin Prizes

Closest to the Pin #4 (Women) – Carleen Hanson  
Closest to the Pin #8 (Men) – Josh Heupel  
Longest Putt #9 – Denise Raap

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## Weekly Vikings Recap - Week 1

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

The Kevin O'Connell era got off to a great start Sunday with a 23-7 victory over the rival Green Bay Packers. Except for a few moments, the Vikings seemed to have total control of this game. The Vikings' offense had a balanced attack thanks to the big plays by Justin Jefferson, as well as the consistent runs by Dalvin Cook and Alexander Mattison. The Vikings' defense capitalized on a Packers' offense that was missing some of its key starters on the offensive line. And to cap it all off, Vikings' kicker, Greg Joseph, tied the Vikings' record for the longest field goal with a 56-yard field goal in the 3rd quarter.

The story of the game was Justin Jefferson, who finished with 184 yards and two touchdowns on nine catches. After the performance today, it feels like Jefferson may officially have the crown for the best wide receiver in the NFL. Also, Jefferson's pursuit of 2,000 receiving yards in a season, something that has never been done before, seems to be a real possibility.

The main storyline coming into the game for the Packers was the lack of good wide receivers for Aaron Rodgers. The concern quickly grew after Rodgers' first pass was dropped by a wide-open Christian Watson. Watson, who was the Packers' second-round draft pick this year, appeared to have at least five yards of separation on Patrick Peterson and would have easily scored if he caught the ball. The Packers' offense just never seemed to recover from this moment as it took until the 5:16 mark of the 3rd quarter for them to get any points on the scoreboard.

As the final score indicates, the Vikings' defense played a great game. The big new addition, Za'Darius Smith, seemed to enjoy playing his former team. There were multiple plays throughout the game where Smith used his pure strength to bull-rush various Packers' offensive linemen. On one play, Smith snuck by one of the Packers' guards, threw AJ Dillon out of the way, and chased Rodgers out of the pocket, ultimately leading to Rodgers fumbling the ball after getting hit from multiple angles.

Smith was not the only new Vikings defensive player that had a great game. Linebacker, Jordan Hicks, had a solid game with nine tackles, one sack, and a forced fumble. Nose tackle, Harrison Phillips, seems like he will be a massive help in the run game for the Vikings this year as the Packers struggled to run the ball between the tackles. He also helped on a key play early in the game when the Vikings stopped an AJ Dillon run up the middle on 4th and goal.

For Kirk Cousins, he appeared to look comfortable with the new offensive scheme in Minnesota. There were multiple moments throughout the game where Cousins slid up in the pocket and found an open Justin Jefferson for a big gain. Also, there were never any turnover-worthy throws by Cousins. It appeared that Cousins went into the game with the idea of getting the ball to Jefferson as many times as he could. Perhaps this will open the door for other guys like Adam Thielen, KJ Osborn, and Irv Smith Jr. to get more looks later in the season.

The Vikings will now head to Philadelphia to play the Eagles on Monday night next week. For the first time since 2019, the Vikings have a winning record. Hopefully, the Vikings can keep it rolling and start the season 2-0 before they head into one of the easier stretches of games on their schedule.

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## Thats Life/Tony Bender

### We have to be able to talk

I was walking down the sideline moments after the national anthem when the announcer welcomed two dignitaries to the game—Senator John Hoeven and Attorney General Drew Wrigley—and I started laughing.

In the last two weeks, I'd taken both to the woodshed in my Forum Communications column. I criticized Wrigley for what I deemed political showboating when he absolved a Fargo officer of wrongdoing in a shooting death, opining that he must have gotten a nice tan from the spotlight. A week earlier, I called Hoeven, who's spotlight averse, "a figment of our collective imaginations."

There they were, both in Wishek at the football game.

What are the chances?

I glanced back occasionally as I photographed the game, and then finally, during a timeout, introduced myself to Wrigley. I've known Hoeven awhile. When I was Ashley Chamber of Commerce president he accepted my invitation to speak at our banquet. His father was a banker in Ashley when we were both kids, he reminded me when we talked.

"Well, if I'm going to beat you up, I'll look you in the eye," I told Wrigley, shaking his hand. He grinned and immediately referenced my column; it's the second time he's been a victim, the first for not digging into the intentional deletion of his late predecessor, Wayne Stenejehem's, e-mails.

"Who is this jerk?" Wrigley wondered aloud to his staff when he read my latest column, although not in those words, exactly.

"Hey, I said you were right!" I said defensively.

"Yeah, the way my wife says I'm right," Wrigley laughed—prefaced by a series of disclaimers.

Turns out a staffer is a fan, though, so he wanted a selfie to share with them. I've got to practice posing. He has a trademark political smile, and I look grumpy—and I wasn't! Heck, I appreciated the conversation. As a member of the Fourth Estate, I hold politicians accountable, but, it's never personal.

Hoeven's got a sense of humor, too. When he ran for governor against Heidi Heitkamp, I waged an independent campaign, promising "a liver sausage in every pot," which unfortunately, many people took as a threat. Heitkamp, who's a good sport, contributed two dollars to my campaign, so naturally I publicized her unconditional support. When I introduced Hoeven at the banquet, though, I noted that he'd only donated a dollar (true) "because he's a fiscal conservative."

He also took in stride the political mudslinging from my desperate campaign when the only compliment I could muster was that he had "gubernatorial hair." Another year, when he was being coy about running for reelection, I heckled that he was "kinda, sorta, maybe, possibly" gonna run again. A few weeks later, he sent me a postcard announcing to me personally that he was indeed "kinda, sorta, maybe, possibly" in the race.

On the sidelines on Friday, he chided me a bit for thinking he's some kind of extremist. Actually, no. We agree on some issues, disagree on others, but I did take him to task for not defending the Constitution over party and president. I expect more. I expect more for my country.

Overall, though, the most political the conversation got was when someone urged Wrigley and Hoeven to buy some Wishek Sausage, not realizing that Kirk Rueb, producer of Ashley Sausage, was standing right there, leaving it to me to play diplomat. Now, when it comes to sausage in McIntosh County, I am Switzerland. Politically neutral. Oh, I'll cop to being a liberal when 99.5% of the county isn't, but I won't go where angels fear to tread. I buy them both. I love them both. Adore, really. And I think Darren Deile and Kirk Rueb are great Americans.

Drew Wrigley and John Hoeven aren't the first politicians I've excoriated nor will they be the last. Unless I stop doing my job. However, throughout several dustups I've had with politicians from both parties, the lines of communication have never closed, and that's the way things should work. We all want what's best for America even if we disagree over how to achieve it. Politician to politician, politician to press, politician to citizen, we need those conversations. I enjoyed mine on Friday night.

Now, I'd like to urge everyone to buy copious amounts of delicious and nutritious Wishek and Ashley sausage. If you know what's good for me.

## Listen to your Gut

People often talk about having a “gut feeling” when they know something is wrong. What feelings come when there is something wrong with the digestive system itself and how do you differentiate between “butterflies” acting up and a serious gastrointestinal problem?

There are many different organs that can cause GI problems and may include the esophagus, stomach, the small intestine, and the large intestine.

The esophagus is the tube that connects the mouth to the stomach. The most common issue people have with the esophagus is acid reflux or “heartburn.” Reflux is a burning sensation in the chest and frequently includes a taste of acid in the back of the throat. Occasional heartburn can be a nuisance, but chronic heartburn can lead to damage to the cells in the esophagus and cause them to change in appearance. This change makes them more likely to develop into cancer over time.

A common stomach issue is ulcers, or an erosion of the lining of the stomach. Ulcers are painful and the pain worsens after eating due to stomach acid being released during digestion. Ulcers are often caused by the bacteria *H. Pylori* that your doctor, ulcers can test for.

The small intestine connects the stomach and the large intestine and is the longest part of the digestive system. This organ is also where most of the nutrients from your food are absorbed. Issues with the small intestine can lead to diarrhea, malnutrition, and bleeding which could result in anemia. Problems with the small intestine cannot only result in discomfort, but also contribute to nutritional problems which can affect the rest of the body.

Celiac disease, Crohn’s disease and small intestine bacterial overgrowth all affect the small intestine. These disorders can cause abdominal pain, severe diarrhea, fatigue, weight loss, and malnutrition.

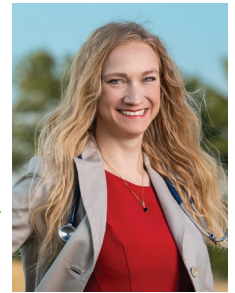
The colon or large intestine can suffer from irritable bowel syndrome. Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is not fully understood but is thought to be at least partially caused by an abnormality in the brain-gut interaction. It can lead to diarrhea, constipation, or a mixture of both. It also causes cramps, bloating, excessive gas, and abdominal pain. Another large intestinal issue is Diverticulitis which results when “pockets” in the colon called diverticula become inflamed and infected. Often individuals with Diverticulitis have left lower abdominal pain, fever, nausea and vomiting.

As you can see there can be many different complex conditions that can cause your gut to give you “feelings” and many of these conditions have overlapping signs and symptoms. If you have any concerns regarding your gastrointestinal tract, you should talk to your primary care doctor. They can help direct you for further testing which may include a referral to a gastroenterologist or surgeon. Most importantly, remember to listen to what your gut is telling you so you can start feeling better soon.

Jill Kruse, D.O. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices as a hospitalist in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at [www.prairedoc.org](http://www.prairedoc.org) and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show providing health information based on science, built on trust, broadcast on SDPB and streaming live on Facebook most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



Based on Science, Built on Trust

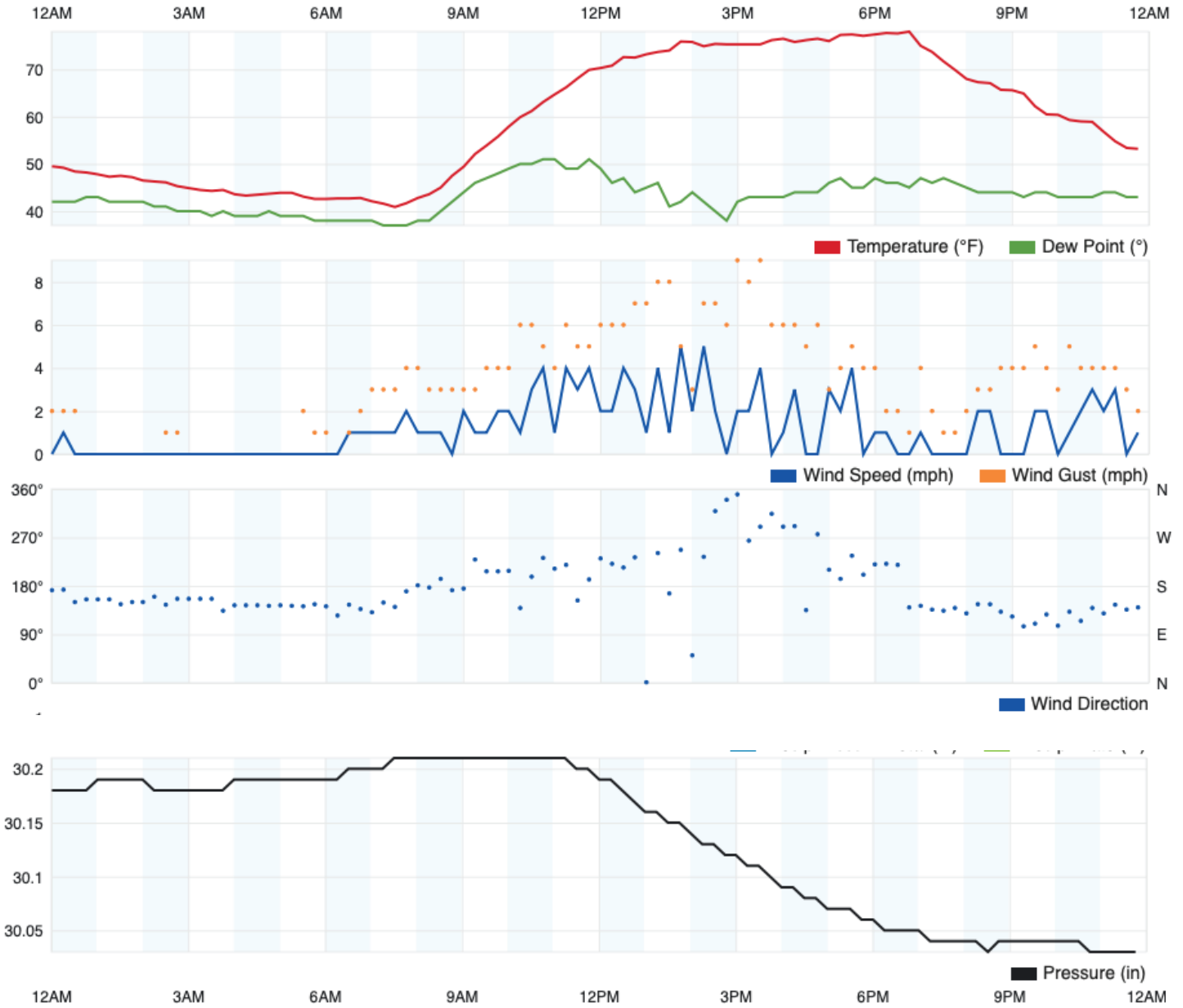


**Jill Kruse, DO**

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 84 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 49 °F

Tuesday



Mostly Sunny

High: 77 °F

Tuesday  
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 52 °F

Wednesday



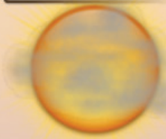
Partly Sunny

High: 85 °F

## Next few days...

Today

SMOKE



Smoky west  
river

High: 80 – 90°F

Low: 49 – 55°F

Tuesday

SMOKE



Elevated smoke

High: 76 – 85°F

Low: 50 – 56°F

Wednesday



Chance of  
precip starting  
in the evening

High: 82 – 90°F

Low: 56 – 65°F

Thursday



Chance of  
precip  
continuing  
through the day

High: 78 – 83°F

Low: 53 – 60°F

Live west of the Missouri River? You might be able to smell smoke today. Otherwise, elevated smoke will create what looks like a partly cloudy sky. High's today are still expected to be unseasonably warm, and it will be warmer tonight than it has been the last few nights. Some showers could move into the area Wednesday evening and continue through the day Thursday.

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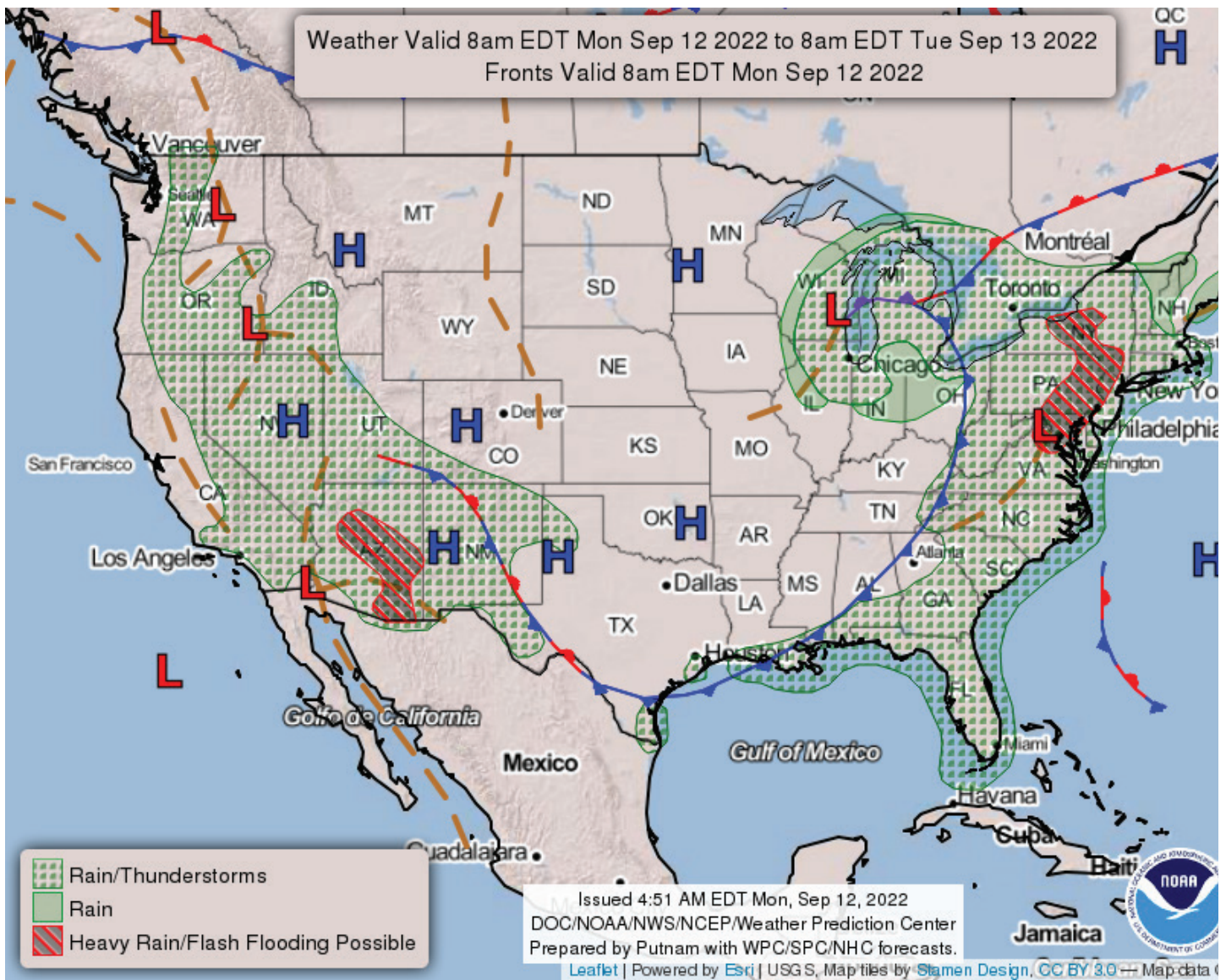
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 78 °F at 6:44 PM**  
**Low Temp: 41 °F at 7:31 AM**  
**Wind: 16 mph at 3:19 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

## Today's Info

Record High: 97 in 1931  
Record Low: 24 in 1902  
Average High: 77°F  
Average Low: 48°F  
Average Precip in Sept.: 0.82  
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 17.16  
Precip Year to Date: 15.96  
Sunset Tonight: 7:51:01 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:07:20 AM

Day length: 12 hours, 44 minutes





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## Today in Weather History

September 12, 1931: On this day in 1931, near-record or record heat came to an end across central and northeast South Dakota as well as west-central Minnesota. From September 9th through the 12th, many record highs were set at Aberdeen, Kennebec, Mobridge, Timber Lake, Watertown, and Wheaton. High temperatures during these four days ranged from 95 degrees to 109 degrees. Aberdeen rose to 107 degrees on the 10th, Kennebec rose to 109 on the 9th, Mobridge rose to 105 on the 9th, Timber Lake's high was 106 on the 9th, Watertown rose to 104 on the 10th, and Wheaton rose to 108 degrees on the 10th.

1857: The SS Central America sinks during a hurricane, killing 425 lives. Fourteen tons of gold was aboard the ship as well.

1882 - Hot and dry winds caused tree foliage in eastern Kansas to wither and crumble. (David Ludlum)

1950: A hailstorm struck southern parts of Oklahoma City on this day. The storm damaged about 4,000 homes, 300 businesses, and 750 cars, resulting in a loss estimated at \$987,000.

1961: Super Typhoon Nancy was an incredibly powerful tropical cyclone of the 1961 Pacific typhoon season. The system had possibly the strongest winds ever measured in a tropical cyclone and caused extensive damage and at least 173 deaths and thousands of injuries in Japan and elsewhere. A reconnaissance aircraft flying into the typhoon near its peak intensity on September 12 determined Nancy's one-minute sustained winds to be 215 mph. If these values are reliable, they would be the highest wind speeds ever measured in a tropical cyclone. However, it was later discovered that measurements and estimations of wind speeds from the 1940s to 1960s were excessive. Thus, Nancy's winds may be lower than its official best-track value.

1977 - Thunderstorms deluged the Kansas City area with torrential rains in the early morning hours, and then again that evening. Some places were deluged with more than six inches of rain twice that day, with up to 18 inches of rain reported at Independence MO. Flooding claimed the lives of 25 persons. The Country Club Plaza area was hardest hit. 2000 vehicles had to be towed following the storm, 150 of which had to be pulled out of Brush Creek, which runs through the Plaza area. (The Kansas City Weather Almanac)

1979 - Hurricane Frederick smashed into the Mobile Bay area of Alabama packing 132 mph winds. Winds gusts to 145 mph were reported as the eye of the hurricane moved over Dauphin Island AL, just west of Mobile. Frederick produced a fifteen foot storm surge near the mouth of Mobile Bay. The hurricane was the costliest in U.S. history causing 2.3 billion dollars damage. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Showers and thunderstorms produced heavy rain which caused flooding in North Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia and Pennsylvania. Parts of Virginia received 3 to 4 inches of rain in just two hours early in the day. Later in the day, three to five inch rains deluged Cumberland County of south central Pennsylvania. Evening thunderstorms produced seven inches of rain at Marysville PA, most of which fell in three hours time. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - An afternoon tornado spawned a tornado which skipped across northern sections of Indianapolis IN damaging roofs and automobiles. It was the first tornado in central Indiana in September in nearly forty years of records. Hurricane Gilbert plowed across the island of Jamaica, and by the end of the day was headed for the Cayman Islands, packing winds of 125 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Snow whitened the mountains and foothills of northeastern Colorado, with eight inches reported at Buckhorn Mountain, west of Fort Collins. Two to three inches fell around Denver, causing great havoc during the evening rush hour. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Southern Plains Region between mid afternoon and early the next morning. Thunderstorms produced hail three inches in diameter at Roswell NM, and wind gusts greater than 98 mph at Henryetta OK. Thunderstorms also produced torrential rains, with more than seven inches at Scotland TX, and more than six inches at Yukon OK. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1999: Hurricane Floyd, a Category 4 storm with top winds of 145 mph, was making residents along the U.S. East Coast very nervous as it steamed steadily westward. Floyd was once forecast to strike Florida but turned away. Instead, Floyd hit the Bahamas at peak strength, causing substantial damage. It then paralleled the East Coast of the United States, causing massive evacuations and costly preparations from Florida through the Mid-Atlantic States.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

"I may not always be right," he said as though he believed it, "but I'm never wrong. Never!" Impressive! We sat there wondering if he knew what he was saying, trying to convince himself of such insanity, or wanting to create fear in our hearts about his power. It really did not matter. All of us, including him, realized the folly of his speech.

However, there are many who believe as he believed: they are incapable of being wrong. They refuse to accept the counsel of anyone and after making a decision become even more resolute and stubborn. Solomon had something to say to people who hold that opinion of themselves: "The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice."

Ultimately and finally, those who have that attitude about themselves are on a path to self-destruction. When looked at from a biblical point of view, they refuse to accept the role of sin in their lives, their need for a Savior, or the reality of God's judgment that awaits them. Their world view is completely distorted.

The wise, however, "listen to advice." Even though they may be embarrassed or disappointed when someone who loves them corrects them, or points out a "flaw," they know that it is for their good. Those who listen to the advice or counsel of someone with spiritual insight and wisdom will be rewarded. Listening to and accepting the advice of our "elders in Christ" is the "wise" thing to do before making any decision.

Prayer: Lord, break the hardness of our hearts when we think we "know it all." Lead us to those who are spiritually mature, love You deeply, and are biblically wise. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice." Proverbs 12:15



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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## 2022-23 Community Events

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

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White ..... \$48.99/year
- Colored ..... \$79.88/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly\* ..... \$31.95/year

\* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

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## Groton Daily Independent

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This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month ..... \$15.98
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- 9 Months ..... \$42.60
- 12 Months ..... \$53.25

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## News from the Associated Press

### Conservative college's curriculum gets foothold in S. Dakota

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A few days before middle school teacher Shaun Nielsen joined a work group to develop South Dakota's social studies standards, he got a thick package in the mail.

Sent from Hillsdale, Michigan, home to a conservative private college enjoying outsize influence among top Republicans, it contained materials that would ultimately form what the state's public schools students could be expected to learn about American history and civics.

"Whoa -- these are already written," Nielsen remembers thinking as he opened the document this spring.

Hillsdale College, which has sought in recent years to "revive the American tradition of K-12 education" by fostering a nationwide network of schools, won new prominence when then-President Donald Trump tapped the school to help develop a "patriotic education" project. Now, in a sign of Hillsdale's growing influence in public education, South Dakota has proposed statewide standards that contain distinct echoes of Hillsdale's material.

While Republican governors such as Tennessee's Bill Lee and Florida's Ron DeSantis have embraced Hillsdale's education for K-12 students, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem has been perhaps the most enthusiastic. Larry Arrn, the school's president, even said in a speech last year that Noem had "offered to build us an entire campus in South Dakota."

That doesn't appear to be in the works. But it was Noem, widely seen as a 2024 White House hopeful, who turned to former Hillsdale politics professor William Morrissey to develop the state's social studies standards. The state paid him \$200,000, and he tapped Hillsdale's material, according to members of the standards commission.

The college played an integral part in Trump's "1776 Report," a conservative response to work like the New York Times' "1619 Project," which re-examined the founding of the United States with the institution of slavery at the center. Hillsdale followed up by producing "The Hillsdale 1776 Curriculum," which offers nearly 2,400 pages of lesson plans on American history.

South Dakota's proposed standards released in mid-August align with the "1776 Curriculum." Both emphasize the ideals of the country's founders as an argument for American exceptionalism — an idea popular in conservative circles that the U.S. is uniquely worthy of universal praise.

The documents both define patriotism similarly, as preserving the "good" of the country while correcting its flaws. They teach that progressivism conflicts with the nation's founding ideals, and assert that most of the founders — including such slave owners as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison — wanted to end slavery.

Morrissey declined an interview, and Hillsdale did not grant a request to interview a member of its K-12 Education Office.

Noem's administration referred questions to Ben Jones, who oversees the South Dakota Historical Society and worked on the commission to develop the standards. Jones defended the scholarship at Hillsdale as respected in higher education and said Morrissey brought the commission a "generic" version of U.S. history that could be found in most textbooks.

"Frankly, it's a logical fallacy to say that something is bad because it's associated with this group that I don't agree with over this other thing," he said of criticism of Hillsdale.

Jones pointed out that Morrissey's draft included descriptions of how the first Africans were enslaved and brought to the colonies and how the U.S. broke treaties with Native American tribes.

"The good, the bad, the ugly was all there," he said.

Jones added that the group discussed and debated the standards over several meetings and by the end, "my sense was that we all made this very much our own."

When Noem's administration formed the 15-person commission, it chose three people, including Nielsen,

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currently certified to teach in South Dakota public schools. The group decided which grade levels should learn the standards and added South Dakota and Native American components to the proposal, Nielsen said.

As the proposal became public last month, Nielsen said he felt conflicted. He said he is a conservative but is careful to separate his political opinions from his classroom teaching. He said he agreed with Noem's desire to make South Dakota a national leader in social studies education and even with much of the content it covered.

Ultimately, he said, he decided to speak out against the standards because they didn't originate with South Dakota educators.

"The '1776 curriculum' -- it's pretty much close to that," he said.

"When you're handed a set of standards to approve, it's not a collaborative process at all," he added. The standards, he worried, were not written with the practical needs of a classroom in mind.

Prominent voices among South Dakota educators agree. The standards — which will be subjected to public hearings this fall before the governor-appointed Board of Education Standards decides whether to adopt them — have been greeted coolly by organizations representing teachers, school boards and school administrators.

"It's coming from a private, out-of-state college," said Tim Graf, the superintendent of Harrisburg School District outside Sioux Falls. "I just don't want it to be political in any way."

Jennifer Lowery, the superintendent at Tea Area School District, worried teachers for younger grade levels would have to spend more time on social studies at the expense of foundational skills like basic math and reading.

"We're not stomping our feet because our feelings got hurt or our profession was disrespected," she said. "You're hearing the outcry because this isn't what's best for our kids."

Several educators said the standards rely too much on memorization and too little on inquiry-based learning that teaches students to question and analyze. Jones, the state historian, countered that memorization at younger grade levels will pave the way for analysis later.

Stephen Jackson, a history professor at the University of Sioux Falls, said that runs counter to criteria for state standards from the American Historical Society, which says inquiry engages students and helps them connect historical events to modern contexts.

Jackson was part of a group that created social studies standards last year, only to have its work scrapped by the governor. As conservatives began pushing back against historical analyses that argued racism and U.S. history are inextricably intertwined, Noem called for teaching how the "U.S. is the most special nation in the history of the world."

Noem said the new standards are the best in the nation, calling them "a true, honest, and balanced approach to American history that is not influenced by political agendas." Hillsdale College used similar language when it launched its curriculum.

Jonathan Zimmerman, an education historian at the University of Pennsylvania, suggested high school students could benefit from analyzing the "1619 Project" alongside the Trump administration's "1776 Report" and learning how to evaluate and debate them. That's unlikely in South Dakota, since Noem has moved to block teachings like the "1619 Project" from public schools.

"People like Kristi Noem are correct when they say that the fundamental narrative of America is under challenge like never before," Zimmerman said. "I just think it's a good challenge."

## Charles pledges to follow queen's example of selfless duty

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III pledged Monday to follow his late mother's example of "selfless duty" as he addressed lawmakers from both houses of parliament in London before he was to fly to Edinburgh to be with the late queen's coffin as it lies at rest in the Scottish capital.

Earlier, Queen Elizabeth II's grandson Prince Harry hailed her as a "guiding compass" and praised her "unwavering grace and dignity."

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Hundreds of lawmakers crowded into the 1,000-year-old Westminster Hall at the Houses of Parliament for the service, rich in pageantry, in which Parliament offered its condolences to the king, and he replied.

A trumpet fanfare greeted the king and his wife Camilla, the queen consort, as they entered the hall, which was packed with hundreds of legislators.

Charles told members of the House of Commons and House of Lords that he would follow his late mother Queen Elizabeth II in upholding "the precious principles of constitutional governance" that underpin the U.K.'s political system.

He paid tribute to his mother, saying: "As Shakespeare said of the earlier Queen Elizabeth, she was a pattern to all princes living."

The hall, with its magnificent hammer-beam roof, is the oldest part of the parliamentary complex — a remnant of the medieval Palace of Westminster that once stood on the site.

The ceremony was held in Westminster Hall because monarchs are not allowed inside the House of Commons. That rule dates from the 17th century, when King Charles I tried to enter and arrest lawmakers. That confrontation between crown and Parliament led to a civil war which ended with the king being beheaded in 1649.

Earlier Monday, a personal statement posted on Harry and his wife Meghan's Archwell website said he cherished their times together "from my earliest childhood memories with you, to meeting you for the first time as my Commander-in-Chief, to the first moment you met my darling wife and hugged your beloved greatgrandchildren."

Amid acrimony in the House of Windsor, Harry quit as a senior royal and moved to the U.S. two years ago. On Saturday, there was a possible sign of a reconciliation as Harry and Meghan joined his brother Prince William and sister-in-law Catherine in meeting mourners outside Windsor Castle.

The national outpouring of grief continued Sunday as thousands of people lined streets and roadsides as the oak coffin was borne from the late queen's beloved Balmoral Castle summer retreat, where she died on Thursday, to Edinburgh.

Later Monday in Edinburgh, the king will walk behind his mother's coffin as it is slowly transported from Holyroodhouse to St. Giles' Cathedral, where the crown of Scotland will be placed on the coffin ahead of a service of prayer and reflection on the life and 70-year reign of the widely cherished monarch.

The queen's coffin will lie at the cathedral for 24 hours, giving members of the public a chance to file past and pay their respects. On Tuesday, it will be flown to London where the coffin will lie in state at the Houses of Parliament Palace from Wednesday afternoon until the morning of the funeral on Sept. 19.

Authorities already have issued rules and guidelines for people wanting to pay their respects in London, with a long queue expected.

After visiting Scotland, Charles embarks on a tour of the other nations that make up the United Kingdom — he visits the Northern Ireland capital, Belfast, on Tuesday and Wales on Friday.

Harry's statement ended on a poignant note alluding to the death last year of his grandfather, Prince Philip, saying that "We, too, smile knowing that you and grandpa are reunited now, and both together in peace."

## Ukraine keeps initiative, claims it reached Russian border

By ELENA BECATOROS and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KHARKIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine kept the counteroffensive momentum in its war against Russia going Monday, saying it liberated one village after another and claiming that in one region it pushed the invaders back right up to the border in a lightning military move that stunned many.

"In some areas of the front, our defenders reached the state border with the Russian Federation," said the regional governor of the northeastern Kharkiv region, Oleh Syniehubov. Russian troops crossed the border in the region on Feb. 24, the first day of the invasion.

Russia acknowledged the military developments by saying it was regrouping. As throughout the war, military claims were hard to verify independently.

After Sunday's attacks by Russia on power stations and other infrastructure that knocked out electricity

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in many places across Ukraine, Kyiv authorities also said that electric power and water supplies have been restored to some 80 percent in the Kharkiv region.

"You are heroes!!!, wrote Kharkiv mayor Ihor Terekhov early in the morning on Telegram, highlighting the ebullient mood in the nation that has endured more than 200 days of war and occupation. "Thanks to everyone who did everything possible on this most difficult night for Kharkiv to normalize the life of the city as soon as possible."

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said that its troops had liberated more than 20 settlements within the past day.

The buoyant mood was also captured by a defiant President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on social media late Sunday, comments that immediately went viral.

"Do you still think you can intimidate, break us, force us to make concessions? Did you really not understand anything? Don't understand who we are? What we stand for? What we are talking about," Zelenskyy exhorted.

"Read my lips," he continued. "Cold, hunger, darkness and thirst for us are not as scary and deadly as your 'friendship' and brotherhood."

He added: "We will be with gas, lights, water and food... and WITHOUT you!"

Yet even amid the ebullience, the casualties kept mounting. Ukraine's presidential office said Monday that at least four civilians were killed and 11 others were wounded in a series of Russian attacks in nine regions of the country. The U.N. Human Rights Office said last week that 5,767 civilians were killed so far.

The Russians continued shelling Nikopol across the Dnieper from the Zaporizhzhia power plant, damaging several buildings there and leaving Europe's largest nuclear facility in a precarious position.

The turn of events and all-important reversal of initiative was backed up by international observers who warned of dire times ahead for Russian troops. It stood in sharp contrast to the first days of the war when Russian troops were moving toward Kyiv's doorstep.

"In the face of Ukrainian advances, Russia has likely ordered the withdrawal of its troops from the entirety of occupied Kharkiv Oblast west of the Oskil River," the British defense ministry said Monday, signifying a major advance by Kyiv. "Ukraine has recaptured territory at least twice the size of Greater London," it said.

The British said that likely will further deteriorate the trust Russian forces have in their commanders. Ukraine's initial move on the southern Kherson area, drawing the attention of enemy troops there, before pouncing on more depleted Russian lines in the northeast beyond Kharkiv has been seen as a great military move so far.

Even around Kherson, Russia is struggling to bring forces across the Dnipro River to stop the Ukrainian offensive there, the British military said.

It added: "The rapid Ukrainian successes have significant implications for Russia's overall operational design. The majority of the force in Ukraine is highly likely being forced to prioritize emergency defensive actions."

The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said Monday that Russia likely lacks the reserve forces it needs to bolster its defenses in Ukraine.

While the war likely will stretch into next year, the institute believes that "Ukraine has turned the tide of this war in its favor" by effectively using Western-supplied weapons like the long-range HIMARS missile system and strong battlefield tactics. "Kyiv will likely increasingly dictate the location and nature of the major fighting."

Seeking to contain its loss of momentum, Russia fired missiles at power plants and other critical infrastructure, immediately meeting with Ukrainian and U.S. criticism for centering on civilian targets.

The bombardment ignited a massive fire at a power station on Kharkiv's western outskirts and killed at least one person. Zelenskyy denounced the "deliberate and cynical missile strikes" against civilian targets as acts of terrorism.

"Russia's apparent response to Ukraine liberating cities and villages in the east: sending missiles to attempt to destroy critical civilian infrastructure," U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget A. Brink wrote.



Separately, the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in the Russia-occupied south completely shut down in a bid to prevent a radiation disaster as fighting raged nearby.

## **New Zealand PM says no republic plan following queen's death**

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Monday that her government will not pursue any moves to change the country into a republic following the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

Ardern said she thought New Zealand will eventually become a republic, and it would probably happen within her lifetime, but that there were more pressing issues for her government.

The remarks were her first about the New Zealand republic debate since the queen's death, and reflect previous comments she has made on the issue. Ardern has also previously expressed her support for the country eventually becoming a republic.

Under the current system, the British monarch is New Zealand's head of state, represented in New Zealand by a governor-general. The governor-general's role these days is considered primarily ceremonial.

Still, many people argue that New Zealand won't fully step out from the shadows of its colonialist past and become a truly independent nation until it becomes a republic.

"There's been a debate, probably for a number of years," Ardern said. "It's just the pace, and how widely that debate is occurring. I've made my view plain many times. I do believe that is where New Zealand will head, in time. I believe it is likely to occur in my lifetime.

"But I don't see it as a short-term measure or anything that is on the agenda any time soon," Ardern said.

She said that becoming a republic was not something her government planned to discuss at any point.

"As I say, in large part actually because I've never sensed the urgency," Ardern said. "There are so many challenges we face. This is a large, significant debate. I don't think it's one that would or should occur quickly."

The death of Elizabeth and ascension of King Charles III to the throne has revived the republic debate in many countries around the world.

Charles became the head of state not only in the United Kingdom and New Zealand but also in 13 other countries, including Canada, Jamaica and Australia.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese started laying the groundwork for an Australian republic after he was elected in May. But he said Sunday that now is not the time for a change but rather for paying tribute to Elizabeth. He previously said that holding a referendum on becoming a republic is not a priority of his first term in government.

Many people in New Zealand have speculated in the past that the republic debate would gather momentum only after the death of Elizabeth, given how beloved she was by so many.

Ardern said she didn't link the two events. "I've never attached it in that way," she said.

Elizabeth's image features on many of New Zealand's coins and banknotes, prompting the nation's central bank to advise people the currency depicting her remains legal tender following her death.

Ardern also announced Monday that New Zealand will mark the death of Elizabeth with a public holiday on Sept. 26. The nation will hold a state memorial service on that day in the capital, Wellington.

Ardern said Elizabeth was an extraordinary person and many New Zealanders would appreciate the opportunity to mark her death and celebrate her life.

"As New Zealand's queen and much-loved sovereign for over 70 years, it is appropriate that we mark her life of dedicated public service with a state memorial service and a one-off public holiday," Ardern said.

Ardern said she will leave this week for Britain to attend Elizabeth's funeral.

## **Swiss propose nuclear waste storage site near German border**

BERLIN (AP) — Switzerland's nuclear waste authority has proposed building the country's permanent

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waste storage site close to the border with Germany, a decision viewed warily by its northern neighbor. The choice of the Noerdlich Laegern site ends a 14-year search for a preferred location, itself preceded by previous failed attempts. The head of waste authority Nagra, Matthias Braun, said on Monday that "the geology has spoken" and "Noerdlich Laegern is the best location with the biggest safety reserves." Two other locations had been under consideration for a site that is meant to be the permanent home for all Switzerland's nuclear waste, which is currently kept at temporary storage facilities. A thick level of opalinus clay, which is "very dense" and "binds radioactive material almost like a magnet," is key to the choice of the site, Braun told reporters in the Swiss capital, Bern. Nagra's choice is only the start of a long process. It's expected to be years before the government can sign off on the site, which would still need approval from parliament and possibly face a referendum. Construction could start in 2045, with the first waste being stored around 30 years from now. The site is very close to the border with Germany, which is at best ambivalent toward nuclear power. The last three German nuclear power plants are due to shut at the end of this year, though the government wants to keep the option of reactivating two of them in case of an energy shortage in the following months. A deputy German environment minister, Christian Kuehn, told news agency dpa after news of the choice first emerged over the weekend that the site would put "a great strain" on nearby areas. The mayor of the nearby German town of Hohentengen, Martin Benz, made clear that he wants information on possible accident scenarios and plans to deal with them. Germany hasn't yet chosen a permanent storage site for its own nuclear waste and isn't expected to until 2031. A new search for a storage site, which authorities hope to start using in 2050, was launched two years ago.

## Former Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis faces fraud trial

PRAGUE (AP) — Former Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis went on trial on Monday in a \$2 million fraud case involving European Union subsidies. The case involves a farm known as the Stork's Nest that received EU subsidies after its ownership was transferred from the Babis-owned Agrofert conglomerate of around 250 companies to Babis' family members. Later, Agrofert again took ownership of the farm. The subsidies were meant for medium- and small-sized businesses, and Agrofert wouldn't have been eligible for them. Agrofert later returned the subsidy. Lawmakers have had to lift Babis' immunity from prosecution three times in the course of the years in the case that dates to 2007. Prague's public prosecution office completed the review of the case in March and went ahead with Babis' indictment. It was repeatedly recommended by police investigators. Babis, a populist billionaire, denies any wrongdoing and has repeatedly said the allegations against him were politically motivated. He was present at Prague's Municipal Court on Monday. His former associate, Jana Nagyova, stood trial with him. The prosecution asked for suspended sentences and fines for them. It's not immediately clear when a verdict might be issued. Babis' ANO political movement lost the parliamentary election in October. A coalition of five parties formed a new government, and ANO ended up in opposition. He is currently considering running for the largely ceremonial post of the country's president.

## Closing arguments set for R. Kelly trial on fixing charges

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Closing arguments are scheduled Monday for R. Kelly and two co-defendants in the R&B singer's trial on federal charges of trial-fixing, child pornography and enticing minors for sex, with

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jury deliberations to follow.

Minutes before the defense rested late Friday, Kelly co-defendant and ex-business manager Derrell McDavid ended three days on the stand. He testified for nearly two days that he had believed Kelly when he denied abusing minors — then said he started having doubts about Kelly's believability during the trial that started last month.

Kelly and McDavid are charged with fixing Kelly's 2008 state child pornography trial — at which Kelly was acquitted — by threatening witnesses and concealing video evidence. Both also face child pornography charges. A third co-defendant, Kelly associate Milton Brown, is accused of receiving child pornography.

Prosecutors normally get a chance to call witnesses in a rebuttal of the defense case. But when they told Judge Harry Leinenweber that they needed time to prepare, he said there would be no rebuttal and the case would go straight to closing arguments Monday morning.

McDavid was the only one of the three defendants to testify on his own behalf.

Kelly, 55, already was sentenced to 30 years in prison in June after a separate federal trial in New York.

Known for his smash hit "I Believe I Can Fly" and for sex-infused songs such as "Bump n' Grind," Kelly sold millions of albums even after allegations of sexual misconduct began circulating in the 1990s. Widespread outrage emerged after the #MeToo reckoning and the 2019 docuseries "Surviving R. Kelly."

During Kelly's monthlong trial in 2008, state prosecutors played a 30-minute, sexually explicit video dozens of times on large screens throughout the courtroom. Prosecutors said it showed Kelly abusing a 14-year-old girl, "Jane."

The ongoing trial in Kelly's hometown is, in ways, a do-over of the 2008 trial. The single video was at the heart of that trial and is also in evidence at the current trial.

Jane, then an adult, did not testify at that 2008 trial, which jurors cited as a reason they couldn't convict Kelly. She testified at the current trial that she was the person in that video. She also said Kelly sexually abused her hundreds of times starting when she was 14.

## **EXPLAINER: Ukraine's nuclear power plant shutdown cuts risks**

By ANDREW KATELL and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The forced shutdown of Ukraine's endangered and crippled Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant — Europe's largest — significantly reduces the risk of a radiation disaster that has haunted the world for weeks.

The last of the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia plant's six nuclear reactors was shut down Sunday because Russia's military actions in Ukraine had repeatedly cut reliable external power supplies. That power is needed to prevent the reactors from overheating to the point of a meltdown that could breach the surrounding concrete and steel containment buildings and spew radiation through Ukraine, Russia and other nearby countries.

Since a Sept. 5 fire caused by shelling knocked the plant off of all external transmission lines, the sixth reactor had had to keep operating — at reduced output — to power reactor cooling and other crucial safety equipment. This "island mode" is unreliable and not designed to be more than a stopgap measure, Ukrainian officials say. On Sunday, one plant connection to Ukraine's power grid was restored, so the sixth reactor's power wasn't needed for the safety systems.

Here is a look at the risks, impact and what could be done if external power is lost again.

### **WHY WAS THE SIXTH REACTOR SHUT DOWN?**

The Zaporizhzhia plant's Ukrainian operators apparently decided that it was too risky to operate any of the six reactors, because the fighting had endangered external power supplies for cooling and other safety systems. But when all external power was lost, they couldn't shut down all the reactors. They needed power from at least one reactor to run the safety systems. When external power was restored using a reserve transmission line, they executed a "cold shutdown" of the sixth reactor — inserting control rods into the reactor core to stop the nuclear fission reaction and generation of heat and pressure.

### **HOW DOES THE SHUTDOWN REDUCE THE RISKS?**

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With all nuclear reactions stopped, temperatures and pressure inside reactors gradually decline, reducing the required intensity of water cooling of the radioactive fuel. This is a nuclear power plant's safest operating mode.

"A cold shutdown enormously reduces the meltdown risk," Steven Arndt, president of the American Nuclear Society and a scientist at the U.S. Oak Ridge National Laboratory, said in an interview Sunday.

Still, International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Grossi said Sunday he remains "gravely concerned about the situation at the plant, which remains in danger as long as any shelling continues."

## WHAT HAPPENS IF EXTERNAL POWER IS LOST AGAIN?

With all reactors shut down, if fighting or other problems cause another loss of external power, plant operators would have more time to arrange a backup power source to run the cooling systems, and the cooling load would be decreased, Arndt said. This is because the heat is coming from decaying fuel, not an active fission reaction.

"Every hour that goes forward, the possibility of a meltdown of fuel becomes less and less," he said.

Cooling systems are also needed for spent nuclear fuel — that is, fuel that has already been used in the reactors but must be kept under water until it's cool enough to be moved outside the reactor containment buildings into dry storage.

If external power to the Zaporizhzhia plant is lost again, engineers could turn to 20 emergency backup diesel generators, as they've done at least once since the war began. The IAEA said only power from one diesel generator per reactor is needed to maintain safety. While Ukrainian authorities have estimated that they have enough diesel fuel in storage to operate the safety systems for at least 10 days, Petro Kotin, the head of the plant's operator, Energoatom, said last week, "Diesel generators are actually the station's last defense before a radiation accident can be expected."

Commenting after the restoration of external power on Sunday, Arndt gave a more upbeat assessment: "We are cautiously optimistic that the plant is in a relatively stable place because of cooling from offsite power and the backup diesel generators."

## IS THE SHUTDOWN OF ZAPORIZHZHIA CAUSING POWER BLACKOUTS?

While power blackouts have plagued Ukraine repeatedly during the war, they appear to be largely a result of shelling of other electricity generation plants and infrastructure, rather than loss of generation from the Zaporizhzhia plant. The Zaporizhzhia regional administration's spokesman, Volodymyr Marchuk, said villages around Enerhodar, where the plant is situated, are without electricity because of the plant's shutdown but that alternative power plants, such as the Dnipro Hydroelectric Power Plant, are feeding power to the electric grid.

## **In parts of Mideast, power generators spew toxic fumes 24/7**

By ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — They literally run the country.

In parking lots, on flatbed trucks, hospital courtyards and rooftops, private generators are ubiquitous in parts of the Middle East, spewing hazardous fumes into homes and businesses 24 hours a day.

As the world looks for renewable energy to tackle climate change, millions of people around the region depend almost completely on diesel-powered private generators to keep the lights on because war or mismanagement have gutted electricity infrastructure.

Experts call it national suicide from an environmental and health perspective.

"Air pollution from diesel generators contains more than 40 toxic air contaminants, including many known or suspected cancer-causing substances," said Samy Kayed, managing director and co-founder of the Environment Academy at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon.

Greater exposure to these pollutants likely increases respiratory illnesses and cardiovascular disease, he said. It also causes acid rain that harms plant growth and increases eutrophication — the excess build-up of nutrients in water that ultimately kills aquatic plants.

Since they usually use diesel, generators also produce far more climate change-inducing emissions than,

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for example, a natural gas power plant does, he said.

The pollutants caused by massive generators add to the many environmental woes of the Middle East, which is one of the most vulnerable regions in the world to the impact of climate change. The region already has high temperatures and limited water resources even without the growing impact of global warming.

The reliance on generators results from state failure. In Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere, governments can't maintain a functioning central power network, whether because of war, conflict or mismanagement and corruption.

Lebanon, for example, has not built a new power plant in decades. Multiple plans for new ones have run aground on politicians' factionalism and conflicting patronage interests. The country's few aging, heavy-fuel oil plants long ago became unable to meet demand.

Iraq, meanwhile, sits on some of the world's biggest oil reserves. Yet scorching summer-time heat is always accompanied by the roar of neighborhood generators, as residents blast ACs around the clock to keep cool.

Repeated wars over the decades have wrecked Iraq's electricity networks. Corruption has siphoned away billions of dollars meant to repair and upgrade it. Some 17 billion cubic meters of gas from Iraq's wells are burned every year as waste, because it hasn't built the infrastructure to capture it and convert it to electricity to power Iraqi homes.

In Libya, a country prized for its light and sweet crude oil, electricity networks have buckled under years of civil war and the lack of a central government.

"The power cuts last the greater part of the day, when electricity is mostly needed," said Muataz Shobaik, the owner of a butcher shop in the city of Benghazi, in Libya's east, who uses a noisy generator to keep his coolers running.

"Every business has to have a backup off-grid solution now," he said. Diesel fumes from his and neighboring shops' machines hung thick in the air amid the oppressive heat.

The Gaza Strip's 2.3 million people rely on around 700 neighborhood generators across the territory for their homes. Thousands of private generators keep businesses, government institutions, universities and health centers running. Running on diesel, they churn black smoke in the air, tarring walls around them.

Since Israel bombed the only power plant in the Hamas-ruled territory in 2014, the station has never reached full capacity. Gaza only gets about half the power it needs from the plant and directly from Israel. Cutoffs can last up to 16 hours a day.

## WAY OF LIFE

Perhaps nowhere do generators rule people's lives as much as in Lebanon, where the system is so entrenched and institutionalized that private generator owners have their own business association.

They are crammed into tight streets, parking lots, on roofs and balconies and in garages. Some are as large as storage containers, others small and blaring noise.

Lebanon's 5 million people have long depended on them. The word "moteur," French for generator, is one of the most often spoken words among Lebanese.

Reliance has only increased since Lebanon's economy unraveled in late 2019 and central power cutoffs began lasting longer. At the same time, generator owners have had to ration use because of soaring diesel prices and high temperatures, turning them off several times a day for breaks.

So residents plan their lives around the gaps in electricity.

Those who can't start the day without coffee set an alarm to make a cup before the generator turns off. The frail or elderly in apartment towers wait for the generator to switch on before leaving home so they don't have to climb stairs. Hospitals must keep generators humming so life-saving machines can operate without disruption.

"We understand people's frustration, but if it wasn't for us, people would be living in darkness," said Ihab, the Egyptian operator of a generator station north of Beirut.

"They say we are more powerful than the state, but it is the absence of the state that led us to exist," he said, giving only his first name to avoid trouble with the authorities.

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Siham Hanna, a 58-year-old translator in Beirut, said generator fumes exacerbate her elderly father's lung condition. She wipes soot off her balcony and other surfaces several times a day.

"It's the 21st century, but we live like in the stone ages. Who lives like this?" said Hanna, who does not recall her country ever having stable electricity in her life.

Some in Lebanon and elsewhere have begun to install solar power systems in their homes. But most use it only to fill in when the generator is off. Cost and space issues in urban areas have also limited solar use.

In Iraq, the typical middle-income household uses generator power for 10 hours a day on average and pays \$240 per Megawatt/hour, among the highest rates in the region, according to a report by the International Energy Agency.

The need for generators has become engrained in people's minds. At a recent concert in the capital, famed singer Umm Ali al-Malla made sure to thank not only the audience but also the venue's technical director "for keeping the generator going" while her admirers danced.

## TOXIC CONTAMINANTS

As opposed to power plants outside urban areas, generators are in the heart of neighborhoods, pumping toxins directly to residents.

This is catastrophic, said Najat Saliba, a chemist at the American University of Beirut who recently won a seat in Parliament.

"This is extremely taxing on the environment, especially the amount of black carbon and particles that they emit," she said. There are almost no regulations and no filtering of particles, she added.

Researchers at AUB found that the level of toxic emissions may have quadrupled since Lebanon's financial crisis began because of increased reliance on generators.

In Iraq's northern city of Mosul, miles of wires crisscross streets connecting thousands of private generators. Each produces 600 kilograms of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases per 8 hours working time, according to Mohammed al Hazem, an environmental activist.

Similarly, a 2020 study on the environmental impact of using large generators in the University of Technology in Baghdad found very high concentrations of pollutants exceeding limits set by the United States' Environmental Protection Agency and the World Health Organization.

That was particularly because Iraqi diesel fuel has a high sulphur content — "one of the worst in the world," the study said. The emissions include "sulphate, nitrate materials, atoms of soot carbon, ash" and pollutants that are considered carcinogens, it warned.

"The pollutants emitted from these generators exert a remarkable impact on the overall health of students and university staff, it said.

## Georgia's shifting politics force GOP to look beyond Atlanta

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

TOCCOA, Ga. (AP) — When Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp made one of his first general election campaign swings in August, he went straight to the modern heartland of the state's Republican Party.

It wasn't Buckhead, the glitzy Atlanta neighborhood where Kemp lives in a governor's mansion dwarfed by other nearby estates. And it wasn't suburban Cobb County, once the bastion of Newt Gingrich.

Instead, Kemp kept going north, deep into the Georgia mountains that have become one of the most Republican areas in the country over the last three decades. He stopped at a gas station turned coffee shop in Toccoa to urge people to "turn out an even bigger vote here in this county and in northeast Georgia than we've ever seen before."

"Ask your kids, your grandkids, your friend's kid, are they registered to vote?" Kemp told attendees. "If they're eligible, and they're not, we got to get them registered, and we've got to go tell them to pull it for the home team."

The emphasis on this rural region represents a notable shift in the GOP's strategy in Georgia. The party grew into a powerhouse in Georgia once it began combining a strong performance in the Atlanta suburbs with growing dominance in rural areas. But that coalition has frayed in recent years as voters in the boom-

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ing Atlanta region rejected the GOP under former President Donald Trump, turning this onetime Republican stronghold into the South's premier swing state.

A 41-county region, including some distant Atlanta suburbs encroaching into north Georgia, now has as many GOP voters as the core of metro Atlanta, according to an analysis by The Associated Press. Those changing dynamics have intensified pressure on Kemp to maintain — or strengthen — his support in rural mountainous communities like Toccoa to offset losses closer to the capital city.

"The party ... in terms of understanding where they're going to get votes, understands that now they need those votes in north Georgia to compensate for their losses in the suburbs," said Bernard Fraga, an Emory University political scientist.

Kemp won the governor's office in 2018 by defeating Democrat Stacey Abrams by just 1.4 percentage points. As the two wage a rematch for the post this year, early summer polling found a close race, with some suggesting Kemp has a narrow advantage.

But his reliance on voters like those in Toccoa is driving the party further to the right.

In a diversifying state, north Georgia is overwhelmingly white. While Democrats attack and Republicans fret over abortion restrictions in the suburbs, there's little public wavering in the mountains. Voters love guns so much that they cut out the middleman and chose gun dealer Andrew Clyde as one of north Georgia's two very Trumpy members of Congress. The other member? Marjorie Taylor Greene.

"It reflects a lot of the country right now, in the sense that it's very populist, very close to the vest, very isolated in the sense of distrust of government, very strong-willed, mountain Appalachian-type individuals that are very self sufficient," said former Rep. Doug Collins, the Republican who preceded Clyde in representing northeast Georgia's 9th Congressional District.

Kathy Petrella, a Clarkesville retiree who was visiting the state Department of Driver Services in early September in Toccoa, said she's a "true blue conservative."

"It means I don't believe in the government telling me anything I have to do, except law and order," said Petrella, who cites her Christian faith as an important anchor of her political affiliation and fears a decline into "communism."

Lee MacAulay of the north Georgia town of Cleveland, also visiting Toccoa, said she believes Trump won the 2020 election and calls President Joe Biden "a ridiculous joke" and "an idiot."

"I was a Trumper," MacAulay said. "I am a Trumper."

She discounts the idea that lingering doubts about the 2020 election will suppress turnout as they appeared to do in the 2021 Senate runoff elections, when victories by Democrats Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff gave their party control of Congress. MacAulay said she believes many neighbors are eager to vote for Republicans this year, "but we need everybody."

Jay Doss, a Toccoa lawyer, said he feels "working-class people are benefited more by the conservative party" and that "I just feel that less government is better for everybody."

There was once another conservative tradition in north Georgia — in the Democratic Party. While there were always some Republicans, a legacy of white mountaineers who backed the Union over the Confederacy in the Civil War, they won few elections.

"It used to be slap Democrat. If you ran Republican, you could not get elected. Now, if you run Democrat, you ain't got a chance much of getting elected," said Stephens County Commissioner Dennis Bell, a Republican who owns Currahee Station, the coffee shop where Kemp campaigned in Toccoa.

That Democratic lineage, nourished by the 1930s-era New Deal, produced former Gov. Zell Miller, a proud son of the mountains and titan of Georgia Democratic politics a generation ago.

Miller rode high in the 1990s as a Democrat who combatted crime and overhauled welfare, while creating lottery-funded college scholarships. Miller even squeaked out a reelection victory in the 1994 "Republican Revolution" that vaulted Gingrich to U.S. House speaker.

That year, Miller actually lost his home region to Republican Guy Millner, a self-financed millionaire businessman. But Miller lost by fewer than 4,000 votes across north Georgia, and Millner's strength in suburban Atlanta wasn't enough, leaving the Republican 32,000 votes short statewide.

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By 2004, as a U.S. senator, Miller was giving the keynote speech at the Republican National Convention that renominated George W. Bush. By then, Miller had written "A National Party No More," a book that blamed his own party for abandoning Southern conservative Democrats.

"Obviously, southerners believe the national Democratic Party does not share their values," Miller wrote in the 2003 book. "They do not trust the national party with their money or the security of the country."

North Georgia was 19% of Millner's vote in 1994. It was 26% of Kemp's vote in 2018. Some of that is due to population growth, but reflects a partisan shift to Republicans. Millner won less than 51% of the vote in the region. Kemp won almost 72%.

Democrats, enduring steep decline, grew demoralized. June Krise, who then chaired the Democratic Party in north Georgia's White County, remembers crying when the county probate judge, clerk of court and sheriff all switched to run as Republicans.

"If we don't switch, we will lose because the Republicans are going to run somebody against us," Krise remembers the men telling her. "And guess why they were going to lose. Barack Obama was the Democratic nominee for president."

Republicans say formerly Democratic voters gravitated to their party because of cultural issues, but those who study the electorate note white voters are much more likely to be Republican, and Appalachia made a hard turn against Obama, the nation's first Black president.

"The Republican Party has now started organizing itself, I think, to be more in line with the white people who are there — more rural, less urban-interested, even less suburban-interested, in terms of the state party," Fraga said. "And that's looks more like North Georgia in a lot of ways."

Fraga sees the split in the Georgia Republican Party over Trump's attempt to overturn Joe Biden's 2020 presidential victory in Georgia in part as a conflict between suburban and rural. Suburban-identified politicians including Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger were willing to oppose Trump, Fraga said, while Republicans representing more rural areas, such as Greene, were "on the Trump train."

Democrats have been trying to rebuild. Mike Maley, a Toccoa pediatrician who chairs the Stephens County Democratic Party, says just getting people on the ballot helps get the message out.

"I have hope for our community," Maley said. "I feel like we can make a difference and this is worth fighting for."

Democrats note that even if they're not going to win in places like Stephens County, where more than 80% of voters chose Kemp in 2018 and Trump in 2020, each additional vote counts in Georgia's ultra-close statewide elections. That's what brought Abrams to the mountain town of Clayton on July 28.

"Why would you go there?" Abrams told Rabun County Democrats she was asked about her trip. "Because counties don't vote, people do."

Abrams' strategy is simple. Get more Democrats to vote across the state, backed up by a campaign that sometimes seems focused more on rural areas than her home turf of Atlanta.

"We've got to boost turnout dramatically across the board," Abrams said that day. "But we've already seen it's possible."

But many voters, like Bell, will be looking to Kemp and other Republicans. The Stephens County commissioner says Democrats are "going way too far to the left" and says debt, spending and restrictions on oil and gas drilling make a GOP vote in north Georgia "a no-brainer."

## Australian PM defends ban on Parliament due to royal's death

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australia's prime minister on Monday defended an obscure and longstanding protocol that bars the nation's parliament from sitting for 15 days following a British monarch's death.

Lawmakers will reconvene on Sept. 23 to debate a condolence motion for Queen Elizabeth II, the earliest date that the protocol allows, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said.

While presenting himself as a traditionalist, Albanese wants an Australian president to replace the British monarch as the nation's head of state. But he has brushed off questions about creating an Australian



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republic since the queen's death.

Most advocates for and against a republic are avoiding saying anything that might be seen as seeking advantage from the death of a widely respected monarch.

Britain apparently doesn't have a comparable protocol and King Charles III, monarch of both Britain and Australia, will address the British Parliament this week.

Because the last British monarch died in 1952, few knew of the Australian protocol. Only two kings had died between then and when Parliament first sat in 1901.

Asked who was behind the protocol, Albanese replied it had "been in place for a long period of time."

"There is something to be said for a prime minister who follows tradition, who follows protocols and who follows order," Albanese told reporters. "That is something that I have done to define my prime minister-ship – respect for those traditions."

Parliamentary debate in Australia often degenerates into heated and unedifying personal abuse, particularly during Question Time, when lawmakers interrogate ministers about issues of the day.

"The idea that we could be debating Question Time as usual, that we could be having the engagement as if it was business as usual is, I believe, not correct," Albanese said.

While the opposition has accepted the new parliamentary schedule, senior opposition Sen. Simon Birmingham expected the protocol would be reviewed.

"The custom and tradition here is appropriate for us to follow on this occasion. No doubt people will look carefully at these traditions in the future and assess how they carry forward," Birmingham told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Anne Twomey, a Sydney University constitutional lawyer, said the protocol was not binding on the government.

"It's like curtsying to the queen. There's no law that requires it. It's just a matter of whether or not you choose to do it," Twomey said.

Albanese and the monarch's representative in Australia, Governor-General David Hurley, will represent the nation at the queen's funeral next week.

Australia was working with his New Zealand counterpart Jacinda Ardern to help leaders of another nine British Commonwealth island nations in the Oceania region attend the funeral, Albanese said.

He has not said whether any leader has accepted Australia's offer of help.

"We want to ensure that no nation in our region, in the Pacific, as part of the Pacific family, is unable to attend the memorial service for Queen Elizabeth because of logistical concerns," Albanese said.

## Trial set to begin for Alex Jones in Sandy Hook hoax case

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — A month after losing one nearly \$50 million verdict, conspiracy theorist Alex Jones is set to go on trial a second time for calling the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting a hoax and causing several of the victims' families emotional and psychological harm.

A six-member jury with several alternates in Connecticut will begin hearing evidence Tuesday on how much Jones should pay the families, since he already has been found liable for damages to them. The trial is expected to last about four weeks.

Last month, a Texas jury ordered Jones to pay \$49.3 million to the parents of 6-year-old Jesse Lewis, one of 26 students and teachers killed in the 2012 shooting in Newtown, Connecticut. Jones' lawyer has said an appeal is planned.

The Connecticut case has the potential for a larger award because it involves three lawsuits — which have been consolidated — that were filed by 15 plaintiffs, including the relatives of nine of the victims and a former FBI agent who responded to the school shooting.

Jones, who runs his web show and Infowars brand in Austin, Texas, also faces a third trial over the hoax conspiracy in another pending lawsuit by Sandy Hook parents in Texas.

Here is a look at the upcoming trial in Waterbury, Connecticut, about 18 miles (29 kilometers) northeast

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of Newtown. Infowars' parent company, Free Speech Systems, which has filed for bankruptcy protection, is also a defendant.

## WHY ARE THE SANDY HOOK FAMILIES SUING JONES?

The families and former FBI agent William Aldenberg say they have been confronted and harassed in person by Jones' followers because of the hoax conspiracy. They also say they have endured death threats and been subjected to abusive comments on social media.

Some of the plaintiffs say strangers have videotaped them and their surviving children. And some families have moved out of Newtown to avoid threats and harassment.

"I can't even describe the last nine and a half years, the living hell that I and others have had to endure because of the recklessness and negligence of Alex Jones," Neil Heslin, Jesse Lewis' father, testified during the Texas trial.

The Connecticut lawsuit alleges defamation, intentional infliction of emotional distress and violations of the state Unfair Trade Practices Act. The families claim when Jones talked about Sandy Hook, he boosted his audience and raked in more profits from selling supplements, clothing and other items.

The families have not asked for any specific amount of damages, some of which may be limited by state laws. There are no damage limits, however, under the Unfair Trade Practices Act.

In all the Connecticut and Texas cases, Jones and his lawyers repeatedly failed to turn over records as required to the families' attorneys. In response, judges handed down one of the harshest sanctions in the civil legal world — they found Jones liable for damages by default without trials.

## WHAT DOES ALEX JONES SAY?

In a reversal from what he said on his show for years following the shooting, Jones now says he believes the massacre was real. But he continues to say his comments about the shooting being a hoax involving crisis actors to encourage gun control efforts were protected by free speech rights.

During a deposition in the case in April, a defiant Jones insisted he wasn't responsible for the suffering that Sandy Hook parents say they have endured because of his words.

He also has said the judges' default rulings against him — finding him liable without trials — were unfair and suggested they were part of a conspiracy to put him out of business and silence him.

"If questioning public events and free speech is banned because it might hurt somebody's feelings, we are not in America anymore," he said at the deposition. "They can change the channel. They can come out and say I'm wrong. They have free speech."

At the Texas trial, however, Jones testified that he now realizes what he said was irresponsible, did hurt people's feelings and he apologized.

## WHAT IS EXPECTED AT THE TRIAL?

Judge Barbara Bellis, who found Jones liable for damages, will oversee the trial. She is the same judge who oversaw Sandy Hook families' lawsuit against gun maker Remington, which made the Bushmaster rifle used in the school shooting. In February, Remington agreed to settle the lawsuit for \$73 million.

The trial is expected to be similar to the one in Texas, with victims' relatives testifying about the pain and anguish the hoax conspiracy caused them and medical professionals answering questions about the relatives' mental health and diagnoses.

Jones also will be testifying, said his lawyer, Norman Pattis.

"He is looking forward to putting this trial behind him; it has been a long and costly distraction," Pattis wrote in an email to The Associated Press.

Evidence about Jones' finances is also expected to be presented to the jury.

Jones testified at the Texas trial that any award over \$2 million would "sink us," and he urged his web show viewers to buy his merchandise to help keep him on air and fight the lawsuits.

But an economist testified that Jones and his company were worth up to \$270 million. Jones faces another lawsuit in Texas over accusations that he hid millions of dollars in assets after families of Sandy Hook victims began taking him to court.

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## 'Squid Game,' 'Succession,' 'Ted Lasso' vie for Emmy Awards

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Emmy Awards host Kenan Thompson and the ceremony's producers are promising a feel-good event — a phrase not applicable to several of the top nominated shows.

The best drama contenders include the violently dystopian "Squid Game," bleak workplace satire "Severance" and "Succession," about a powerful and cutthroat family. Even comedy nominee "Ted Lasso," the defending champ, took a storytelling dark turn.

But after several pandemic-constrained awards seasons, Monday's 74th Primetime Emmy Awards (airing 8 p.m. EDT on NBC, streaming on Peacock) will be big and festive, executive producers Reginald Hudlin and Ian Stewart said.

They're actually taking a page from last year's scaled-down ceremony and its club-style table seating for nominees.

"They had a ball. They had a party. They celebrated themselves," Stewart said, recalling a comment made by actor Sophia Bush at the evening's end: "Oh, my God, I actually had fun at the Emmys."

The tables will be back and again reserved for nominees — and their "significantans," Stewart said — but there will be some 3,000 other guests seated traditionally in the temporarily reconfigured 7,000-seat Microsoft Theater in downtown Los Angeles.

"When the nominees are having a great time that translates on screen," Hudlin said, citing the "passionate, touching" speeches delivered by winners.

Thompson, the veteran "Saturday Night Live" cast member taking his first turn as Emmys host, said he wants to enjoy the ceremony and make sure others do.

"This should be a night of appreciating artistry and creativity and removing the stress of it all out. I get it — it sucks to lose, and everybody's picking outfits and trying to do the red carpet thing," Thompson said. "But at the same time, it's an awesome thing to be in the room on Emmys night, and I don't want that to get lost in the stress."

He doesn't expect anything mirroring the Will Smith-Chris Rock confrontation that cast a shadow over the Oscars earlier this year, Thompson said.

Although HBO's "Succession," which won the best drama series award in 2020, and "Ted Lasso" from Apple TV+ are considered the frontrunners for top series honors, there's potential for surprises. Netflix's "Squid Game," a global sensation, would be the first non-English language drama series to win an Emmy.

On the comedy side, ABC's acclaimed newcomer "Abbott Elementary" could become the first broadcast show to win the best comedy award since the network's "Modern Family" in 2014. It's also among the few contenders this year, along with "Squid Game," to field a substantial number of nominees of color.

At the Emmy creative arts ceremonies held earlier this month, the mockumentary-style show about educators in an underfunded Philadelphia school, won the trophy for outstanding comedy series casting. "Succession" won the drama series casting award.

"The Crown," last year's big winner, wasn't in the running this time because it sat out the Emmys eligibility period. The dramatized account of Queen Elizabeth's reign and family life will return for its fifth season in November, as Britain mourns the loss of its longest-serving monarch who died Thursday at age 96.

## Americans give health care system failing mark: AP-NORC poll

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Emmanuel Obeng-Dankwa is worried about making rent on his New York City apartment, he sometimes holds off on filling his blood pressure medication.

"If there's no money, I prefer to skip the medication to being homeless," said Obeng-Dankwa, a 58-year-old security guard.

He is among a majority of adults in the U.S. who say that health care is not handled well in the country, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The poll reveals that public satisfaction with the U.S. health care system is remarkably low, with fewer

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than half of Americans saying it is generally handled well. Only 12% say it is handled extremely or very well. Americans have similar views about health care for older adults.

Overall, the public gives even lower marks for how prescription drug costs, the quality of care at nursing homes and mental health care are being handled, with just 6 percent or less saying those health services are done very well in the country.

"Navigating the American health care system is exceedingly frustrating," said A. Mark Fendrick, the director of the University of Michigan Center for Value-Based Insurance Design. "The COVID pandemic has only made it worse."

More than two years after the pandemic's start, health care worker burnout and staffing shortages are plaguing hospitals around the country. And Americans are still having trouble getting in-person medical care after health centers introduced restrictions as COVID-19 killed and sickened millions of people around the country, Fendrick said.

In fact, the poll shows an overwhelming majority of Americans, nearly 8 in 10, say they are at least moderately concerned about getting access to quality health care when they need it.

Black and Hispanic adults in particular are resoundingly worried about health care access, with nearly 6 in 10 saying they are very or extremely concerned about getting good care. Fewer than half of white adults, 44%, expressed the same level of worry.

Racial disparities have long troubled America's health care system. They have been abundantly clear during the COVID-19 pandemic, with Black and Hispanic people dying disproportionately from the virus. Black and Hispanic men also make up a disproportionately high rate of recent monkeypox infections.

Fifty-three percent of women said they are extremely or very concerned about obtaining quality care, compared to 42% of men.

While Americans are united in their dissatisfaction with the health care system, that agreement dissolves when it comes to solutions to fix it.

About two-thirds of adults think it is the federal government's responsibility to make sure all Americans have health care coverage, with adults ages 18 to 49 more likely than those over 50 to hold that view. The percentage of people who believe health care coverage is a government responsibility has risen in recent years, ticking up from 57% in 2019 and 62% in 2017.

Still, there's not consensus on how that coverage might be delivered.

About 4 in 10 Americans say they support a single-payer health care system that would require Americans to get their health insurance from a government plan. More, 58%, say they favor a government health insurance plan that anyone can purchase.

There also is broad support for policies that would help Americans pay for the costs of long-term care, including a government-administered insurance plan similar to Medicare, the federal government's health insurance for people 65 or older.

Retired nurse Pennie Wright, of Camden, Tennessee, doesn't like the idea of a government-run health care system.

After switching to Medicare this year, she was surprised to walk out of her annual well-woman visit, once fully covered by her private insurance plan, with a \$200 bill.

She prefers the flexibility she had on her private insurance plan.

"I feel like we have the best health care system in the world, we have a choice of where we want to go," Wright said.

A majority of Americans, roughly two-thirds, were happy to see the government step in to provide free COVID-19 testing, vaccines and treatment. Roughly 2 in 10 were neutral about the government's response.

The government's funding for free COVID-19 tests dried up at the beginning of the month. And while the White House says the latest batch of recommended COVID-19 boosters will be free to anyone who wants one, it doesn't have money on hand to buy any future rounds of booster shots for every American.

Eighty percent say they support the federal government negotiating for lower drug prices. President Joe Biden this summer signed a landmark bill into law allowing Medicare to negotiate the price of prescription

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drugs. The move is expected to save taxpayers as much as \$100 billion over the next decade.

"Medication costs should be low, to the minimum so that everyone can afford it," said Obeng-Dankwa, the Bronx renter who has trouble paying for his medication. "Those who are poor should be able to get all the necessary health they need, in the same way someone who also has the money to pay for it."

## What to watch in last multistate primaries of midterm season

By HOLLY RAMER and JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Delaware will host the final multistate primary elections of the 2022 midterm season Tuesday, with contests to select candidates for governor, U.S. Senate and the U.S. House.

Because of their late primaries, the winners of Tuesday's races will have a mere eight weeks to win over voters ahead of the Nov. 8 general election. Delaware's primary will feature just one contested statewide race — the Democratic primary for auditor.

As in earlier contests in other states, former President Donald Trump's shadow looms large over some key races to be decided Tuesday, particularly in New Hampshire.

What to watch:

### SUNUNU SEEKS A FOURTH TERM AS NEW HAMPSHIRE GOVERNOR

Until late last year, New Hampshire's Republican Gov. Chris Sununu was widely expected to run for the U.S. Senate, taking on Democratic Sen. Maggie Hassan. Instead, he opted to seek a fourth two-year term as governor, dealing a major blow to Republicans who had hoped he could help them retake control of the Senate.

Although he faced intense pressure to run for the Senate, Sununu insists he can have a bigger and more direct impact as governor than as a senator. And despite efforts by Trump's former campaign manager to recruit a challenger, none of the other five Republicans on the ballot Tuesday poses a serious threat.

Democratic state Sen. Tom Sherman is running unopposed for his party's nomination for governor.

### REPUBLICANS' SCRAMBLE FOR U.S. SENATE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

With Sununu out of the running, a crowd of 11 candidates stepped forward to seek the GOP Senate nomination, including state Senate President Chuck Morse, former Londonderry town manager Kevin Smith and cryptocurrency entrepreneur Bruce Fenton. But retired Army Brig. Gen. Donald Bolduc, who lost the GOP primary for New Hampshire's other Senate seat in 2020, quickly emerged as the front-runner via dogged grassroots campaigning to compensate for his lack of cash.

That has made establishment Republicans nervous, with Sununu calling Bolduc "not a serious candidate" and a conspiracy theorist. Sununu issued a last-minute endorsement for Morse.

Democratic groups, meanwhile, have put up ads promoting Bolduc, hoping he'll be an easy opponent for Hassan in November.

Hassan, seeking a second term in the battleground state, faces two virtually unknown challengers on the Democratic side. Although Democrats hold all four of New Hampshire's congressional seats, Republicans control the state Legislature, and Hassan's 2016 win was a narrow one.

### GOP EYES 2 CONGRESSIONAL SEATS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

Many expected major changes in New Hampshire's two congressional districts thanks to the once-a-decade redistricting process, but that didn't happen. Earlier this year, the Republican-controlled Legislature redrew the state's two districts to give the GOP an advantage in the 1st District. But Sununu vetoed the plans, and the maps were updated by the courts instead with only minor changes.

Still, Republicans are bullish about their chances in New Hampshire and are eagerly eyeing both Democratic-held seats as potential pickups in November.

New Hampshire's 1st District flipped five times in seven elections before Democrat Chris Pappas won his first term in 2018. He faces no primary opponent this year, while more than 10 Republicans are competing for a chance to challenge him.

The field includes a number of candidates with ties to Trump: Matt Mowers, the district's 2020 Republican nominee and a former Trump State Department adviser; Karoline Leavitt, a former assistant press

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secretary in the Trump White House; and former TV broadcaster Gail Huff Brown, who is married to Scott Brown, a former U.S. senator from Massachusetts and the Trump administration ambassador to New Zealand. While Trump hasn't endorsed in the race, the candidates haven't been shy about emphasizing their connections to him.

In the second district, Democratic Rep. Annie Kuster faces no primary challenge as she seeks a sixth term. Seven Republicans are vying for their party's nomination to challenge her, including pro-Trump candidate Bob Burns, a former county treasurer who runs a pharmaceutical safety company, and the more moderate George Hansel, mayor of Keene.

## TOUGH DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY FOR RHODE ISLAND GOVERNOR

Rhode Island Gov. Dan McKee is trying to fend off four Democratic challengers as he seeks his first full term in office. McKee, the former lieutenant governor, became governor a year and a half ago when then-Gov. Gina Raimondo was tapped to be the U.S. commerce secretary in the Biden administration.

McKee is expected to be in a close contest against Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea. Both were first elected to statewide office in 2014 and maintain a base of support and name recognition among voters.

Also running in the Democratic primary: Helena Foulkes, a former CVS Health executive who has proved to be an adept fundraiser and is spending heavily on the race in her first bid for public office; former Rhode Island secretary of state and progressive candidate Matt Brown; and community activist Dr. Luis Daniel Muñoz.

McKee is hoping his stewardship during the COVID-19 pandemic — and his 94-year-old mother — will earn him the Democratic nomination.

Willa McKee is a star of her son's first television ad, titled "motha" because that's how she pronounces "mother." The two are playing cards as the governor talks about helping the economy, eliminating the state's car tax, creating affordable housing and passing gun safety laws to keep families safe.

"Not bad for a year and a half," the governor says.

He laughs as his mother replies, "Not bad for a governor that lives with his motha."

## A RHODE ISLAND CONGRESSIONAL SEAT RIPE FOR FLIPPING?

The 2nd Congressional District seat has been held by Democrats for more than three decades in a state traditionally dominated by the party. National Republican leaders think now is their best chance to flip it.

U.S. Rep. Jim Langevin, who has represented the district since 2001, announced his retirement in January. The state's Democratic treasurer, Seth Magaziner, had been running for governor but switched races after Langevin's announcement to try to keep the seat in Democratic control.

Magaziner, who is considered the front-runner and has been endorsed by Langevin, faces a crowded Democratic field, including Joy Fox, a former top aide to Langevin; former Biden administration official Sarah Morgenthau; Omar Bah, executive director of The Refugee Dream Center in Providence; and former state lawmakers David Segal and Spencer Dickinson.

A popular former Rhode Island mayor, Allan Fung, is running unopposed for the Republican nomination after two rivals dropped out of the race. House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy visited Rhode Island in August to raise money for Fung.

## In a nod to JFK, Biden pushing 'moonshot' to fight cancer

By ZEKE MILLER and CARLA K. JOHNSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is set to channel John F. Kennedy on the 60th anniversary of the former president's moonshot speech, as the incumbent tries to set the nation's sights on "ending cancer as we know it."

Biden was traveling to Boston on Monday to highlight a new federally backed study that seeks to validate using blood tests to screen against multiple cancers — a potential game-changer in diagnostic testing to dramatically improve early detection of cancers. He also planned other announcements meant to better the lives of those suffering from cancer.

His speech at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum comes as Biden seeks to rally the

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nation around developing treatments and therapeutics for the pervasive diseases that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention rank as the second-highest killer of people in the U.S. after heart disease. Biden hopes to move the U.S. closer to the goal he set in February of cutting U.S. cancer fatalities by 50% over the next 25 years and to dramatically improve the lives of caregivers and those suffering from cancer.

Danielle Carnival, the White House cancer moonshot coordinator, told The Associated Press that the administration sees huge potential in the commencement of the blood diagnostic study on identifying and treating cancers.

"One of the most promising technologies has been the development of blood tests that offer the promise of detecting multiple cancers in a single blood test and really imagining the impact that could have on our ability to detect cancer early and in a more equitable way," Carnival said. "We think the best way to get us to the place where those are realized is to really test out the technologies we have today and see what works and what really has an impact on extending lives."

In 2022, the American Cancer Society estimates, 1.9 million new cancer cases will be diagnosed and 609,360 people will die of cancer diseases.

The issue is personal to Biden, who lost his adult son Beau in 2015 to brain cancer. After Beau's death, Congress passed the 21st Century Cures Act, which dedicated \$1.8 billion over seven years for cancer research and was signed into law in 2016 by President Barack Obama.

Obama designated Biden, then vice president, to run "mission control" on directing the cancer funds as a recognition of Biden's grief as a parent and desire to do something about it. Biden wrote in his memoir "Promise Me, Dad" that he chose not to run for president in 2016 primarily because of Beau's death.

Despite Biden's attempts to hark back to Kennedy and his space program, the current initiative lacks that same level of budgetary support. The Apollo program garnered massive public investment — more than \$20 billion, or more than \$220 billion in 2022 dollars adjusted for inflation. Biden's "moonshot" effort is far more modest and reliant on private sector investment.

Still, Biden has tried to maintain momentum for investments in public health research, including championing the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health, modeled after similar research and development initiatives benefiting the Pentagon and intelligence community.

On Monday, Biden will announce Dr. Renee Wegrzyn as the inaugural director of ARPA-H, which has been given the task of studying treatments and potential cures for cancers, Alzheimer's, diabetes and other diseases. He will also announce a new National Cancer Institute scholars' program to provide resources to early-career scientists studying treatments and cures for cancer.

Experts agree it's far too early to say whether these new blood tests for finding cancer in healthy people will have any effect on cancer deaths. There have been no studies to show they reduce the risk of dying from cancer. Still, they say setting an ambitious goal is important.

Carnival said the National Cancer Institute Study was designed so that any promising diagnostic results could be swiftly put into widespread practice while the longer-term study — expected to last up to a decade — progresses. She said the goal was to move closer to a future where cancers could be detected through routine bloodwork, potentially replacing more invasive and burdensome procedures like colonoscopies, and therefore saving lives.

Scientists now understand that cancer is not a single disease, but hundreds of diseases that respond differently to different treatments. Some cancers have biomarkers that can be targeted by existing drugs that will slow a tumor's growth. Many more targets await discovery.

"How do we learn what therapies are effective in which subtypes of disease? That to me is oceanic," said Donald A. Berry, a biostatistician at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. "The possibilities are enormous. The challenges are enormous."

Despite the challenges, he's optimistic about cutting the cancer death rate in half over the next 25 years. "We can get to that 50% goal by slowing the disease sufficiently across the various cancers without curing anybody," Berry said. "If I were to bet on whether we will achieve this 50% reduction, I would bet yes."

Even without new breakthroughs, progress can be made by making care more equitable, said Dr. Crystal

Denlinger, chief scientific officer for the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, a group of elite cancer centers.

And any effort to reduce the cancer death rate will need to focus on the biggest cancer killer, which is lung cancer. Mostly attributable to smoking, lung cancer now causes more cancer deaths than any other cancer. Of the 1,670 daily cancer deaths in the United States, more than 350 are from lung cancer.

Lung cancer screening is helping. The American Cancer Society says such screening helped drive down the cancer death rate 32% from its peak in 1991 to 2019, the most recent year for which numbers are available.

But only 5% of eligible patients are being screened for lung cancer.

"It's tragic," said Dr. Roy Herbst, a lung specialist at Yale Cancer Center.

"The moonshot is going to have to be a social fix as well as a scientific and medical fix," Herbst said. "We're going to have to find a way that screening becomes easier, that it's fully covered, that we have more screening facilities."

Biden planned to urge Americans who might have delayed cancer screenings during the pandemic to seek them out swiftly, reminding them that early detection can be key to avoiding adverse outcomes.

He was also set to highlight provisions in the Democrats' healthcare and climate change bill that the administration believes will lower out of pocket drug prices for some widely used cancer treatments. He will also celebrate new guarantees for veterans exposed to toxic burn pits, that cover their potential cancer diagnoses.

Dr. Michael Hassett of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, said Biden's goal to reduce cancer deaths could met by following two parallel paths: one of discovery and the other making sure as many people as possible are reaping the advantages of existing therapies and preventive approaches.

"If we can address both aspects, both challenges, major advances are possible," Hassett said.

In breast cancer, for example, many women who could benefit from a hormone-blocking pill either never start the therapy or stop taking it before the recommended five years, Hassett's research has found.

"Those are big gaps," Hassett said. "That's a treatment that's effective. But if many people aren't taking that medication or if they're taking it but stopping it before concluding the course of therapy, then the benefits that the medicine could offer aren't realized."

## Carlos Alcaraz wins US Open for 1st Slam title, top ranking

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Walking out for his first Grand Slam final at age 19, Carlos Alcaraz bumped fists with fans leaning over a railing along the path leading to the Arthur Ashe Stadium court. Moments later, after the coin toss, Alcaraz turned to sprint to the baseline for the warmup, until being beckoned back to the net by the chair umpire for the customary pre-match photos.

Alcaraz is imbued with boundless enthusiasm and energy, not to mention skill, speed, stamina and sangfroid. And now he's a U.S. Open champion and the No. 1 player in men's tennis.

Using his uncommon combination of moxie and maturity, Alcaraz beat Casper Ruud 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (1), 6-3 on Sunday to both earn the trophy at Flushing Meadows and become the youngest man to lead the ATP rankings.

"Everything came so fast. For me it's unbelievable. It's something I dreamed since I was a kid, since I started playing tennis," said Alcaraz, whom folks of a certain age might still consider a kid.

"Of course," he said, "I'm hungry for more."

Alcaraz, who will move up three ranking spots from No. 4 on Monday, already has attracted plenty of attention as someone considered the Next Big Thing in a sport dominated for decades by the Big Three of Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer.

"He's one of these few rare talents that comes up every now and then in sports. That's what it seems like," said Ruud, a 23-year-old from Norway. "Let's see how his career develops, but it's going all in the right direction."



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The Spaniard was serenaded by choruses of "Olé, Olé, Olé! Carlos!" that reverberated off the arena's closed roof — and Alcaraz often motioned for the spectators to get louder. There were a couple of magical points that drew standing ovations, including one Alcaraz lost with a laser of an on-the-run forehand while ending up face-down on his belly.

He only briefly showed signs of fatigue from having to get through three consecutive five-setters in the three rounds right before the final; no one had gone through that arduous a route on the way to the title in New York in 30 years.

Alcaraz went five sets against 2014 U.S. Open champion Marin Cilic in the fourth round, ending at 2:23 a.m. Tuesday; against Jannik Sinner in the quarterfinals, a 5-hour, 15-minute thriller that ended at 2:50 a.m. Friday after Alcaraz needed to save a match point; and against Frances Tiafoe in the semifinals.

"It's not time to be tired," Alcaraz said.

This was not a stroll to the finish. He faced a pair of set points while down 6-5 in the third. Could have been an outcome-altering moment.

But Alcaraz erased each of those point-from-the-set opportunities for Ruud with the sorts of quick-reflex, soft-hand volleys he repeatedly displayed.

"He just played too good on those points. We've seen it many times before: He steps up when he needs to," Ruud said. "When it's close, he pulls out great shots."

One break in the fourth was all it took for Alcaraz to seal the victory in the only Grand Slam final between two players seeking both a first major championship and the top spot in the ATP's computerized rankings, which date to 1973.

The winner was guaranteed to be first in Monday's rankings; the loser was guaranteed to be second.

"We knew what was at stake," said Ruud, who entered the U.S. Open ranked No. 7. "I'm disappointed, of course, that I'm not No. 1, but No. 2 is not too bad, either."

He also was the runner-up to Nadal at the French Open in June.

If nothing else, Ruud gets the sportsmanship award for conceding a point he knew he didn't deserve. It came at 4-3 in the first set, when he raced to a short ball that bounced twice before his racket touched it. Play continued, and Alcaraz hesitated, then flubbed his response. Ruud told the chair umpire what had happened, giving the point to Alcaraz, who responded with a thumbs-up.

Alcaraz certainly seems to be a rare talent, possessing an all-court game, a blend of groundstroke power with a willingness to push forward. He won 34 of the 45 points that he finished at the net.

He is increasingly a threat while serving — he delivered 14 aces at up to 128 mph — and returning, earning 11 break points, converting three.

And, as Ruud noted, Alcaraz showed "incredible fighting spirit and will to win."

Make no mistake: Ruud is no slouch. There's a reason he is the youngest man since Nadal to get to two major finals in one season.

But this was Alcaraz's time to shine under the lights.

Some perspective: He is the first teenager to win the U.S. Open since Pete Sampras in 1990, the first to triumph at any Slam since Nadal at the 2005 French Open.

Decent company.

Another way to understand how precocious Alcaraz is: The last man to win this tournament by his second appearance was Pancho Gonzalez in 1948, before pros were allowed into the field.

For context on the rankings, it is helpful to know that Novak Djokovic did not play at the U.S. Open or Australian Open this year, unable to enter those countries because is not vaccinated against COVID-19, and did not receive any ranking boost for his Wimbledon championship because no points were on offer for anyone after the All England Club banned athletes from Russia and Belarus over the invasion of Ukraine.

Regardless of the circumstances, it is significant that Alcaraz is the first male teenager at No. 1.

No one else did it. Not Nadal, not Djokovic, not Federer, not Sampras or anyone else.

When one last service winner glanced off Ruud's frame Sunday, Alcaraz dropped to his back on the court, then rolled over onto his stomach, covering his face with his hands.

He went into the stands for hugs with his coach Juan Carlos Ferrero, a former No. 1 himself who won

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the French Open in 2003 and reached the final of that year's U.S. Open, and others, crying all the while. "He was born to play this kind of tournament, born to play these kind of matches," said Ferrero, who has worked with Alcaraz for three years. "Since the moment that I started with him, I saw some things that were different than the other guys at his age."

You only get to No. 1 for the first time once.

You only win a first Grand Slam title once.

Many folks expect Alcaraz to be celebrating these sorts of feats for years to come.

"I want to be (at) the top for many, many weeks — I hope many years," he said. "I'm going to work hard again after this week, these amazing two weeks. I'm going to fight (to) have more of this."

## Swedish conservatives close to election win amid crime fears

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Near final results in Sweden's election Sunday show that a bloc of right-wing parties was expected to defeat a left-wing bloc headed by Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson. The conservative group includes a populist anti-immigration party that made its best ever showing.

However, the result was so close that the election authority said it would not be known before Wednesday when some uncounted votes, including those cast abroad, have been tallied.

According to the early count, Andersson's ruling left-wing Social Democrats won 30.5% of the vote, more than any other party. However a bloc of four left-wing parties appeared to fall short as a whole of winning a majority of votes in the 349-seat parliament, or Riksdag.

Exit polls had initially predicted a narrow victory for Andersson's camp but as the evening wore on, and the vote count supplanted the exit poll, the results tipped in favor of the conservatives.

Early Monday, the conservatives appeared to have 176 seats to 173 for the center-left.

In a speech to her supporters, Andersson said that while the results were unclear, it was obvious that the social democratic movement, which is based on ideals of creating an equal society and a strong welfare state, remains strong in Sweden.

The biggest winner of the evening was the populist anti-immigration party, the Sweden Democrats, which had a strong showing of nearly 21%, its best result ever. The party gained on promises to crack down on shootings and other gang violence that have shaken a sense of security for many in Sweden.

The party has its roots in the white nationalist movement but years ago began expelling extremists. Despite its rebranding, voters long viewed it as unacceptable and other parties shunned it. But that has been changing, and its result in this election show just how far it come in gaining acceptance.

"We are now the second biggest party in Sweden and it looks it's going to stay that way," party leader Jimmie Akesson told his supporters.

"We know now that if there's going to be a shift in power, we will be having a central role in that," he said. "Our ambition is to be in the government."

The conservative bloc was led during the campaign by the center-right Moderates, which won 19%. It was previously the country's second largest party.

Moderates leader Ulf Kristersson told his supports that he stands ready to try to create a stable and effective government.

Regardless of the election outcome, Sweden is likely to face a lengthy process to form a government, as it did after the 2018 election.

Andersson, a 55-year-old economist, became Sweden's first female prime minister less than a year ago and led Sweden's historic bid to join NATO following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February.

## Rules issued for those wanting to pay respects to the queen

LONDON (AP) — People wanting to pay their final respects to Queen Elizabeth II as she lies in state at the Houses of Parliament in London need to be prepared for a long wait.

The government has published guidelines for people wishing to file past the late queen's closed coffin

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as it lies in state at the Palace of Westminster from 5 p.m. (1600 GMT) Wednesday until 6:30 a.m. (0530 GMT) on Sept. 19. Thousands are expected to want to pay tribute to the only monarch that many in the United Kingdom have ever known.

The rules were made public a day after thousands of people lined roads and bridges Sunday as a hearse carried the queen's coffin across the Scottish countryside from her beloved Balmoral Castle to Edinburgh.

"If you wish to attend the Lying-in-State, please note that there will be a queue, which is expected to be very long. You will need to stand for many hours, possibly overnight, with very little opportunity to sit down as the queue will be continuously moving," the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport said in its guidelines.

The closed coffin of the monarch who died Thursday at 96 will rest on a raised platform called a catafalque in Westminster Hall at the Houses of Parliament.

"Large crowds are expected, and there are likely to be delays on public transport and road closures around the area," the ministry warned.

Visitors will have to pass through airport-style security and can only bring one small bag with one zipper opening. Larger bags can be stowed at a special facility — but only if there is space available.

The ministry advises people to bring essentials for a potentially long wait exposed to whatever elements an early fall day in London can throw at them — an umbrella or sunscreen, a cell phone power bank and any needed medication.

No food or liquids will be allowed past security screening at the Houses of Parliament. Nor will flowers or other tributes such as candles, toys or photographs.

"Please respect the dignity of this event and behave appropriately. You should remain silent while inside the Palace of Westminster," the advice says, adding that people must dress appropriately and turn off their mobile phones before going through security.

Included in a list of things not to do: "Film, photograph, use mobile phones or other handheld devices in the security search area or within the Palace of Westminster. Bring or erect gazebos or tents. Light barbecues and fires."

And a long list of prohibited items includes fireworks, smoke canisters, flares, whistles, laser devices and other items that could be used to cause a disturbance as well as any banners, placards, flags, advertising or marketing messages.

## 9/11 terror attacks reverberate as US marks 21st anniversary

By JENNIFER PELTZ, KAREN MATTHEWS and JULIE WALKER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Americans remembered 9/11 on Sunday with tear-choked tributes and pleas to "never forget," 21 years after the deadliest terror attack on U.S. soil.

The loss still felt immediate to Bonita Mentis, who wore a necklace with a photo of her slain sister, Shevonne Mentis.

"It's been 21 years, but it's not 21 years for us. It seems like just yesterday," she said before reading victims' names at the World Trade Center to a crowd that included Vice President Kamala Harris and husband Doug Emhoff.

At the Pentagon, which also was targeted on 9/11, President Joe Biden vowed that the U.S. would continue working to root out terrorist plots and called on Americans to stand up for "the very democracy that guarantees the right to freedom that those terrorists on 9/11 sought to bury in the burning fire, smoke and ash." First lady Jill Biden spoke at the third attack site, a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

On Sept. 11, 2001, conspirators from the al-Qaida Muslim militant group seized control of jets to use them as passenger-filled missiles, hitting the trade center's twin towers and the Pentagon. The fourth plane was headed for Washington but crashed near Shanksville after crew members and passengers tried to storm the cockpit.

The attacks killed nearly 3,000 people, reconfigured national security policy and spurred a U.S. "war on terror" worldwide. Sunday's observances came little more than a month after a U.S. drone strike killed a

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key al-Qaida figure who helped plot 9/11, Ayman al-Zawahri.

Pierre Roldan, who lost his cousin Carlos Lillo, a paramedic, said “we had some form of justice” when a U.S. raid killed Osama bin Laden in 2011.

“Now that al-Zawahri is gone, at least we’re continuing to get that justice,” Roldan said.

The self-proclaimed mastermind of the attacks, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, still awaits a long-postponed military tribunal. An attorney for one of Mohammed’s co-defendants this week confirmed ongoing negotiations toward a potential agreement to avoid a trial and impose lesser but still lengthy sentences.

The Sept. 11 attacks stirred — for a time — a sense of national pride and unity for many, while also subjecting Muslim Americans to years of suspicion and bigotry and engendering debate over the balance between safety and civil liberties. In ways both subtle and plain, the aftermath of 9/11 ripples through American politics and public life to this day.

But like some other victims’ relatives, Jay Saloman fears that Americans’ consciousness of 9/11 is receding.

“It was a terrorist attack against our country that day. And theoretically, everybody should remember it and, you know, take precautions and watch out,” said Saloman, who lost his brother, Wayne Saloman.

By tradition, no political figures speak at the ground zero ceremony. The observance centers, instead, on relatives reading aloud the names of the dead.

Like a growing number of readers, Brooke Walsh-DiMarzio wasn’t born yet when her relative died. But she took the podium to honor her grandmother, Barbara Walsh.

“I’m here today to represent generation 9/12, those who never experienced 9/11 but still suffer the aftermath of it,” Walsh-DiMarzio said. “We will never, ever forget.”

Nikita Shah wore a T-shirt that bore the de facto epigraph of the annual commemoration — “never forget” — and the name of her father, Jayesh Shah. She was 10 when he was killed.

The family later moved to Houston but often returns to New York for the anniversary to be “around people who kind of experienced the same type of grief and the same feelings after 9/11,” said Shah.

Readers often add personal remarks that form an alloy of American sentiments about Sept. 11 — grief, anger, toughness, appreciation for first responders and the military, appeals to patriotism, hopes for peace, occasional political barbs, and a poignant accounting of the graduations, weddings, births and daily lives that victims have missed. A few readers note recent events, this year ranging from the still ongoing coronavirus pandemic to Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Some relatives also lament that a nation which came together — to some extent — after the attacks has since splintered apart. Federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies, which were reshaped to focus on international terrorism after 9/11, now see the threat of domestic violent extremism as equally urgent.

“It took a tragedy to unite us. It should not take another tragedy to unite us again,” said Andrew Colabella, whose cousin, John DiGiovanni, died in the 1993 bombing World Trade Center bombing that presaged 9/11.

Communities around the country marked the day with candlelight vigils, interfaith services and other commemorations, and some Americans joined in volunteer projects. Others observed the anniversary with their own reflections.

More than 70 of Sekou Siby’s co-workers perished at Windows on the World, the restaurant atop the trade center’s north tower. He had the day off because another cook asked him to switch shifts.

“Every 9/11 is a reminder of what I lost that I can never recover,” says Siby, now president of ROC United, a restaurant workers’ advocacy group. He said ahead of the anniversary that the attacks made him wary of becoming attached to people when “you have no control over what’s going to happen to them next.”

Ginny Barnett volunteered at the Shanksville site after the attacks and struggled for years to come to terms with the tragedy. She gradually found hope by volunteering for the memorial there now.

“I have seen firsthand the evil that man can do, but I have also seen the good that man can do,” Barnett said Sunday. “With God’s help, we can focus on and foster good, rather than let hate and anger consume us.”

## Weather helping, but threat from Western fires persists

FORESTHILL, Calif. (AP) — Firefighters made progress against a huge Northern California wildfire that

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was still growing and threatening thousands of mountain homes on Sunday, while crews also battled major blazes that blanketed large swaths of Oregon and Washington in smoke.

The Mosquito Fire in foothills east of Sacramento spread to nearly 65 square miles (168 square kilometers), with 10% containment, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire.

"Cooler temperatures and higher humidity assisted with moderating some fire activity," but higher winds allowed the flames to push to the north and northeast, according to a Cal Fire incident report Sunday.

More than 5,800 structures in Placer and El Dorado counties were under threat and some 11,000 residents of communities including Foresthill and Georgetown were under evacuation orders.

In Southern California, cooler temperatures and rain brought respite to firefighters battling the massive Fairview Fire about 75 miles (121 kilometers) southeast of Los Angeles after sweltering heat last week.

The 44-square-mile (114-square-kilometer) blaze was 45% contained Sunday. The fire has destroyed at least 30 homes and other structures in Riverside County. Two people died while fleeing flames last Monday.

A helicopter assisting with operations in the Fairview Fire crashed in a residential backyard while attempting to land at a local airport Saturday afternoon, fire officials said. Injuries to the pilot and two others were not critical.

The southern part of the state welcomed the cooler weekend weather as a tropical storm veered off the Pacific Coast and faded, helping put an end to blistering temperatures that nearly overwhelmed the state's electrical grid.

Thunderstorms and the risk of flooding persisted in mountainous areas of greater Los Angeles on Sunday. But after Hurricane Kay made landfall in Mexico last week it quickly was downgraded and weakened further until it largely disappeared, forecasters said.

To the north, remnants of Kay caused flooding Saturday that stranded about 40 vehicles and closed a stretch of State Route 190 in Death Valley National Park. The park was still cleaning up from floods five weeks ago that closed many key roads.

In Washington state, fire officials were scrambling to secure resources in the battle against a blaze sparked Saturday in the remote Stevens Pass area that sent hikers fleeing and forced evacuations of mountain communities. There was no containment Sunday of the Bolt Creek Fire, which had scorched nearly 12 square miles (31 square kilometers) of forestland about an hour and a half east of Seattle.

"The fire will continue to advance in areas that will be unstaffed. With limited resources, only point protection will be in place while resources continue to mobilize to the fire," said a Sunday morning incident report.

California's Mosquito Fire has covered a large portion of the Northern Sierra region with smoke. California health officials urged people in affected areas to stay indoors where possible. Organizers of the Tour de Tahoe canceled the annual 72-mile (115-km) bicycle ride scheduled Sunday around Lake Tahoe because of the heavy smoke from the blaze — more than 50 miles (80 km) away. Last year's ride was canceled because of smoke from another big fire south of Tahoe.

The Mosquito Fire's cause remained under investigation. Pacific Gas & Electric said unspecified "electrical activity" occurred close in time to the report of the fire on Tuesday.

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. In the last five years, California has experienced the largest and most destructive fires in state history.

And the rest of the West hasn't been immune. There were at least 18 large fires burning in Oregon and Washington, leading to evacuations and targeted power outages near Portland as the challenge of dry and windy conditions continued in the region.

Sprawling areas of western Oregon choked by thick smoke from the fires in recent days were expected to see improved air quality on Sunday thanks to a returning onshore flow, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported.

South of Portland, more than 3,000 residents were under new evacuation orders because of the 134-square-mile (347-square-kilometer) Cedar Creek Fire, which has burned for over a month across Lane and Deschutes counties. Firefighters were protecting remote homes in Oakridge, Westfir and surrounding mountain communities.

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According to the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center, this weekend there were more than 400 square miles (1,035 square kilometers) of active, uncontained fires and nearly 5,000 people on the ground fighting them in the two northwestern states.

## Saints pull off improbable comeback to beat Falcons 27-26

By PAUL NEWBERRY AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — A new coach. A bunch of guys coming back from injuries. A 16-point deficit in the fourth quarter.

None of it flustered the New Orleans Saints, who pulled off a stunning comeback Sunday.

Wil Lutz kicked a 51-yard field goal with 19 seconds remaining after Jameis Winston guided a pair of lighting-quick touchdown drives, giving the Saints a 27-26 victory over the Atlanta Falcons in Dennis Allen's coaching debut.

"It was exciting," Winston said with a smile. "We've just got to find a way to get there quicker."

After struggling offensively through most of the season opener, the Saints finally found their rhythm.

Winston threw for 269 yards after going down last season on Halloween with a knee injury. Michael Thomas hauled in a pair of fourth-quarter TD passes in his first game since the 2020 season, having missed an entire campaign with complications from an ankle injury.

And Lutz delivered at the end, showing he's fully recovered from a core issue that kept him out for all of 2021.

"I'm happy with our resilience," Winston said. "We never gave up."

Winston hooked up with Thomas on touchdown passes of 3 and 9 yards. The Saints converted one 2-point try, but failed on the other, leaving the Falcons clinging to a 26-24 lead.

New Orleans got the ball back one more time, taking over at its own 20 with 48 seconds remaining and no timeouts.

No problem.

Winston connected on a 40-yard pass to Jarvis Landry and a 17-yarder to Juwan Johnson to set up Lutz's winning field goal.

A personal foul on the Saints gave the Falcons a chance to pull out the victory, but Youngbuck Koo's 63-yard field goal attempt was blocked as the clock ran out.

It was a stirring start to the Allen era.

Sean Payton, who coached the team for 15 years and led New Orleans to its lone Super Bowl title, surprisingly stepped down after last season.

His defensive coordinator got the job, even though Allen's first head coaching stint resulted in a record of 8-28 with the Raiders in 2012-14.

Make it 9-28.

"I hope they're not all like that," Allen said. "Look, our team is tough and gritty. That's what I love about 'em. That's exactly the way they played in this game. It wasn't perfect. We've got a ton of things to clean up."

The Falcons, who have seemingly never recovered from squandering a 28-3 lead in the 2017 Super Bowl, added another meltdown to their resume in their first game of the post-Matt Ryan era.

Cordarrelle Patterson rushed for a career-high 120 yards, including a 5-yard scoring burst, and Marcus Mariota made his first start since 2019 as Ryan's replacement.

Mariota threw for 215 yards and added 72 on the ground, highlight by a 2-yard touchdown run.

But in the end, the Falcons let what seemed like a sure victory get away.

"You guys wrote our obituary back in May and you'll continue to write our obituary," second-year coach Arthur Smith grumbled to reporters. "Who cares? We've got 16 games to learn from this and get better."

Winston was sacked four times by a team that had a league-low 18 sacks a year ago. He passed for just 24 yards in the first half, but made all the throws when it really counted.

Landry had seven catches for 114 yards, and Thomas finished with five catches for 57 yards.

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"It was a blessing to be back out there with the guys," said Thomas, who had an NFL-record 149 receptions in 2019 but was playing just his eighth game since then.

## SECOND CHANCE

Lutz was kicking himself after his first field goal attempt from 44 yards hit the left upright.

He bounced back to make a 49-yarder before connecting on the game-winner.

"Obviously, coming off a miss is tough," Lutz said. "But that's what we signed up to do. I'm grateful the defense gave me a chance to get back out there and the offense put me in position to make the kick. It feels really good."

## SACK ATTACK

One bright spot for the Falcons was their pass rush.

The four sacks was the most by Atlanta since its next-to-last contest of the 2020 season at Kansas City. The Falcons had an NFL-low 18 sacks a year ago, never managing more than three in a game.

Grady Jarrett was credited with 1 1/2 sacks, teaming with Lorenzo Carter on one of them. Mykal Walker and Arnold Ebiketie also had sacks.

## PROMISING STARTS

Both teams got plenty of production from their first-round rookie receivers.

Drake London, the No. 8 overall selection, led the Falcons with five catches for 74 yards.

Chris Olave, the No. 11 choice by the Saints, had three receptions for 41 yards and hauled in another catch on New Orleans' successful 2-point conversion.

## INJURY REPORT

Atlanta RB Damien Williams sustained a rib injury in the first quarter, forcing Patterson to take on the bulk of the running load. The Falcons activated only one other back, Avery Williams, choosing not to play rookie Tyler Allgeier.

## UP NEXT

Saints: Home opener next Sunday against Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Falcons: Hit the road to face the Super Bowl champion Los Angeles Rams in the first of two straight West Coast games.

## Former MLB pitcher turned cop Varvaro dies in car crash

By DAVE COLLINS Associated Press

Anthony Varvaro, a former Major League Baseball pitcher who retired in 2016 to become a police officer in the New York City area, was killed in a car crash Sunday morning on his way to work at the Sept. 11 memorial ceremony in Manhattan, according to police officials and his former teams.

Varvaro, 37, was an officer for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. He played baseball at St. John's University in New York City before a career in the majors as a relief pitcher with the Seattle Mariners, Atlanta Braves and Boston Red Sox from 2010 to 2015.

"We are deeply saddened on the passing of former Braves pitcher Anthony Varvaro," the Braves said in a statement. "Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and colleagues."

The crash happened Sunday morning in New Jersey. Messages seeking details about the crash were left with New Jersey state police.

St. John's head baseball coach Mike Hampton said he was "at a loss for words" over Varvaro's death.

"Not only was he everything you could want out of a ball player, he was everything you could want in a person," said Hampton, who was an assistant coach at St. John's during all three of Varvaro's seasons there. "My heart goes out to his family, friends, teammates and fellow officers."

Port Authority officials said in a statement that Varvaro "represented the very best of this agency, and will be remembered for his courage and commitment to service."

"On this solemn occasion as the Port Authority mourns the loss of 84 employees in the attacks on the World Trade Center — including 37 members of the Port Authority Police Department — our grief only deepens today with the passing of Officer Varvaro," said the statement by Port Authority Chairman Kevin

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O'Toole and Executive Director Rick Cotton.

Raised in Staten Island in New York City, Varvaro was drafted by Seattle in the 12th round in 2005. He played for the Mariners in 2010 and Atlanta from 2011 to 2014.

Varvaro was traded to the Red Sox in late 2014 and pitched 11 innings for Boston early in the 2015 season. In May 2015, the Chicago Cubs claimed him off waivers from Boston, but returned him to the Red Sox after testing showed he had a elbow injury in his right pitching arm, which resulted in season-ending surgery.

For his major league career, he pitched 183 innings in 166 games, compiling a 3.23 earned run average, 150 strikeouts and one save.

In 2016, he appeared in 18 games for Boston's top minor league affiliate before retiring in June and beginning his police training.

Varvaro, who studied criminal justice at St. John's and graduated in 2005, told the student newspaper, The Torch, in December 2016 that he inquired about police jobs at the Port Authority while pitching in the majors.

"I figured that I had a pretty successful career in baseball, I had played a number of seasons, and I was fine moving on to the next step of my life," he told the newspaper.

Port Authority officials said Varvaro became a police officer in December 2016 and was assigned to patrol for nearly five years before transferring to the Port Authority Police Academy to become an instructor.

## Russia hits power stations after Ukraine counteroffensive

By KARL RITTER and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia attacked power stations and other infrastructure Sunday, causing widespread outages across Ukraine as Kyiv's forces pressed a swift counteroffensive that has driven Moscow's troops from swaths of territory it had occupied in the northeast.

The bombardment ignited a massive fire at a power station on Kharkiv's western outskirts and killed at least one person. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy denounced the "deliberate and cynical missile strikes" against civilian targets as acts of terrorism.

Ukraine's second-largest city of Kharkiv appeared to be without power Sunday night. Cars drove through darkened streets, and the few pedestrians used flashlights or mobile phones to light their way.

Separately, the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in the Russia-occupied south completely shut down in a bid to prevent a radiation disaster as fighting raged nearby.

Kyiv's action in recent days to reclaim Russia-occupied areas in the Kharkiv region forced Moscow to withdraw its troops to prevent them from being surrounded, leaving behind significant numbers of weapons and munitions in a hasty flight as the war marked its 200th day on Sunday.

Ukraine's military chief, Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyy, said its forces had recaptured about 3,000 square kilometers (1,160 square miles) since the counteroffensive began in early September. He said Ukrainian troops are only 50 kilometers (about 30 miles) from the Russian border.

One battalion shared a video of Ukrainian forces in front of a municipal building in Hoptivka, a village just over a mile from the border and about 19 kilometers (12 miles) north of Kharkiv.

Kharkiv Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Ukrainian troops have reclaimed control of more than 40 settlements in the region.

In Sunday night's missile attacks by Russia, the Kharkiv and Donetsk regions seemed to bear the brunt. Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia and Sumy had only partially lost power, Zelenskyy said.

Kharkiv Mayor Igor Terekhov called the power outage "revenge by the Russian aggressor for the successes of our army at the front, in particular, in the Kharkiv region."

Ukrainian officials said Russia hit Kharkiv TEC-5, the country's second-biggest heat and power plant, and Zelenskyy posted video of the Kharkiv power plant on fire.

"Russian terrorists remain terrorists and attack critical infrastructure. No military facilities, only the goal of leaving people without light and heat," he tweeted,

But Zelenskyy remained defiant despite the attacks. Addressing Russia, he added: "Do you still think



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you can intimidate, break us, force us to make concessions? ... Cold, hunger, darkness and thirst for us are not as scary and deadly as your 'friendship and brotherhood.' But history will put everything in place. And we will be with gas, lights, water and food ... and WITHOUT you!"

Later in the evening some power had been restored in some regions. None of the outages were believed to be related to the shutdown of the reactors at the Zaporizhzhia plant.

While most attention focused on the counteroffensive, Ukraine's nuclear energy operator said the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe's largest, was reconnected to Ukraine's electricity grid, allowing engineers to shut down its last operational reactor to safeguard it amid the fighting.

The plant, one of the 10 biggest atomic power stations in the world, has been occupied by Russian forces since the early days of the war. Ukraine and Russia have traded blame for shelling around it.

Since a Sept. 5 fire caused by shelling knocked the plant off transmission lines, the reactor was powering crucial safety equipment in so-called "island mode" — an unreliable regime that left the plant increasingly vulnerable to a potential nuclear accident.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog that has two experts at the site, welcomed the restoration of external power. But IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi said he is "gravely concerned about the situation at the plant, which remains in danger as long as any shelling continues."

He said talks have begun on establishing a safety and security zone around it.

In a call Sunday with Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President Emmanuel Macron urged the withdrawal of Russian troops and weaponry from the plant in line with IAEA recommendations.

The pullback of Moscow's forces in recent days marked the biggest battlefield success for Ukrainian forces since they thwarted a Russian attempt to seize Kyiv near the start of the war. The Kharkiv campaign seemed to take Moscow by surprise; it had relocated many of its troops from the region to the south in expectation of a counteroffensive there.

Yuriy Kochevenko, of the 95th brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, tweeted a video from what appeared to be central Izyum. The city was considered an important command and supply hub for Russia's northern front.

"Everything around is destroyed, but we will restore everything. Izyum was, is, and will be Ukraine," Kochevenko said in his video, showing the empty central square and destroyed buildings.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian General Staff said Russian troops also had left several settlements in the Kherson region, in the southern part of the country, as Kyiv's forces pressed the counteroffensive. It did not identify the areas.

But an official with the Russian-backed administration in the city of Kherson, Kirill Stremousov, said on social media that the city north of the Crimean Peninsula was safe and asked everyone to stay calm.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Saturday the withdrawal from Izyum and other areas was intended to strengthen Moscow's forces in the neighboring Donetsk region to the south. The explanation was similar to how Russia justified pulling back from Kyiv earlier this year.

But Igor Strelkov, who led Russia-backed forces when the separatist conflict in the Donbas erupted in 2014, mocked the Russian Defense Ministry's explanation of the retreat, suggesting that handing over Russia's own territory near the border was a "contribution to a Ukrainian settlement."

The retreat angered Russian military bloggers and nationalist commentators, who bemoaned it as a major defeat and urged the Kremlin to step up its war efforts. Many criticized Russian authorities for continuing with fireworks and other lavish festivities in Moscow that marked a city holiday on Saturday despite the debacle in Ukraine.

In Moscow, Putin attended the opening of a huge Ferris wheel in a park on Saturday, and inaugurated a new transport link and a sports arena. The action underscored the Kremlin's narrative that the war it calls a "special military operation" was going according to plan without affecting Russians' everyday lives.

Pro-Kremlin political analyst Sergei Markov criticized the Moscow festivities as a grave mistake.

"The fireworks in Moscow on a tragic day of Russia's military defeat will have extremely serious political consequences," Markov wrote on his messaging app channel. "Authorities mustn't celebrate when people

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are mourning.”

In a sign of a potential rift in the Russian leadership, Ramzan Kadyrov, the Kremlin-backed head of Chechnya, said the retreat resulted from blunders by the Russian brass.

“They have made mistakes and I think they will draw the necessary conclusions,” Kadyrov said. “If they don’t make changes in the strategy of conducting the special military operation in the next day or two, I will be forced to contact the leadership of the Defense Ministry and the leadership of the country to explain the real situation on the ground.”

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the head of NATO cautioned Friday the war would likely go on for months, urging the West to keep supporting Ukraine through what could be a difficult winter.

Ukraine’s battlefield gains would help as the Biden administration seeks continued financial support of the war effort from Congress and Western allies, said Daniel Fried, a former U.S. ambassador to Poland and now a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council in Washington.

“The Biden administration policy is evolving in a direction that is more and more justified,” Fried said.

## For Elizabeth, Balmoral estate was a place to ‘be normal’

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — When the hearse carrying Queen Elizabeth II’s body pulled out of the gates of Balmoral Castle on Sunday, it marked the monarch’s final departure from a personal sanctuary where she could shed the straitjacket of protocol and ceremony for a few weeks every year.

The sprawling estate in the Scottish Highlands west of Aberdeen was a place where Elizabeth rode her beloved horses, picnicked, and pushed her children around the grounds on tricycles and wagons, setting aside the formality of Buckingham Palace.

“When ... she goes through those (Balmoral) gates, I believe the royal part of her stays mostly outside,” said the Rev. David Barr, of Glenmuick Church in nearby Ballater. “And as she goes in, she was able to be a wife, a loving wife, a loving mum, a loving gran and then later on a loving great gran — and aunty — and be normal.”

It was a transformation that took place every summer, when the royal family would spend much of August and September at the estate that has been a royal bolt-hole since 1852, when Prince Albert bought it for his wife, Queen Victoria.

Balmoral is the family’s “private wilderness,” where a fleet of immaculate Land Rovers would pick up guests each morning during the shooting and stalking season, Jonathan Dimpleby wrote in his 1994 biography of Prince Charles, who became King Charles III upon his mother’s death.

But there were other attractions, too.

“In the stables, the Queen’s horses were again at the ready, coats groomed, saddles and bridles soaped and stirrups polished,” Dimpleby wrote. “The household servants, trained in discretion, appeared only when required, aware that to be seen or heard without a purpose would be to intrude.”

At Balmoral, a woman most remembered for being clad in robes and crowns or grandmotherly dresses and wide-brimmed hats could tie a scarf around her head, snuggle into a warm jacket and tug on a pair of boots to explore a domain covered with heather and pine forests and populated by deer, bees and butterflies.

That sense of informality could bring out the queen’s mischievous side.

A former royal protection officer, Richard Griffin, remembered accompanying the queen on a picnic when they met two American hikers. The tourists didn’t recognize Elizabeth and asked how long she had been visiting the area. When she replied “over 80 years,” they asked if she had ever met the queen.

“As quick as a flash she says, ‘Well, I haven’t, but Dickie here meets her regularly,’” Griffin told Sky News earlier this year during events marking the monarch’s 70 years on the throne.

One of the hikers then turned to Griffin and asked what the queen was like. He replied: “She can be very cantankerous at times, but she’s got a lovely sense of humor.”

After posing for a picture with the queen, the unsuspecting hikers waved good-bye and they continued

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their trek.

"And then Her Majesty said to me, 'I'd love to be a fly on the wall when he shows those photographs to friends in America. Hopefully, someone tells him who I am,'" Griffin recalled.

The queen's love of Balmoral underscored the royal family's close links to Scotland, which began with her great, great-grandmother Queen Victoria, who began the royal tradition of wearing the tartan.

During the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence, the queen was said to be hoping for a "no" vote, though she couldn't express her view publicly. Former Prime Minister David Cameron later confirmed this, telling how her husband, the late Prince Philip, sought to keep the peace at Balmoral by trying to hide the morning papers on the day a poll was published suggesting the Scots might vote in favor of leaving the U.K.

"But, of course, when she got the result he said that she purred like a cat with satisfaction when she heard her United Kingdom was going to remain united," royal historian Robert Lacey told the BBC on Friday.

But at its heart, Balmoral was a family home for the queen.

Freed temporarily from the affairs of state, Elizabeth and Philip spent more time with their children while at Balmoral.

Home movies shared with the BBC for a documentary on the queen's 90th birthday showed the couple playing with Charles and his sister, Anne, on the lawn outside Balmoral Castle, with Philip careening down a grassy slope on a little red wagon before toppling over, his kilt flying in the breeze.

In later years, Charles played ping-pong and football in the yard and was even allowed to cycle to the village shop by himself, albeit with a police officer trailing behind, Dimbleby wrote.

It's "very significant" that the queen died in Scotland, Lacey told The Associated Press.

"Because apart from her love of that particular country, it was the countryside, the way it brought her into contact with nature," he said.

## **'I cannot mourn': Former colonies conflicted over the queen**

By CARA ANNA, DANICA COTO and RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Upon taking the throne in 1952, Queen Elizabeth II inherited millions of subjects around the world, many of them unwilling. Today, in the British Empire's former colonies, her death brings complicated feelings, including anger.

Beyond official condolences praising the queen's longevity and service, there is some bitterness about the past in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and elsewhere. Talk has turned to the legacies of colonialism, from slavery to corporal punishment in African schools to looted artifacts held in British institutions. For many, the queen came to represent all of that during her seven decades on the throne.

In Kenya, where decades ago a young Elizabeth learned of her father's death and her enormous new role as queen, a lawyer named Alice Mugo shared online a photograph of a fading document from 1956. It was issued four years into the queen's reign, and well into Britain's harsh response to the Mau Mau rebellion against colonial rule.

"Movement permit," the document says. While over 100,000 Kenyans were rounded up in camps under grim conditions, others, like Mugo's grandmother, were forced to request British permission to go from place to place.

"Most of our grandparents were oppressed," Mugo tweeted hours after the queen's death Thursday. "I cannot mourn."

But Kenya's outgoing president, Uhuru Kenyatta, whose father, Jomo Kenyatta, was imprisoned during the queen's rule before becoming the country's first president in 1964, overlooked past troubles, as did other African heads of state. "The most iconic figure of the 20th and 21st centuries," Uhuru Kenyatta called her.

Anger came from ordinary people. Some called for apologies for past abuses like slavery, others for something more tangible.

"This commonwealth of nations, that wealth belongs to England. That wealth is something never shared in," said Bert Samuels, a member of the National Council on Reparations in Jamaica.

Elizabeth's reign saw the hard-won independence of African countries from Ghana to Zimbabwe, along

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with a string of Caribbean islands and nations along the edge of the Arabian Peninsula.

Some historians see her as a monarch who helped oversee the mostly peaceful transition from empire to the Commonwealth, a voluntary association of 56 nations with historic and linguistic ties. But she was also the symbol of a nation that often rode roughshod over people it subjugated.

There were few signs of public grief or even interest in her death across the Middle East, where many still hold Britain responsible for colonial actions that drew much of the region's borders and laid the groundwork for many of its modern conflicts. On Saturday, Gaza's Hamas rulers called on King Charles III to "correct" British mandate decisions that they said oppressed Palestinians.

In ethnically divided Cyprus, many Greek Cypriots remembered the four-year guerrilla campaign waged in the late 1950s against colonial rule and the queen's perceived indifference over the plight of nine people whom British authorities executed by hanging.

Yiannis Spanos, president of the Association of National Organization of Cypriot Fighters, said the queen was "held by many as bearing responsibility" for the island's tragedies.

Now, with her passing, there are new efforts to address the colonial past, or hide it.

India is renewing its efforts under Prime Minister Narendra Modi to remove colonial names and symbols. The country has long moved on, even overtaking the British economy in size.

"I do not think we have any place for kings and queens in today's world, because we are the world's largest democratic country," said Dhiren Singh, a 57-year-old entrepreneur in New Delhi.

There was some sympathy for the Elizabeth and the circumstances she was born under and then thrust into.

In Kenya's capital, Nairobi, resident Max Kahindi remembered the Mau Mau rebellion "with a lot of bitterness" and recalled how some elders were detained or killed. But he said the queen was "a very young lady" then, and he believes someone else likely was running British affairs.

"We cannot blame the queen for all the sufferings that we had at that particular time," Kahindi said.

Timothy Kalyegira, a political analyst in Uganda, said there is a lingering "spiritual connection" in some African countries, from the colonial experience to the Commonwealth. "It is a moment of pain, a moment of nostalgia," he said.

The queen's dignified persona and age, and the centrality of the English language in global affairs, are powerful enough to temper some criticisms, Kalyegira added: "She's seen more as the mother of the world."

Mixed views were also found in the Caribbean, where some countries are removing the British monarch as their head of state.

"You have contradictory consciousness," said Maziki Thame, a senior lecturer in development studies at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, whose prime minister announced during this year's visit of Prince William, who is now heir to the throne, and Kate that the island intended to become fully independent.

The younger generation of royals seem to have greater sensitivity to colonialism's implications, Thame said — during the visit, William expressed his "profound sorrow" for slavery.

Nadeen Spence, an activist, said appreciation for Elizabeth among older Jamaicans isn't surprising since she was presented by the British as "this benevolent queen who has always looked out for us," but young people aren't awed by the royal family.

"The only thing I noted about the queen's passing is that she died and never apologized for slavery," Spence said. "She should've apologized."

## AP Top 25: UGA reclaims No. 1; Kentucky, Arkansas in Top 10

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer

Georgia reclaimed the top spot in The Associated Press college football poll on Sunday, and Kentucky, Oklahoma State and Arkansas moved into the top 10 after an upset-filled weekend across the country.

The defending national champion Bulldogs, who started the season at No. 3 in the AP Top 25 presented by Regions Banks, took two weeks to get back to where they spent most of last year.

Georgia jumped Alabama after it cruised to a 33-0 victory against Samford.

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But it wasn't so much about what the Bulldogs did this week as much as what they did last week, combined with the Crimson Tide needing a late field goal to escape at Texas on Saturday.

Georgia, which opened the season by beating Oregon 49-3, received 53 of 63 first-place votes from the media panel. No. 2 Alabama received nine first-place votes and No. 3 Ohio State got one first-place vote. No. 4 Michigan and No. 5 Clemson held their places, but the rest of the top 10 was shuffled.

Oklahoma moved up a spot to No. 6. Southern California jumped three places to No. 7, its best ranking since September 2017.

The rest of the top 10 are new arrivals: No. 8 Oklahoma State moved up three spots. No. 9 Kentucky jumped 11 places for its best ranking since it reached No. 8 in October 2007. And No. 10 Arkansas was up six.

After being upset at home by Sun Belt schools, Texas A&M dropped from No. 6 to No. 24 and Notre Dame tumbled out all the way from No. 8.

The Aggies were beaten by Appalachian State and the Fighting Irish fell to 0-2 after losing to Marshall. It was the fifth time in the last 10 seasons and first time since 2020 that two top-10 teams lost at home to unranked teams in the same week.

Notre Dame is unranked for the first time since Sept. 17, 2017, snapping a streak of 80 straight poll appearances, which was fourth in the country behind Alabama, Ohio State and Georgia among active runs.

## POLL POINTS

No. 1 winning and dropping, as Alabama did, is a common occurrence. Since the AP college football poll started in 1936, it has happened 91 times.

The last time it happened was 2019, when twice during the season the top spot flipped twice while teams remained unbeaten.

## IN

— No. 21 Texas was rewarded for its effort against Alabama by moving into the ranking for the first time since Oct. 10.

The Longhorns are believed to be the first team to lose and still enter the AP Top 25 since Missouri did it in 1997. That came after the famous Flea Kicker game against Nebraska.

— No. 22 Penn State appeared in the ranking for the first time since dropping out in the middle of last November during a late-season slide.

— No. 25 Oregon is back after putting up 70 points on Eastern Washington.

## OUT

— Wisconsin's 17-14 home loss to Washington State knocked the Badgers out of the ranking for the first time this season.

— Houston dropped out after losing in overtime at Texas Tech, the Cougars' second straight OT game to open the season.

## CONFERENCE CALL

SEC — 8 (Nos. 1, 2, 9, 10, 15, 18, 20, 24).

ACC — 5 (Nos. 5, 13, 16, 19, 23).

Big Ten — 4 (Nos. 3, 4, 11, 22).

Big 12 — 4 (Nos. 6, 8, 17, 21).

Pac-12 — 3 (Nos. 7, 14, 25).

Independents — 1 (No. 12).

## RANKED vs. RANKED

No. 12 BYU at No. 25 Oregon. Second straight ranked Power Five opponent for the Cougars.

No. 13 Miami at No. 24 Texas A&M. Aggies' loss cost College Station a chance to host ESPN's "College GameDay," but it's still a matchup of ranked teams.

## Biden honors 9/11 victims, vows commitment to thwart terror

By COLLEEN LONG and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden marked the 21st anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, taking part in a somber wreath-laying ceremony at the Pentagon held under a steady rain and paying tribute to “extraordinary Americans” who gave their lives on one of the nation’s darkest days.

Sunday’s ceremony occurred a little more than a year after Biden ended the long and costly war in Afghanistan that the U.S. and allies launched in response to the terror attacks.

Biden noted that even after the United States left Afghanistan that his administration continues to pursue those responsible for the 9/11 attacks. Last month, Biden announced the U.S. had killed Ayman al-Zawahiri, the al-Qaida leader who helped plot the Sept. 11 attacks, in a clandestine operation.

“We will never forget, we will never give up,” Biden said. “Our commitment to preventing another attack on the United States is without end.”

The president was joined by family members of the fallen, first responders who had been at the Pentagon on the day of the attack, as well as Defense Department leadership for the annual moment of tribute carried out in New York City, the Pentagon and Somerset County, Pennsylvania.

In ending the Afghanistan war, the Democratic president followed through on a campaign pledge to bring home U.S. troops from the country’s longest conflict. But the war concluded chaotically in August 2021, when the U.S.-backed Afghan government collapsed, a grisly bombing killed 170 Afghans and 13 U.S. troops at Kabul’s airport, and thousands of desperate Afghans gathered in hopes of escape before the final U.S. cargo planes departed over the Hindu Kush.

Biden marked the one-year anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan late last month in low-key fashion. He issued a statement in honor of the 13 U.S. troops killed in the bombing at the Kabul airport and spoke by phone with U.S. veterans assisting ongoing efforts to resettle in the United States Afghans who helped the war effort.

Biden on Sunday said an “incredible debt” was owed to the U.S. troops who served in Afghanistan as well as their families. More than 2,200 U.S. service members were killed and more than 20,000 were wounded over the course of the nearly 20-year war, according to the Pentagon.

He also vowed that the nation will “never fail to meet the sacred obligation to you to properly prepare and equip those that we send into harm’s way and care for those and their families when they come home — and to never, ever, ever forget.”

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell on Thursday criticized Biden’s handling of the end of the war and noted that the country has spiraled downward under renewed Taliban rule since the U.S. withdrawal.

“Now, one year on from last August’s disaster, the devastating scale of the fallout from President Biden’s decision has come into sharper focus,” McConnell said. “Afghanistan has become a global pariah. Its economy has shrunk by nearly a third. Half of its population is now suffering critical levels of food insecurity.”

The president also remembered the words of comfort Queen Elizabeth II, who died last week, sent to the American people soon after the 2001 attacks: “Grief is the price we pay for love.” Biden said those words remain as poignant as they did 21 years ago but the weight of loss also remains heavy.

“On this day, when the price feels so great, Jill and I are holding all of you close to our hearts.” Biden said.

Biden has recently dialed up warnings about what he calls the “extreme ideology” of former President Donald Trump and his “MAGA Republican” adherents as a threat to American democracy. Without naming Trump, Biden again on Sunday raised a call for Americans to safeguard democracy.

“It’s not enough to stand up for democracy once a year or every now and then,” Biden said. “It’s something we have to do every single day. So this is a day not only to remember, but also is a day for renewal and resolve for each and every American in our devotion to this country, to the principles it embodies, to our democracy.”

First lady Jill Biden spoke to a crowd at the Flight 93 National Memorial Observance in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where she recalled the concern she had about her sister Bonny Jacobs, a United Airlines flight attendant.

She said the attacks showed that “with courage and kindness we can be a light in that darkness.”

“It showed us that we are all connected to one another,” said Biden, who was joined by her sister in Shanksville for Sunday’s commemoration. “So as we stand on this sacred and scarred earth, a record of

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our collective grief and a monument to the memories that live on each day, this is the legacy we much carry forward: Hope that defies hate.”

Vice President Kamala Harris and her husband attended a commemoration ceremony at the National September 11th Memorial in New York.

## Queen Elizabeth II's coffin takes long road through Scotland

By DAVID KEYTON and MIKE CORDER Associated Press

EDINBURGH, Scotland (AP) — In a somber, regal procession, Queen Elizabeth II's flag-draped coffin was driven slowly through the Scottish countryside Sunday from her beloved Balmoral Castle to the Scottish capital of Edinburgh. Mourners packed city streets and highway bridges or lined rural roads with cars and tractors to take part in a historic goodbye to the monarch who had reigned for 70 years.

The hearse drove past piles of bouquets and other tributes as it led a seven-car cortege from Balmoral, where the queen died Thursday at 96, for a six-hour trip through Scottish towns to Holyroodhouse palace in Edinburgh. The late queen's coffin was draped in the Royal Standard for Scotland and topped with a wreath made of flowers from the estate, including sweet peas, one of the queen's favorites.

The procession was a huge event for Scotland as the U.K. takes days to mourn its longest-reigning monarch, the only one most Britons have ever known. People turned out hours early to grab a space by the police barricades in Edinburgh. By afternoon, the crowds were 10 people deep.

“I think she has been an ever-constant in my life. She was the queen I was born under, and she has always been there,” said Angus Ruthven, a 54-year-old civil servant from Edinburgh. “I think it is going to take a lot of adjusting that she is not here.”

Silence fell on the packed Royal Mile in Edinburgh as the hearse carrying the queen arrived. But as the convoy vanished from view, the crowd spontaneously started clapping.

“A very historic moment. I am quite speechless actually,” said Fiona Moffat, a 57-year-old office manager from Glasgow. “She was a lovely lady. Great mother, grandmother. She did well. I am very proud of her.”

When the hearse reached Holyroodhouse, members of the Royal Regiment of Scotland, wearing green tartan kilts, carried the coffin past the queen's youngest three children — Princess Anne, Prince Andrew and Prince Edward — into the throne room, where it was to remain until Monday afternoon so staff can pay their last respects.

King Charles III and his Queen Consort Camilla will travel Monday to Edinburgh to join another solemn procession that takes the queen's coffin to St. Giles Cathedral on the city's Royal Mile. There the coffin will remain for 24 hours so the Scottish public can pay their respects before it is flown to London on Tuesday.

The first village the cortege passed through was Ballater, where residents regard the royal family as neighbors. Hundreds of people watched in silence. Some threw flowers in front of the hearse.

“She meant such a lot to people in this area. People were crying, it was amazing to see,” said Victoria Pacheco, a guest house manager.

In each Scottish town and village, the entourage was met with respect. People stood mostly in silence; some clapped politely, others pointed their phone cameras at the passing cars. In Aberdeenshire, farmers lined the route with an honor guard of tractors.

Along the route, the cortege passed through locations laden with House of Windsor history. Those included Dyce, where in 1975 the queen formally opened the U.K.'s first North Sea oil pipeline, and Fife, near St. Andrews University, where her grandson Prince William, now the Prince of Wales, studied and met his future wife, Catherine.

Sunday's solemn drive came as the queen's eldest son was formally proclaimed the new monarch — King Charles III — in the rest of the United Kingdom: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It came a day after a pomp-filled accession ceremony in England.

“I am deeply aware of this great inheritance and of the duties and heavy responsibilities of sovereignty, which have now passed to me,” Charles said Saturday.

Just before the proclamation was read Sunday in Edinburgh, a protester appeared with a sign condemn-

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ing imperialism and urging leaders to "abolish the monarchy." She was taken away by police. Reaction was mixed. One man shouted, "Let her go! It's free speech!" while others shouted: "Have some respect!"

Still, there was some booing in Edinburgh when Joseph Morrow, Lord Lyon King of Arms, finished his proclamation with "God save the king!"

That upset Ann Hamilton, 48.

"There's tens of thousands of people here today to show their respect. For them to be here, heckling through things, I think it was terrible. If they were so against it, they shouldn't have come," she said.

Still, it was a sign of how some, including people in Britain's former colonies, are struggling with the legacy of the monarchy — and its future.

Earlier in the day, proclamations were read in other parts of the Commonwealth, including Australia and New Zealand.

Charles, even as he mourned his late mother, got to work at Buckingham Palace, meeting with the secretary-general and other Commonwealth envoys. Many in those nations are grappling with both affection for the queen and lingering bitterness over their colonial legacies, which ranged from slavery to corporal punishment in African schools to looted artifacts held in British cultural institutions.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who is in favor of an Australian republic, said Sunday that now was not the time for a change but for paying tribute to the late queen. India, a former British colony, observed a day of state mourning, with flags lowered to half-staff.

Amid the grief enveloping the House of Windsor, there were hints of a possible family reconciliation. Prince William and his brother Harry, together with their respective wives, Catherine, Princess of Wales, and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, delighted mourners near Windsor Castle with a surprise joint appearance Saturday.

The queen's coffin was taking a circuitous journey back to the capital. After it is flown to London on Tuesday, the coffin will be moved from Buckingham Palace on Wednesday to the Houses of Parliament to lie in state until a state funeral at Westminster Abbey on Sept. 19.

In Ballater, the Rev. David Barr said locals consider the royal family as neighbors.

"When she comes up here, and she goes through those gates, I believe the royal part of her stays mostly outside," he said of the queen. "And as she goes in, she was able to be a wife, a loving wife, a loving mum, a loving gran and then later on a loving great-gran — and aunty — and be normal."

Elizabeth Taylor, from Aberdeen, had tears in her eyes after the hearse passed through Ballater.

"It was very emotional. It was respectful and showed what they think of the queen," she said. "She certainly gave service to this country, even up until a few days before her death."

## Ukraine pushes big counteroffensive as war marks 200 days

By The Associated Press undefined

As the war in Ukraine marked 200 days on Sunday, the country has reclaimed broad swaths of the south and east in a long-anticipated counteroffensive that has dealt a heavy blow to Russia.

The counterattack began in the final days of August and at first focused on the southern region of Kherson, which was swept by Russian forces in the opening days of the invasion. But just as Moscow redirected attention and troops there, Ukraine launched another, highly effective offensive in the northeast, near Kharkiv.

Facing the prospect of a large group of its forces becoming surrounded, Moscow pulled back its troops from Kharkiv in a dramatic shift in the state of play that posed the biggest challenge to the Kremlin since it launched the invasion Feb. 24.

"The Ukrainian army has taken advantage of the relocation of the bulk of the Russian forces to the south and is trying to direct the course of the war, excelling in maneuver and showing great ingenuity," said Mykola Sunhurovskyy, a military expert with the Razumkov Centre, a Kyiv-based think tank. Ukraine's quick gains, he added, are "important both for seizing initiative and raising troops' spirit."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy praised the military in a video address Saturday night, saying



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it has reclaimed about 2,000 square kilometers (over 770 square miles) of territory so far this month. He also taunted Moscow over its withdrawal, saying the Russian army was "demonstrating the best it can do — showing its back" and "they made a good choice to run."

The Russian military debacle has provoked outrage among Russian military bloggers and patriotic commentators, who chastised the Kremlin for failing to mobilize more forces and take stronger action against Ukraine. Even Ramzan Kadyrov, the Moscow-backed leader of the Russian region of Chechnya, publicly criticized the Russian Defense Ministry for what he called "mistakes" that made the Ukrainian blitz possible.

Both sides have suffered heavy losses in Europe's largest conflict since World War II. Ukraine's military chief said last month that nearly 9,000 of its soldiers have been killed in action. And while Moscow hasn't reported its own losses since March, Western estimates put the toll as high as 25,000 dead, with the wounded, captured and deserters bringing the overall Russian losses to more than 80,000.

Ukraine has sought to mobilize the population to reach an active military of 1 million people, while Russia, in contrast, has continued to rely on a limited contingent of volunteers for fear that a mass mobilization could fuel discontent and upset internal stability.

As the war slogs on, a growing flow of Western weapons over the summer is playing a key role in the counteroffensive, helping Ukraine significantly boost its precision strike capability.

Since the counteroffensive began, Ukraine said, its forces have reclaimed more than 30 settlements in the Kharkiv region.

In the Kherson region, troops sought to drive Russian forces from their foothold on the west bank of the Dnieper River, a potential vantage point for a push deeper into Ukraine by Moscow.

The Ukrainian General Staff said Russian forces had also left several settlements in the region but did not identify the towns.

The city of Kherson, an economic hub at the confluence of the Dnieper and the Black Sea with a prewar population of about 300,000, was the first major population center to fall in the war.

Russian forces also have made inroads into the Zaporizhzhia region farther north, where they seized Europe's largest nuclear power plant. The last of its six reactors was shut down Sunday after operating in a risky "island mode" for several days to generate electricity for the plant's crucial cooling systems after one of the power lines was restored.

Moscow has installed puppet administrations in occupied areas, introduced its currency, handed out Russian passports and prepared for local plebiscites to pave the way for annexation. But the counteroffensive has derailed those plans, with a top Moscow-backed official in Kherson saying the vote there needs to be put off.

The counterattack followed methodical strikes on Russian infrastructure and supply lines. Ukrainian forces have used U.S.-supplied HIMARS multiple rocket launchers to pound the two bridges on the Dnieper, forcing Russian troops in the Kherson region to rely on pontoon crossings that also have faced daily strikes.

Last month, a series of explosions also hit airbases and a munitions depot in Crimea, underlining the vulnerability of the peninsula that was annexed by Russia in 2014 and has been crucial for its southern operations. Ukrainian authorities initially refrained from claiming responsibility, but the country's military chief, Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyy, acknowledged in recent days that his forces hit them with rockets.

Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov said Kyiv "has used the tactics of methodically exhausting the Russian army, weakening it and depriving it of a possibility to regularly beef up its forces."

Unlike in the south, where Ukraine's counteroffensive proceeded more slowly on the barren steppes of Kherson that left troops vulnerable to Russian artillery, the Kharkiv region's forests offered natural cover that allowed for lightning-fast surprise attacks from multiple directions.

"Swiftness and surprise have become key components of the Ukrainian army action in the Kharkiv region after Russian forces deployed there had been relocated to the south," Zhdanov said.

Michael Kofman, an expert on the Russian military at the Virginia-based think tank CNA, said the counteroffensive "has proven a very significant victory for Ukraine."

"Russian forces appear to have been spread thinly, and military leadership unprepared despite earlier evidence of Ukrainian buildup," Kofman wrote. "I think it's fair to assess that Russia was caught by surprise with little in the way of reserves locally available."

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After capturing the town of Balakliia, about 55 kilometers (about 34 miles) southeast of Kharkiv, Ukrainian forces quickly pressed their offensive farther east to Kupiansk, a rail hub vital for sustaining Russian operations in the region.

They claimed control of the strategic city Saturday, cutting supply lines to a big group of Russian forces around Izyum to the south. To prevent their complete encirclement, Moscow ordered the hasty retreat, claiming they were relocating to focus on the neighboring Donetsk region.

Zhdanov noted that a successful counteroffensive is key to persuading allies to further increase supplies of weapons to Ukraine, something that was discussed Thursday at a NATO meeting in Germany.

"The events in the south and in the Kharkiv region must show to the West that the Ukrainian military knows how to handle the weapons and needs to develop their success," Zhdanov said.

## The queen, as imagined —from punk rock to mystery novels

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

In the spring of 2012, portrait artist Ralph Heimans stood on the Cosmati pavement of Westminster Abbey and awaited the subject of his latest commission, Queen Elizabeth II. When she approached, he says, it was an extraordinary moment.

"She was wearing her Robe of State, with four footmen holding it, and as she came down the long corridor it was a very theatrical kind of entrance," Heimans said soon after he had learned that the queen had died Thursday at age 96.

After spending an hour the queen, "discussing niceties," he came away with "a sense of how thoughtful she was, almost a sense of shyness, an introspective quality." In his oil painting, which hangs in Westminster, he drew her as a solitary, even brooding figure, her eyes cast down, with the vastness of Westminster behind her like so much weight from the past — and present.

"I wanted to show her in this private moment, with a certain gravity about her," he says.

Over the past 70 years, authors, filmmakers, playwrights, songwriters and painters have responded to the queen as both symbol and human being, whether commenting on the heights of her position or attempting to tease out the inner life of a woman who spoke infrequently in public and avoided personal revelations. The dual qualities, majesty and mystery, found her imagined in settings ranging from the sobriety of royal art to the rage of punk music to the varied characterizations of film and television.

"I think because she was a constant presence who didn't say very much, it allowed people to project on her in different ways," says Elizabeth Holmes, whose "HRH: So Many Thoughts on Royal Style" was published in 2020. "Also, you can very easily make people look like the Queen. You can take that as a starting point and run."

On film, the queen has been fictionalized in everything from Helen Mirren's Oscar-winning portrayal in "The Queen" to the farcical "Naked Gun" movies and the grim "Spencer," with Kristen Stewart as Princess Diana and Stella Gonet as Elizabeth. But she has been dramatized most fully in the Emmy-winning Netflix series "The Crown," which follows her life from the beginning of her reign to recent times — and whose production was suspended Friday after her death.

When played by Claire Foy as a young and glamorous monarch, she is seen as finding her way in her new life, trying to maintain a happy relationship with her husband, Prince Philip, while approaching her royal duties with the sobriety of someone years older. Olivia Colman takes over as Elizabeth ages and becomes more mature and prickly, and flawed, failing initially to travel to the scene of a devastating mining tragedy in Wales and comfort the townspeople, and proving unsympathetic to Diana's troubles with her son Prince Charles.

"I emote. The queen is not meant to," Colman told Vanity Fair in 2018. "She's got to be a rock for everyone, and has been trained not to (emote)."

The queen herself didn't comment on works about her or always seem aware of cultural trends: Greeting Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page at a 2005 palace reception, she seemed unsure of who he was and what instrument he played. But she sensed her place in world and had enough savvy to appear with

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Daniel Craig, in character as James Bond, for a 2012 Olympics video, and enough good humor to allow herself to be pictured as parachuting from a helicopter with him (the former was really her, the latter a stunt double).

Fiction writers enjoyed setting the queen off on unusual adventures. In Emma Tennant's "The Autobiography of the Queen," the monarch flees to St. Lucia in the Caribbean. S.J. Bennett worked from the premise "What if the queen solved crimes?" in writing the mystery novels "The Windsor Knot" and "A Three Dog Problem."

"She had such a unique perspective on the world. She was always looking out when everyone else was looking at her, so she must see a lot of things the rest of us don't see," Bennett, the daughter of a military veteran who had met the Queen, told The Associated Press.

"It was her character that fascinated me, not her position as a symbol," she added. "She was intelligent, frequently underestimated because she wasn't traditionally educated, and endlessly curious about people. In the books I have her eagerly looking out of the windows of Buckingham Palace while being painted for a portrait, to see what was going on outside, because that's what she really did. She had a very wry sense of humor and a huge instinct for fun, but equally an almost supernatural instinct for diplomacy, and a world-class sense of duty."

Musicians have paid tribute, condemned her and invoked her name for a quick laugh.

For punk and New Wave artists, she was a monument to be torn down. The Smiths' "The Queen Is Dead" mocks the royal family and the succession to power: "I say, Charles, don't you ever crave/To appear on the front of the Daily Mail/Dressed in your Mother's bridal veil?" The Sex Pistols helped define the punk movement in 1976 with "God Save the Queen," in which Johnny Rotten (now Lydon) declares "No future" as he snarls out some of the most scathing, nihilistic lyrics ever to top the British charts:

God save the queen  
The fascist regime  
They made you a moron  
A potential H bomb  
God save the queen  
She's not a human being ...

Songwriters otherwise responded with affection. Duke Ellington met her in the late 1950s and found her "so inspiring" he soon collaborated with Billy Strayhorn on the pensive "The Queen's Suite," for which he arranged a single gold pressing just for her. In the late 1960s, Paul McCartney dashed off the acoustic, 23-second "Her Majesty," with its cheeky refrain, "Her Majesty's a pretty nice girl/But she doesn't have a lot to say," and the Beatles tacked it onto the end of "Abbey Road."

As he explained in "Paul McCartney: The Lyrics," published in 2021, he wrote the song in part because the queen really didn't offer many public statements, beyond her annual Christmas address and the opening of Parliament. McCartney would meet the queen numerous times, as a Beatle and a solo performer, and even played the song for her. But, he reaffirmed in his book: "She didn't have a lot to say."

## As small businesses raise prices, some customers push back

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Inflation isn't only costing small businesses money. It's costing them customers as well.

At the Bushwick Grind Cafe in Brooklyn, New York, Kymme Williams-Davis has raised prices and switched to different types of goods to keep up with the rising costs of milk, coffee, paper goods and plastic, as well as shortages of items such as paper cups and plastic lids. She hasn't experienced anything like this since opening in 2015.

Williams-Davis says she has lost nearly half of her regular customers. Some have traded down and are buying coffee for \$1 at the McDonald's or bodega on either side of the café instead of paying the \$3 she charges.

"If (customers) can get it for a dollar for not that notable of a difference, they're going next door."

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One customer who had been coming in for years stopped in to tell Williams-Davis he bought himself a coffeemaker.

"He said I'm going to start making coffee at home, I need to budget, so I won't be coming in here every day," she said. "I feel like I've been on a goodbye campaign."

Inflation has been rising at nearly the fastest pace in 40 years, driven up by strong consumer spending and higher costs for food, rent, medical care, and other necessities.

On Tuesday, the government is expected to report that price increases slowed in August compared with a year ago, largely because of a steady drop in the cost of gas. Prices for other items, particularly food, are likely to keep rising quickly. Overall, economists forecast consumer prices rose 8.1% in August, compared with a year ago, down from 8.5% in July, according to data provider FactSet.

For much of the pandemic, small business customers were largely tolerant of price increases and kept on spending. But now owners say they're seeing some pushback.

Ninety-seven percent of small business owners say inflationary pressure is the same or worse than it was three months ago, according to a survey of more than 1,500 small businesses by Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Business Voices. Sixty-five percent have raised prices to offset higher costs. And 38% say they've seen a decline in customer demand due to price increases.

Nicole Miskelley, who manages PMR, an auto and diesel repair shop in Marion, Illinois, said she has seen customers delay repairs that aren't urgent such as scheduled maintenance or getting new tires.

At the beginning of the year, Miskelley's labor costs rose 12% and the cost of towing cars to the shop went up due to higher gas prices. Parts are more expensive too. Last year, an air conditioner processor would cost her \$200, but this year she can't find one for under \$400. So, she's had to raise her average price for a repair by 30% to 40%.

Her customers have noticed.

"Typically, I am able to joke about how drastically different things are now and most agree with me," she said. "On occasion, I deal with push back," including the rare bout of yelling or cursing by a customer.

"Among a lot of my older customers, who are on restricted income like Social Security, they say they have to cut back," she said. "They say, 'I know I need these tires, but I need to make a couple more rounds (of Social Security) to save up.'"

She says she's a little worried but hopes people can adjust to inflation.

"Right now, it kind of sucks because costs increased faster than I could catch up with. In time, I hope people budget better and their incomes change to reflect the economy."

The pullback is more dramatic among consumers with less discretionary income. Walmart says its customers, who tend to have lower incomes, are spending more on food and less on other items. Small business owners are seeing much of the same.

Kim Shanahan operates the online store Gifts Fulfilled in Berlin, Maryland, which sells gift baskets and care packages and employs people with disabilities.

"Last year has been challenging to say the least," she said. "All prices across the board have gone up." Everything from cardboard, containers and the food that she includes in the baskets have become more expensive.

She implemented a 5% increase to cover some costs. After she raised the price of her most popular get-well gift basket called "One Tough Cookie," from \$27.50 to \$28.95, sales went down, she said.

Less expensive baskets, such as those with gifts and candy that sell for \$25 and under, have been the most affected, with unit sales down about 50% in 2022 compared with last year. "The whole segment of the market is gone for us," she said.

"We are a 'want to-' not 'have to-' have item in our primary categories," Shanahan said. "What we sort of see is people maybe buying a \$50 gift dropping down to \$35. And the whole lower tier aren't even buying at all, they don't have the discretionary funds."

Schuyler Northstrom of Uinta Mattress, a mattress maker in Salt Lake City, Utah, says he's raised his prices by 15% since 2020. A mattress that used to sell for \$289 wholesale is now \$330.

The increase doesn't fully cover Uinta's higher costs. Raw materials such as springs and foam have in-

creased by 40%. But Northstrom fears that raising prices any higher could cause his customers to drop him. "The pushback from retailers is pretty strong there," he said. His retail partners include John Paras mattress stores and 2Brothers Mattress, both in Utah. "Sometimes we're displaced by some of the larger guys with a lower cost product because of their volume."

To adapt, Northstrom is redesigning the mattress to cut down on costs, and taking less profit, which isn't sustainable in the long term, he said. He's also focusing more on the higher end, mattresses that cost up to \$1,200, which hasn't been hit as hard.

"We're feeling it, we're not a necessary purchase, people buy food and gas," he said.

## Crisis forge Beshear's role as Kentucky's consoler in chief

By BRUCE SCHREINER Associated Press

PRESTONSBURG, Ky. (AP) — Derrek McIntosh was left homeless twice within weeks — first by floodwaters that destroyed his eastern Kentucky home, then when a fire burned down the house he stayed in with relatives.

Now that he's moved into a temporary travel trailer, McIntosh said he no longer worries where he'll lay his head at night. And the 34-year-old Republican gives the credit for that to a Democrat — Gov. Andy Beshear.

When flooding swept through parts of Appalachia in late July, McIntosh said, the governor moved quickly. "I think he's doing an awesome job," McIntosh said.

Beshear's first term in office has been dominated by one deadly crisis after another: the global COVID-19 pandemic, tornadoes that killed scores of people in western Kentucky in December and floodwaters in Appalachia that left dozens more Kentuckians dead. Through it all, Beshear has offered encouragement to victims, pledged to hold officials accountable for the federal response and dived into the details of the recovery process.

"This rebuilding process is going to be one of the most challenging the country has ever seen," Beshear said during a recent stop in Hazard. "And I think we're up to it. I saw this saying the other day. It was: God saves his toughest challenges for his strongest soldiers."

If there's a playbook for a Democratic politician navigating the treacherous politics of a ruby-red state, Beshear may have found it. The 44-year-old governor talks about his Christian faith, his stewardship of the state's record-setting economy and the resilience of his fellow Kentuckians.

Beshear, who is seeking reelection to his second term next year, typically steers away from partisan politics.

"Every time that we can put aside red or blue, D or R, and just focus on things that are good for our families, are the times that we jump in front of every other state that can't do that," the governor said recently at the Kentucky Farm Bureau's annual ham breakfast. "And I'm convinced that our job in state government isn't to move the state to the right or to the left but to move it forward."

Beshear's approach has caught the eye of New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, who will chair the Democratic Governors Association in 2023. He said Beshear has an "unlimited ceiling" if the Kentuckian wins another term.

"He's every bit as good as he seems," Murphy said. "And he's just an extraordinary leader and, by the way, knows how to get stuff done with the other side of the aisle."

Other Democrats may find the formula hard to duplicate in places that haven't faced the gauntlet of challenges Kentucky has — or if they lack his political pedigree. His father, Steve Beshear, was a popular two-term Kentucky governor from 2007 to 2015.

And while crisis management has marked the younger Beshear as a politician to watch since his election as governor in 2019, Republicans are lining up to challenge him in a state where Democrats have struggled in recent years.

The GOP holds both U.S. Senate seats, five of six congressional seats, every statewide office other than governor and lieutenant governor and supermajorities in the legislature.

"I think his personal image is right side up, but his party's image is decidedly upside-down," said Scott

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Jennings, a Kentucky-based Republican political commentator and former adviser to President George W. Bush.

Following a strategy that catapulted the GOP to dominance in Kentucky, Republican contenders for governor hope to nationalize the race, in part by tying Beshear to the inflationary surge that caused President Joe Biden's approval ratings to sag.

But Beshear's appearances with Biden have come in the aftermath of natural disasters and only served to amplify Beshear's role as a state-level consoler in chief as he focuses on helping people.

He intends to make his management of the state's economy a cornerstone of his reelection campaign. During his term, Kentucky has posted record highs for job creation and investments and record low unemployment rates.

Republicans, meanwhile, consistently remind Kentuckians of the restrictions Beshear imposed during the pandemic.

"Folks, just because we lived through a global pandemic doesn't mean that our rights, our freedoms and liberties should be tossed out the window," GOP gubernatorial hopeful Ryan Quarles said this summer at the Fancy Farm picnic, the state's top political event.

Republican Attorney General Daniel Cameron, among the Republicans running for governor, led a legal fight against Beshear's pandemic restrictions on businesses and gatherings, winning before the Kentucky Supreme Court. That cleared the way for the legislature to rein in the governor's emergency powers.

But as Republican rivals at the picnic slammed his job performance, Beshear was across the state in the mountains, consoling families left homeless by the flooding.

The governor defends his pandemic-related actions, which he says reflected guidance from then-President Donald Trump's coronavirus task force. More importantly, Beshear says, they saved lives.

For all his niceties, Beshear also has shown a fighter's instincts — whether it's on the campaign trail or in skirmishes over legislation.

He vetoed bills putting more restrictions on abortion and banning transgender girls and women from female sports teams, beginning in the sixth grade. Both were political risks in socially conservative Kentucky. Beshear also vetoed bills aimed at launching charter schools, phasing out individual income taxes and tightening rules for public assistance benefits. Republican lawmakers overrode all those vetoes and cite them as evidence that he's out of touch.

"It shows that his beliefs are inconsistent with the beliefs of Kentuckians," said state Auditor Mike Harmon, another GOP officeholder running for governor.

But for some Republican voters, Beshear's handling of epic natural disasters and his empathy for Kentuckians struggling to overcome tragedy matter more.

Timothy Carter, an eastern Kentucky coal miner and diehard Trump supporter, said Beshear has been there for flood victims.

"He's gotten out and stomped right through the mud just the same as they have," Carter said. "And when a lot of people see that, that brings a different respect. It's an earned respect."

In a region with deep affection for Trump, Carter and several others praised Beshear as they waited recently for their children to be fitted with donated shoes at Jenny Wiley State Resort Park, one of several places Beshear designated as emergency shelters after the tornadoes or flooding.

During another visit there, Beshear comforted Pansy McCoy, who took refuge at the park after floodwaters swamped her home. She's hit a snag in getting the help she needs.

"I just want my home," she told the governor. "I just want a home."

"We'll work with you on that, OK?" Beshear said before connecting her with members of his team.

While McCoy expressed her appreciation for the governor, not everyone saw things that way.

Randy Johnson stayed outside the park lodge when the governor spoke to a crowd inside. Johnson said later that he's been in limbo since his home was flooded, living at the park with his wife and grandchild and awaiting federal aid.

"He sure let us down," Johnson said. "I just don't see nothing getting any better."

But that wasn't the prevailing view. McIntosh, the Republican who's moved into a temporary travel trailer,

said he'll have no problem voting for the governor next year.

"I can't believe he's doing as much as he's doing here," McIntosh said, "trying to help all us eastern Kentuckians."

## **EXPLAINER: The intel review of documents at Trump's estate**

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The discovery of hundreds of classified records at Donald Trump's home has thrust U.S. intelligence agencies into a familiar and uncomfortable role as the foil of a former president who demanded they support his agenda and at times accused officers of treason.

While the FBI conducts a criminal investigation, the office that leads the intelligence community is also conducting a review — currently on pause pending a court order — of the damage that would result from disclosure of the documents found at the Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida.

The investigation comes at a perilous time in American politics, with increasing threats to law enforcement and election workers and as a growing swath of officials assail the FBI and spread baseless theories of voter fraud. There's already a wide range of speculation about what was in the documents, with some Democrats pointing to reporting about possible nuclear secrets while some Trump allies suggesting the case is a benign argument about storage.

So far, the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence has proceeded cautiously, issuing no public statements and declining to answer questions about the review's structure or how long it will take.

A look at what's known and expected:

### **NOT A FORMAL 'DAMAGE ASSESSMENT'**

According to the government, the documents seized at Mar-a-Lago and papers the Republican former president had turned over previously included highly sensitive "Special Access Program" designations as well as markings for intelligence derived from secret human sources and electronic signals programs. Those forms of intelligence are often produced by the CIA or the National Security Agency, and the underlying sources can take years to develop.

The ODNI review will try to determine the possible damage if the secrets in those documents were to be exposed. It has not said if it's investigating whether documents already have been exposed.

Avril Haines, the director of national intelligence, confirmed the review in a letter to the chairpersons of two House committees. Haines' letter says the ODNI will lead a "classification review of relevant materials, including those recovered during the search." Experts say that could include non-classified papers with notes written on them that might reference classified information.

Haines' letter also says her office will lead an assessment of "the potential risk to national security that would result from the disclosure of the relevant documents."

That's different from a formal "damage assessment" that intelligence agencies have carried out after high-profile breaches like the disclosures of programs by former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden.

Damage assessments have specific requirements under intelligence community guidelines published online, including an estimate of "actual or potential damage to U.S. national security," the identification of "specific weaknesses or vulnerabilities" and "detailed, actionable recommendations to prevent future occurrences."

Under those guidelines, the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, a subsidiary within the ODNI, would lead a damage assessment. The center is led by acting Director Michael Orlando as President Joe Biden has not yet nominated a chief counterintelligence executive.

It's unknown whether the intelligence review will include interviewing witnesses. Haines' letter says the ODNI will coordinate with the Justice Department to ensure its assessment does not "unduly interfere" with the criminal investigation.

For now, the Justice Department has said the ODNI review is paused after a federal judge barred the use of records seized at Mar-a-Lago in a criminal investigation. "Uncertainty regarding the bounds of the

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Court's order and its implications for the activities of the FBI has caused the Intelligence Community, in consultation with DOJ, to pause temporarily this critically important work," attorneys for the government said in a court filing.

## THE ANSWERS COULD BE UNSATISFYING

The results may not come for weeks or months, and full findings will likely remain classified.

Lawmakers in both parties are calling for briefings from the intelligence community. None is known to have been scheduled.

Former officials note that it's often difficult for agencies to diagnose specific damage from an actual or potential breach. Given the political climate and the unprecedented nature of evaluating a former president, the ODNI is widely expected to be limited and precise in what it says publicly and privately to Congress.

But reviews like the one underway often help top officials and lawmakers better understand vulnerabilities and how to manage risk going forward, said Timothy Bergreen, a former Democratic majority staff director for the House Intelligence Committee.

"No healthy organization or society can exist without comprehensive review of its mistakes," Bergreen said. "That's always been a democracy's big advantage over authoritarians."

## AN OFFICE CREATED AFTER SEPT. 11

Lesser known than many of the agencies it oversees, the ODNI was created in the reorganization of the intelligence community after the Sept. 11 attacks. Amid revelations that the FBI and the CIA did not share critical information with each other, the ODNI was intended to oversee the 18-member intelligence community and integrate the different streams of collection and analysis produced by different agencies.

The ODNI supervises the drafting of the President's Daily Brief, the distillation of top American intelligence provided to Biden and top advisers daily. Haines is the president's principal intelligence adviser and often briefs Biden in the Oval Office along with other national security leaders.

Trump went through three directors of national intelligence in his last year, part of his long-running battles with the intelligence community.

Some of his top officials were accused of selectively declassifying information for political purposes. And before, during and after his time in office, Trump has accused intelligence officials of selectively leaking material to undermine him or not being sufficiently loyal.

He was incensed by the long-running investigations into allegations of Russian influence on his 2016 campaign, calling them the "greatest political CRIME in American History." And he excoriated the person who spoke to a whistleblower about his pressuring Ukraine for derogatory information, saying that person was "close to a spy" who could have committed treason.

Under Biden, Haines and other top officials have been involved in declassifying information about Russia's war plans against Ukraine. They have also faced questioning about overly optimistic assessments of Afghanistan prior to the fall of Kabul.

Michael Allen, a former Republican majority staff director of the House Intelligence Committee, said the ODNI is uniquely positioned to handle such a closely watched review.

"This, I think, is one of the reasons why you have a DNI, to coordinate across the wide and disparate community of intelligence agencies," said Allen, author of "Blinking Red," a history of the post-Sept. 11 intelligence reforms. "This is their bread and butter."

## Testimony: School shooter's home ruled by chaos

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Chaos reigned in the home where Florida school shooter Nikolas Cruz grew up, testimony in his ongoing penalty trial has shown.

He and his half-brother Zachary tormented their adoptive, widowed mother, Lynda. By the time Cruz reached middle school in the early 2010s, the pair took their fists and baseball bats to the walls, leaving gaping holes. They destroyed televisions and carved gashes in furniture, witnesses said.

Zachary may have been two years younger, but he was bigger and stronger and relentlessly picked on



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his brother — one social worker remembered Zachary climbing atop a counter and stepping in Nikolas' cereal as he ate.

Lynda Cruz called sheriff's deputies to the family's 4,500-square-foot (420-square-meter) home at least two dozen times between 2012 and 2016 to deal with one son, the other or both. Most calls were for fighting, destroying her property, disrespecting her or running away.

"Nikolas was very easily set off and I think Zachary derived some pleasure from pushing Nikolas' buttons," testified Frederick Kravitz, one of Cruz's childhood psychologists. In turn, "they were very good at pushing (their mother's) buttons."

Nikolas Cruz, 23, pleaded guilty in October to murdering 17 students and staff members at Parkland's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Feb. 14, 2018. His trial is only to decide whether he is sentenced to death or life without parole. The trial resumes Monday after a week off.

Lead prosecutor Mike Satz's case was straightforward. He played security videos of the shooting and showed the AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle Cruz used. Teachers and students testified about watching others die. He showed graphic autopsy and crime scene photos and took jurors to the still blood-stained, bullet-pocked classroom building Cruz terrorized. Parents and spouses gave tearful and angry statements about their loss.

In an attempt to counter that, assistant public defender Melisa McNeill and her team have made Cruz's history their case's centerpiece, hoping at least one juror will vote for life. A death verdict must be unanimous.

The defense wants to show that from Cruz's birth to a hard-drinking, crack-smoking Fort Lauderdale prostitute, he never fully received needed help even as he grew increasingly out of control.

And nowhere was that more apparent than in the home Roger and Lynda Cruz built in Parkland, an upscale Fort Lauderdale suburb. They adopted Nikolas at birth in 1998 and, in 2000, Zachary, who had a different birth father.

Lynda Cruz, who turned 50 shortly after adopting Nikolas, was a stay-at-home mom. Roger Cruz, then 61, owned a successful marketing business.

Lynda Cruz "had wanted a child, always wanted a child. So once she got Nikolas, she felt like her family was complete," friend Trish Davaney-Westerlind testified. "He was a cute little baby. She would go and get him all these sailor outfits. She was just the happiest I ever saw."

But by preschool, Cruz showed extreme behavior. Neighbors and teachers testified he hit and bit other children and didn't socialize. He was anxious, fell when he ran and couldn't use utensils. Nikolas started seeing psychiatrists and psychologists at age 3 and didn't fully talk or become potty trained until 4.

At 5, just as Cruz entered kindergarten, he witnessed his father suffer a fatal heart attack in the family's den. That left Lynda Cruz alone in her mid-50s with two sons who would have challenged a much younger couple.

Unemployed, she became paranoid about spending, keeping her air conditioners' thermostats in the 80s (25 to 30 Celsius) and unplugging unused appliances. One friend said her monthly electric bill was \$80, a fraction of what the owner of a large South Florida home typically pays.

She padlocked the refrigerator so her sons couldn't eat without permission and kept it so poorly stocked neighbors gave her groceries.

Friends gave conflicting testimony over whether Lynda Cruz really was financially strapped or had wealth she didn't want to spend.

In either case, she had expenses other parents didn't. Cruz's mental health treatments weren't fully covered by insurance. He loved online, often violent video games, but hated losing - that's what caused him to destroy TVs and damage walls. She sometimes locked his video game console in her car as punishment — and Cruz at least once broke a window to get it back.

"She was a little afraid of him," neighbor Paul Gold testified.

Despite Cruz's tantrums, Lynda Cruz told teachers and counselors he was gentle and loving, a mama's boy. Friends testified that wasn't wholly a facade — Cruz and his mother did have a strong, often affectionate attachment and she favored him over his brother.

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Still, Zachary remained popular in the neighborhood while Cruz was the outcast — and not just with children.

Steven Schusler testified that shortly after moving nearby, his landlord called over the Cruz boys and pointed at Nikolas, then about 10.

“He’s the weird one, aren’t you Nicky?” Schusler recalled the woman saying. Cruz “curled up” and “looked like a snail when you put salt on one.”

But Cruz’s behavior was often strange and sometimes violent. When he was 9, a parent called police after he hit her child in the head with a rock. When his dog died after eating a poisonous toad, he went on a killing spree against the amphibians. At middle school, his outbursts disrupted classes and he plastered his homework with racist slurs, swastikas, obscenities and stick figures having sex or shooting each other.

Lynda Cruz became so overwhelmed in Cruz’s early teens, a social services agency was assigned to help. That’s what brought case manager Tiffany Forrest to the home. She said Lynda Cruz complained Nikolas wouldn’t bathe, so Forrest tried to explain to him the importance of hygiene. Cruz stood up, walked outside and jumped clothed into the pool. He then climbed out.

“I showered,” he told Forrest.

In the coming weeks, Cruz’s attorneys are expected to present testimony about his transfer to a school for students with emotional and behavioral problems, his time at Stoneman Douglas and call his brother to the stand. Zachary now lives in Virginia with two benefactors.

Their mother died less than four months before the shooting.

## **EXPLAINER: ‘Morning after pill’ not always option after rape**

By AMY FORLITI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Some leaders in states with strict abortion bans say exceptions for rape or incest victims aren’t needed because emergency contraceptives can be used instead. But medical professionals and advocates for rape survivors say that while emergency contraception is a helpful tool, it’s not always foolproof, and getting access to these emergency measures in the short time frame in which they would be effective may not be realistic for someone who has just been assaulted.

Here’s a look at emergency contraceptives and what some people are saying.

### **WHAT ARE EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVES?**

Emergency contraceptives are used to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex or if a method of birth control fails.

Two types of medications, sometimes referred to as “morning after pills,” are available: levonorgestrel, known by the popular brand name Plan B; and ulipristal acetate, known under the brand ella. They should be taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

The pills prevent ovulation, which is when an egg is released from an ovary, said Dr. Jonah Fleisher, director of the Center for Reproductive Health at the University of Illinois in Chicago. If an egg is not released, it cannot be fertilized.

### **ARE THEY THE SAME AS ABORTION PILLS?**

No. Emergency contraceptives prevent a pregnancy. The abortion pill, mifepristone, ends a pregnancy after a fertilized egg has implanted in the lining of a woman’s uterus. It’s commonly administered with the drug misoprostol and can be taken up to 11 weeks after the first day of a woman’s last period.

### **DOES EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION WORK?**

Not 100% of the time. The pills’ effectiveness improves the sooner they are taken after unprotected sex, doctors said. The drugs won’t prevent pregnancies if they are taken before sex, Fleisher said.

The Food and Drug Administration has approved Plan B for use up to 72 hours, or three days, after unprotected sex. Ella is approved for up to 120 hours, or five days.

Timing is important because sperm can live inside a woman’s body for up to five days, so a woman can still get pregnant if ovulation occurs after intercourse, said Dr. Dana Stone, an OB-GYN in Oklahoma City. If a woman has ovulated prior to intercourse, the pills are unlikely to help.

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"So that's where the failure comes in. It's based on the timing," Stone said.

A woman's weight also may play a role, though there is conflicting information on that. Guidance from the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology says levonorgestrel may be less effective in women with a body mass index that's over 25. The organization says some research suggests ulipristal acetate also has lower effectiveness among women with a BMI that's 30 or higher.

However, the FDA found conflicting data and reached no conclusion in a 2016 review of the effectiveness of levonorgestrel in women who weigh more than 165 pounds or have a BMI above 25. The agency said additional research should be a priority.

Another form of emergency contraception, a copper intrauterine device, is seen as the most effective method, if inserted into a woman's uterus within five days of unprotected sex. Its effectiveness is not dependent on weight, Fleisher said.

A doctor or nurse must insert a copper IUD, which can remain in place for many years as a regular form of birth control.

Plan B can be purchased over the counter by anyone 17 or older, but younger people need a prescription. Ella requires a prescription.

## WHAT DID THEY SAY?

Officials in some states, such as Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and South Carolina state Rep. Doug Gilliam, point to emergency contraceptives as a reason abortion bans don't need exceptions for rape or incest.

During an Aug. 31 House debate, Gilliam said, in a hypothetical case of a 12-year-old raped by her father, the child would have "choices" and wouldn't be "forced" to carry a pregnancy. Among them, he said, she could go to the hospital and get an emergency contraceptive, or go to the store and get one without a prescription.

Pressed by a fellow lawmaker on who would take the girl to the store to get the pill, he initially replied "The ambulance," then corrected himself and said, "The hospital when she's there."

In a follow-up interview with The Associated Press, the Republican lawmaker said he did not mean to suggest that an ambulance would take a girl to a store, but that if she were to go to the hospital, she would likely be offered emergency contraception.

"I don't want anybody to think that I told you a 12-year-old that just been raped ... is going to call an ambulance to go to a store," he said. "I just let them know the options were out there, and one of them was emergency medical contraceptives."

## WHAT ABOUT RAPE VICTIMS?

Most rape victims don't report the crime to law enforcement, according to Jude Foster, advocacy medical forensic and prevention programs director for the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault. Many also may not go in for immediate medical care. Not everyone knows that emergency contraceptives are an option and part of a routine rape exam, or that such an exam is free.

"Why is sexual assault used as a political football when you are talking about access to reproductive care?" Foster said. "Please don't. It just really frustrates me."

Stone said the belief that a woman can just take Plan B if she is raped is misguided.

"We need all kinds of options for women because nothing is a one size fits all," Stone said. "People have transportation problems, they have financial problems. There are always barriers to some percentage of women that will keep them from accessing this in the short time frame that they have."

## STATE LAWS

Several states have explicitly allowed for emergency contraception in their abortion laws.

Arkansas, Kentucky and Oklahoma all have laws that ban abortion at all stages of pregnancy, and make no exceptions for cases of rape or incest. Arkansas' and Kentucky's laws explicitly say they don't prohibit contraceptive measures if they are used before a pregnancy can be determined. Oklahoma's abortion ban also does not apply to emergency contraception.

Abortion bans aside, the National Conference of State Legislatures says 21 states and the District of Columbia have statutes related to accessing emergency contraception, and 16 of them and the District of Columbia require hospitals or health care facilities to provide information about or administer emergency

contraception to women who have been sexually assaulted.

Fleisher said emergency contraception does not replace the need for abortion care, and these issues should be between a doctor and patient.

"The people writing the laws don't understand the choices that real people are making," he said.

## **Aid for flood victims arrives in hard-hit Pakistani province**

By ZARAR KHAN Associated Press

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — Two more U.S. military planes loaded with tons of aid for Pakistanis affected by flooding from deadly monsoon rains landed Sunday in southern Sindh province, one of the worst-affected regions in the impoverished country.

Saif Ullah, spokesman for the country's Civil Aviation Authority, said each plane was loaded with about 35 tons of relief aid that would be distributed in the province by the World Food Program. The aircraft landed at Sukkur Airport in Sindh and Ullah said the U.S. operation that began Thursday would continue until Sept. 16.

Pakistan has suffered under extremely heavy monsoon rains that started early this year — in mid-June. Multiple officials and experts have blamed the rains and resulting floodwaters on climate change. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres last week called on the world to stop "sleepwalking" through the dangerous environmental crisis. He has called repeatedly on the international community to send massive amounts of aid to Pakistan.

Ullah said Sunday that two more flights bringing relief goods from the United Arab Emirates landed at Karachi airport. So far, U.N. agencies and several countries have sent multiple planeloads of aid, and authorities say the UAE has been one of the most generous contributors.

Near 1,400 people have been killed, 13,000 injured and millions left homeless by the heavy flooding since mid-June. The waters also destroyed road and communications infrastructure.

In the worst-hit Sindh province, 621 people, including 270 children, were killed and 8,400 people left injured.

Miles of cotton and sugarcane crops, banana orchards and vegetable fields could be seen submerged in floodwaters. Thousands of mud and brick homes caved in under the deluge leaving people homeless and sheltering in tents alongside damaged roads.

According to the latest report from authorities, the unprecedented monsoon rains and flood destroyed more than 1.5 million houses, 63 bridges, 2,688 kilometers of roads and near half a million animals drowned in the flood water across the Sindh province, leaving over 30 million homeless.

Pakistan's military chief Gen. Qamar Jawed Bajwa toured the badly affected district of Dadu in Sindh and its surroundings on Saturday. Dadu could suffer further flooding from the rising waters of the Indus River.

"People will continue to suffer if we don't have a drainage system and dams," Bajwa told reporters.

He said constructing dams would help produce electricity, curb pollution and decrease global warming and that army engineers have been asked to conduct an initial study.

Bajwa said working on alternate energy sources is essential and called for the gradual reduction of oil and coal as energy sources to minimal levels.

Since June, heavy rains and flooding have added a new level of grief to cash-strapped Pakistan and highlighted the disproportionate effect of climate change on impoverished populations.

Experts say Pakistan is responsible for only 0.4% of the world's historic emissions that are blamed for climate change. The U.S. is responsible for 21.5%, China for 16.5% and the European Union for 15%.

## **Fighting bogus claims a growing priority in election offices**

By ALI SWENSON and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

Election officials preparing for the rapidly approaching midterm elections have one more headache: trying to combat misinformation that sows distrust about voting and results while fueling vitriol aimed at rank-and-file election workers.

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Some states and counties are devoting more money or staff to a problem that has only grown more concerning since the 2020 presidential election and the false claims that it was marred by widespread fraud. A barrage of misinformation in some places has led election officials to complain that Facebook parent Meta, Twitter and other social media platforms aren't doing enough to help them tackle the problem.

"Our voters are angry and confused. They simply don't know what to believe," Lisa Marra, elections director in Cochise County, Arizona, told a U.S. House committee last month. "We've got to repair this damage."

Many election offices are taking matters into their own hands, starting public outreach campaigns to provide accurate information about how elections are run and how ballots are cast and counted. That means traveling town halls in Arizona, "Mythbuster Mondays" in North Carolina and animated videos in Ohio emphasizing the accuracy of election results. Connecticut is hiring a dedicated election misinformation analyst.

Still, the task is daunting. Despite Oregon putting additional money into joining a national #Trust-edInfo2022 campaign, misinformation continues to reach social media and force local election officials to respond, taking time from other duties.

Ben Morris, spokesperson for the Oregon secretary of state's office, cited three recent Facebook posts that Meta allowed to remain on Facebook despite his office providing evidence to them that they were false.

One alleged a candidate's name had been improperly censored from election fliers. Another falsely asserted that one party was purposefully denied access to a local elections office. Yet another claimed inaccurately that election workers in Multnomah County were being required to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination.

"Meta's policies are too limited to address the misinformation we see at a state and local level," Morris said. "Their policies cover big national issues, but false posts about a county clerk or a state law aren't removed. When you realize this could be happening at Meta's scale, it's deeply concerning."

The disconnect may be that Facebook policies "prioritize provably false claims that are timely, trending and consequential." All three posts Morris referenced were presumably too localized to have "trended," though he contends they were still damaging.

They also were posted by candidates for office, a group that includes a growing number of election deniers and whose speech social media companies strive to protect.

Meta spokesperson Corey Chambliss said the policies exempt much of what politicians say online because of "Facebook's fundamental belief in free expression, respect for the democratic process, and the belief that, especially in mature democracies with a free press, political speech is the most scrutinized speech there is."

But he said those protections are waived in cases of direct election interference or threats of violence or intimidation.

In Arizona's largest county, Maricopa, candidates shielded by those protections have liberally posted misinformation during this year's election cycle. That has prompted officials to aggressively condemn the false narratives themselves.

When a candidate for county supervisor encouraged supporters to steal ballot-marking pens given to them at polling places on Election Day during the state's August primary, the county attorney, Rachel Mitchell, wrote warning her to stop. The candidate pushed false claims that the pens allow election workers to change people's votes.

And when Republican gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake made unsupported claims of potential fraud ahead of the primary, Board of Supervisors Chairman Bill Gates told local reporters her claims were "beyond irresponsible."

"They never brought any specifics to us," said Gates, a fellow Republican.

He said he has been more vocal on social media and more available to traditional media than ever before this year, in an effort to tamp down false election claims before they get out of hand.

Gates and County Recorder Stephen Richer regularly respond directly to false Twitter posts with the facts. Richer said his department also emails Twitter when it sees a misleading narrative or threats against election workers gathering steam online, though it has disagreed with some of the platform's responses.

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When debunked claims about the county deleting election data off a server in 2021 resurfaced at an activist-led "election security forum" three days before the state's August primary, the presenters publicly identified two election workers they claimed were responsible and called their actions a crime. That prompted threats and harassment against the workers online, part of a disturbing trend affecting election offices across the country.

Richer said the county wrote to Twitter in hopes of muting the hate, but the platform "didn't always agree" that the content violated its policies.

Last month, Twitter activated enforcement of 2022 election integrity policies intended to "enable healthy civic conversation on Twitter, while ensuring people have the context they need to make informed decisions about content they encounter." The company's efforts included unveiling state-specific pages with live election updates featuring tweets from election officials and local reporters. The platform didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Video app TikTok, whose growing popularity has made it yet another hub for misinformation this election cycle, announced last month it is launching an election center that will help people find voting locations and candidate information. The platform said it works with over a dozen fact-checking organizations to debunk misinformation and will incorporate artificial intelligence as part of its efforts to detect and remove threats against election workers and push back against voting misinformation.

Not every state or county has Maricopa's command of social media.

Relatively few county election offices have official presences on both Facebook and Twitter, according to a recent report by a pair of scholars who specialize in voter participation and the electoral processes, Mississippi State University's Thessalia Merivaki and Connecticut College's Mara Suttman-Lea.

Many more local offices are on just one platform or the other, and the vast majority aren't on either.

Legislation introduced in Congress earlier this year would provide \$20 billion over the next decade to help state and local governments support election administration, which includes fighting misinformation.

"Election after election, millions of Americans see inaccurate or misleading information about elections and the voting process on social media, and it is hurting our democracy," Sen. Amy Klobuchar, a Minnesota Democrat who is co-sponsoring the legislation, said during a hearing last spring.

When election officials battle through staffing, funding and personal safety concerns to get more involved on social media, voters of all ages — and particularly younger voters — become more engaged, according to the recent academic report on elections. The electorate benefits, the researchers wrote, "as does democracy itself."

That's just what the election supervisor's office in Collier County, Florida, is trying to do.

In one TikTok video on her personal account, office spokesperson Trish Robertson snaps her fingers to the Sicilian song "Che La Luna" amid images of district maps, portraits of election officials and large windows that allow for public viewing during vote counting.

The lighthearted video from June, playing off a TikTok trend in which users display essential items in their homes and offices, is one of many efforts Robertson is making to restore voters' trust. Besides posting to her own TikTok feed, she manages the county supervisor's social media channels, hosts "transparency tours" of the office and responds to piles of public record requests, which often demand information that doesn't exist.

Amid election falsehoods stoked by former President Donald Trump and amplified by his allies, Robertson said fighting misinformation "has pretty much become a full-time job."

## Today in History: September 12, Steve Biko dies in custody

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, Sept. 12, the 255th day of 2022. There are 110 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 12, 1977, South African Black student leader and anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko (BEE'-koh),

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30, died while in police custody, triggering an international outcry.

On this date:

In 1913, Olympic legend Jesse Owens was born in Oakville, Alabama.

In 1914, during World War I, the First Battle of the Marne ended in an Allied victory against Germany.

In 1958, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Cooper v. Aaron*, unanimously ruled that Arkansas officials who were resisting public school desegregation orders could not disregard the high court's rulings.

In 1959, the Soviet Union launched its Luna 2 space probe, which made a crash landing on the moon. The TV Western series "Bonanza" premiered on NBC.

In 1962, in a speech at Rice University in Houston, President John F. Kennedy reaffirmed his support for the manned space program, declaring: "We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

In 1987, reports surfaced that Democratic presidential candidate Joseph Biden had borrowed, without attribution, passages of a speech by British Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock (KIHN'-ik) for one of his own campaign speeches. (The Kinnock report, along with other damaging revelations, prompted Biden to drop his White House bid.)

In 1995, the Belarusian military shot down a hydrogen balloon during an international race, killing its two American pilots, John Stuart-Jervis and Alan Fraenckel.

In 2001, stunned rescue workers continued to search for bodies in the World Trade Center's smoking rubble a day after a terrorist attack that shut down the financial capital, badly damaged the Pentagon and left thousands dead. President George W. Bush, branding the attacks in New York and Washington "acts of war," spoke of "a monumental struggle of good versus evil" and said that "good will prevail."

In 2003, in the Iraqi city of Fallujah, U.S. forces mistakenly opened fire on vehicles carrying police, killing eight of them.

In 2005, Federal Emergency Management Agency director Mike Brown resigned, three days after losing his onsite command of the Hurricane Katrina relief effort.

In 2008, a Metrolink commuter train struck a freight train head-on in Los Angeles, killing 25 people. (Federal investigators said the Metrolink engineer, Robert Sanchez, who was among those who died, had been text-messaging on his cell phone and ran a red light shortly before the crash.)

In 2011, Novak Djokovic beat defending champion Rafael Nadal 6-2, 6-4, 6-7 (3), 6-1 to win his first U.S. Open championship.

Ten years ago: The U.S. dispatched an elite group of Marines to Tripoli, Libya, after the mob attack in Benghazi that killed the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans. President Barack Obama strongly condemned the violence, and vowed to bring the killers to justice; Republican challenger Mitt Romney accused the administration of showing weakness in the face of tumultuous events in the Middle East.

Five years ago: Crews worked to repair the lone highway connecting the Florida Keys, where 25 percent of the homes were feared to have been destroyed by Hurricane Irma; more than 9 million Floridians, or nearly half the state's population, were still without power in the late-summer heat. Seattle Mayor Ed Murray announced that he was resigning amid sex abuse allegations. Gay rights pioneer Edith Windsor, whose landmark Supreme Court case struck down parts of a federal anti-gay-marriage law, died in New York at the age of 88.

One year ago: Novak Djokovic's bid for the first calendar-year Grand Slam in men's tennis since 1969 ended with a loss to Daniil Medvedev in the U.S. Open final. Tailgating, face-painted fans returned in full force at stadiums around the country as the NFL opened its doors to capacity for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic. Lil Nas X won video of the year at the MTV Video Music Awards, on a night that saw Justin Bieber triumphantly return to the stage as a performer and as winner of the artist of the year. Max Scherzer of the Los Angeles Dodgers became the 19th pitcher in major league history with 3,000 career strikeouts; he also carried a perfect game into the eighth inning of a game against the San Diego Padres.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Linda Gray is 82. Singer Maria Muldaur is 80. Actor Joe Pantoliano is 71. Singer-musician Gerry Beckley (America) is 70. Original MTV VJ Nina Blackwood is 70. Former Kansas Gov. Sam

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Brownback is 66. Actor Rachel Ward is 65. Actor Amy Yasbeck is 60. Rock musician Norwood Fisher (Fishbone) is 57. Actor Darren E. Burrows is 56. Rock singer-musician Ben Folds (Ben Folds Five) is 56. Actor-comedian Louis (loo-ee) C.K. is 55. Rock musician Larry LaLonde (Primus) is 54. Golfer Angel Cabrera is 53. Actor-singer Will Chase is 52. Actor Josh Hopkins is 52. Country singer Jennifer Nettles is 48. Actor Lauren Stamile (stuh-MEE'-lay) is 46. Rapper 2 Chainz is 45. Actor Kelly Jenrette is 44. Actor Ben McKenzie is 44. Singer Ruben Studdard is 44. Basketball Hall of Fame player Yao Ming is 42. Singer-actor Jennifer Hudson is 41. Actor Alfie Allen is 36. Actor Emmy Rossum is 36. Los Angeles Dodgers first baseman Freddie Freeman is 33. Country singer Kelsea Ballerini is 29. Actor Colin Ford is 26.