

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 1 of 105

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Football team beats Sisseton](#)
- [2- Preschool Developmental Screening](#)
- [3- South Dakota Average Gas Prices](#)
- [4- Drought Monitor](#)
- [5- Jark Auction Ad](#)
- [6- Homecoming Parade](#)
- [22- Tiger-Palooza](#)
- [23- Weather Pages](#)
- [27- Daily Devotional](#)
- [28- 2022 Community Events](#)
- [29- Subscription Form](#)
- [30- News from the Associated Press](#)

Saturday, Sept. 24

Youth Football at Britton Jamboree
11 a.m.: Girls Soccer hosts Tea Area with JV game to follow
7th/8th Grade Volleyball Tournament at Matchbox in Aberdeen
Common Cents Community Thrift Store Open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 209 N Main.

Sunday, Sept. 25

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:45 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study 8:00 am. Worship (St. John's 9:00 am, Zion 11:00 am)
UMC: Conde worship, 8:30 p.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Worship, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday school after children's sermon during worship.
Emmanuel: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 26

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.
School Lunch: Chicken legs, mashed potatoes.
Senior Menu: Sloopy joe on wheat bun, oven roasted potatoes, mixed vegetables, fruit salad.
Noon: Senior Citizens Potluck at Groton Community Center
Boys Region 1A Golf Tournament - site and time to be determined
4 p.m.: Cross Country meet at Olive Grove Golf Course

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



4 p.m.: Combined 7th/8th Grade FB game at Aberdeen Roncalli
5:15 p.m.: JV Football game at Aberdeen Roncalli
Volleyball at Faulkton: C match at 5:15 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity.
7 p.m.: School Board Meeting
Pantry at Community Center open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
UMC: The Walk Bible Study by Pastor Brandon, 7 p.m.
Emmanuel: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

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

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.
© 2022 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 2 of 105

Four interceptions turn into touchdowns in homecoming win

Groton Area intercepted the ball four times and all four times the Tigers would end up scoring to win their homecoming game over Sisseton, 28-0.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM with Mike Nehls doing the play-by-play. The broadcast was sponsored by Bahr Spray Foam, John Sieh Agency, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Locke Electric, Dacotah Bank, SD Army National Guard with Brent Wienk, Milbrandt Enterprises Inc, Groton Area Chamber of Commerce, Doug Abeln Seed Company, Mike-N-Jo's Body-N-Glass.

Lane Tietz had two interceptions, Andrew Marzahn had one and Colby Dunker took an interception into the end zone. Teylor Diegel also had a fumble recovery.

Tietz completed a six yard pass to Marzahn and a 50 yard pass play to Diegel as Groton Area took a 14-0 lead after the first quarter. Nicolas Fernandez kicked both PATs.

Dunker would intercept the ball on the last play of the first half and ran it back 30 yards as the score stood at 20-0 at half time. Diegel would score on an 11 yard run in the third quarter with Tietz connecting with Dunker on the PAT to make it 28-0.

Groton Area had more first downs, 15-5. The Tigers carried the ball 39 times for 225 yards. Diegel had 12 carries for 112 yards, Tietz had 11 carries for 58 yards, Marzahn had 15 carries for 53 yards and Dunker had one carry for two yards. Sisseton had 18 carries for 25 yards with Jason Fisher having seven for 22 yards.

Tietz would complete 12 of 24 passes for 131 yards for two touchdowns and had two interceptions. Diegel had three catches for 73 yards, Marzahn had three for 17 yards, Dunker had three for 21 yards, Tate Larson had two for 11 yards and Ethan Gengerke had one for nine yards. Three quarterbacks for Sisseton completed five of 23 passes for four interceptions with Fisher having two catches for 30 yards.

Groton Area had eight penalties for 75 yards while Sisseton had seven for 70 yards.

Holden Sippel and Dunker each had 12 tackles, Logan Ringgenberg had nine while Marzahn and Brevin Fliehs each had four tackles. Hunter Biel led Sisseton with 11 tackles.

Groton Area, now 3-3, will host Webster Area on Friday. Sisseton, 1-5, has a bye week.

- Paul Kosel

Preschool Developmental Screening

Groton Area Schools #06-6

Preschool Developmental Screening is for children ages 3-4 who reside in the Groton Area School District. The child needs to be 3 years of age before the screening date/day. This screening is not required to enter Kindergarten.

The screening consists of adaptive, personal/social, communicating/speaking, motor, and concepts skills. If you believe your child has difficulties in any of these areas please contact the school.

If your child is already receiving services or enrolled at Groton Elementary School they will not need to be screened. If your child has already been screened but you have concerns please contact the elementary school. If you are new to the district and have a child under the age of 5, we also ask you to contact the elementary school.

Screenings will be held on Friday, September 30 8:00-3:30. Information will be sent to families who have already been identified. Please contact Heidi Krueger at 605-397-2317 to schedule a screening time.

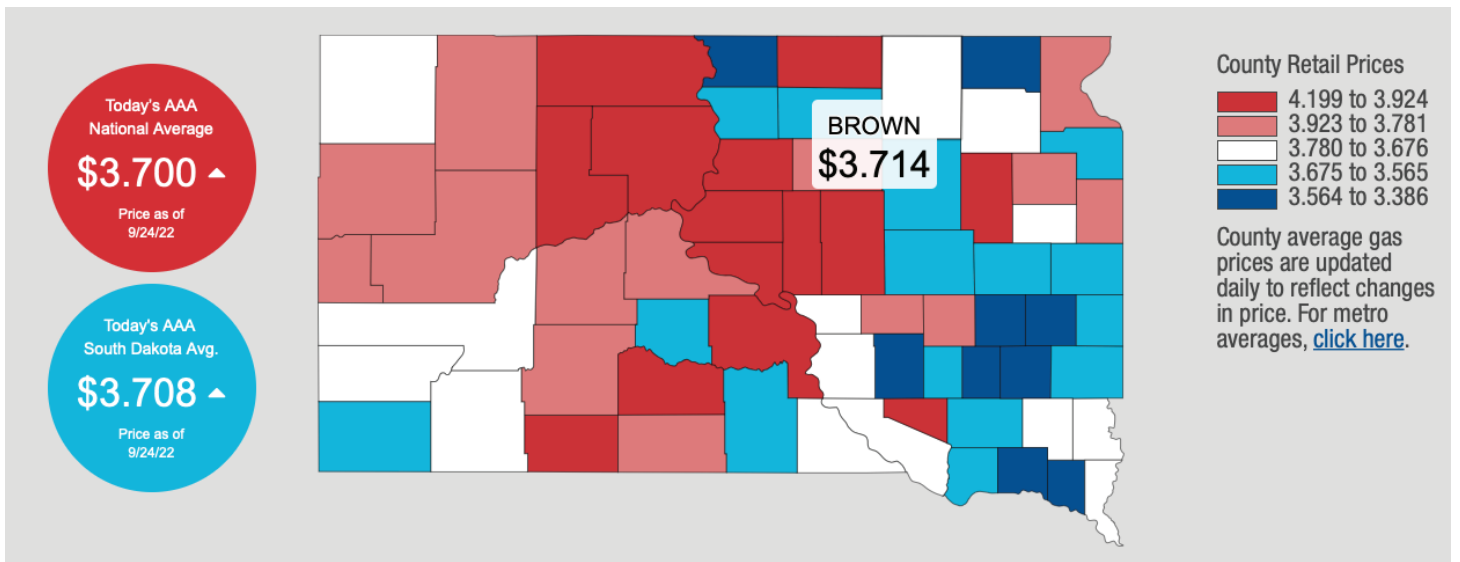
Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 3 of 105

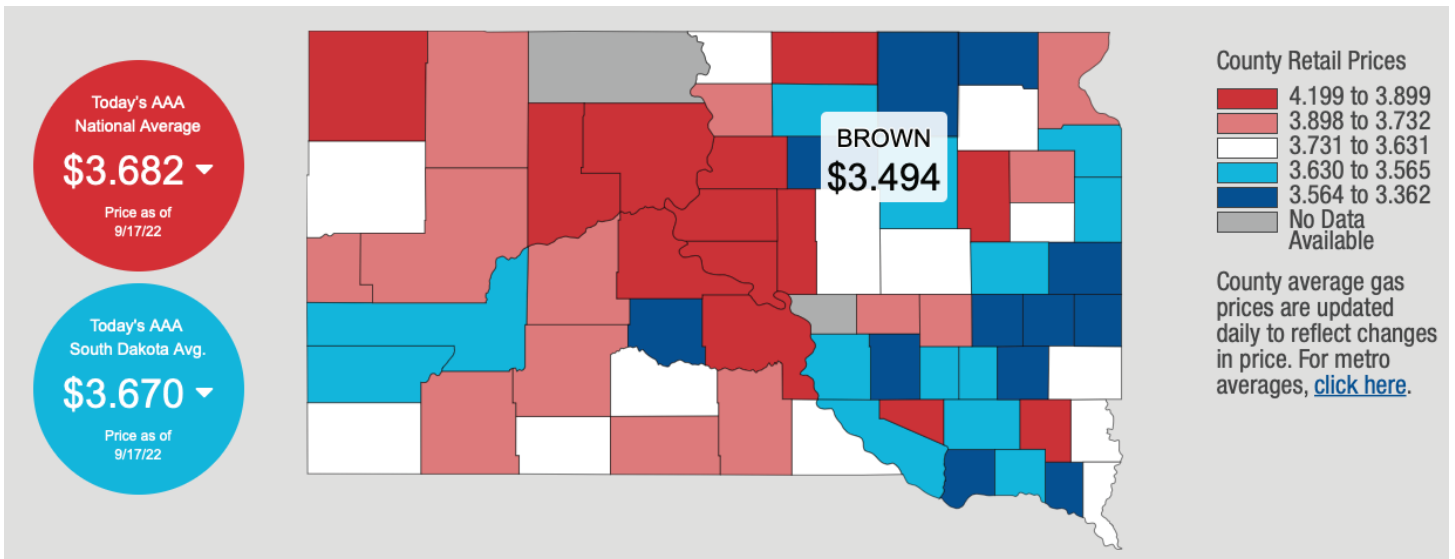
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.708	\$3.847	\$4.312	\$4.716
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.703	\$3.841	\$4.311	\$4.730
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.670	\$3.828	\$4.285	\$4.790
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.861	\$4.032	\$4.521	\$4.782
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.159	\$3.284	\$3.639	\$3.260

This Week



Last Week



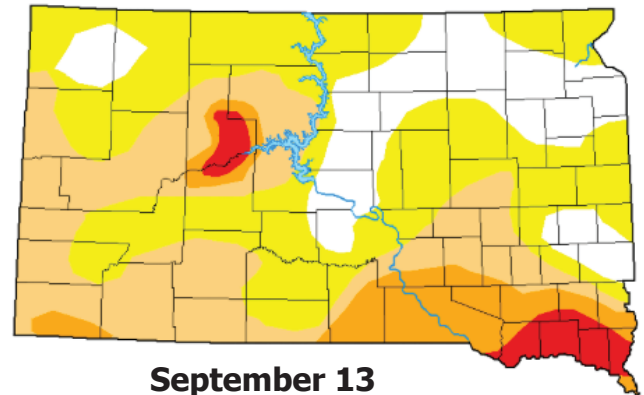
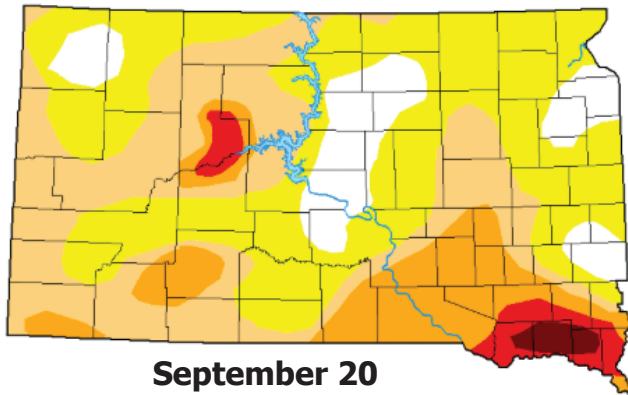
Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 4 of 105

Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



Parts of the High Plains region had rain while other parts were dry. Up to two inches fell locally in parts of several states. Especially dry areas occurred in parts of the Dakotas, Montana, Kansas, and Colorado. The lack of rain was accompanied by unusually hot temperatures regionwide, which increased evapotranspiration and accelerated the drying of soils. The drying soils and dry ponds and waterholes led to extensive expansion of D0-D2 in North Dakota and Montana, and D0-D4 in South Dakota and Kansas. Groundwater levels are low with wells in Wichita, Kansas, going dry. According to media reports, a water emergency developed in Caney, a town in southeast Kansas, when water stopped flowing over the Little Caney River's dam; there are 6 weeks of water supply left. D1 and D2 expanded in parts of Colorado, and D3 expanded in southeast Wyoming while other parts of the state saw contraction of D0 and D1. Nebraska also had some contraction of D2, but expansion of D1-D3 in other parts of the state. According to USDA statistics, all states in the region had half or more of the topsoil moisture short or very short of moisture. In Nebraska and Kansas, three-fourths of the pasture and rangeland was in poor to very poor condition, while the value was 50% for Colorado, 55% for South Dakota, and 58% for Montana.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 5 of 105

ANOTHER JARK/WORLIE AUCTION



RETIREMENT CEMENT TOOLS & EQUIPMENT AUCTION

Saturday, Oct. 1, 2022
Sale Time: 10:00 AM

507 E. RR Ave, Groton, SD



SKID STEER – WHEEL LOADER

• **Mustang 2056 Turbo** w/2 speed Cab, AC/Heat, Hydr. Tach, 6' Bucket, 2302 hours, ('10) • **5' Mustang Skid Steer Bucket** (cement) • **Kobelco LK300A Wheel Loader** w/Bucket, Forks, 16.9-24 Tires, Eng. Overhauled 4084 hrs ago (\$23,000)– Runs/Works.

GUN SAFE - TOOLS – EQUIP – TANKS

- Safari 24 Gun Safe (NIB)
- Husqvarna FS309 Cement Saw -Nice
- Subaru Robin Ex17 Cement Saw
- DP-75ASB Diesel Generator (New)
- Wen 5500 Generator (New)!
- Screeds w/Honda & B&S Motors
- BNT-40 14.4v Lithium Rebar Cutter
- Honda Drive Motor w/Vibrating Cable & Water Pump
- Impala 30 ton Hydr. Press
- Mikasa MVC-88GH Packer (Honda)
- Wacker VPA1750 Packer (Honda)
- Wacker Power Float (Honda)
- DeWalt & Jet Table Saws
- Insulated Concrete Blankets
- 8 Sets of Scaffolding
- Bosch Elec. Jack Hammer
- Stihl TS 400 & TS 500 Cement Saws
- Weldmark 135+ Welder
- DP Air Compressor
- Older Floats, Packers & Screeds
- Hammer Drills
- Hand Tools, Trowels, Air Hose Reel
- 5/8" Rod (4', 8', 20')
- 4) 6"x6"x15' St. Tubes (1/4")
- 90) 4x8 Wall Forms
- 4' & 8' Corner Forms
- Newer 2' Forms
- Stakes & Wire Ties
- 2x4's, 2x6's, 2x10's,
- Several 2x12's (15' & 20')
- 500 gal. Propane Tank (needs valve)
- 500 gal. Diesel Tank (1/2 full)
- Lots of Hand Tools

TRACTOR – LOADER – SNOWMOBILE

Case IH 50 CVT FWA Tractor w/L350 Loader, Bucket, Forks, 3 pt, PTO, 2 Hydr, 575 hours! • **Case IH BS172H 6' Snow Blower** (Nice) • **Case IH TLX180H 80" 3 pt. Tiller** • **Farm King 847 7' Leveler** • **Fimco 3 pt. Sprayer** w/ 50 gal. Tank, Folding Booms • **King Kutter 3 pt. 6' Disk** • **Field Svc Tank** • '08 **Polaris RMK 700 Snowmobile** w/155" Track/ 2 1/4" Lugs (all consigned)



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 6 of 105

GHS Homecoming Parade



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 7 of 105



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 8 of 105



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 9 of 105



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 10 of 105



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 11 of 105



St. John's Lutheran Church had the Best Church Float



Eighth Graders took first place

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 12 of 105



Seventh Grade Float
(Photos by Bruce Babcock)



Sixth Grade Float took Third Place

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 13 of 105



Junior Class Float



Senior Class Float



Freshmen Class Float took Second Place



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 14 of 105



Sophomore Class Float



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 15 of 105



POET - Best Commercial Float



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 16 of 105



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 17 of 105



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 18 of 105



Croton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 19 of 105



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 20 of 105



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 21 of 105



The GHS Class of 1982 was touring the high school including the Arena.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 22 of 105



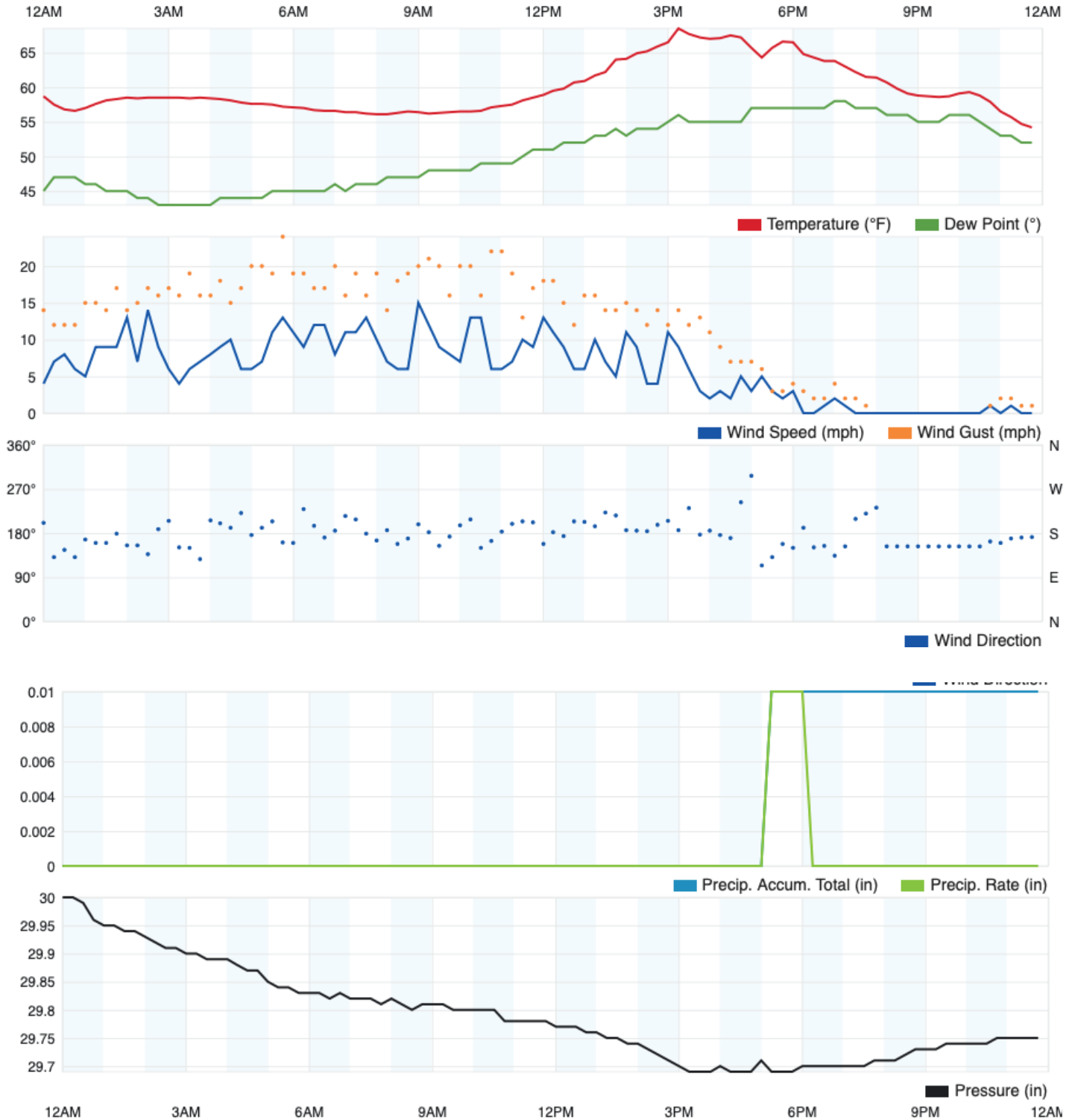
Tiger-Palooza was held in the GHS Gym and the dunk tank outside was a popular hit.



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 23 of 105

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 24 of 105

Today



Partly Sunny

High: 71 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 49 °F

Sunday



Sunny and Breezy

High: 68 °F

Sunday Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 40 °F

Monday



Sunny

High: 68 °F



Continued Mild & Dry

September 24, 2022
2:26 AM

Today
Partly Sunny, Highs 65-79°

Tonight
Partly Cloudy, Lows 44-53°

Sunday
Mostly Sunny, Highs 62-75°



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A tranquil weekend is on tap, along with mild temperatures. #sdwx #mnwx

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 25 of 105

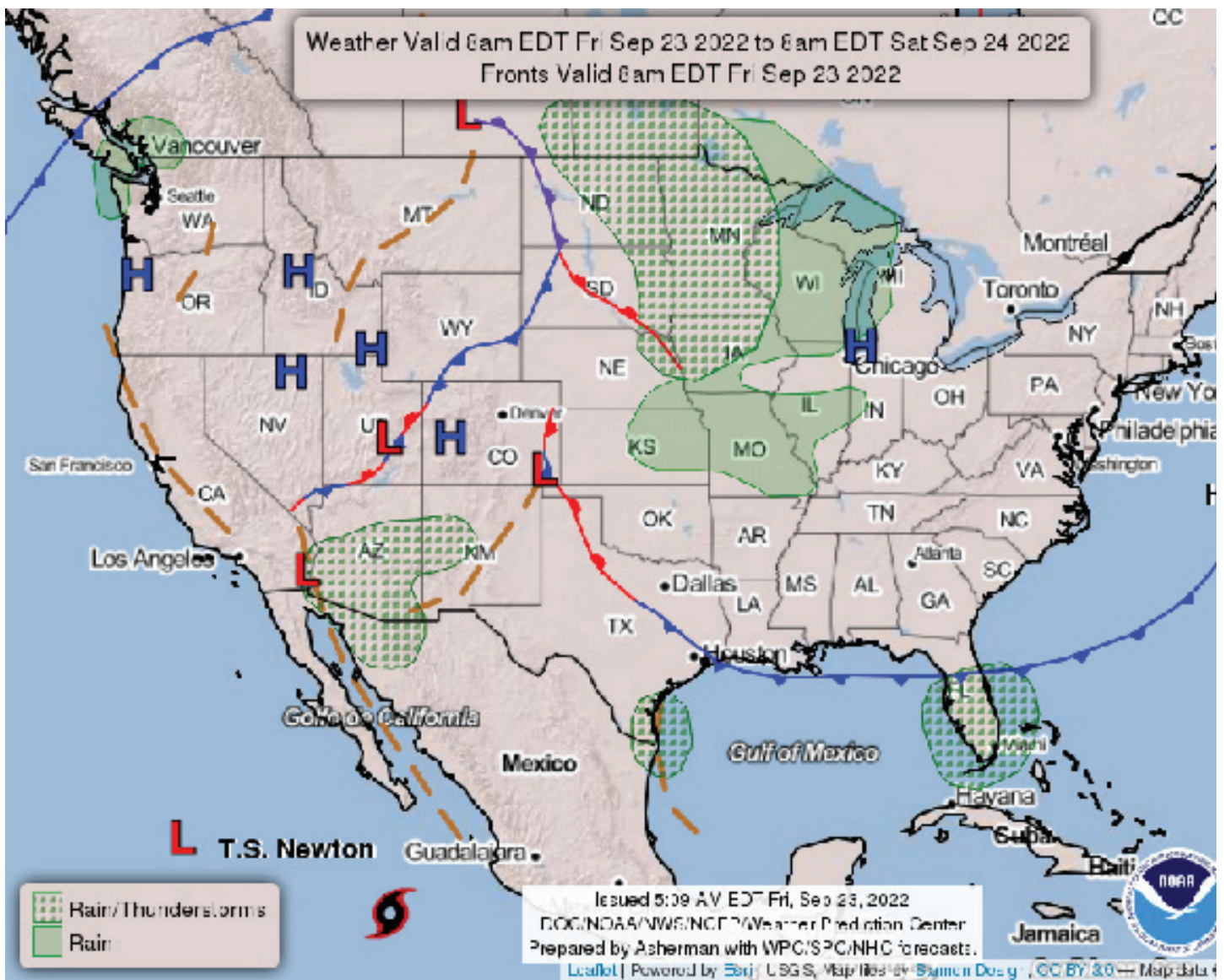
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 69 °F at 3:18 PM
Low Temp: 54 °F at 11:53 PM
Wind: 24 mph at 5:44 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 12 hours, 07 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1935
Record Low: 23 in 2000
Average High: 72°F
Average Low: 43°F
Average Precip in Sept.: 1.59
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.07
Average Precip to date: 17.93
Precip Year to Date: 16.05
Sunset Tonight: 7:27:50 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:22:01 AM



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 26 of 105

Today in Weather History

September 24, 1986: Thunderstorms brought high winds along with several tornados to parts of western and central South Dakota from the late evening in the morning hours of the 25th. Winds were estimated up to 80 mph. Many trees and power poles were downed along with damage to many buildings. The tornadoes occurred near Newell, east of Cedar Butte, west of Murdo, 20 miles northwest of Pierre, and northwest of Ridgeview in Dewey County.

September 24, 1992: South winds gusting to 50 to 55 mph across northeast South Dakota during the day toppled several trees and light poles. In Aberdeen, a front window was blown out of a store.

1926 - A hurricane came inland near Daytona Beach, FL. The hurricane caused 2.5 million dollars damage in eastern Florida, including the Jacksonville area. (David Ludlum)

1926: The temperature at Yellowstone Park drops to 9 degrees below zero, making it the coldest September reading ever recorded in the US.

1939 - The temperature at Lewiston, ID, hit 117 degrees to establish an all-time record high for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1939: A thunderstorm on this day dropped 6.45 inches in six hours at Indio, CA. This rainfall preceded "El Cordonazo" or "The Lash of St. Francis", an actual tropical storm. For the entire storm, which started on this day and ended on the 26th, four inches of rain fell across the deserts and mountains as a dying tropical cyclone moved across Baja California into southwestern Arizona. This storm was the second tropical cyclone to impact California during this month. A strong El Niño may have contributed to the activity. The tropical storm produced 50 mph winds over the ocean and estimated seas of 40 feet. September rain records were set in Los Angeles with 5.66 inches and 11.6 inches at Mt. Wilson. 45 people died from sinking boats, and harbors were damaged. Total damage was estimated at \$2 million. Californians were unprepared and were alerted to their vulnerability to tropical storms. In response, the weather bureau established a forecast office for Southern California, which began operations in February of 1940.

1943 - On a whim, and flying a single engine AT-6, Lieutenant Ralph O'Hair and Colonel Duckworth were the first to fly into a hurricane. It started regular Air Force flights into hurricanes. (The Weather Channel)

1956: Hurricane Flossy made landfall near Destin, Florida as a Category 1 storm.

1986: An F2 tornado, unusually strong for one in California, touched down just southeast of Vina on this day and traveled two miles through an agricultural area. A mobile home was destroyed, injuring a 22-year-old occupant. Eleven other buildings were damaged or demolished, and 50 acres of walnut orchards were flattened.

1987 - Thunderstorms in Minnesota spawned a tornado which moved in a southwesterly direction for a distance of thirty miles across Rice County and Goodhue County. Trees were uprooted and tossed about like toys, and a horse lifted by the tornado was observed sailing horizontally through the air. Thunderstorms drenched La Crosse, WI, with 5.26 inches of rain, their second highest 24 hour total of record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Hot weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Williston, ND, reported a record high of 108 degrees. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the eastern U.S., and in southeastern Texas. Richland County, SC, was soaked with up to 5.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in the southwestern U.S. Yuma, AZ, experienced their most severe thunderstorm of record. Strong thunderstorm winds, with unofficial gusts as high as 95 mph, reduced visibilities to near zero in blowing dust and sand. Yuma got nearly as much rain in one hour as is normally received in an entire year. The storm total of 2.55 inches of rain was a record 24 hour total for July. Property damage due to flash flooding and high winds was in the millions. (Storm Data)

2001: A weak, F0 tornado passed in the sight of the Washington Monument. Soon after, an F3 tornado struck College Park, Maryland.

2005: Early on the morning of September 24, 2005, Major Hurricane Rita came ashore near the Texas/Louisiana border.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 27 of 105

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

CHOOSE WISELY!

God created us to live in relationships with others. In fact, it is difficult for many to go through a day without speaking to someone about something. Friends are very important and can bring "good things to life." However, the opposite can also be true. Some friendships bring healing, help and hope into our lives while others bring us trouble, turmoil and tragedy.

No doubt Solomon had his share of friendships that were not what he expected and brought the unwanted and unexpected into his life. So, he issued us a warning: "A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray."

"Righteous" in the Old Testament always refers to meeting God's standards of what is right and just. If our relationship with God is as He wants it to be, then we must be "cautious" about our relationships with others. Unfortunately, being close friends with a person whom we admire and respect, but who has no time or concern for godly things is very dangerous. The influence that person has on our life can lead us astray and destroy us. That is why we must be "cautious." Our relationship with God is more important than any relationship with any other person.

But how "cautious" are we to be? Very! The meaning of that word includes "duties" like instigate, spy out or search out. "How foolish," some might say. Not really. If we want the best God has to offer us, we must be cautious.

Prayer: Lord, may we guard our relationship with You and strengthen it through reading Your Word and prayer. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. Proverbs 12:26



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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 28 of 105

2022-23 Community Events

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 29 of 105

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.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

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

- 1 Month \$15.98
- 3 Months \$26.63
- 6 Months \$31.95
- 9 Months \$42.60
- 12 Months \$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul



News from the Associated Press

South Dakota investigation weighs Noem's use of state plane

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem was returning from an official appearance in Rapid City in 2019 when she faced a decision: Overnight in the capital of Pierre, where another trip would start the next day, or head home and see her son attend his high school prom?

The Republican governor chose the latter, a decision that eventually cost taxpayers some \$3,700 when the state airplane dropped her off near her home and then returned the next day to pick her up.

It's one of several trips that year where Noem, a potential 2024 White House contender, blurred the lines between official travel and attending either family or political events. The trips sparked a complaint to the state ethics board, which has referred the matter to the state's Division of Criminal Investigation. A county prosecutor overseeing the investigation will decide whether the governor broke an untested law enacted by voters in 2006 to rein in questionable use of the state airplane.

The governor has also faced action by the same ethics board for intervening in a state agency shortly after it moved to deny her daughter a real estate appraiser's license.

As Noem's political star rose in 2020, she began using private jets to fly to fundraisers, campaign events and conservative gatherings.

But before that, in the first year of her term in 2019, Noem used the state plane six times to fly to out-of-state events hosted by political organizations including the Republican Governors Association, Republican Jewish Coalition, Turning Point USA and the National Rifle Association. Raw Story, an online news site, first reported the trips, which the governor's office defended as part of her work as the state's "ambassador" to bolster the state's economy and intergovernmental relationships.

State plane logs also show that Noem had family members join her on in-state flights in 2019.

The 2006 ballot measure was a response to scrutiny of plane travel by then-Gov. Mike Rounds, who attended events such as his son's away basketball games while on trips for other official business. At the time, Rounds, now a U.S. senator, used political funds to reimburse the state for those trips, as well as travel to political events.

State Sen. Reynold Nesiba, a Democrat who proposed the ballot measure before he became a lawmaker, said voters were clear in their intent.

"When it's been used for family members, this seems like a clear violation of not only the letter but the spirit of the law that was passed overwhelmingly," he said.

Noem campaign spokesman Ian Fury said it was "fully within precedent" for family members to join governors on flights, adding that the "level of nitpickiness is ridiculous because she is doing this sort of thing less than Dennis Daugaard," referring to Noem's Republican predecessor.

State plane logs from Daugaard's last term show wife, Linda, often joined trips. Daugaard's sister and daughter also joined one trip each in 2017 and 2016 respectively. Noem's children — not counting daughter Kennedy Noem, on the governor's staff as a policy analyst — joined nine plane trips during her first term.

On another trip, Noem's itinerary allowed her to return home for her son's prom. On April 5, 2019, she rode the state plane from Watertown, near her home in Castlewood, to Rapid City for an announcement on Ellsworth Air Force Base. On the return flight, the plane stopped in the capital city of Pierre to drop off Rounds, who had joined her for the trip, and several aides. But even though she had another trip from Pierre to Las Vegas for a Republican Jewish Coalition event planned the next day, Noem didn't stay in the governor's mansion there.

She flew to Watertown, near her home, in time to watch her son take the stage at his prom, according to Noem's social media posts. The state plane, meanwhile, returned to Pierre, only to make the trip back to Watertown for the governor the next day.

Fury defended the trips because her travel started in Watertown, near where she had spoken at an event

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 31 of 105

for her son's school district the day before.

"Part of official travel is returning from official travel," Fury said.

He used a similar defense for a May 30, 2019 trip that started in Custer, where she was staying to help her daughter prepare for her wedding, and traveled around the state to speak at two youth leadership events. Noem's son, nephew and one of their friends who were attending one of those events, in Aberdeen, rode back on the state plane to join the wedding preparations.

Fury said adding her son and his friends to the flight didn't cost the state any extra money and was part of her official travel.

Richard Briffault, a professor at Columbia Law School who specializes in government ethics, said Noem's travel to political events seemed to fall into a legal gray area. While a trip to fundraise or campaign would clearly break the law, he said, traveling to meet with political groups was "pushing the limit."

Across the country, Democratic and Republican governors alike have come under scrutiny for their use of state aircraft. New York, Kentucky, Minnesota and Montana allow governors to do some politicking with state-owned aircraft but place some restrictions and require reimbursements for political use. New York also allows immediate family members to travel with the governor.

Hughes County State's Attorney Jessica LaMie, who was appointed to examine whether Noem broke the law, promised a "thorough" investigation.

"If you take the title and all of that out of it, it's no different than any other investigation," she said.

Neil Fulton, the dean of the University of South Dakota Law School who also served as Rounds' chief of staff after the 2006 law was enacted, said it's not perfectly clear what exactly the law means by "state business." He said other jurisdictions usually define state business as "actions to advance programs or initiatives of the state."

The law imposes steep fines: \$1,000 plus 10 times the cost of the travel. Violators also face a Class 2 misdemeanor, which carries a maximum of a 30-day jail sentence, but that is usually only reserved for repeat or violent offenders.

"We weren't hoping to convict anyone of anything," Nesiba, the state lawmaker, said. "We were hoping to make a deterrent."

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Aberdeen Central 24, Huron 7

Alcester-Hudson 46, Gayville-Volin 0

Beresford 54, Lennox 35

Bon Homme 42, Platte-Geddes 6

Brandon Valley 33, Rapid City Stevens 20

Britton-Hecla 43, Arlington 12

Brookings 40, Douglas 6

Clark/Willow Lake 31, Mobridge-Pollock 22

Corsica/Stickney 36, Avon 28

Crazy Horse def. Takini, forfeit

Dakota Valley 14, Madison 7

Dell Rapids 37, Milbank 6

Dell Rapids St. Mary 48, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 16

Deuel 55, Dakota Hills 0

Elk Point-Jefferson 61, Flandreau 7

Elkton-Lake Benton 50, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 0

Estelline/Hendricks 42, Centerville 16

Faith 20, Timber Lake 14

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 32 of 105

Florence/Henry 27, Deubrook 6
Freeman/ Marion/ Freeman Academy Co-op 44, Colome 22
Gregory 26, Kimball/White Lake 0
Groton Area 28, Sisseton 0
Hamlin 46, Castlewood 20
Hanson 26, Canistota 6
Harding County/Bison Co-op 52, Dupree 0
Harrisburg 35, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 0
Herreid/Selby Area 46, Sully Buttes 6
Hitchcock-Tulare 76, Sunshine Bible Academy 22
Hot Springs 44, Lead-Deadwood 0
Howard 56, Irene-Wakonda 22
Jim River 19, Wagner 0
Kadoka Area 44, Jones County 0
Lemmon/McIntosh 44, Newell 8
Lower Brule 34, Standing Rock, N.D. 0
McCook Central/Montrose 18, Sioux Valley 14
Miller/Highmore-Harrold 41, Hill City 6
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 32, Tri-Valley 6
Northwestern 36, Langford 14
Parker 21, Baltic 6
Parkston 52, Garretson 0
Philip 54, New Underwood 20
Pierre 47, Watertown 13
Rapid City Christian 50, Lakota Tech 8
Redfield 26, Webster 0
Sioux Falls Christian 42, Chamberlain 0
Sioux Falls Jefferson 49, Mitchell 7
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 35, Sioux Falls Lincoln 28
Spearfish 40, Belle Fourche 12
St. Thomas More 20, Sturgis Brown 10
Stanley County 43, White River 16
Tea Area 38, Yankton 28
Todd County def. Omaha Nation, Neb., forfeit
Vermillion 28, Custer 0
Viborg-Hurley 50, Chester 0
Wall 48, Lyman 6
Warner 45, Faulkton 32
West Central 34, Canton 12
Wolsey-Wessington 50, Colman-Egan 12
Woonsocket/Wessington Springs/Sanborn Central 25, Tripp-Delmont/Armour/Andes Central/Dakota Christian 0
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Pine Ridge vs. Little Wound, ppd.

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

In-person voting starts in Minnesota, 3 other early states

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 33 of 105

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — In-person voting for the midterm elections opened Friday in Minnesota, South Dakota, Virginia and Wyoming, kicking off a six-week sprint to Election Day in a landscape that has changed much since the pandemic drove a shift to mail balloting in the 2020 presidential contest.

Twenty people voted in the first hour as Minneapolis opened its early voting center, taking advantage of generous rules that election officials credit with making Minnesota a perennial leader in voter turnout. First in when the doors opened was Conrad Zbikowski, a 29-year-old communications and digital consultant who said he has voted early since at least 2017.

"I like to vote early because you never know what might happen on Election Day," said Zbikowski, displaying his civic pride with a T-shirt that bore the sailboat logo of the City of Lakes. "You might get sick, you might get COVID, you might get in a car crash, there's many things that can happen. But what you do have control over is being able to vote early and getting that ballot in."

The start of in-person voting comes as the nation continues to grapple with the fallout from nearly two years of false claims that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from former President Donald Trump due to widespread fraud and manipulation of voting machines. Those conspiracy theories, promoted by a constellation of Trump allies in the campaign, on social media and at conferences held across the country, have taken a toll on public confidence in U.S. elections.

They've also led to tightening of rules that govern mail ballots in several Republican-led states as well as an exodus of experienced election workers, who have faced an onslaught of harassment and threats since the 2020 election.

But nearly two years since that election, no evidence has emerged to suggest widespread fraud or manipulation while reviews in state after state have upheld the results showing President Joe Biden won.

Saturday also is the deadline by which election officials must send ballots to their military and overseas voters. North Carolina started mailing out absentee ballots Sept. 9.

Early in-person voting is offered in 46 states and the District of Columbia, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. States may use different ways to describe it, with some calling it in-person absentee voting or advanced voting. In some cases, it mirrors Election Day voting with polling locations equipped with poll workers and voting machines. Elsewhere, it involves voters requesting, completing and submitting an absentee ballot in person at their local election office.

Early voting periods vary by state, with some offering as few as three days and others extending to 46 days. The average is 23 days, according to the conference of legislatures.

This year, voting will unfold in a much different environment than two years ago, when the coronavirus prompted a major increase in the use of mail ballots as voters sought to avoid crowded polling places. States adopted policies to promote mail voting, with a few states opting to send mail ballots to all registered voters and others expanding the use of drop boxes.

While some have made those changes permanent, others have rolled back them back. For instance, Georgia will have fewer drop boxes this year and has added ID requirements to mail ballots under legislation pushed by Republican state lawmakers.

In Wyoming, a steady stream of voters filed into the lone early polling place in Cheyenne, which offered a refuge from winds that toppled a "Vote Here" sign. About 60 people had voted there by midday, Laramie County Clerk Debra Lee said.

"It's less people and we don't have to worry," said one early voter, Brent Dolence of Cheyenne. "Things move faster and you don't have to wait so much."

Unlike elsewhere in the U.S., poll workers in Laramie County haven't been subjected to threats and harassment, Lee said, but they've received plenty of questions from voters about machines and the county's lone ballot drop box.

"They're really looking at things and asking questions," Lee said. "In a good way. You know, wanting information. They're curious."

Minnesota's ballot includes races for governor and other statewide offices, with control of the Legislature at stake, too.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 34 of 105

Zbikowski declined to say for whom he voted. But he said he doesn't take the right to vote for granted, given that his family came to America from Russia when it didn't have free elections. As a part-time poll worker — he was off-duty Friday— he said he's seen Minnesota's safeguards firsthand and has full confidence in the integrity of the process.

Other early voters included first-timers Ronald Johnson and his wife, Judith Weyl, who voted on Election Day in 2020. They both said they voted a straight Democratic ticket.

"It just feels like this election is so important, life is so busy, I just wanted to have closure on this as quickly as possible," Johnson said.

Johnson, a 74-year-old mental health counselor, said he wanted to support candidates who will preserve a Minnesota election system that he said has integrity.

He said he "absolutely" supports the state's chief elections officer, Secretary of State Steve Simon, over GOP challenger Kim Crockett, who has called the 2020 election a "train wreck" and has advocated for a return to voting mostly on Election Day. Simon, in contrast, calls the 2020 election "fundamentally fair, honest, accurate and secure," and defends the changes that he oversaw to make voting safer in the pandemic.

"We really care about protecting democracy," said Weyl, 73.

Aaron Bommarito, a 48-year-old teacher who also said he voted a straight Democratic ticket, said he has no concerns about his votes being counted properly and has "absolute confidence in the system." He said voting early was a spur-of-the moment decision. He just happened to be driving by the voting center and seized the moment.

"I dropped my two kids off at school, and the 'Vote Here' sign was the next thing I saw," he said.

Russia shells Ukrainian cities amid Kremlin-staged votes

By KARL RITTER and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian forces launched new strikes on Ukrainian cities as Kremlin-orchestrated votes took place in occupied regions of Ukraine to create a pretext for their annexation by Moscow.

Ukraine's presidential office said the latest Russian shelling killed at least three people and wounded 19. Oleksandr Starukh, the Ukrainian governor of Zaporizhzhia, one of the regions where Moscow-installed officials organized referendums on joining Russia, said a Russian missile hit an apartment building in the city of Zaporizhzhia, killing one person and injuring seven others.

Ukraine and its Western allies say the referendums underway in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in the south and the eastern Luhansk and Donetsk regions have no legal force. They alleged the votes were an illegitimate attempt by Moscow to seize Ukrainian territory stretching from the Russian border to the Crimean Peninsula.

Luhansk Gov. Serhiy Haidai said the voting "looked more like an opinion survey under the gun barrels," adding that Moscow-backed local authorities sent armed escorts to accompany election officials and to take down the names of individuals who voted against joining Russia.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged Ukrainians in occupied regions to undermine the referendums and to share information about the people conducting "this farce." He also called on Russian recruits to sabotage and desert the military if they are called up under the partial troop mobilization President Vladimir Putin announced Wednesday.

"If you get into the Russian army, sabotage any activity of the enemy, hinder any Russian operations, provide us with any important information about the occupiers — their bases, headquarters, warehouses with ammunition," Zelenskyy said.

Putin on Saturday signed a hastily approved bill that toughens the punishment for soldiers who disobey officers' orders, desert or surrender to the enemy.

To carry out the referendums that started Friday, election officials accompanied by police officers carried ballots to homes and set up mobile polling stations, citing safety reasons. The votes are set to wrap up Tuesday. Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said

"Half of the population fled the Donetsk region because of Russian terror and constant shelling, voting

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 35 of 105

against Russia with their feet, and the second half has been cheated and scared," .

In the Ukrainian capital, about 100 people from the Russia-occupied city of Mariupol, which is part of the Donetsk region, gathered to protest the referendum, covering themselves in Ukrainian flags and carrying posters "Mariupol is Ukraine."

"They ruined the city, killed thousands of people, and now they are doing some kind of profanation over there," said Vladyslav Kildishov who helped organize the rally.

Elina Sytkova, 21, a demonstrator who has many relatives left in Mariupol even though the city spent months under bombardment, said the vote was "an illusion of choice when there isn't any."

It's "like a joke, because it's the same as it was in Crimea, meaning it's fake and not real," she said, referring to a 2014 referendum that took place in Crimea before Moscow annexed the peninsula in a move that most of the world considered illegal.

The mobilization ordered by Putin marked a sharp shift from his effort to cast the seven-month war as a "special military operation" that doesn't interfere with the lives of most Russians.

The Russian leader and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said the order applied to reservists who had recently served or had special skills, but almost every man is considered a reservist until age 65 and Putin's decree kept the door open for a broader call-up.

The Russian Ministry said that the partial mobilization initially aimed to add about 300,000 troops to beef up its outnumbered volunteer forces in Ukraine. The Ukrainian government stopped allowing most men ages 18-60 to leave the country immediately after Russia's Feb. 24 invasion under a general mobilization order intended to build a 1 million-strong military.

Across Russia's 11 time zones, men hugged their weeping family members before being rounded up for service amid fears that a wider call-up might follow. Some media reports claimed Russian authorities planned to mobilize more than 1 million recruits, which the Kremlin denied.

Moving to assuage public fears over the call-up that could erode Putin's grip on power, authorities announced that many Russians working in high tech, communications or finance would be exempt.

Police moved quickly to disperse more demonstrations against the mobilization that were held in several cities across Russia on Saturday and detained more than 100 participants. Over 1,300 protesters were arrested during antiwar demonstrations on Wednesday, and many of them immediately received call-up summons.

Many Russian men bought up scarce and exorbitantly priced airline tickets out of the country as rumors swirled about a pending border closure. Thousands others fled by car, creating lines of traffic hours or even days long at some borders. The massive exodus underlined the unpopularity of the war and fueled public outrage.

In a sign the Kremlin was starting to worry about a backlash, the head of a top state-controlled TV station harshly criticized military authorities for hastily sweeping up random people to meet mobilization targets instead of calling up people with specific skills and recent military service, as Putin promised.

RT chief Margarita Simonyan lashed out at military conscription offices for "driving people mad" by rounding up those who weren't supposed to be drafted. "It's as if they were tasked by Kyiv to do that," she said.

Ramzan Kadyrov, the Kremlin-backed regional leader of Chechnya who sent his forces to fight in Ukraine and repeatedly called for tougher action, suggested that Moscow should more broadly engage personnel from law-enforcement agencies in the fighting.

He denounced those fleeing the mobilization as cowards and argued that police and various paramilitary agencies that number a total of 5 million personnel together with the military would make a much better-trained and motivated fighting force.

"If we leave 50 percent of the personnel to fulfil their duties, 2.5 million others will blow any Western army away and we won't need any reservists," Kadyrov said.

Putin's mobilization order followed a swift Ukrainian counteroffensive that forced Moscow's retreat from broad swaths of the northeastern Kharkiv region, a humiliating defeat that highlighted blunders in Moscow's military planning.

The Defense Ministry on Saturday announced the dismissal of Gen. Dmitry Bulgakov from the post of

Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 36 of 105

deputy defense minister in charge of logistics. It didn't mention the cause for his ouster, but the move was widely seen as a punishment for the flaws in supporting operations in Ukraine.

Fiona knocks out power with strong winds in Atlantic Canada

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia (AP) — Fiona knocked out power to more than 500,000 customers in Atlantic Canada Saturday, damaging homes with strong winds and rain as it made landfall as a big, powerful post-tropical cyclone.

Fiona transformed from a hurricane into a post-tropical storm late Friday, but meteorologists cautioned that it still could have hurricane-strength winds and would bring drenching rains and huge waves.

More than 415,000 Nova Scotia Power customers — about 80% of the province of almost 1 million — were affected by outages Saturday morning. Over 82,000 customers in the province of Prince Edward Island were also without power, while NB Power in New Brunswick reported 44,329 were without electricity.

The fast-moving Fiona made Nova Scotia landfall before dawn Saturday, with its power down from the Category 4 strength it had early Friday when passing by Bermuda, though officials there reported no serious damage.

The Canadian Hurricane Centre tweeted early Saturday that Fiona has the lowest pressure ever recorded for a storm making landfall in Canada. Forecasters had warned it could be the one of the most powerful storms to hit the country.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Newfoundland said the town of Port aux Basques, in Newfoundland is in a state of emergency as authorities deal with multiple electrical fires and residential flooding. Port aux Basques Mayor Brian Button said some houses have been washed away amid high winds and surging seas.

A state of local emergency has been declared by the mayor and council of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality amid widespread power outages, road closures and damage to homes.

"There are homes that have been significantly damaged due to downed trees, big old trees falling down and causing significant damage. We're also seeing houses that their roofs have completely torn off, windows breaking in. There is a huge amount of debris in the roadways," Amanda McDougall, mayor of Cape Breton Regional Municipality, told The Associated Press

"There is a lot of damage to belongings and structures but no injuries to people as of this point. Again we're still in the midst of this," she said. "It's still terrifying. I'm just sitting here in my living room and it feels like the patio doors are going to break in with those big gusts. It's loud and it is shocking."

McDougall said the shelter they opened was full overnight and they will look to open more.

. The federal Public Safety ministry advised against all non-essential travel by car.

A hurricane watch was issued for coastal expanses of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau decided to delay his trip to Japan for the funeral for assassinated former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

"We of course hope there won't be much needed, but we feel there probably will be," Trudeau said. "Listen to the instructions of local authorities and hang in there for the next 24 hours."

The U.S. hurricane center said Fiona had maximum sustained winds of 90 mph (150 kph) Saturday. It was moving across eastern Canada.

Hurricane-force winds extended outward up to 175 miles (280 kilometers) from the center and tropical storm-force winds extended outward up to 405 miles (650 kilometers).

Hurricanes in Canada are somewhat rare, in part because once the storms reach colder waters, they lose their main source of energy. But post-tropical cyclones still can have hurricane-strength winds, although they have a cold core and no visible eye. They also often lose their symmetric form and more resemble a comma.

"Just an incredibly strong storm as it made landfall. And even as it moves away it is continuing to affect the region for several more hours today," said Ian Hubbard, meteorologist for the Canadian Hurricane

Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 37 of 105

Centre in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, said Saturday morning.

Hubbard said he lost power at his house and had to drive the long way to work because bridges have been closed. He said there are downed trees and signs in the Halifax area but other areas of province have it worse.

In Sydney, Nova Scotia, the largest city in Cape Breton, about 20 people have taken refuge at the Centre 200 sports and entertainment facility in Sydney, said Christina Lamey, a spokeswoman for the region.

"The key message from that is for people to stay at home," she said. "The first responders are really stretched right now. We want people to stay off the roads. Most of the roads have hazards on them, with power lines down and trees down as well."

Bob Robichaud, Warning Preparedness Meteorologist for the Canadian Hurricane Centre, said Fiona was shaping up to be a bigger storm system than Hurricane Juan, which caused extensive damage to the Halifax area in 2003.

He added that Fiona is about the same size as post-tropical storm Dorian in 2019. "But it is stronger than Dorian was," he said. "It's certainly going to be an historic, extreme event for eastern Canada."

Authorities in Nova Scotia also sent an emergency alert to phones warning of Fiona's arrival and urging people to stay inside, avoid the shore, charge devices and have enough supplies for at least 72 hours.

Fiona so far has been blamed for at least five deaths — two in Puerto Rico, two in the Dominican Republic and one in the French island of Guadeloupe.

Meanwhile, the National Hurricane Center said newly formed Tropical Storm Ian in the Caribbean was expected to keep strengthening and hit Cuba early Tuesday as a hurricane and then hit southern Florida early Wednesday.

It was centered about 315 miles (519 kilometers) southeast of Kingston, Jamaica. It had maximum sustained winds of 45 mph (75 kph) and was moving west-northwest at 14 mph (22 kph). A hurricane watch was issued for the Cayman Islands.

Abortion is a matter of 'freedom' for Biden and Democrats

By SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The way President Joe Biden sees it, the overturning of Roe vs. Wade was not just about whether a woman has a right to obtain an abortion.

"It's about freedom," Biden said at a private fundraiser in New York this past week.

Vice President Kamala Harris takes an even bolder approach when she talks about abortion. "Extremist, so-called leaders trumpet the rhetoric of freedom while they take away freedoms," she told voters in Illinois this month.

That deliberate echo of "freedom" from Biden, Harris and other top White House officials shows how Democrats — eager to keep abortion front of mind heading into the November elections — at the highest ranks are increasingly co-opting traditionally conservative rhetoric in a blunt appeal to a broad swath of the electorate.

White House aides think the message is a particularly potent one, especially when combined with repeated reminders about the GOP's proposals on abortion, which often do not include exceptions for rape or the mother's health that are popular with voters. The freedom message also resonates, officials say, as access to contraception and abortion medication is under threat in Republican-controlled states.

Now more than ever, Democrats are leaning into messaging strategy from pro-abortion rights groups, which have long advised candidates and elected officials to talk about reproductive rights as if they were part of the tea party — the conservative movement that made its mark in 2010 campaigning against government overreach. It's a playbook that succeeded in August, when opponents of a Kansas initiative that would have allowed for further restrictions on abortion successfully hammered home an anti-government-mandate message to voters and on the airwaves.

Organizations supportive of abortion rights say research shows that framing the issue as a matter of freedom is by far the most effective message for voters across all political persuasions. For instance, when

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 38 of 105

participants in focus groups convened by NARAL Pro-Choice America were shown articles about abortion restrictions, they would often become angry, insisting that the freedom to make personal decisions without political interference was a core American value.

The message, strategists say, can work even on GOP voters. In a July Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll, 32% of Republicans said after the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* in June that they believe Congress should guarantee the right to a legal abortion.

"Fundamentally, particularly now post-*Dobbs*, in a post-*Roe* America, getting back to the fundamental freedom guaranteed by the constitutional right ... is a really powerful way to talk about this issue," Mini Timmaraju, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, said in an interview.

Since the Supreme Court ruled in June to nullify the constitutional right to an abortion, GOP candidates in battleground districts and states have tried to play down the issue while Democrats nationwide have made it a central part of their bid to retain control of Congress. Republicans still say the November elections will be fought on a political terrain focused on the economy and Biden's standing with the public, although Democrats believe their voters, fueled by anger over abortion, are far more motivated to cast a ballot this fall.

"Democrats are pushing an on-demand, taxpayer-funded abortion agenda that a majority of voters disagree with, all while ignoring the skyrocketing prices, crime surge, and border crisis they created," said Danielle Alvarez, communications director for the Republican National Committee. "Voters will vote for freedom this November — freedom from failed Democrat one-party rule."

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who recently proposed a federal ban on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy, has repeatedly argued that his plan is good politics for Republicans and that his party should tell the public that Democrats support few, if any, restrictions on access to the procedure.

"Let's talk about this in terms of human rights and personal freedom," he told the AP. "The Democratic Party is on the track of supporting an abortion policy of North Korea and China. They're not exactly in the column of personal freedom."

Mallory Carroll, vice president of communications for SBA Pro-Life America, said: "Abortion is the opposite of freedom. It is an egregious human rights violation that harms two people — the baby who is killed and the mother."

Still, mentions of abortion and the fate of reproductive rights have become a staple of Biden's political speeches as he steps up his election-year campaigning. A Catholic once viewed by advocates as an imperfect messenger for abortion rights, Biden even referenced his faith this past week as he depicted some Republican-crafted restrictions as extreme.

Abortion was a fixture during Biden's two fundraisers for the Democratic National Committee in New York, as well as at a rally Friday at the National Education Association headquarters in Washington, where he emphasized that the elections offered voters choices on an array of issues from abortion and guns to democracy. Biden's political schedule continues Tuesday in Florida, a state that has become more reliably Republican in recent years.

Biden also emphasized the freedom message at a reception in Detroit this month as he talked up Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat who has centered her reelection message on abortion rights.

"Republicans want a national ban on abortion," Biden said. "Gretchen supports the ballot initiative to put the right to reproductive freedom in your state constitution." Voters in Michigan this fall will decide whether to enshrine access to abortion in the state's constitution.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre repeatedly invokes the word as she decries abortion restrictions across the nation, including Idaho, Texas, Tennessee and Indiana. And at a gathering of Democratic attorneys general in Milwaukee, Harris on Thursday stressed that a woman and those around her should be the ones making a decision about an abortion.

"The government should not be making that decision for her," Harris said.

Though the party's candidates from New Hampshire to Florida to Nevada have carried the freedom

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 39 of 105

message in their campaigns this fall, Democrats in some prominent races have taken that anti-government theme to a new level.

An ad released last week from Rep. Chris Pappas, D-N.H., who is in one of the most contested House races, emphatically stated that "here in New Hampshire, we keep the government out of our homes and out of our doctors' offices" as it warned about the anti-abortion views of his Republican challenger, Karoline Leavitt.

"If Karoline Leavitt gets her way, it won't be a woman's choice. It will be the government's choice," the ad said in its closing. In response, Leavitt said Democrats were "extremists who believe in taxpayer-funded abortions until the moment of birth" and that state legislatures were responsible for abortion policies, not Washington.

In a campaign stop in Concord, New Hampshire, last week, Sen. Maggie Hassan, D-N.H., warned that the Supreme Court has "taken freedom away from half the population, freedom most women have known their entire lives." If her opponent, Republican Don Bolduc, were elected, those freedoms would continue to be reversed, she argued.

A spokeswoman for Bolduc's campaign accused Hassan of wanting to distract from issues such as home heating bills and the economy. But Hassan, in a brief interview with the AP, insisted that she could do both.

"My constituents have to deal with inflation and a threat to their reproductive freedom all at once," she said. "They expect us to be able to do the same thing."

Dissident: 'Iranian women are furious' over headscarf death

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — The tears come quickly to Masih Alinejad when she talks about the messages she's received in recent days from women in Iran protesting against their government after a young woman died in police custody over a violation of the country's strict religious dress code.

They talk about the risks, possibly fatal ones, in facing off against government forces that have a long history of cracking down on dissent. They share stories of saying goodbye to their parents, possibly for the last time. They send videos of confrontations with police, of women removing their state-mandated head coverings and cutting their hair.

According to a tally by The Associated Press, at least 11 people have been killed since protests began earlier this month after the funeral of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who died in custody after being detained by Iran's morality police. State media has said the toll could be as high as 35.

"I feel the anger of people right now through their text messages," Alinejad told The Associated Press in New York City, where the 46-year-old opposition activist and writer in exile has lived since fleeing Iran following the 2009 election.

"They have been ignored for years and years," she said. "That is why they are angry. Iranian women are furious now."

Amini's death spurred this latest explosion of outrage. She had been detained Sept. 13 for allegedly wearing her hijab too loosely in violation of strictures demanding women in public wear the Islamic headscarves. She died three days later in police custody; authorities said she had a heart attack but hadn't been harmed. Her family has disputed that, leading to the public outcry.

Protests started after her Sept. 17 funeral, and have taken place in more than a dozen cities. The Iranian government has pushed back, clashing with demonstrators and clamping down on internet access.

Alinejad shares the outrage of the protesters; for more than a decade she has been an outspoken critic of the theocracy that rules the country and its control over women through the required wearing of the hijab and other measures. In 2014, she started My Stealthy Freedom, an online effort encouraging Iranian women to show images of themselves without hijabs.

"Let me make it clear that Iranian women who are facing guns and bullets right now in the streets, they're not protesting against compulsory hijab like just a small piece of cloth. Not at all," she said.

"They are protesting against one of the most visible symbols of oppression. They are protesting against

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 40 of 105

the whole regime.”

Alinejad, who grew up following the rules on religious coverings in the small Iranian town where she was born, began pushing back against being forced to don certain garments when she was a teenager.

But even she, who now displays her full head of curly hair as a matter of course, didn't find it easy to overcome a lifetime of conditioning.

“It was not easy to put it away, like overnight,” she said. “It took three years for me, even outside Iran, to take off my hijab.”

She said the first time she went out without a religious covering, in Lebanon, she saw a police officer and had a panic attack. “I thought the police are going to arrest me.”

Her activism has made her no fans among Iranian officials and supporters of the government.

Last year, an Iranian intelligence officer and three alleged members of an Iranian intelligence network were charged in federal court in Manhattan with a plot to kidnap her and take her back to Iran. Officials in Iran have denied it. In August, an armed man was arrested after being seen hanging around Alinejad's Brooklyn home and trying to open the front door.

She's committed to her cause, though, and supporting those in Iran, women and men, who are engaged in the protests. She would love to see more support from those in the West.

“We deserve the same freedom,” she said. “We are fighting for our dignity. We are fighting for the same slogan — My body, my choice.”

She worries what will happen to the demonstrators in Iran as the government takes action to remain in control and shut down dissent, if there is no outside pressure.

“My fear is that if the world, the democratic countries don't take action, the Iranian regime will kill more people,” she said, scrolling through her phone to show images of young people she says have already been killed in the current wave of protest.

She called the women in the protests warriors and “true feminists.”

“These are the women of suffragists risking their lives, facing guns and bullets,” she said.

But even if, as has happened in the past, the government exerts enough control to quiet the protests down, it won't make the dissent go away, she said.

The “Iranian people made their decision,” she said. “Whether the regime cracks down on the protests, whether they shut down the internet, people of Iran won't give up. ... The anger is there.”

In Lebanon, boat tragedy kills 89 but others plan to migrate

By BILAL HUSSEIN and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

NAHR EL-BARED, Lebanon (AP) — Thousands of Palestinians held prayers on a small soccer field in a refugee camp in northern Lebanon on Saturday, to mourn one of the scores of migrants who died after their boat sank off Syria's coast this week, even as others vowed to undertake the same perilous voyage.

Abdul-Al Abdul-Al, 24, kissed his father goodbye Tuesday before boarding a crowded boat leaving from a nearby town seeking a better life in Europe. It was his 14th attempt to flee the crisis-hit Mediterranean country, this time ending with the return of his dead body. He was to be buried in the camp where he was born, his father, Omar, told The Associated Press during the funeral procession.

The head of al-Basel Hospital in Syria's coastal city of Tartus said Saturday that the death toll has reached 89, adding that of the 20 others who were receiving treatment at the medical center, six were discharged.

The Lebanese army announced Saturday that troops have detained the man who allegedly organized the deadly trip.

The incident was the deadliest so far as a surging number of Lebanese, Syrians, and Palestinians have been trying to flee Lebanon by sea to Europe in search of jobs and stability. In Lebanon, tens of thousands have lost their jobs while the national currency has dropped more than 90% in value, eradicating the purchasing power of thousands of families and pulling three-quarters of the population into poverty.

Alongside 1 million Syrian refugees, the small country of Lebanon is home to tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees and their descendants. Many live in the dozen refugee camps that are scattered around

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 41 of 105

the country. Palestinians suffer wide discrimination in Lebanon where they are deprived from doing specific jobs or own property and since the end of the 1975-90 civil war many have migrated.

After noon prayers were held at Nahr el-Bared, hundreds of people gathered in a yard used to play football where Abdul-Al's coffin was placed in the middle. Prayers were held before the body was carried to a nearby cemetery where thousands of people had gathered to witness the young man being laid to rest.

Omar Abdul-Al said that his son had tried to leave Lebanon before but did not succeed as sometimes the migrant boats he took had technical problems or faced high seas. Sometimes he had to swim back to shore, the man said.

"We don't want to live here anymore. We want to leave," said Omar Abdul-Al, adding that he encouraged his late son to leave and now he is encouraging his four other sons to leave Lebanon. He added that his sons are all well educated but they cannot find jobs.

"We are passing through a severe crisis. There is no medication or bread or anything," the father said. He added that many other Palestinians were planning to go on the boat but it did not fit more people.

Another relative of Abdul-Al screamed that "there is a disaster in Nahr el-Bared" saying that there are about 30 people missing from the camp who were on the boat. He said people are selling their homes and cars in order to go.

Several others have been buried since Friday.

There were conflicting reports on how many people were on board the boat when it sank, with some saying at least 120. Details about the ship, such as its size and capacity, were also not clear.

In the aftermath of the disaster, the Lebanese army said troops stormed Friday the homes of several suspected smugglers, detaining eight people involved in trafficking people abroad.

Residents in northern Lebanon say that people pay about \$6,000 for an adult and \$3,000 for a child to reach Europe.

At the morgue, Omar Abdel-Al said he found his son's body "intact" though it was difficult to identify many of the dozens of other corpses kept there.

"Anyone that comes with a boat, people are ready to go," he said.

'Fighting fit': Trial to show Oath Keepers' road to Jan. 6

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

The voting was over and almost all ballots were counted. News outlets on Nov. 7, 2020, had called the presidential race for Joe Biden. But the leader of the Oath Keepers extremist group was just beginning to fight.

Convinced the White House had been stolen from Donald Trump, Stewart Rhodes exhorted his followers to action.

"We must now ... refuse to accept it and march en-mass on the nation's Capitol," Rhodes declared.

Authorities allege Rhodes and his band of extremists would spend the next several weeks after Election Day, Nov. 3, amassing weapons, organizing paramilitary training and readying armed teams with a singular goal: stopping Biden from becoming president.

Their plot would come to a head on Jan. 6, 2021, prosecutors say, when Oath Keepers in battle gear were captured on camera shouldering their way through the crowd of Trump supporters and storming the Capitol in military-style stack formation.

Court documents in the case against Rhodes and four co-defendants — whose trial opens Tuesday with jury selection in Washington's federal court — paint a picture of a group so determined to overturn Biden's victory that some members were prepared to lose their lives to do so.

It's the biggest test for the Justice Department's efforts to hold accountable those responsible for the Capitol attack. Rioters temporarily halted the certification of Biden's victory by sheer force, pummeling police officers in hand-to-hand fighting as they rammed their way into the building, forcing Congress to adjourn as lawmakers and staff hid from the mob.

Despite nearly 900 arrests and hundreds of convictions in the riot, Rhodes and four Oath Keeper asso-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 42 of 105

ciates — Kelly Meggs, Jessica Watkins, Kenneth Harrelson and Thomas Caldwell — are the first to stand trial on the rare and difficult-to-prove charge of seditious conspiracy.

The Oath Keepers accuse prosecutors of twisting their words and insist there was never any plan to attack the Capitol. They say they were in Washington to provide security at events for figures such as Trump ally Roger Stone before Trump's big outdoor rally near the White House on Jan. 6. Their preparations, training, gear and weapons were to protect themselves against potential violence from left-wing antifa activists or to be ready if Trump invoked the Insurrection Act to call up a militia.

Rhodes' lawyers have signaled their defense will focus on his belief that Trump would take that action. But Trump never did, so Rhodes went home, his lawyers have said.

On Nov. 9, 2020, less than a week after the election, Rhodes held a conference call and rallied the Oath Keepers to go to Washington and fight. He expressed hope that antifa (anti-fascist) activists would start clashes because that would give Trump the "reason and rationale for dropping the Insurrection Act."

"You've got to go there and you've got to make sure that he knows that you are willing to die to fight for this country," Rhodes told his people, according to a transcript filed in court.

By December, Rhodes and the Oath Keepers had set their sights on Congress' certification of the Electoral College vote on Jan. 6, prosecutors say.

On Dec. 23, he published an open letter on the Oath Keepers website declaring that "tens of thousands of patriot Americans, both veterans and nonveterans" would be in Washington. He warned they might have to "take to arms in defense of our God given liberty."

As 2021 approached, Rhodes spent \$7,000 on two night-vision devices and a weapon sight and sent them to someone outside Washington, authorities say. Over several days in early January, he would spend an additional \$15,500 on guns, magazines, mounts, sights and other equipment, according to court documents.

Rhodes had instructed Oath Keepers to be ready, if asked, to secure the White House perimeter and "use lethal force if necessary" against anyone, including the National Guard, who might try to remove Trump from the White House, according to court documents.

On Jan. 5, Meggs and the Florida Oath Keepers brought gun boxes, rifle cases and suitcases filled with ammunition to the Virginia hotel where the "quick reaction force" teams would be on standby, according to prosecutors. A team from Arizona brought weapons, ammunition, and supplies to last 30 days, according to court papers. A team from North Carolina had rifles in a vehicle parked in the hotel lot, prosecutors have said.

At the Capitol, the Oath Keepers formed two teams, military "stacks," prosecutors say.

Some members of the first stack headed toward the House in search of Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., but couldn't find her, according to court documents. Members of the second stack confronted officers inside the Capitol Rotunda, prosecutors allege.

Rhodes isn't accused of going inside the Capitol but was seen huddled with members outside after the riot. Rhodes and others then walked to the nearby Phoenix Park Hotel, prosecutors say.

In a private suite there, Rhodes called someone on the phone with an urgent message for Trump, according to an Oath Keeper who says he witnessed it. Rhodes repeatedly urged the person on the phone to tell Trump to call upon militia groups to fight to keep the president in power, court papers say. The person denied Rhodes' request to speak directly to Trump.

"I just want to fight," Rhodes said after hanging up, according to court papers. Authorities have not disclosed the name of the person they believe Rhodes was speaking to on the call.

That night, Rhodes and other Oath Keepers went to dinner in Virginia. In messages over the course of the evening, they indicated their fight was far from over.

"Patriots entering their own Capitol to send a message to the traitors is NOTHING compared to what's coming," Rhodes wrote.

Rhodes returned to Texas after the Jan. 6 attack and remained free for a year before his arrest in Janu-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 43 of 105

ary 2022.

In interviews before he was jailed, he sought to distance himself from Oath Keepers who went inside the Capitol, saying that was a mistake. He also continued to push the lie the election was stolen and said the Jan. 6 investigation was politically motivated.

EXPLAINER: Italian election only part of forming government

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — A Sunday parliamentary election will determine who governs next in Italy. But it might take weeks before a coalition government is actually in place to run the major industrial economy and key NATO member.

Opinion polls indicate that voters might elect the first far-right premier of the post-World War II era — and the first woman to lead an Italian government — in the person of Giorgia Meloni.

Given Italy's fractured political spectrum, no single party stands much chance of winning enough seats to govern alone. Right-wing and right-leaning centrists forged a campaign pact that could propel Meloni into power. The rival center-left bloc failed to secure a similarly broad alliance with left-leaning populists or centrists, which could leave it at a big disadvantage.

WHY HAVE ELECTIONS NOW?

Elections were due in spring 2023, when Parliament's five-year term was supposed to end. But populist leaders saw their parties' support steadily slipping both in opinion polls and in various mayoral and gubernatorial races since the last national election in 2018.

In July, 5-Star Movement head Giuseppe Conte, right-wing League leader Matteo Salvini and former Premier Silvio Berlusconi yanked their support for Premier Mario Draghi during a confidence vote. That triggered the premature demise of the wide-ranging coalition government and paved the way for early elections.

Meloni's meteoric rise in opinion polls made the trio of populist leaders nervous about waiting until spring to face voters. Her far-right Brothers of Italy, a party with neo-fascist roots, won just over 4% in the 2018 election. Polls tab the party as possibly taking as much as 25% on Sunday. Salvini and Berlusconi are now in an electoral alliance with Meloni.

FEWER LAWMAKERS

Many lawmakers won't be reelected — regardless of their legislative record — simply due to math. Since the last election, a reform has been passed aimed at streamlining Parliament and make its operation less costly to taxpayers. In the upper chamber, the number of senators drops from 315 to 200, while the lower Chamber of Deputies will number 400 instead of 630.

PINBALL POLITICS

Just about everyone agrees Italy's electoral law is complicated, including lawmakers who created it. Of the total seats, 36% are determined by a first-past-the-post system — whoever gets the most votes for a particular district wins. The remaining 64% of the seats get divvied up proportionally, based on candidate lists determined by parties and their alliances.

Lawmakers have likened the proportional part of the electoral system to a game of pinball, particularly in the Chamber of Deputies. Under the "pinball effect," a candidate who, say, came in first in a specific district could see another candidate who finished second elsewhere suddenly shifted to her or his district, knocking the first-place candidate out of a seat.

Confused? So are many voters. Except for in the first-past-the-post contests, many Italians are essentially voting for alliances and parties, not candidates, and don't have a direct say in determining their specific representative in the legislature.

WHEN DOES ITALY GET A NEW GOVERNMENT?

All over Europe, governments are grappling with an energy and cost-of-living crisis — mostly triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine — that looks set to spiral this winter. But for the next few weeks Mario Draghi's caretaker government will likely be doing the grappling for Italy.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 44 of 105

President Sergio Mattarella, as head of state, will hold consultations of party leaders to figure out which political forces are willing to team up in a coalition. Then Mattarella will ask someone — if opinion polls prove right, likely Meloni — to try to assemble a government with a solid majority in Parliament.

Whoever gets tapped reports back to the president with a proposed Cabinet list, if a coalition is cobbled together. In 2018, Mattarella nixed the selection for economy minister because the proposed appointee had questioned Italy's continued participation in the group of countries that use Europe's common currency, the euro.

Sentiment got so tense that the leader of the 5-Star Movement, who was trying to form the coalition, demanded Mattarella's impeachment. Bickering between the 5-Stars and the right-wing League, the proposed coalition's junior partner, dragged on, and it took three months before that government was sworn in.

A MATTER OF CONFIDENCE

All new governments must win a mandatory confidence vote in Parliament. The new legislature must hold its first session within 21 days of the election. Thus the incoming Parliament should be in place by mid-October. After it decides its chambers' presidents, the confidence vote can take place.

HOW LONG DO ITALIAN GOVERNMENTS LAST?

In theory, for the full term of Parliament. But post-war governments have generally run out of staying power long before that.

To cite the latest example: since the 2018 election, Italians have had three governments. Two were headed by 5-Star leader Giuseppe Conte, who first teamed up with League leader Matteo Salvini, In Conte II, the Democratic Party of Enrico Letta replaced the League as junior partner.

When Conte's second government fell in early 2021, Mattarella tapped Draghi to lead a pandemic unity government. That coalition's unity unraveled, victim to rival agendas among its major partners: the 5-Stars, the Democrats, the League, and Berlusconi's Forza Italia.

The only main leader who refused to join any coalition government in the outgoing legislature was Giorgia Meloni. Pollsters say voters could reward her for consistency, in staying stalwartly in the opposition.

Puerto Ricans seething over lack of power days after Fiona

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Half of Puerto Rico is without power more than five days after Hurricane Fiona struck — including an entire town where not a single work crew has arrived.

Many on the U.S. territory are angry and incredulous, and calls are growing for the ouster of the island's private electricity transmission and distribution company.

Fuel disruptions are worsening the situation, forcing grocery stores, gas stations and other businesses to close and leaving apartment buildings in the dark because there is no diesel for generators.

Many are questioning why it is taking so long to restore power since Fiona was a Category 1 storm that did not affect the entire island, and whose rain — not wind — inflicted the greatest damage.

"It's not normal," said Marcel Castro-Sitiriche, an electrical engineering professor at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez. "They have not given a convincing explanation of what the problem is."

He noted that Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority and Luma, a private company that took over the island's power transmission and distribution last year, also have not released basic information such as details of the damage to the electricity grid.

"We don't know the extent of the damage yet," Castro said, adding that he was concerned and surprised that Luma had not brought in additional crews to boost extra manpower already on the island.

Luma has said Fiona's floods left several substations underwater and inaccessible, and it has insisted it doesn't need more personnel.

"We have all the resources we believe we need," said Luma engineer Daniel Hernández.

The lack of power has prompted at least two mayors to activate own repair teams, and several other town leaders are calling for answers on why Luma crews have not reconnected homes and key infrastructure.

"They haven't even arrived here," said Yasmín Allende, municipal administrator for Hormigueros, a town

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 45 of 105

in western Puerto Rico that is home to more than 15,600 people, many of them elderly.

She said town officials have provided a list of downed transformers and power lines as well as the exact location of dozens of damaged electric posts. They have even cleared openings around damaged spots to ensure that electricity could be restored as soon as possible, she said.

"Everything is ready for them so they can come and do their job," Allende said. "All they have to do is show up."

Elizabeth González, who lives in Hormigueros, said she was forced to throw out two bags of meat Friday and is struggling to buy more gasoline for her generator, even as her husband, who has cancer, depends on it.

González said she is fed up with Puerto Rico's power grid.

"It's useless, as simple as that," she said. "If a hurricane comes, if rain comes, or a little gust of wind, the power quickly goes out."

The island's power grid was already crumbling due to austerity measures, aging infrastructure and lack of maintenance when a powerful Hurricane Maria razed the system in 2017. Reconstruction of the grid had barely started when Hurricane Fiona hit last Sunday.

In the first days following Fiona, Luma officials and Gov. Pedro Pierluisi promised that the vast majority of customers would soon have their electricity back. But as of late Friday, more than 40% of 1.47 million customers were still in the dark.

In addition, 27% of 1.3 million water and sewer customers did not have water in part because pumps rely on electricity and not all had backup generators.

Neither Luma nor Puerto Rico's power generating utility have said when electricity will be restored to the most affected areas. They have said only that hospitals and other critical infrastructure are their priority.

The situation has outraged many Puerto Ricans, including local government officials.

"I am not going to accept excuses," said Alexander Burgos, mayor in the central mountain town of Ciales. "Our power lines are up, there are no electrical posts on the ground, and we are ready to be connected."

Edward O'Neill, mayor of the northern town of Guaynabo, tweeted that Luma's "bad performance" was "unacceptable."

O'Neill, who worked for both the Puerto Rico's power company and Luma, said his municipality has collected all necessary information to help crews restore power but has not seen any results.

In the northern town of Bayamon, Mayor Ramón Luis Rivera got tired of waiting and contracted independent repair crews that began work Friday afternoon, although they were not handling live wires. Aguadilla Mayor Julio Roldán announced he was doing the same in his northwest coastal town, saying, "We're depending on other people to stay alive. We've had it."

The mayor of the central mountain town of Utuado said no one in his municipality of 28,000 people had power and accused Luma of making residents unnecessarily suffer. The mayor of the western town of Moca echoed those sentiments, saying "Luma has not wanted to assume its responsibilities."

Cathy Kunkel, a Puerto Rico-based energy and finance analyst, said she was surprised power had not yet returned to areas barely affected by Fiona, including the capital of San Juan.

She also questioned why Luma has not employed hundreds of experienced linesmen that worked with Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority before the private company took over transmission and distribution in June 2021.

"We have this absurdly frustrating situation," she said. "The old system is held together in substandard ways. You actually want the people who know how to work on that particular system."

The lack of power has been linked to several deaths. Authorities say a 70-year-old man burned to death when he tried to fill his running generator with gasoline and a 78-year-old man died from inhaling toxic gases from his generator. On Friday, police said a 72-year-old man and a 93-year-old woman died after their house caught on fire because they were relying on candles for light.

Castro-Sitiriche, the electrical engineering professor, said Puerto Rico's government, Luma and the Electric Power Authority are all to blame.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 46 of 105

"It's a shared disaster," he said, adding that Fiona was a wake-up call and that more people need to be connected to solar power. "It is a shame that the government has not done that to save lives."

In Pennsylvania, Shapiro's low-key style poses test for Dems

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

CHAMBERSBURG, Pa. (AP) — Doug Mastriano, the Republican nominee for governor in Pennsylvania, is perhaps best known as an election denier who was at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. John Fetterman, the Democrat hoping to flip the state's Senate seat, has revolutionized how campaigns use social media. And Dr. Mehmet Oz was a TV celebrity long before he launched a GOP Senate campaign.

And then there's Josh Shapiro.

In one of the most politically competitive states in the U.S., the Democratic contender for governor is waging a notably drama-free campaign, betting that a relatively under the radar approach will resonate with voters exhausted by a deeply charged political environment. But Shapiro faces a test of whether his comparatively low-key style will energize Democrats to rally against Mastriano, who many in the party view as an existential threat.

The GOP candidate, who worked to keep Donald Trump in power and overturn President Joe Biden's victory in 2020, supports ending abortion rights and would be in position to appoint the secretary of state, who oversees elections in this state that is often decisive in choosing presidents.

The tension of Shapiro's strategy was on display during a recent swing through this small city, a dot in deeply Republican south central Pennsylvania. He spent 10 minutes ticking through his record as a two-term attorney general and his policy goals if he becomes governor, such as expanding high-speed internet and boosting school funding. But he also acknowledged that he knew what was on the minds of audience members, noting how his wife gives him a simple reminder every morning: "You better win."

The 49-year-old Shapiro then became more explicit about the implications of a Mastriano win.

"This guy is the most dangerous, extreme person to ever run for governor in Pennsylvania and by far the most dangerous, extreme candidate running for office in the United States of America," Shapiro told the crowd in Chambersburg, Mastriano's home base in his conservative state Senate district.

Shapiro is managing something of a two-pronged campaign, one built for a conventional election year and another aimed at the tense political environment in the aftermath of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol and the overturning of the landmark Roe v. Wade decision guaranteeing abortion rights.

Last month, Shapiro released a TV ad statewide that discussed a case he brought as attorney general against a contractor who agreed to repay wages after Shapiro's office accused it of stealing from workers. Then, he's also aired TV ads describing Mastriano as a threat to democracy, pointing out that Mastriano watched at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, as pro-Trump demonstrators attacked police.

"It was there that day that my opponent sided with the angry mob, marched to the Capitol, breached the police lines, and he did so with one purpose, all of them: they didn't want your votes to count," Shapiro told an audience in Gettysburg, prompting one woman to call out, "He's a traitor."

That message isn't lost on the Democrats who go see Shapiro.

"I think this is just a critical election," said Marissa Sandoe, 29. "I think this election will determine whether we still have a democracy in this nation."

Shapiro later shrugs off suggestions that, for his supporters, the grist of normal-year gubernatorial politics is being drowned out by existential issues, like saving democracy.

"I'm focused like a laser beam on making Pennsylvanians' lives better," Shapiro said.

The first midterm of a new administration is often challenging for the president's party. But for now, polls suggest Shapiro is leading Mastriano and he also has a significant fundraising advantage. Shapiro has run more than \$20 million worth of TV ads, while Mastriano has run hardly anything, and nothing since the primary.

Campaigning in the state where Biden was born, Shapiro may benefit from a recovery in Biden's approval.

The president's popularity nationally has improved to 45% from 36% in July, although concerns about

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 47 of 105

his handling of the economy persist, according to a September poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Republican Party leaders who initially criticized Mastriano as being too extreme to win the fall general election say he could still win, despite his flaws, if the electorate is angry enough over inflation to check every box against Democrats as a vote against Biden.

But Republicans acknowledge Mastriano is running a race focused largely on his right-wing base, instead of reaching out to the moderates who often put winners over the top in one of America's most politically divided states.

Mastriano has gotten institutional fundraising help, including events headlined by state party leaders, Donald Trump Jr. and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, but Republican strategists have whispered that the fundraisers aren't well-attended and Mastriano went on Facebook this week to complain about a lack of support from "national-level Republican organizations."

"We haven't seen much assistance coming from them and we're 49 days out," Mastriano said.

At campaign events, Mastriano promises to be a pro-energy governor and bus migrants to Biden's home in Delaware, and he warns that Shapiro is pursuing an extreme agenda.

"If we're extreme about anything, it's about loving our constitution," Mastriano told a rally crowd in nearby Chambersburg earlier this month.

For his part, Shapiro is gamely going about the campaign, taking advantage of Mastriano's weaknesses. The Democrat will be a guest in early October at the annual dinner of the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry, a group accustomed to endorsing Republicans for governor. Mastriano hasn't accepted even its invitation to speak to its board, something Shapiro already did.

Building-trades unions that work on power plants, pipelines and refineries in a coal and natural gas powerhouse haven't heeded Mastriano's promises that "we're going to drill and dig like there's no tomorrow."

Instead, they have accepted Shapiro's middle-of-the-road stance on energy and attacked Mastriano's support for right-to-work policies as anathema even to rank-and-file members who vote Republican.

"Here's one thing my members get: They'll never, ever be with someone who is for right-to-work, ever," said James Snell, the business manager of Steamfitters Local 420 in Philadelphia.

Shapiro is also taking centrist positions that might help inoculate himself against Mastriano's attacks.

The race got personal, with Mastriano repeatedly criticizing Shapiro's choice of a private school for his children — a Jewish day school — as "one of the most privileged, entitled schools in the nation."

Shapiro, a devout conservative Jew, responded that Mastriano — who espouses what scholars call Christian nationalist ideology — wants to impose his religion on others and "dictate to folks where and how they should worship and on what terms."

Shapiro dug deeper on Mastriano, saying he speaks in "anti-Semitic, racist and homophobic tropes every day." Mastriano calls those distractions from Shapiro's record as attorney general and failure to stem rising homicides in Philadelphia.

Still, Shapiro is drawing crowds on Mastriano's turf, far from his power base in Philadelphia's upscale suburbs.

It is fertile ground, said Marty Qually, a Democratic county commissioner in Adams County, which includes Gettysburg, because Democrats are riled up like he's never seen before and even Republicans there tell him they cannot accept Mastriano's Christian nationalism or hard-line abortion stance.

It speaks volumes that Shapiro is campaigning in small towns, and not in Democratic strongholds: It means that he's comfortable with where the race is, Qually said.

"Some folks here said: 'Why do you want to go to Franklin County? That's where the other guy's from,'" Shapiro told the crowd in Chambersburg. "Let me tell you something. I'm glad I came. Ya'll are making me feel at home."

As Ukraine worries UN, some leaders rue what's pushed aside

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 48 of 105

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — In speech after speech, world leaders dwelled on the topic consuming this year's U.N. General Assembly meeting: Russia's war in Ukraine.

A few, like Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, prodded the world not to forget everything else.

He, too, was quick to bring up the biggest military confrontation in Europe since World War II. But he wasn't there to discuss the conflict itself, nor its disruption of food, fuel and fertilizer markets.

"The ongoing war in Ukraine is making it more difficult," Buhari lamented, "to tackle the perennial issues that feature each year in the deliberations of this assembly."

He went on to name a few: inequality, nuclear disarmament, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the more than 1 million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar who have been living in limbo for years in Bangladesh.

In an environment where words are parsed, confrontations are calibrated and worry is acute that the war and its wider effects could worsen, no one dismissed the importance of the conflict. But comments such as Buhari's quietly spoke to a certain unease, sometimes bordering on frustration, about the international community's absorption in Ukraine.

Those murmurs are audible enough that the United States' U.N. ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, made a point of previewing Washington's plans to address climate change, food insecurity, health and other issues during the diplomatic community's premier annual gathering.

"Other countries have expressed a concern that as we focus on Ukraine, we are not paying attention to what is happening in other crises around the world," she said, vowing that it wasn't so. Still, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken complained at a Security Council meeting days later that Russia's invasion is distracting the U.N. from working on other important matters.

In many years at the assembly, there's a hot spot or news development that takes up a lot of diplomatic oxygen. As former U.N. official Jan Egeland puts it, "the world manages to focus on one crisis at a time."

"But I cannot, in these many years as a humanitarian worker or a diplomat, remember any time when the focus was so strongly on one conflict only while the world was falling apart elsewhere," Egeland, now secretary-general of an international aid group called the Norwegian Refugee Council, said in a phone interview.

Certainly, no one was surprised by the attention devoted to a conflict with Cold War echoes, oblique nuclear threats from Russian President Vladimir Putin, shelling that has endangered the continent's largest atomic power plant, and far-reaching economic effects. The urgency only intensified during the weeklong meeting as Russia mobilized some of its military reserves.

President Andrzej Duda of Poland — on Ukraine's doorstep — stressed in his speech that "we mustn't show any 'war fatigue'" regarding the conflict. But he also noted that a recent trip to Africa left him pondering how the West has treated other conflicts.

"Were we equally resolute during the tragedies of Syria, Libya, Yemen?" he asked himself, and the assembly. And didn't the West return to "business as usual" after wars in Congo and the Horn of Africa?

"While condemning the invasion of Ukraine," Duda added, "do we give equal weight to fighting mercenaries who seek to destabilize the Sahel and threaten many other states in Africa?"

He isn't the only one asking.

Over seven months of war, there have been pointed observations from some quarters about how quickly and extensively wealthy and powerful nations mobilized money, military aid, General Assembly votes to support Ukraine and offer refuge to its residents, compared to the global response to some other conflicts.

South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor last month told reporters — and the visiting Blinken — that while the war is awful, "we should be equally concerned at what is happening to the people of Palestine as we are with what is happening to the people of Ukraine."

At the General Assembly, she added that, from South Africa's vantage point, "our greatest global challenges are poverty, inequality, joblessness and a feeling of being entirely ignored and excluded."

Tuvalu's prime minister, Kausea Natano, said in an interview on the assembly's sidelines that the war shouldn't "be an excuse" for countries to ignore their financial commitments to a top priority for his island nation: fighting climate change. Part of Bolivian President Luis Arce's speech compared the untold billions

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 49 of 105

of dollars spent on fighting in Ukraine in a matter of months to the \$11 billion committed to the U.N.-sponsored Green Climate Fund over more than a decade.

To be sure, most leaders made time for issues beyond Ukraine in their allotted, if not always enforced, 15 minutes at the mic. And some mentioned the war only in passing, or not at all.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro devoted his time to lambasting capitalism, consumerism and the U.S.-led war on drugs, particularly its focus on coca plant eradication. Kryrgyz President Sadyr Zhaparov, whose country has close ties to Russia, homed in on his homeland's border dispute with Tajikistan. Jordan's King Abdullah II briefly mentioned the war's effects on food supplies, then moved on to sustainable economic growth, Syrian refugees and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Ukraine is undeniably a dominant concern for the European Union. But foreign policy chief Josep Borrell insisted the bloc hasn't lost sight of other problems.

"It's not a question of choosing between Ukraine and the others. We can do all at the same time," he said on the eve of the assembly.

Yet diplomatic attention and time are precious, sought-after resources. So, too, the will and money to help.

U.N. humanitarian office figures show that governments and private organizations have put up about \$3.7 billion to aid Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees this year. About \$2 billion has been raised for war-torn Yemen, where the U.N. says over 17 million people are struggling with acute hunger.

And those are big campaigns. Just \$428 million has been raised for Myanmar and for the Rohingya in Bangladesh.

Egeland's organization helps uprooted people around the world, including in Ukraine. But he feels an "urgent need to get attention to absolute freefalls elsewhere."

"It didn't get better in Congo or in Yemen or in Myanmar or in Venezuela because it got so much worse in Europe, in and around Ukraine," Egeland said. "We need to fight for those who are starving in the shadows of this horrific war in Ukraine."

Staffing shortages, violence plague Oklahoma prisons

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

HOLDENVILLE, Okla. (AP) — Working as a prison guard in Oklahoma is becoming an ever more dangerous job as the state, with one of the highest incarceration rates in the United States, struggles with violence and understaffing at detention facilities. Long hours, dangerous conditions and remote, rural locations have meant fewer guards and a system plagued with increased killings and violence.

Three inmates were killed in separate incidents this year at the same private prison in rural, east-central Oklahoma where a correctional officer was fatally stabbed by an inmate over the summer, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press.

Davis Correctional Facility, a 1,700-bed men's prison in Holdenville operated by Tennessee-based private prison operator CoreCivic, has been operating at only about 70% of its contractually obligated staffing level, according to a 2021 audit of the facility provided to the AP after an open-records request.

Alan Jay Hershberger, a 61-year-old veteran correctional officer from Missouri who previously worked at a CoreCivic facility in Kansas, was traveling to Oklahoma to work at the prison for six-week stints at a time, according to his family. On July 31, Hershberger was supervising about 30 inmates in a recreation yard at the prison when 49-year-old inmate Gregory Thompson walked past him, pulled a 16-inch, homemade knife from his waistband and plunged it into Hershberger's back, according to an affidavit from Oklahoma Department of Corrections investigator J. Dale Hunter.

"The victim immediately grabbed his side and quickly walked out of the A Unit South door toward a second correctional officer ... and collapsed," Hunter wrote. "The defendant followed behind the victim and began shouting, "On the set" and "On the Crips," prison slang indicating the action is the responsibility of the Crips prison gang of which the defendant is a validated member."

Thompson, who is serving a no-parole life sentence for a 2003 murder conviction, has gang affiliation and a history of prison violence, including a 2010 first-degree manslaughter conviction in a case in which

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 50 of 105

Thompson stabbed another inmate to death in 2009 at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester. Despite his history, Thompson was held among the general population at Davis Correctional Facility, according to the DOC.

"He should not have been in general (population), knowing how violent he was and his history," said Jessica Scott, a correctional officer who worked with Hershberger during a six-week stint at Davis. "Administrative segregation is where he should have been."

Scott, who has worked at two other CoreCivic prisons in Kansas and Tennessee, said the facility at Holdenville had more problems maintaining appropriate staffing levels, cell doors that didn't lock properly and inmates who were particularly violent and noncompliant toward staff.

"It was by far the worst," said Scott, who now works at a state prison in Kansas. "There's a reason I'm not there anymore."

Thompson has been charged with first-degree murder in Hughes County. His public defenders declined to comment on the case.

CoreCivic did not respond directly to questions about Thompson's offender-level status or its staffing ratio at the time of the killing, but acknowledged the company is taking steps to improve staffing levels.

"CoreCivic is committed to the health and safety of our employees, the individuals in our care and our communities," CoreCivic spokesman Matthew Davio said in a statement. "We're also committed to attracting and retaining qualified, professional staff at Davis. However, both public and private correctional facilities have faced staffing challenges across the country."

Davio said the company used additional funding this year from the Oklahoma Legislature to increase pay for officers at the facility and also has advertised for openings and launched recruiting efforts at military bases and local colleges. A billboard along a highway near the prison, located 75 miles (120 kilometers) southeast of Oklahoma City, advertises starting pay at \$22.10 per hour.

Still, another inmate was killed at the prison earlier this month, the third this year, according to the DOC. Correctional officers watched as 32-year-old Darren Padron strangled his cellmate, 27-year-old Dustin Patterson as he pleaded for his life, according to an affidavit from a DOC investigator.

"Correctional officers reported they witnessed Darren R. Padron attack Patterson with various strangulation techniques including a lateral neck restraint, pushing his elbow into Patterson's throat as he lay prone, and utilizing Patterson's shirt as a ligature," the affidavit states.

The officers told DOC investigators that Padron refused to comply with verbal directives and continued to strangle Patterson even after multiple deployments of pepper spray.

Padron also has been charged with first-degree murder. Court records don't indicate the name of an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

Prison records show both Thompson and Padron have been moved to the maximum-security Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester.

CoreCivic, formerly the Corrections Corporation of America, has a long history of problems with inmate violence at its prisons. In one of the deadliest prison attacks in Oklahoma history, four inmates were stabbed to death in 2015 at a prison operated by CCA. Those attacks followed a violent outburst a few months earlier in which some 200 to 300 of the prison's roughly 1,600 inmates were involved in a brawl that resulted in 11 prisoners being taken to the hospital.

Just last month, the private prison company agreed to settle a federal lawsuit over a Tennessee inmate's killing in which low staffing levels were blamed.

While some of it is simply the nature of the work, prisons are now also competing against oil field jobs that pay better. The Legislature approved a pay raise for prison guards this year to help combat hiring challenges, boosting recruits in a hopeful sign of improvement.

Private facilities are not alone in their struggle to decrease violence and hire and retain staff. Oklahoma has long had one of the highest average annual homicide rates among all the state prison systems in the country from 2001 to 2019, with 14 homicides per 100,000 inmates during that time. South Carolina topped it only slightly with 15 homicides per 100,000 inmates, according to a 2021 report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Bobby Cleveland, a former state lawmaker and director of an association that represents prison workers in Oklahoma, said understaffing at both private and public prisons has indeed led to more violence.

He suggested gradually reducing private prisons.

"They're constantly going on lockdown because of staff shortages. You've got more drugs coming in, you get more phones coming in. And what happens is you get inmates fighting over the contraband and who controls it," he said, adding "When you're short staffed, you're going to have more problems."

In GOP legislatures, a gender divide emerges over abortion

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Outside the chambers of the West Virginia Legislature, the marble foyer was packed with young women in T-shirts, ripped jeans, and gym shorts holding signs with uteruses drawn in colored marker.

"Bans off our bodies," the signs said. "Abortion is essential."

Inside, a group of lawmakers, almost all of them men, sat at desks in pressed suits, doing their best to talk over protesters' chants carrying through the heavy wooden doors.

A stark gender divide has emerged in debates unfolding in Republican-led states including West Virginia, Indiana and South Carolina following the U.S. Supreme Court's June decision to end constitutional protections for abortion. As male-dominated legislatures worked to advance bans, often with support of the few Republican women holding office, protesters were more likely to be women.

The contrast wasn't lost on West Virginia Sen. Owens Brown, the only Black lawmaker in the Republican-dominated Senate, who asked lawmakers to look around before they passed a bill banning abortion at all stages of pregnancy last week.

"When I look around the room, what do I see? A bunch of middle-aged and some elderly men. Also, middle-income men," the Democrat said during a final Senate debate in which only men shared opinions. "Look out in the hallway. What do you see? You see young women, and we're here making a decision for all these young women because you're never going to have to ever face this issue yourself."

In all three states, lawmakers fighting against abortion bans have pointed to the gender divide, insisting that men shouldn't get to dictate medical decisions for women. Ban supporters say abortion affects not only women, but also children, and all of society.

"I am incredibly grateful to the men in my caucus, who were not afraid to stand up for life," said Republican Del. Kayla Kessinger, one of the West Virginia ban's biggest supporters. "They have just as much of a right to have an opinion on this as anyone else."

"I wish that the left would stop trying to silence conservative women who are pro-life and believe that empowering women doesn't require us to kill our children," said Kessinger, who joined the legislature eight years ago, at 21, running on the abortion issue.

The gender gap was hard to miss as protesters descended on the West Virginia Capitol starting in July, when lawmakers first took up abortion. During a public hearing, dozens of women who showed up were given 45 seconds each to speak; several who went longer were escorted out by security. This past week, at least one woman was arrested and another dragged out of the chamber gallery by a group of male officers when she shouted "shame" at lawmakers during a debate.

After the bill passed, the House clerk read a lengthy resolution introduced by a white male lawmaker describing how society should view mothers. Motherhood is a privilege, it said, and shouldn't be treated as "a mere option."

"It was formerly a wisdom common to all participants of the abortion debate that no woman wants an abortion," the resolution states. Those with power over women "convince them to perform acts against their conscience."

The resolution didn't sit well with Roni Jones, a mother from the Charleston suburb of St. Albans.

"I'm tired of older, rich white men deciding our fate," she said, her voice hoarse from protesting. "They have no idea what working-class people go through."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 52 of 105

Jones once had an abortion in the second trimester of a wanted pregnancy because of a medical issue, she said. And while West Virginia's ban has exemptions for medical emergencies and for rape and incest, those apply only early in pregnancy — and she worries doctors will fear losing their license if they make a close call.

Her daughter, Catherine Jones, 25, said none of these decisions should be up to men, who will never experience pregnancy, childbirth or a miscarriage: "How can they truly empathize?"

In West Virginia, 18 of 134 lawmakers are women — and 13 of them, all Republican, voted for the near-total abortion ban. In Indiana, 35 of 150 legislators are women; 14 voted for the bill there. In South Carolina, 29 of 124 legislators are women; seven voted for bans.

Indiana Republican Sen. Sue Glick sponsored the abortion ban that became law. A House version was also proposed by a woman. But it was a male Democrat who pointed out the gender divide — as in West Virginia.

"This is the government, the male-dominated government of the state of Indiana, saying to the women of this state, you lose your choice," Indiana Democratic Sen. Tim Lanane said when the Senate passed its ban. "We've told you — papa state, big state government — is going to tell you what you will do with your body."

Men have invoked wives, daughters and granddaughters during debates on rape and incest exemptions. Several said they needed to make a decision that allowed them to "sleep at night."

Female lawmakers in both parties have at times voiced frustration.

"To say it's tough to be a woman in politics is an understatement," South Carolina Sen. Katrina Shealy — the body's longest-serving woman — said on the Senate floor. "To say it's really tough to be a woman in politics in South Carolina is hardly a statement at all."

Shealy was one of three female Republican senators who opposed an effort to remove exceptions for rape and incest.

"Yes, I'm pro-life," she said. "I'm also pro-life for the mother, the life she has with her children who are already born."

South Carolina senators narrowly rejected a ban on almost all abortions this month. But Republican lawmakers plan to keep trying to enact new restrictions. In West Virginia and Indiana, the bans passed were signed into law, although a judge has temporarily blocked enforcement of Indiana's ban. The state quickly appealed.

In West Virginia, Democratic Del. Kayla Young noted the lack of legislative representation not only of women but of people of color — and those communities will be affected most by the ban, she said.

"We're never going to have to deal with this because we're incredibly privileged people," she said. "We are making decisions about other people, and we shouldn't do that. If it's your religious belief, if it's your moral belief, that is great for you. But get it away from me, get it out of my body, get it out of my uterus."

Democratic Del. Danielle Walker — the only Black woman in the Legislature — has acknowledged having an abortion. Walker often joined protesters between floor sessions, leading chants.

"Who do you think you are to tell me what I should do with my body, with my vagina, with my uterus, with my ovaries?" she said amid the crowd before walking into House chambers to vote against the bill.

Other legislators say the ban reflects what West Virginians want. Republican Sen. Patricia Rucker supported the measure and was vocal in debates about ensuring victims of rape and incest who want abortions must report assaults to police. Though she wasn't involved in drafting the final version, she said her male colleagues shared their work and sought input.

Rucker said she feels she's carrying out voters' wishes. But opponents of restricting abortion say that can be known only through a statewide vote. In 2018, 52 percent of voters approved a constitutional amendment saying that nothing in the state constitution "secures or protects a right to abortion or requires the funding of abortion."

No vote has been held in West Virginia since. In the wake of the Supreme Court decision, only Kansas voters have had a chance to weigh in on abortion. The traditionally conservative state voted to affirm the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 53 of 105

procedure as a right in the state constitution, with the support of an unprecedented increase in female registered voters.

A proposal by West Virginia House Democrats to put the abortion question to voters was rejected by Republicans on the day the ban passed. At least four states — California, Kentucky, Michigan and Vermont — could have votes in November on abortion access.

The day the West Virginia bill passed, Rucker and other female legislators let her male colleagues do the talking — she felt she'd already had her say.

"I did not feel any reason to delay action of saving the babies when the West Virginia voters already spoke out," she said. "Voters knew when they elected me, I was 100% pro-life."

China using civilian ships to enhance navy capability, reach

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A Chinese scientific ship bristling with surveillance equipment docked in a Sri Lankan port. Hundreds of fishing boats anchored for months at a time among disputed islands in the South China Sea. And ocean-going ferries, built to be capable of carrying heavy vehicles and large loads of people.

All are ostensibly civilian ships, but experts and uneasy regional governments say they are part of a Chinese civil-military fusion strategy, little concealed by Beijing, that enhances its maritime capabilities.

China's navy is already the world's largest by ship count, and has been rapidly building new warships as part of a wider military expansion. It launched its first domestically designed and built aircraft carrier in June, and at least five new destroyers are on the way soon.

The buildup comes as Beijing attempts to exert broader influence in the region. It is increasing its military activities around the self-governing island of Taiwan, seeking new security agreements with Pacific islands and building artificial islands in disputed waters to fortify its territorial claims in the South China Sea, which the U.S. and its allies have challenged.

The civilian vessels do more than just augment the raw numbers of ships, performing tasks that would be difficult for the military to carry out.

In the South China Sea's Spratly Islands, for example, China pays commercial trawlers more than they can make by fishing simply to drop anchor for a minimum of 280 days a year to support Beijing's claim to the disputed archipelago, said Gregory Poling, director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative.

"China is able to use nominally civilian vessels that are clearly state directed, state paid to eat away the sovereignty of its neighbors, but then plausibly deny that the state is responsible," he said.

China has been using civilian fishing trawlers for military purposes for decades, but has significantly increased the numbers recently with the creation of a "Spratly Backbone Fleet" out of a government subsidy program begun under President Xi Jinping, which helps cover building new vessels, among other things.

Those ships "largely appeared almost overnight" after China constructed port infrastructure a few years ago on the artificial islands it built in the Spratlys that could be used for resupply, Poling said.

Now there are about 300 to 400 vessels deployed there at any given time, he said.

The Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam and others also have claims to the Spratly Islands, which sit in a productive fishing area and important shipping lane, and are thought to hold untapped reserves of natural gas and oil.

But the Chinese ships deter other trawlers from fishing in the area, and have been slowly displacing them from the grounds, with little that governments can do, said Jay Batongbacal, who heads the University of the Philippines' Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea.

"Because they are ostensibly civilian fishing vessels, navies' ships are unable to deal with them lest China accuse the Philippines of provoking an incident and using force against civilians," he said. "They take advantage of perceived 'grey zones' below the threshold for triggering a self-defense response."

In one highly publicized incident, a steel Chinese trawler in 2019 rammed and sank a wooden-hulled Filipino boat at anchor northeast of the Spratly Islands, abandoning its crew to be rescued later by a Vietnamese fishing boat. Despite a diplomatic protest from the Philippines, China denied the incident was

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 54 of 105

intentional, calling it an “accidental collision.”

In addition to about 800 to 1,000 commercial fishing boats in the Spratly fleet, China has approximately 200 other vessels as part of a professional maritime militia, according to a November study co-authored by Poling based on an analysis of official Chinese reports, satellite imagery and other sources.

The professional militia is better equipped, with trained crews and under direct state control, and is used for more aggressive operations such as harassing foreign oil and gas operations, Poling said.

In the event of a conflict, China’s use of civilian vessels would complicate the rules of engagement, he said.

“You don’t want to treat every Chinese fishing boat as if it were an armed combatant, but, in fact, some of them may well be armed combatants,” Poling said.

China has also been deploying civilian research vessels for military-related tasks in areas where its navy would be unable to operate without provoking a response, said Ridzwan Rahmat, a Singapore-based analyst with the defense intelligence company Janes.

“If you deploy grey hull vessels, your adversary may also deploy a grey hull vessel as a reciprocal measure, so that makes it more dangerous for everyone,” he said, referring to the typical color of military ships. “So to avoid this, China has been deploying white hull vessels — to reinforce its presence without escalating things.”

There are also many Western export controls prohibiting sensitive technology from being sent to China for military use, which China is able to bypass by building such civilian ships, even though “in everything but name they’re military,” Rahmat said.

The autonomously piloted Zhu Hai Yun is believed to be one such ship, capable of launching airborne, surface and underwater drones “to carry out marine scientific research,” according to the Chinese state-run Global Times.

The ship, which completed its first autonomous sea trial in June, could also create military maps of the South China Sea floor, including important submarine lanes around Taiwan, Rahmat said.

“China has been increasing its submarine deterrent patrols, and in order to ensure it can do this it needs to map the underwater terrain,” he said.

China’s methods drew the ire of regional rival India last month when it sought to dock the Yuan Wang 5 in Sri Lanka’s Hambantota Port, not far from India’s southeast coast, for refueling at a time that New Delhi was preparing to test a new missile.

The vessel is officially a scientific research ship equipped with sensors that can be used to track satellites, but the same equipment can be used to gather data on a missile launch.

Sri Lanka, in the midst of an economic crisis and heavily reliant on aid from India, initially declined to allow the ship to dock over India’s concerns.

But China operates the Hambantota Port, having been granted a 99-year lease on the facility — built with Chinese money — after Sri Lanka defaulted on loans in 2017. After high-level consultations with Beijing, Sri Lankan authorities backtracked and allowed the Yuan Wang 5 to dock from Aug. 16 to Aug. 22.

On Aug. 23, India successfully tested its new surface-to-air missile designed to defend a ship from close-range aerial threats.

“I suspect the launch was delayed until the Chinese spy ship was gone,” Rahmat said.

China hasn’t tried to disguise its military use of civilian ocean-going ferries, which have had to meet defense standards since 2016 allowing them to accommodate military vehicles like tanks, said Mike Dahm, a retired U.S. Navy intelligence officer who has written on the topic for the U.S. Naval War College China Maritime Studies Institute.

Slickly produced state television videos showing trainloads of military vehicles and troops boarding the vessels and heading to sea, stating openly they are testing “how to use civilian transportation resources to execute military tasks.” The latest such exercise wrapped up earlier this month.

This could be meant to intimidate Taiwan, which China claims as its own and has not ruled out attempting to take by force, and also dovetails with the Chinese government’s message that the public is contributing to national security, Dahm said.

China at the moment does not possess enough amphibious craft to transport the number of troops

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 55 of 105

needed 160 kilometers (100 miles) across the Taiwan Strait for a potential beach landing on the island, and the ferries could be a stopgap measure should a crisis prompt China to decide to invade, Rahmat said.

China also may not want to take on the expense of building and maintaining a "huge amphibious armada" for an indeterminate period of time, Dahm said.

Military amphibious craft are built to land troops and vehicles on a beach, whereas ferries provide port-to-port movement, which would mean they would only be effective if China can capture Taiwanese ports in serviceable condition, Dahm said.

Still, in a crisis, China's People's Liberation Army could attempt a chancy gambit like offloading amphibious vehicles from the ferries at sea or using floating causeways, Dahm said.

"There is always the possibility that the PLA could commit to a high-risk operation against Taiwan with the possibility of losing a large number of civilian ships," he said.

Cards' Pujols hits 700th home run, 4th player to reach mark

By BETH HARRIS AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Albert Pujols seemed like a long shot in early August to reach 700 home runs, still more than a dozen swings from the hallowed mark and his power stroke all but gone.

Or so it appeared.

Now showing the pop of his youth in the final weeks of his career, the 42-year-old slugger got there with two long shots.

Pujols hit his 700th home run, connecting for his second drive of the game and becoming the fourth player in major league history to make it to the milestone as the St. Louis Cardinals routed the Los Angeles Dodgers 11-0 Friday night.

Pujols joined Barry Bonds (762 homers), Hank Aaron (755) and Babe Ruth (714) in one of baseball's most exclusive clubs.

"Don't get me wrong, I know where my places stand in this game, but since Day One when I made my debut, I was never about numbers, never about chasing numbers," Pujols said. "It was always about winning championships and tried to get better in these games."

Dodgers manager Dave Roberts gladly gushed about Pujols' accomplishment.

"This is like the Mount Rushmore of sluggers, so to reach that 700-home run mark, it's remarkable," Roberts said.

A man wearing a blue Dodgers shirt with Hideo Nomo's No. 16 on the back snagged the 700th homer ball. He was whisked under the stands as he clutched a black glove containing the historic souvenir ball to his chest. Prolonged negotiations went on before the man was escorted out of Dodger Stadium flanked by 10 security personnel and into a waiting SUV.

"Souvenirs are for the fans," Pujols said. "I don't have any problem if they want to keep it. That's why the fans come here, to have a special moment of history."

Stirring up images of his dominant days as a three-time NL MVP, Pujols hit No. 699 in the third inning, then launched No. 700 in the fourth.

A 37-year-old Los Angeles man, Cesar Soriano, snagged No. 699. He turned the ball over to security after being told he could meet Pujols.

It's been a remarkable and resurgent run for Pujols. This was his 14th home run since the start of August for the NL Central-leading Cardinals, and his 21st of the season.

Roberts marveled at the improbability in July of Pujols making history in late September.

"I wouldn't doubt him, but the stars seem to kind of have to align for it to play out like this," Roberts said. "I don't think Albert even thought it was a possibility."

Now, no one needs to wonder whether Pujols would've come back for a few extra swings next year had he finished this season at 699 or so.

Pujols took extra pleasure in making his mark at Dodger Stadium, where he said he regained his joy for the game while with the Dodgers last season.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 56 of 105

"It's pretty special, especially with the Dodgers fans, to do it here," Pujols said. "And, you get to see both sides, they get to enjoy this and to do it in a Cardinals uniform is really special."

Pujols' historic homer was a three-run shot against reliever Phil Bickford. The ball landed in the first couple rows of the left-field pavilion, the same location his two-run shot touched down the previous inning off left-hander Andrew Heaney.

"At first, I was upset ... and then when the crowd reacted and seen all the smiles, it was a very special moment for MLB," Bickford said. "Albert Pujols is one of the most amazing people I've ever met."

Pujols jogged around the bases smiling all the way. After crossing the plate and pointing his fingers skyward, Pujols went over to greet fellow Dominican Republic and former Dodgers star Adrian Beltre. They high-fived through the protective netting.

Then he was off to the Cardinals dugout, getting hugs and congratulations every step of the way.

Pujols received a prolonged standing ovation from the crowd — he finished out last season while playing for the Dodgers. He took a curtain call, raising his cap in acknowledgment.

The crowd of 50,041 chanted "Pujols! Pujols!" The fans finally sat down after being on their feet in anticipation of seeing history.

Later in the Cardinals clubhouse, his teammates "gave me a little shower, a little toast," Pujols said.

Pujols' 700th homer gave him a couple of other nice, round numbers, too — he has hit 500 home runs off right-handers and 200 off lefties.

His achievement was celebrated beyond Chavez Ravine.

At Chase Field in Phoenix, the San Francisco Giants were meeting on the mound when the 700th homer was shown on the videoboard, prompting veteran third baseman Evan Longoria to applaud, along with the Diamondbacks' crowd.

At Target Field in Minneapolis, Shohei Ohtani pitched the Los Angeles Angels to a win and then said through an interpreter: "I'm really glad he got to 700. ... It was an honor to be a teammate of his. He's raking this year, so it feels like he's got a lot more left in the tank."

Hall of Fame pitcher Pedro Martinez tweeted about his fellow star from the Dominican: "You are the man!!"

Pujols connected twice on the same night New York Yankees slugger Aaron Judge remained on deck for home run history. He remained at 60 homers, just short of tying Roger Maris' AL mark of 61 in 1961, in a win at Yankee Stadium.

Lars Nootbaar, Juan Ypez and Alec Bureson also homered for St. Louis.

Pujols struck out swinging in his first at-bat against Heaney and grounded out to short in the sixth. He was replaced in the eighth by Bureson, who added a pinch-hit homer.

José Quintana (6-6) got the victory. He scattered five hits over 6 2/3 innings and struck out six.

Cardinals outfielder Corey Dickerson pitched the ninth. With the bases loaded, he retired Trayce Thompson on a flyball to end the game.

Heaney (3-3) was tagged in the most-lopsided loss this year for the NL West-leading Dodgers.

Pujols snapped a tie with Alex Rodriguez for fourth on the career list when he hit career homer No. 697 against Pittsburgh on Sept. 11.

Batting .189 on July 4, Pujols started to find his stroke in August, swatting seven homers in one 10-game stretch that helped St. Louis pull away in the division race.

Pujols has enjoyed a productive season after returning to St. Louis in March for a \$2.5 million, one-year contract. It's his highest total since he hit 23 homers for the Angels in 2019.

He plans to retire when the season ends.

Pujols began his career in St. Louis. He was selected by the Cardinals in the 13th round of the 1999 amateur draft and won the 2001 NL Rookie of the Year award.

He has hit at least .300 with at least 30 homers and 100 RBIs in each of his first 10 seasons. He helped the Cardinals to World Series titles in 2006 and 2011.

He set a career high with 49 homers in 2006 — one of seven seasons with at least 40 homers. He led the majors with 47 homers in 2009 and topped the NL with 42 in 2010.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 57 of 105

Pujols left St. Louis in free agency in December 2011, signing a \$240 million, 10-year contract with the Angels. He was waived by the Angels in May 2021, and then joined the Dodgers and hit 12 homers and drove in 38 runs in 85 games.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Dodgers: All-Star RHP Tony Gonsolin (forearm) will throw two innings in a rehab assignment Tuesday for Triple-A Oklahoma City. ... LHP David Price (wrist) will throw to live hitters again in a couple days.

HONORING ALBERT AND YADI

The Dodgers honored Cardinals teammates Pujols and catcher Yadier Molina, both of whom are retiring at season's end.

The players were greeted by a standing ovation when they strode to home plate before the game. Their career highlights were shown on the stadium's big screens.

Both players were presented with white golf bags before Pujols took the mic and thanked his former teammates and fans for treating him well during his lone season in LA last year.

UP NEXT

Cardinals: LHP Jordan Montgomery (8-5, 3.26 ERA) makes his second road start with the team since coming from the Yankees. He tossed a one-hit shutout in his other one against the Chicago Cubs on Aug. 22 in a 1-0 victory.

Dodgers: LHP Clayton Kershaw (9-3, 2.39) makes his 20th start of the season. He has 117 strikeouts in 109 1/3 innings.

The AP Interview: Marcos wants to 'reintroduce' Philippines

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Looking to "reintroduce the Philippines" to the world, new President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has ambitious plans for his nation on the international stage and at home — if, that is, the twin specters of pandemic and climate change can be overcome or at least managed.

And if he can surmount the legacies of two people: his predecessor, and his father.

He also wants to strengthen ties with both the United States and China — a delicate balancing act for the Southeast Asian nation — and, like many of his fellow leaders at the United Nations this week, called on the countries that have caused global warming to help less wealthy nations counteract its effects.

Marcos, swept into office this spring, is already drawing distinctions both subtle and obvious between himself and his voluble predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, who alienated many international partners with his violent approach to fighting drug trafficking and the coarse rhetoric he used to galvanize supporters.

Asked if Duterte went too far with his lethal drug crackdown, Marcos redirected the criticism toward those who carried out the plan.

"His people went too far sometimes," Marcos told The Associated Press on Friday. "We have seen many cases where policemen, other operatives, some were just shady characters that we didn't quite know where they came from and who they were working for. But now we've gone after them."

Marcos, 65, sat for a wide-ranging interview in New York on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly's annual leaders' meeting. Three months into his administration, he seemed energetic and enthusiastic — and eager to project his vision for the nation beyond its borders.

On Thursday, he met with U.S. President Joe Biden in a bid to strengthen the sometimes complicated ties that have ebbed and flowed between the two nations since the Philippines spent four decades as an American colony in the early 20th century.

"There have been bits and pieces where they were not perhaps ideal," Marcos said. "But in the end, that overall trajectory has been to strengthen and strengthen and strengthen our relationship."

In addition to Duterte, Marcos also must draw distinctions between himself and the most iconic figure in the Philippines' public sphere: his late father, whose name he shares. Ferdinand Marcos Sr., hero to some and plundering dictator to others, ruled from the 1960s to the 1980s, including a tumultuous period of martial law and repression. He made the family reputation an indelible part of Filipino history.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 58 of 105

Addressing the family legacy directly is something the son has been loath to do, at least explicitly, though he vehemently rejects use of the term "dictator" to describe his father's rule. To him, the political baggage of his parents is a remnant of the past.

"I did not indulge in any of that political back-and-forth concerning the Marcos family," he said. "All I spoke about was, 'What are we going to do to get into a better place?' And people responded."

Engaging, he said, would have simply been a retread — and an unnecessary one. "It doesn't help. It doesn't change anything," he said. "So what's the point?"

The elder Marcos placed the Philippines under martial law in 1972, a year before his term was to expire. He padlocked Congress and newspaper offices, ordered the arrest of political opponents and activists and ruled by decree. Thousands of Filipinos disappeared under his rule; some have never been accounted for.

When it comes to his predecessor, Marcos treads a nuanced political line as well. Distinguishing himself from Duterte's in-your-face rule can benefit him at home and internationally, but Duterte's popularity helped catapult him into office, and the former president's daughter Sara is Marcos' vice president.

The extrajudicial killings associated with Duterte's yearslong crackdown provoked calls that his administration should be investigated from the outside, and he vowed not to rejoin the International Criminal Court — a precept that Marcos agrees with. After all, Marcos asked, why should a country with a functioning legal system be judged from elsewhere?

"We have a judiciary. It's not perfect," he said. "I do not understand why we need an outside adjudicator to tell us how to investigate, who to investigate, how to go about it."

Marcos cast the coronavirus pandemic as many other leaders have — as a balancing act between keeping people safe and making sure life can push forward.

"We took a very extreme position in the Philippines, and we eventually had the longest lockdown in any country in the world," he said. "That was the choice of the previous government. And now, we are now coming out of it."

In recent days, he has both removed a national mandate to wear masks outdoors and extended a "state of calamity" — something he said he didn't necessarily want to do, but keeping the declaration in place allows more people to continue getting help.

"It's not very encouraging when people look at your country and they see, 'Well, it's under a state of calamity.' That's not good for tourists. It's not good for visitors. It's not good for business," Marcos said.

Encouraging ties with China, particularly given Beijing's aggressive maritime policies, might be a daunting prospect for a nation so closely and historically aligned with the United States. But, Marcos says, it's possible — and necessary.

"It is a very fine line that we have to tread in the Philippines," the president said. "We do not subscribe to the old Cold War 'spheres of influence.' ... So it's really guided by national interest, number one. And second, the maintenance of peace."

Peace comes in many flavors. Last week, Marcos traveled to the southern part of the nation — a predominantly Muslim area of a predominantly Catholic country — to express support for a multiyear effort to help a onetime rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, give up their guns and govern their autonomous region effectively.

While Moro has come into the government fold, smaller militant groups including the violent Abu Sayyaf have continued to fight the government and wage sporadic attacks, especially in impoverished rural regions with weak law enforcement. Marcos dismissed Abu Sayyaf as a group that no longer has a cause other than "banditry."

"I don't believe they are a movement anymore. They are not fighting for anything," Marcos said. "They are just criminals."

Marcos did not specify precisely why the Philippines needed to be reintroduced, though the country's image took a hit from 2016 to 2022 under the Duterte administration.

"The purpose, really, that I have brought to this visit here in New York ... has been to try to reintroduce the Philippines to our American friends, both in the private sector and in the public sector," he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 59 of 105

And after the pandemic truly ends, he said, the nation needs to find a fruitful path and follow it. "We have to position ourselves. We have to be clever about forecasting, being a bit prescient," he said. "We do not want to return to whatever it is we were doing pre-pandemic," Marcos said. "We want to be able to be involved and be a vital part of the new global economy, of the new global political situation."

Cards' Pujols hits 700th home run, 4th player to reach mark

By BETH HARRIS AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — St. Louis Cardinals slugger Albert Pujols hit his 700th home run on Friday night, connecting for his second drive of the game against the Los Angeles Dodgers and becoming the fourth player to reach the milestone in major league history.

With the drive in the final days of his last big league season, the 42-year-old Pujols joined Barry Bonds (762 homers), Hank Aaron (755) and Babe Ruth (714) in one of baseball's most exclusive clubs.

A man wearing a blue Dodgers shirt with Hideo Nomo's No. 16 on the back snagged the 700th homer ball. He was whisked under the stands as he clutched a black glove containing the historic souvenir ball to his chest. Prolonged negotiations went on before the man was escorted out of Dodger Stadium flanked by 10 security personnel and into a waiting SUV.

Showing the pop from his younger, dominant days, the 42-year-old Pujols hit No. 699 in the third inning, then launched No. 700 in the fourth.

A 37-year-old Los Angeles man, Cesar Soriano, snagged No. 699. He turned the ball over to security after being told he could meet Pujols.

The Cardinals routed the NL West champion Dodgers 11-0.

It's been a remarkable and resurgent run for Pujols. This was his 14th home run since the start of August for the NL Central-leading Cardinals, and his 21st of the season.

Fairly recently, many considered him a long shot to reach 700 this season. He went into August batting only .235 with just seven home runs.

But with two long shots on this evening, he made his mark.

Pujols' historic homer was a three-run shot against Dodgers reliever Phil Bickford. The ball landed in the first couple rows of the left-field pavilion, the same location his two-run shot touched down the previous inning off left-hander Andrew Heaney.

He jogged around the bases smiling all the way. After crossing the plate and pointing his fingers skyward, Pujols went over to greet fellow Dominican and former Dodgers star Adrian Beltre. They high-fived through the protective netting.

Then he was off to the Cardinals dugout, getting hugs and congratulations every step of the way.

Pujols received a prolonged standing ovation from the crowd — he finished out last season while playing for the Dodgers. He took a curtain call, raising his cap in acknowledgment.

The crowd of 50,041 chanted "Pujols! Pujols!" They finally sat down after being on their feet in anticipation of seeing history.

His 700th homer gave him a couple of other nice, round numbers, too — he has hit 500 home runs off right-handers and 200 off lefties.

Pujols connected twice on the same night New York Yankees slugger Aaron Judge remained on deck for home run history. He remained at 60 homers, just short of tying Roger Maris' AL mark of 61 in 1961, in a win at Yankee Stadium.

Pujols' two bops gave the Cardinals a 5-0 lead, with all the runs coming courtesy of his big bat.

The Cardinals extended their lead to 8-0 in the fifth on Dylan Carlson's RBI double and Lars Nootbaar's two-run homer. They added two more runs in the seventh on Juan Yenez's solo shot and Nootbaar's RBI single.

Pujols struck out swinging in his first at-bat against Heaney and grounded out to short in the sixth. He was replaced in the eighth by pinch-hitter Alec Burleson, who homered.

José Quintana (6-6) got the victory. He scattered five hits over 6 2/3 innings and struck out six. Heaney

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 60 of 105

(3-3) took the loss.

Pujols snapped a tie with Alex Rodriguez for fourth on the career list when he hit career homer No. 697 against Pittsburgh on Sept. 11.

The three-time NL MVP was batting .189 on July 4. But he started to find his stroke in August, swatting seven homers in one 10-game stretch that helped St. Louis pull away in the division race.

"I know that early in the year ... I obviously wanted better results," Pujols said after he homered in a 1-0 victory over the Chicago Cubs on Aug. 22. "But I felt like I was hitting the ball hard. Sometimes this game is going to take more away from you than the game (is) giving you back.

"So I think at the end of the day you have to be positive and just stay focused and trust your work. That's something that I've done all the time."

Pujols has enjoyed a productive season after returning to St. Louis in March for a \$2.5 million, one-year contract. It's his highest total since he hit 23 homers for the Angels in 2019.

He plans to retire when the season ends.

Pujols also began his career in St. Louis. He was selected by the Cardinals in the 13th round of the 1999 amateur draft and won the 2001 NL Rookie of the Year award.

The Dominican Republic native hit at least .300 with at least 30 homers and 100 RBIs in each of his first 10 seasons. He helped the Cardinals to World Series titles in 2006 and 2011.

He set a career high with 49 homers in 2006 — one of seven seasons with at least 40 homers. He led the majors with 47 homers in 2009 and topped the NL with 42 in 2010.

Pujols left St. Louis in free agency in December 2011, signing a \$240 million, 10-year contract with the Angels. He was waived by the Angels in May 2021, and then joined the Dodgers and hit 12 homers and drove in 38 runs in 85 games.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Dodgers: All-Star RHP Tony Gonsolin (forearm) will throw two innings in a rehab assignment Tuesday for Triple-A Oklahoma City. ... LHP David Price (wrist) will throw to live hitters again in a couple days.

HONORING ALBERT AND YADI

The Dodgers honored Cardinals teammates Pujols and catcher Yadier Molina, both of whom are retiring at season's end.

The players were greeted by a standing ovation when they strode to home plate before the game. Their career highlights were shown on the stadium's big screens.

Both players were presented with white golf bags before Pujols took the mic and thanked his former teammates and fans for treating him well during his lone season in LA last year.

UP NEXT

Cardinals: LHP Jordan Montgomery (8-5, 3.26 ERA) makes his second road start with the team since coming from the Yankees. He tossed a one-hit shutout in his other one against the Chicago Cubs on Aug. 22 in a 1-0 victory.

Dodgers: LHP Clayton Kershaw (9-3, 2.39) makes his 20th start of the season. He has 117 strikeouts in 109 1/3 innings.

Georgia voting equipment breach at center of tangled tale

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The tale of breached voting equipment in one of the country's most important political battleground states involves a bail bondsman, a prominent attorney tied to former President Donald Trump's attempts to overturn the 2020 presidential election and a cast of characters from a rural county that rarely draws notice from outsiders.

How they all came together and what it could mean for the security of voting in the upcoming midterm elections are questions tangled up in a lawsuit and state investigations that have prompted calls to ditch the machines altogether.

Details of the unauthorized access of sensitive voting equipment in Coffee County, Georgia, became public

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 61 of 105

last month when documents and emails revealed the involvement of high-profile Trump supporters. That's also when it caught the attention of an Atlanta-based prosecutor who is leading a separate investigation of Trump's efforts to undo his loss in the state.

Since then, revelations about what happened in the county of 43,000 people have raised questions about whether the Dominion Voting Systems machines used in Georgia have been compromised.

The public disclosure of the breach began with a rambling phone call from an Atlanta-area bail bondsman to the head of an election security advocacy group involved in a long-running lawsuit targeting the state's voting machines.

According to a recording filed in court earlier this year, the bail bondsman said he'd chartered a jet and was with a computer forensics team at the Coffee County elections office when they "imaged every hard drive of every piece of equipment."

That happened on Jan. 7, 2021, a day after the violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and two days after a runoff election in which Democrats swept both of Georgia's U.S. Senate seats.

The trip to Coffee County, about 200 miles south of Atlanta, to copy data and software from elections equipment was directed by attorney Sidney Powell and other Trump allies, according to deposition testimony and documents produced in response to subpoenas.

Later that month, security camera footage shows, two men who have participated in efforts to question the results of the 2020 election in several states spent days going in and out of the Coffee County elections office.

The footage also shows local election and Republican Party officials welcoming the visitors and allowing them access to the election equipment. The video seems to contradict statements some of the officials made about their apparent involvement.

The new information has made Coffee County, where Trump won nearly 70% of the vote two years ago, a focal point of concerns over the security of voting machines. While there is no evidence of widespread problems with voting equipment in 2020, some Trump supporters have spread false information about machines and the election outcome.

Election security experts and activists fear state election officials haven't acted fast enough in the face of what they see as a real threat.

The copying of the software and its availability for download means potential bad actors could build exact copies of the Dominion system to test different types of attacks, said University of California, Berkeley computer scientist Philip Stark, an expert witness for the plaintiffs in the voting machines lawsuit.

"This is like bank robbers having an exact replica of the vault that they're trying to break into," he said.

Stark said the risks could be minimized by using hand-marked paper ballots and rigorous audits. Dominion says its equipment remains secure.

Marilyn Marks, executive director of the Coalition for Good Governance, the group that sued over the state's voting machines, said the state has been slow to investigate. She was on the receiving end of the phone call from the bail bondsman.

The state, she said, has been "repeatedly looking the other way when faced with flashing red lights of serious voting system security problems."

State officials say they're confident the election system is safe. All Coffee County election equipment that wasn't already replaced will be swapped out before early voting begins next month, the secretary of state's office said Friday.

State officials also noted they were deluged by false claims after the 2020 election.

"In retrospect, you can say, well what about this, this and this," said Gabriel Sterling, a top official in the Georgia secretary of state's office. "In real time, no, there was no reason to think that."

In late January 2021, a few weeks after the computer forensics team visited, security video shows a secretary of state's office investigator arriving at the Coffee County elections office. He and the elections supervisor walk into the room that houses the election management system server. Seconds later, Jeff Lenberg, who has been identified by Michigan authorities as being part of an effort to gain access to vot-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 62 of 105

ing machines there, is seen walking out of that room.

Asked whether Lenberg's presence in the room with sensitive election equipment raised concerns for the investigator, secretary of state's office spokesperson Mike Hassinger said the investigator was looking into an unrelated matter and didn't know who Lenberg was.

Security video also showed another man, Doug Logan, at the office in mid-January. Logan founded a company called Cyber Ninjas, which led a discredited review of the 2020 election in Maricopa County, Arizona. In May 2021, Coffee County's new elections supervisor raised concerns with the secretary of state's office after finding Logan's business card by a computer. The election supervisor's concerns were referred to an investigator, but he testified that no one ever contacted him.

Hassinger said the secretary of state's office responds to allegations when they are raised but that "information about unauthorized access to Coffee County's election equipment has been kept hidden" by local officials and others.

Much of what is known was uncovered through documents, security camera video and depositions produced in response to subpoenas in the lawsuit filed by individual voters and the election security advocacy group. The suit alleges Georgia's touchscreen voting machines are not secure and seeks to force the state to use hand-marked paper ballots instead.

The recently produced evidence of a breach wasn't the first sign of problems in Coffee County, which caused headaches for state election officials in the hectic weeks following the 2020 election. It's likely that turmoil helped opened the door for Trump's allies.

In early December 2020, the county elections board declined to certify the results of a machine recount requested by Trump, saying the election system had produced inaccurate results. A video posted online days later showed the former county elections supervisor saying the elections software could be manipulated; as she spoke, the password to the county election management system server was visible on a note stuck to her computer.

At the end of December, Cathy Latham, the Coffee County Republican Party chair who also was a fake elector for Trump, appeared at a state legislative committee hearing and made further claims that the voting machines were unreliable.

Within days of that hearing, Latham said, she was contacted by Scott Hall, the bail bondsman, who had been a Republican observer during an election recount. Latham testified in a deposition that Hall asked her to connect him with the Coffee County elections supervisor (who later was accused of falsifying timesheets and forced to resign).

A few days later, on Jan. 7, Hall met with a computer forensics team from data solutions firm SullivanStrickler at the Coffee County elections office. The team copied the data and software on the election management system server and other voting system components, a company executive said in a deposition. The company said it believed its clients had the necessary permission.

Invoices show the data firm billed Powell \$26,000 for the day's work.

"Everything went smoothly yesterday with the Coffee County collection," the firm's chief operating officer wrote to Powell in an email. "Everyone involved was extremely helpful."

West: More sanctions, isolation if Putin carries out threats

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and LORNE COOK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — How do American leaders and their allies intend to respond if President Vladimir Putin seeks to escalate his way out of a bad situation on Ukraine's battlefields, and makes good on renewed threats of annexing territory or even using nuclear weapons?

At least to start with, by trying to double down on the same tactics that have helped put Russia in a corner in Ukraine, U.S. and European leaders have made clear: more financial penalties and international isolation for Russia, more arms and other backing for Ukraine.

That won't necessarily be easy. It's been tough enough staying the current course of persuading all of dozens of allies to stick with sanctions and isolation for Putin, and persuading more ambivalent countries

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 63 of 105

to join in. Global financial and energy disruptions from Russia's war in Ukraine already promise to make the coming winter a tough one for countries that have depended on Russia for their energy needs.

And there's no sign of U.S. or NATO officials matching Putin's renewed nuclear threats with the same nuclear bluster, which in itself might raise the risks of escalating the conflict to an unimaginable level. Even if Putin should act on his nuclear threat, President Joe Biden and others point, without details, to an ascending scale of carefully calibrated responses, based on how far Russia goes.

To start with, "they'll become more of a pariah in the world than they ever have been," Biden told CBS' "60 Minutes" just ahead of Putin's new wartime measures and renewed nuclear threat.

"What they do will determine what response would occur," Biden said on the nuclear side, adding that the U.S. responses in that case would be "consequential."

"I do not believe the United States would take an escalatory step" in the event of a one-off, limited nuclear detonation by Russia aimed at trying to scare Ukraine and its supporters off, said Rose Gottemoeller, former deputy NATO secretary-general and former U.S. undersecretary of state for arms control. "Certainly, it would not respond with nuclear weapons."

Putin this week pledged to use "all available means" to stave off any challenges as Russia moves to summarily claim more Ukrainian territory despite heavy losses on the battlefield to NATO-armed Ukrainian forces. In case NATO missed the point, another senior Russian political figure specified the next day that included nuclear weapons. Putin also mobilized Russian fighters to throw into the seven-month invasion of Ukraine, and announced votes in parts of Ukraine that the West says are meant to provide political cover for illegally absorbing those regions into Russia.

U.S. and European Union officials say new sanctions are in the works in response to Putin's latest moves. "Russia, its political leadership, and all those involved in organizing these 'referenda' as well as in other violations of international law and international humanitarian law in Ukraine will be held accountable," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell pledged this week, on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

But political declarations are the easy part. It's unclear what type of measures can be agreed upon, as the financial punishments against Russia are also increasingly inflicting pain on other European economies weighed down by high electricity and natural gas prices and spiraling inflation. Hungary has led resistance to sanctions that might hit its supplies from Russia, but it isn't alone in hesitating.

New sanctions may come only after much debate and hand-wringing among the 27 EU member countries in coming weeks, probably only after Russia has held its referendums.

The last round of sanctions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine was announced May 4, but only agreed on four weeks later, as concerns over oil divided member countries. Rather than a new set of sanctions, a "maintenance and alignment" package was sealed in July, mostly to close loopholes on measures already agreed upon.

Pressed by reporters in New York for details about what might be coming, Borrell said the sanctions would target "new areas of the Russian economy, especially — if I can be a little more concrete — the technological ones."

Ursula von der Leyen, who heads the EU's executive branch — the European Commission — which has been responsible for drawing up most of the sanctions, also appeared resolute, but she was hardly more forthcoming.

"We stand ready to impose further economic costs on Russia and on individuals and entities inside and outside of Russia who support (the war), politically or economically. Plus we will propose additional export controls on civilian technology as Russia moves to a full war economy," she told CNN.

Beyond the economic sanctions, the EU since Russia's February invasion of Ukraine has slapped asset freezes and travel bans on more than 1,200 Russians, including Putin, Russia's foreign minister and other senior officials.

Militarily, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said this month that NATO is working with the defense industry to explore ways to boost arms production to better meet Ukraine's needs and replenish the arsenals of allies who have been providing weapons and defense systems.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 64 of 105

"We saw that during the COVID crisis, the industry was able to ramp up production of vaccines and now we need to have, to some extent, the same approach: ramp up quickly production of weapons and ammunition," he told The Associated Press.

The U.S. as a matter of policy maintains ambiguity about how it would respond to any use of nuclear weapons in the conflict. Such a use would return the world to nuclear war for the first time since the U.S. dropped bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, and risk escalation on a scale the world has never seen.

But U.S. officials' public comments on the matter this month are in line with expectations from arms experts that Washington's response would be a graduated one based on the gravity of Russia's nuclear use. A one-off and comparatively limited Russian nuclear use would deepen Russia's isolation internationally, but may not necessarily draw an immediate Western nuclear use in kind.

It's difficult to fathom Putin launching any central strategic nuclear strike at the United States or its NATO allies, which would be "to commit suicide," said Gottemoeller, the former deputy NATO secretary-general.

Gottemoeller describes instead a scenario of Putin carrying out a single demonstration strike over the Black Sea or against a Ukrainian military target, in hopes of spiking pressure on Ukraine's Western-allied government to capitulate.

Internationally, "There would be a very firm response that ... would amount to, again redoubling efforts to help the Ukrainians," and "also in terms of huge condemnation in the international community," she said.

That condemnation would be sure to draw in countries that so far have declined to break with Russia or stop doing business with it, including China, India and countries of the global south, she said.

For Putin, actual nuclear use would give up all the benefits of simply threatening it, and pile on untold risks for Putin after that, said Lawrence Freedman, emeritus professor of war studies at King's College London.

"The Chinese and the Indians and others that have not been marked in their condemnation of Russia ... would have to speak. The last thing they want is for the precedent of nuclear use to be made," Freedman said.

"So I think we can we can scare ourselves quite easily by the by the rhetoric he uses. But I think I think it's best to recognize he does have a purpose, which is working, to stop the West intervening directly," he said. "To start using nuclear weapons against the West, you have to expect" at least the risk of "nuclear weapons coming back in your direction."

Oscar-winning 'Cuckoo's Nest' actor Louise Fletcher dies

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Louise Fletcher, a late-blooming star whose riveting performance as the cruel and calculating Nurse Ratched in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" set a new standard for screen villains and won her an Academy Award, has died at age 88.

Fletcher died in her sleep surrounded by family at her home in Montdurausse, France, her agent David Shaul told The Associated Press on Friday. No cause was given.

After putting her career on hold for years to raise her children, Fletcher was in her early 40s and little known when chosen for the role opposite Jack Nicholson in the 1975 film by director Milos Forman, who had admired her work the year before in director Robert Altman's "Thieves Like Us." At the time, she didn't know that many other prominent stars, including Anne Bancroft, Ellen Burstyn and Angela Lansbury, had turned it down.

"I was the last person cast," she recalled in a 2004 interview. "It wasn't until we were halfway through shooting that I realized the part had been offered to other actresses who didn't want to appear so horrible on the screen."

"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" went on to become the first film since 1934's "It Happened One Night" to win best picture, best director, best actor, best actress and best screenplay.

Clutching her Oscar at the 1976 ceremony, Fletcher told the audience, "It looks as though you all hated me."

She then addressed her deaf parents in Birmingham, Alabama, talking and using sign language: "I want

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 65 of 105

to thank you for teaching me to have a dream. You are seeing my dream come true."

A moment of silence was followed by thunderous applause.

Later that night, Forman made the wry comment to Fletcher and her co-star, Jack Nicholson: "Now we all will make tremendous flops."

In the short run, at least, he was right.

Forman next directed "Hair," the movie version of the hit Broadway musical that failed to capture the appeal of the stage version. Nicholson directed and starred in "Goin' South," generally regarded as one of his worst films. Fletcher signed on for "Exorcist II: The Heretic," a misconceived sequel to the landmark original.

Far more than her male peers, Fletcher was hampered by her age in finding major roles in Hollywood. Still, she worked continuously for most of the rest of her life. Her post-"Cuckoo's Nest" films included "Mama Dracula," "Dead Kids" and "The Boy Who Could Fly."

She was nominated for Emmys for her guest roles on the TV series "Joan of Arcadia" and "Picket Fences," and had a recurring role as Bajoran religious leader Kai Winn Adami in "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine." She played the mother of musical duo Carpenters in 1989's "The Karen Carpenter Story."

Fletcher's career was also hampered by her height. At 5-feet-10, she would often be dismissed from an audition immediately because she was taller than her leading man.

Fletcher had moved to Los Angeles to launch her acting career soon after graduating from North Carolina State University.

Working as a doctor's receptionist by day and studying at night with noted actor and teacher Jeff Corey, she began getting one-day jobs on such TV series as "Wagon Train," "77 Sunset Strip" and "The Untouchables."

Fletcher married producer Jerry Bick in the early 1960s and gave birth to two sons in quick succession. She decided to put her career on hold to be a stay-at-home mother and didn't work for 11 years.

"I made the choice to stop working, but I didn't see it as a choice," she said in the 2004 interview. "I felt compelled to stay at home."

She divorced Bick in 1977 and he died in 2004.

In "Cuckoo's Nest," based on the novel Ken Kesey wrote while taking part in an experimental LSD program, Nicholson's character, R.P. McMurphy, is a swaggering, small-time criminal who feigns insanity to get transferred from prison to a mental institution where he won't have to work so hard.

Once institutionalized, McMurphy discovers his mental ward is run by Fletcher's cold, imposing Nurse Mildred Ratched, who keeps her patients tightly under her thumb. As the two clash, McMurphy all but takes over the ward with his bravado, leading to stiff punishment from Ratched and the institution, where she restores order.

The character was so memorable she would become the basis for a Netflix series, "Ratched," 45 years later.

Estelle Louise Fletcher was born the second of four children on July 22, 1934, in Birmingham. Her mother was born deaf and her father was a traveling Episcopal minister who lost his hearing when struck by lightning at age 4.

"It was like having parents who are immigrants who don't speak your language," she said in 1982.

The Fletcher children were helped by their aunt, with whom they lived in Bryant, Texas, for a year. She taught them reading, writing and speaking, as well as how to sing and dance.

It was those latter studies that convinced Fletcher she wanted to act. She was further inspired, she once said, when she saw the movie "Lady in the Dark" with Ginger Rogers.

That and other films, Fletcher said, taught her "your dream could become real life if you wanted it bad enough."

"I knew from the movies," she would say, "that I wouldn't have to stay in Birmingham and be like everyone else."

Fletcher's death was first reported by Deadline.

She is survived by her two sons, John and Andrew Bick.

World opinion shifts against Russia as Ukraine worries grow

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The tide of international opinion appears to be decisively shifting against Russia, as a number of non-aligned countries are joining the United States and its allies in condemning Moscow's war in Ukraine and its threats to the principles of the international rules-based order.

Western officials have repeatedly said that Russia has become isolated since invading Ukraine in February. Until recently, though, that was largely wishful thinking. But on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, much of the international community spoke out against the conflict in a rare display of unity at the often fractured United Nations.

The tide had already appeared to be turning against Russian President Vladimir Putin even before Thursday's U.N. speeches. Chinese and Indian leaders had been critical of the war at a high-level summit last week in Uzbekistan. And then the U.N. General Assembly disregarded Russia's objections and voted overwhelmingly to allow Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to be the only leader to address the body remotely, instead of requiring him to appear in person.

That shift against Russia accelerated after Putin on Wednesday announced the mobilization of some additional 300,000 troops to Ukraine, signaling the unlikelihood of a quick end to the war. Putin also suggested that nuclear weapons may be an option. That followed an announcement of Russia's intention to hold referendums in several occupied Ukrainian regions on whether they will become part of Russia.

Those announcements came at the very moment that the General Assembly, considered the premier event in the global diplomatic calendar, was taking place in New York.

Numerous world leaders used their speeches on Tuesday and Wednesday to denounce Russia's war. That trend continued Thursday both in the assembly hall and at the usually deeply divided U.N. Security Council, where, one-by-one, virtually all of the 15 council members served up harsh criticism of Russia — a council member -- for aggravating several already severe global crises and imperiling the foundations of the world body.

The apparent shift in opinion offers some hope to Ukraine and its Western allies that increasing isolation will add pressure on Putin to negotiate a peace. But few are unduly optimistic. Putin has staked his legacy on the Ukraine war and few expect him to back down. And, Russia is hardly isolated. Many of its allies depend on it for energy, food and military assistance and are likely to stand by Putin regardless of what happens in Ukraine.

Still, it was striking to hear Russia's nominal friends like China and India, following up on last week's remarks, speak of grave concerns they have about the conflict and its impact on global food and energy shortages as well as threats to the concepts of sovereignty and territorial integrity that are enshrined in the U.N. Charter.

Brazil registered similar concerns. Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa make up the so-called BRICS bloc of countries, which has often shunned or outright opposed Western initiatives and views on international relations.

Only one country, Belarus, a non-council member and Russia ally that was invited to participate, spoke in support of Russia, but also called for a quick end to the fighting, which it called a "tragedy."

"We hear a lot about the divisions among countries at the United Nations," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. "But recently, what's striking is the remarkable unity among member states when it comes to Russia's war on Ukraine. Leaders from countries developing and developed, big and small, North and South have spoken in the General Assembly about the consequences of the war and the need to end it."

"Even a number of nations that maintain close ties with Moscow have said publicly that they have serious questions and concerns about President Putin's ongoing invasion," Blinken said.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was careful not to condemn the war but said that China's firm stance is that "the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be respected. The purposes of the principles of the U.N. Charter should be observed."

Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said "the trajectory of the Ukraine conflict is a matter of a

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 67 of 105

profound concern for the international community." He called for accountability for atrocities and abuses committed in Ukraine. "If egregious attacks committed in broad daylight are left unpunished, this council must reflect on the signals we are sending on impunity. There must be consistency if we are to ensure credibility," he said.

And Brazilian Foreign Minister Carlos Alberto Franca said immediate efforts to end the war are critical. "The continuation of the hostilities endangers the lives of innocent civilians and jeopardizes the food and energy security of millions of families in other regions, especially in developing countries," he said. "The risks of escalation arising for the current dynamics of the conflict are simply too great, and its consequences for the world order unpredictable."

Foreign ministers and top officials from Albania, Britain, France, Ireland, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico and Norway delivered similar rebukes.

"Russia's actions are blatant violation of the Charter of the United Nations," said Albanian Foreign Minister Olta Xhaka. "We all tried to prevent this conflict. We could not, but we must not fail to hold Russia accountable."

Mexican Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard called the invasion a "flagrant breach of international law" and Irish foreign minister Simon Coveney said: "If we fail to hold Russia accountable we send a message to large countries that they can prey on their neighbors with impunity."

Unsurprisingly, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was unapologetic and defensive at the same time and specifically targeted Zelenskyy. Citing a phrase often attributed to President Franklin Roosevelt, Lavrov called Zelenskyy "a bastard," but said Western leaders regarded him as "our bastard."

He repeated a long list of Russia's complaints about Ukraine and accused Western countries of using Ukraine for anti-Russia activities and policies.

"Everything I've said today simply confirms that the decision to conduct the special military operation was inevitable," Lavrov said, following Russian practice of not calling the invasion a war.

Russia has denied being isolated and the foreign ministry used social media to publicize a number of apparently cordial meetings that Lavrov has held with foreign minister colleagues at the UN in recent days.

Still, Blinken and his colleagues from other NATO nations seized on what they believe to be growing opposition to and impatience with Putin.

And, several speakers, including Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, pointed out that Lavrov skipped the meeting except for his speaking slot.

"I notice that Russian diplomats flee almost as quickly as Russian soldiers," Kuleba said, referring to Lavrov's hasty exit along with recent Russian troop retreats in Ukraine.

Fiona bears down on northeast Canada as big, powerful storm

By ROB GILLIES and DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

CAGUAS, Puerto Rico (AP) — Hurricane Fiona transformed into a post-tropical cyclone late Friday, but meteorologists warned it could still bring hurricane-strength wind, heavy rain and big waves to the Atlantic Canada region and had the potential to be one of the most severe storms in the country's history.

Fiona, which started the day as Category 4 storm but weakened to Category 2 strength late Friday, was forecast to make landfall in Nova Scotia early Saturday.

The Canadian Hurricane Centre issued a hurricane watch over extensive coastal expanses of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Fiona should reach the area as a "large and powerful post-tropical cyclone with hurricane-force winds."

"This is definitely going to be one of, if not the most powerful, tropical cyclones to affect our part of the country," said Ian Hubbard, meteorologist for the Canadian Hurricane Centre in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. "It's going to be definitely as severe and as bad as any I've seen."

Fiona was a Category 4 hurricane when it pounded Bermuda with heavy rains and winds earlier Friday as it swept by the island on a route heading for northeastern Canada. Authorities in Bermuda opened shelters and closed schools and offices ahead of Fiona. Michael Weeks, the national security minister, said

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 68 of 105

there had been no reports of major damage.

The U.S. center said Fiona had maximum sustained winds of 105 mph (165 kph) late Friday. It was centered about 140 miles (220 kilometers) southeast of Halifax, Nova Scotia, heading north at 46 mph (74 kph).

Hurricane-force winds extended outward up to 185 miles (295 kilometers) from the center and tropical storm-force winds extended outward up to 345 miles (555 kilometers).

Hubbard said the storm was weakening as it moved over cooler water and he felt it highly unlikely it would reach land with hurricane strength. Hurricanes in Canada are somewhat rare, in part because once the storms reach colder waters, they lose their main source of energy and become extratropical. But those cyclones still can have hurricane-strength winds, though with a cold instead of a warm core and no visible eye. Their shape can be different, too. They lose their symmetric form and can more resemble a comma.

Bob Robichaud, Warning Preparedness Meteorologist for the Canadian Hurricane Centre, said the center of the storm was expected to arrive in Nova Scotia on Saturday morning, but its winds and rains would arrive late Friday.

"It's going to be a bad one," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said. "We of course hope there won't be much needed, but we feel there probably will be. And we will be there for that. In the meantime we encourage everyone to stay safe and to listen to the instructions of local authorities and hang in there for the next 24 hours."

Officials in Prince Edward Island sent an emergency alert warning of severe flooding along the northern shore of the province. "Immediate efforts should be taken to protect belongings. Avoid shorelines, waves are extremely dangerous. Residents in those regions should be prepared to move out if needed," the alert read.

Authorities in Nova Scotia sent an emergency alert to phones warning of Fiona's arrival and urging people to stay inside, avoid the shore, charge devices and have enough supplies for at least 72 hours. Officials warned of prolonged power outages, wind damage to trees and structures and coastal flooding and possible road washouts.

A hurricane warning was in effect for Nova Scotia from Hubbards to Brule; Prince Edward Island; Isle-de-la-Madeleine; and Newfoundland from Parson's Pond to Francois.

Fiona so far has been blamed for at least five deaths — two in Puerto Rico, two in the Dominican Republic and one in the French island of Guadeloupe.

People across Atlantic Canada were stocking up on last-minute essentials and storm-proofing their properties Friday ahead of the arrival.

At Samsons Enterprises boatyard in the small Acadian community of Petit-de-Grat on Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island, Jordan David was helping his friend Kyle Boudreau tie down Boudreau's lobster boat "Bad Influence" in hopes it wouldn't be lifted and broken by winds.

"All we can do is hope for the best and prepare as best we can. There's something coming, and just how bad is yet to be determined," said David, wearing his outdoor waterproof gear.

Kyle Boudreau said he was worried. "This is our livelihood. Our boats get smashed, our traps get smashed ... it's stuff you don't have to start your season next year," he said.

Aidan Sampson said he had been working 11-hour days in his father-in-law's boatyard for the past week, lifting fishing vessels out of the water.

Meanwhile, the National Hurricane Center said newly formed Tropical Storm Ian in the Caribbean was expected to keep strengthening and hit Cuba early Tuesday as a hurricane and then hit southern Florida early Wednesday.

It was centered about 385 miles (625 kilometers) southeast of Kingston, Jamaica late Friday. It had maximum sustained winds of 40 mph (65 kph) and was moving west-northwest at 12 mph (19 kph). A hurricane watch was issued for the Cayman Islands.

Before reaching Bermuda, Fiona caused severe flooding and devastation in Puerto Rico, leading U.S. President Joe Biden to say Thursday that the full force of the federal government is ready to help the U.S. territory recover.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 69 of 105

Gov. Pedro Pierluisi of Puerto Rico activated the National Guard to help distribute diesel fuel to hospitals and supermarkets. The force is also supplying generators used to operate potable water plants and telecommunications towers. Hundreds of people remained isolated by blocked roads.

Arizona judge: State can enforce near-total abortion ban

By BOB CHRISTIE Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Arizona can enforce a near-total ban on abortions that has been blocked for nearly 50 years, a judge ruled Friday, meaning clinics statewide will have to stop providing the procedures to avoid the filing of criminal charges against doctors and other medical workers.

The judge lifted a decades-old injunction that blocked enforcement of the law on the books since before Arizona became a state. The only exemption to the ban is if the woman's life is in jeopardy.

The ruling means the state's abortions clinics will have to shut down and anyone seeking an abortion will have to go out of state. The ruling takes effect immediately, although an appeal is possible. Planned Parenthood and two other large providers said they were halting abortions.

Abortion providers have been on a roller coaster since the U.S. Supreme Court in June overturned the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade decision guaranteeing women a constitutional right to an abortion. At first providers shut down operations, then re-opened, and now have to close again.

Planned Parenthood had urged the judge not to allow enforcement, and its president declared that the ruling "takes Arizonans back to living under an archaic, 150-year-old law."

"This decision is out of step with the will of Arizonans and will cruelly force pregnant people to leave their communities to access abortion," said Alexis McGill Johnson, Planned Parenthood Federation of America's president and CEO, said in a statement.

Republican Attorney General Mark Brnovich, who had urged the judge to lift the injunction so the ban could be enforced, cheered.

"We applaud the court for upholding the will of the Legislature and providing clarity and uniformity on this important issue," Brnovich said in a statement. "I have and will continue to protect the most vulnerable Arizonans."

The ruling comes amid an election season in which Democrats have seized on abortion rights as a potent issue. Sen. Mark Kelly, under a challenge from Republican Blake Masters, said it "will have a devastating impact on the freedom Arizona women have had for decades" to choose an abortion. Democrat Katie Hobbs, who is running for governor, called it the product of a decadeslong attack on reproductive freedom by Republicans that can only be fended off by voters in November.

Masters and Kari Lake, the Republican running against Hobbs, both back abortion restrictions. Their campaigns had no immediate comment.

Pima County Superior Court Judge Kellie Johnson ruled more than a month after hearing arguments on Brnovich's request to lift the injunction.

The near-total abortion ban was enacted decades before Arizona secured statehood in 1912. Prosecutions were halted after the injunction was handed down following the Roe decision. Even so, the Legislature reenacted the law in 1977.

Assistant Attorney General Beau Roysden told Johnson at an Aug. 19 hearing that since Roe has been overruled, the sole reason for the injunction blocking the old law is gone and she should allow it to be enforced. Under that law, anyone convicted of performing a surgical abortion or providing drugs for a medication abortion could face two to five years in prison.

An attorney for Planned Parenthood and its Arizona affiliate argued that allowing the pre-statehood ban to be enforced would render more recent laws regulating abortion meaningless. Instead, she urged the judge to let licensed doctors perform abortions and let the old ban only apply to unlicensed practitioners.

The judge sided with Brnovich, saying that because the injunction was issued in 1973 only because of the Roe decision, it must be lifted in its entirety.

"The Court finds an attempt to reconcile fifty years of legislative activity procedurally improper in the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 70 of 105

context of the motion and record before it," Johnson wrote. "While there may be legal questions the parties seek to resolve regarding Arizona statutes on abortion, those questions are not for this Court to decide here."

In overturning Roe on June 24, the high court said states can regulate abortion as they wish.

A physician who runs a clinic providing abortions said she was dismayed but not surprised by the decision. "It kind of goes with what I've been saying for a while now — it is the intent of the people who run this state that abortion be illegal here," Dr. DeShawn Taylor said. "Of course we want to hold onto hope in the back of our minds, but in the front of my mind I have been preparing the entire time for the total ban."

Republicans control the Legislature, and GOP Gov. Doug Ducey is an abortion opponent who has signed every abortion law that reached his desk for the past eight years.

Johnson, the judge, said Planned Parenthood was free to file a new challenge. But with Arizona's tough abortion laws and all seven Supreme Court justices appointed by Republicans, the chances of success appear slim.

What's allowed in each state has shifted as legislatures and courts have acted since Roe was overturned. Before Friday's ruling, bans on abortion at any point in pregnancy were in place in 12 Republican-led states.

In another state, Wisconsin, clinics have stopped providing abortions amid litigation over whether an 1849 ban is in effect. Georgia bans abortions once fetal cardiac activity can be detected. Florida and Utah have bans that kick in after 15 and 18 weeks gestation, respectively.

The ruling came a day before a new Arizona law banning abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy takes effect. Signed by Ducey in March, the law was enacted in hopes that the Supreme Court would pare back limits on abortion regulations. Instead, it overturned Roe.

Ducey has argued that the new law he signed takes precedence over the pre-statehood law, but he did not send his attorneys to argue that before Johnson.

The old law was first enacted among a set of laws known as the "Howell Code" adopted by 1st Arizona Territorial Legislature in 1864. Arizona clinics have been performing about 13,000 abortions a year.

Roger Federer retires after teaming with Nadal in last match

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

LONDON (AP) — This day, this match, had to come, of course, for Roger Federer, and for tennis, just as it inevitably must for every athlete in every sport.

Federer bid adieu Friday night with one last contest before he heads into retirement at age 41 after a superlative career that spanned nearly a quarter-century and included 20 Grand Slam titles and a statesman's role. He wrapped up his days as a professional player with a loss in doubles alongside his longtime rival Rafael Nadal for Team Europe in the Laver Cup against Frances Tiafoe and Jack Sock of Team World.

The truth is that the victors, the statistics and the score (OK, for the record it was 4-6, 7-6 (2), 11-9) did not matter, and were all so entirely beside the point. The occasion was, after all, about the farewell itself. Or, better, the farewells, plural: Federer's to tennis, to the fans, to his competitors and colleagues. And, naturally, each of those entities' farewells to Federer.

"It's been a perfect journey," Federer said. "I would do it all over again."

When the match and, with it, his time in professional tennis ended, Federer hugged Nadal, then Tiafoe and Sock. And then Federer began crying. There were plenty of tears to go around; Nadal wiped his own away, too.

"When Roger leaves the tour, an important part of my life is leaving, too," said Nadal, 36, who used the words "sad" and "unforgettable" to describe the occasion.

As cascades of clapping and yells of affection came from the stands, Federer put his hands on his hips, his chest heaving. Then he mouthed, "Thank you," while applauding right back toward the spectators who had chanted, "Let's go, Roger! Let's go!" during the concluding moments of a match that lasted more than two hours and ended at about 12:30 a.m.

His wife, Mirka, their four children — twin girls and twin boys — and Federer's parents joined him on the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 71 of 105

court afterward for embraces and, yes, more bawling. Members of both teams joined together to hoist Federer up in the air.

"It's been a wonderful day. I told the guys I'm happy; I'm not sad," Federer said. "I enjoyed tying my shoes one more time. Everything was the last time."

The Swiss star announced last week that the three-day team event, which was founded by his management company, would be his final event before retirement, then made clear the doubles outing would be the last match. His surgically repaired right knee — the last of three operations came shortly after a loss in the Wimbledon quarterfinals in July 2021, which will go down as his official exit in singles — is in no shape to allow him to continue.

"For me, just personally, (it was) sad in the first moment, when I came to the conclusion it's the best decision," Federer said in an interview with The Associated Press this week about his emotions when realizing it was time to go. "I kind of held it in at first, then fought it off. But I could feel the pain."

He had said he wanted this to feel more like a party than a funeral, and the crowd obliged, rising for a loud and lengthy standing ovation when Federer and Nadal — each wearing a white bandanna, blue shirt and white shorts — emerged together from a tunnel leading out to the black court for the last match on Day 1 at the O2 Arena. They remained on their feet for nearly 10 minutes, through the pre-match warmup, holding aloft phone cameras to capture the moment.

They came ready to roar for him, some with Swiss flags, some with homemade signs ("Idol Forever" read one), and they made themselves heard with a wall of sound when Federer delivered a forehand volley winner on the match's second point. Similar reactions arrived merely at the chair umpire's announcement before the third game of "Roger Federer to serve," and again when he closed that game with a 117 mph service winner.

"Obviously had 99.9% of the crowd against us. But it was super fun to just be a part of that match. I think we are going to be forever grateful to be a part of the GOAT's final match," Sock said, using the acronym for "Greatest of All-Time."

Doubles requires far less movement and court coverage, of course, so the stress on Federer's knee was limited Friday.

"Honestly," he said, acknowledging that leading into the match there were the sorts of nerves he'd get before a Grand Slam final, "I was so surprised how well I was able to play tonight."

He showed touches of his old flair, to be sure, and of rust, as to be expected.

There were a couple of early forehands that sailed several feet too long. There also was a forehand that slid right between Sock and Tiafoe and seemed too good to be true — and, it turned out, was: The ball traveled through a gap below the net tape and so the point was taken away from Federer and Nadal.

Although this match amounted to, essentially, a glorified exhibition, all four doubles participants played as if they wanted to win. That was clear when Sock, a three-time major champion in doubles who is 29, leaped and screamed after one particularly terrific volley or when Tiafoe, 24, sent a couple of shots right at Federer and Nadal.

There were moments of levity.

Federer and Nadal were able to laugh after a bit of confusion over which should go for a ball on a point they lost. After Nadal somehow flicked one back-to-the-net shot around the post, only for it to land barely wide, Tiafoe, a semifinalist at the U.S. Open, crossed over to extend a hand with congratulations for the effort.

In the first set, the older duo couldn't quite hear each other between points, so Federer trotted from the net back to the baseline to consult with Nadal, then pointed to his ear to signal what the issue was.

Before Federer began winning Grand Slam titles in 2003, the men's mark for most major tennis championships was 14 by Pete Sampras. Federer blew past that, accumulating eight at Wimbledon, six at the Australian Open, five at the U.S. Open and one at the French Open, setting a new standard that Nadal, now with 22, and Novak Djokovic, with 21, equaled, then surpassed, as part of a golden era for the sport.

Surely, there are those who would have found it particularly apt to see Federer finish across the net from Nadal, often an on-court nemesis but eventually an off-court friend. Maybe it could have taken place

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 72 of 105

about 15 miles away at Centre Court of the All England Club, say, or in Court Philippe Chatrier at Roland Garros, or Rod Laver Arena at Melbourne Park, or even Arthur Ashe Stadium, the centerpiece of the U.S. Open, the lone Grand Slam tournament at which they never faced off, somehow.

Perhaps they could have provided everyone with one final installment of a head-to-head matchup as memorable as any in the long history of their sport — or, indeed, any other.

Roger vs. Rafa — just one name apiece required — belongs up there with McEnroe vs. Borg (as it happens, the two Laver Cup team captains, John and Bjorn), Evert vs. Navratilova, Sampras vs. Agassi, Ali vs. Frazier, Magic vs. Bird, Brady vs. Manning, and so on.

Over the years, Federer and Nadal showed off individual greatness and compelling contrasts across their 40 matches, 14 at Grand Slam tournaments, nine in major finals: righty vs. lefty, attacker vs. grinder, seeming effortless vs. relentless intensity.

And yet, there was an unmistakable element of poetry with these two men who challenged each other and elevated each other performing as partners, slapping palms and sharing smiles.

This goodbye follows that of Serena Williams, the owner of 23 major singles championships, at the U.S. Open three weeks ago after a third-round loss. It leaves questions about the future of a game he and she dominated, and transcended, for decades.

One key difference: Each time Williams took the court in New York, the looming question was how long her stay would endure — a “win or this is it” prospect.

Friday WAS it for Federer, no matter the result.

“All the players will miss him,” said Casper Ruud, who beat Sock in singles 6-4, 5-7, 10-7.

The day’s other results, which left Team Europe and Team World tied at 2-2: Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated Diego Schwartzman 6-2, 6-1 in a match interrupted briefly when an environmental protester lit a portion of the court and his own arm on fire, and Alex de Minaur got past Andy Murray 5-7, 6-3, 10-7.

Due to begin playing shortly after the end of Murray’s loss, Federer and Nadal first provided him with some coaching tips, then watched part of that one on TV together in a room at the arena, waiting for their turn. When Federer and Nadal were in action, it was Djokovic’s turn to suggest strategy.

The last hurrah came after a total of 103 career singles trophies and 1,251 wins in singles matches for Federer, both second only to Jimmy Connors in the Open era, which began in 1968.

At the height of his powers, Federer appeared in a record 10 consecutive Grand Slam finals, winning eight, from 2005-07. Extend that to 2010, and he reached 18 of 19 major finals.

More than those numbers, folks will remember the powerful forehand, the one-handed backhand, the flawless footwork, the spectacularly effective serve and eagerness to get to the net, the willingness to reinvent aspects of his game and — the part of which he’s proudest — the unusual longevity. Beyond the elegance and effectiveness while wielding a racket, Federer’s persona made him an ambassador for tennis, someone whose immense popularity helped attract fans.

“This is not the end-end, you know. Life goes on. I’m healthy, I’m happy, everything’s great,” Federer said, “and this is just a moment in time.”

Ohio Republican stays in campaign amid scrutiny of service

By BRIAN SLODYSKO, JOHN SEEWER and JAMES LAPORTA Associated Press

HOLLAND, Ohio (AP) — Republican J.R. Majewski insisted Friday that he would stay in the race for a competitive northwest Ohio congressional seat after The Associated Press reported earlier this week that he misrepresented key elements of his Air Force service.

“I flew into combat zones often, specifically in Afghanistan, and I served my country proud,” Majewski said at a news conference.

The comments came amid growing fallout for Majewski, who repeatedly said he deployed to Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks, but instead served a six-month stint loading and unloading planes while based in Qatar, according to records obtained by the AP through a public records request.

The House Republican campaign arm on Thursday cancelled nearly \$1 million in advertising that it had

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 73 of 105

planned to spend on Majewski's behalf, a sign that the GOP was effectively giving up hope of unseating longtime Democratic Rep. Marcy Kaptur in a district that was recently redrawn to favor Republicans. Meanwhile, advocates for veterans questioned why Majewski has declined to offer proof, or even describe forays he made into Afghanistan.

Throughout his campaign, Majewski has repeatedly said he was a combat veteran who served a tour of duty under "tough" circumstances in Afghanistan, where by his account he once went over 40 days without a shower due to a lack of running water.

His latest remarks amounted to a far less robust description of what he says he did in the country. Majewski previously said he was deployed to the country, a term which refers to orders assigning service-members to a specific base or location.

On Friday he said his service involved flying in and out of Afghanistan from Qatar, but declined to offer additional details or proof because he said it was "classified."

While based in Qatar, Majewski would land at other air bases to transfer military passengers, medics and supplies, his campaign previously said. The campaign did not answer repeated and direct questions from the AP before the story was published Wednesday about whether he was ever in Afghanistan.

They also gave no indication that he couldn't discuss his service because it was "classified," as Majewski said.

"I was in multiple bases in Afghanistan and the time frame is clear, in 2002," Majewski said Friday. "We flew in and out of the area of responsibility multiple times. It's almost impossible for me to tell you where I was and on what day. That's why my orders are listed as a classified location."

Experts contacted by the AP say it is possible that Majewski may have entered the country. They also say Majewski is well positioned to prove it, though Majewski's campaign declined to do so Friday.

"It was hardly a secret that we were operating in Afghanistan," said Don Christensen, a retired colonel and former military judge who once served as the Air Force's chief prosecutor. "It would be pretty easy for him to find a supervisor or coworker that could verify if he was actually there. His (enlisted performance report) would have been signed by his supervisor most likely. That person would know if this was true."

Scott Taylor, a former Navy SEAL sniper and Republican who represented Virginia in Congress, said he doesn't understand why Majewski's campaign refused to explain whether or not he ever went to Afghanistan earlier this week.

"Is it possible he went on some night flight to Afghanistan to drop off supplies? Yes it is possible," said Taylor, who was injured in a combat operation in Ramadi, Iraq, and had to be evacuated. "But again, he should have answered those questions right away."

The experts said the discussion about whether he did or did not enter Afghanistan also obscures the broader picture: Majewski for months has presented himself as a combat veteran who deployed to Afghanistan, descriptors that indicate he came under hostile fire while stationed in the country.

The term "combat veteran" can evoke images of soldiers storming a beachhead or finding refuge during a firefight. But under the laws and regulations of the U.S. government, facing live fire has little to do with someone earning the title.

During the Persian Gulf War, then-President George H.W. Bush designated, for the first time, countries used as combat support areas as combat zones despite the low risk of American service members ever facing hostilities. That helped veterans receive a favorable tax status. Qatar, which is now home to the largest U.S. air base in the Middle East, was among the countries that received the designation under Bush's executive order — a status that remains in effect today.

Majewski's campaign previously said he calls himself a combat veteran because the place he operated out of — Qatar — is recognized as a combat zone. His military records state he has not received a combat medal.

"Everybody plays a role. But you have to be proud of what your contribution was and not try to step on someone else's," said Taylor, the former congressman and Navy SEAL. "Barring him giving some evidence and filing a petition to get a combat ribbon, he's not a combat veteran."

Majewski's campaign has released several documents on social media that they say either back up his

claims or refute parts of the AP's story. None of them address whether or not he was in Afghanistan.

One document from February 2003, when he was still enlisted in the Air Force, indicated Majewski was eligible to reenlist. However, the AP reported that when Majewski was discharged several months later, his paperwork indicated he was "considered but not selected for reenlistment."

He also claimed that he provided the AP with a picture that shows him in Afghanistan. The picture, which is also on his campaign website, shows a group in fatigues who are inside what appears to be a shelter, but does not include any indicators of where it was taken.

Amended autopsy: Black man died due to sedative, restraint

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press
DENVER (AP) —

A Black man died after a police encounter in a Denver suburb in 2019 because he was injected with a powerful sedative after being forcibly restrained, according to an amended autopsy report publicly released Friday.

Despite the finding, the death of Elijah McClain, a 23-year-old massage therapist, was still listed as undetermined, not a homicide, the report shows. McClain was put in a neck hold and injected with ketamine after being stopped by police in Aurora for "being suspicious." He was unarmed.

The original autopsy report that was written soon after his death in August 2019 did not reach a conclusion about how he died or what type of death it was, such as if it was natural, accidental or a homicide. That was a major reason why prosecutors initially decided not to pursue charges.

But a state grand jury last year indicted three officers and two paramedics on manslaughter and reckless homicide charges in McClain's death after the case drew renewed attention following the killing of George Floyd in 2020. It became a rallying cry during the national reckoning over racism and police brutality.

The five accused have not yet entered pleas and their lawyers have not commented publicly on the charges.

In the updated report, completed in July 2021, Dr. Stephen Cina, a pathologist, concluded that the ketamine dosage given to McClain, which was higher than recommended for someone his size, "was too much for this individual and it resulted in an overdose, even though his blood ketamine level was consistent with a 'therapeutic' blood concentration."

He said he could not rule out that changes in McClain's blood chemistry, like an increase in lactic acid, due to his exertion while being restrained by police contributed to his death but concluded there was no evidence that injuries inflicted by police caused his death.

"I believe that Mr. McClain would most likely be alive but for the administration of ketamine," said Cina, who noted that body camera footage shows McClain becoming "extremely sedated" within a few minutes of being given the drug.

Cina acknowledged that other reasonable pathologists with different experience and training may have labeled such a death, while in police custody, as a homicide or accident, but that he believes the appropriate classification is undetermined.

Qusair Mohamedbhai, attorney for McClain's mother, Sheneen McClain, declined a request for comment.

Dr. Carl Wigren, a forensic pathologist in Washington state, questioned the report's focus on ketamine, saying all the available evidence — including a highly critical independent review of McClain's death commissioned by Aurora last year — point to McClain dying as a result of compressional asphyxia, a type of suffocation, from officers putting pressure on his body while restraining him. He was struck by one passage in the city's review citing the ambulance company's report that its crew found McClain lying on the ground on his stomach, his arms handcuffed behind his back, his torso and legs held down, with at least three officers on top of him.

That scene was not captured on body camera footage, the report said, but much of what happened between police was not because the officers' cameras came off soon after McClain was approached. The cameras did continue to record where they fell and captured people talking.

Just because McClain, who said he couldn't breathe, could be heard making some statements on the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 75 of 105

footage, does not mean he was able to fully breathe, Wigren said. Ketamine, which slows breathing, could have just exacerbated McClain's condition, but Wigren does not think it caused his death.

However, another pathologist, Dr. Deborah G. Johnson of Colorado, said McClain's quick reaction to ketamine suggests that it was a cause of McClain's death, but she said its use cannot be separated from the impact that the police restraint may have had. McClain may have had trouble breathing because of the restraint and having less oxygen in your system would make the sedative take effect more quickly, she said.

Both thought the death could have been labeled as a homicide — a death caused by the actions of other people — which they pointed out is a separate judgment from deciding whether someone should be prosecuted with a crime for causing it.

McClain got an overdose of ketamine, Johnson said, noting that the paramedics were working at night when it is hard to judge someone's weight.

"Was that a mistake to send someone to prison for? I don't think so," she said.

The updated autopsy was released Friday under a court order in a lawsuit brought by Colorado Public Radio, joined by other media organizations including The Associated Press. Colorado Public Radio sued the coroner to release the report after learning it had been updated, arguing that it should be made available under the state's public records law.

Coroner Monica Broncucia-Jordan said she could not release it because it contained confidential grand jury information and that releasing it would violate the oath she made not to share it when she obtained it last year.

But Adams County District Judge Kyle Seedorf ordered the coroner to release the updated report by Friday, and a Denver judge who oversees state grand jury proceedings, Christopher Baumann, ruled Thursday that grand jury information did not have to be redacted from the updated report.

Cina noted that the report was updated based on extensive body camera footage, witness statements and records that he did not have at the time of the original autopsy report, which were not made available to the coroner's office at all or in their entirety before. Last year, Cina and Broncucia-Jordan received some material that was made available to the grand jury last year, according to court documents, but they did not say what exactly that material was.

McClain's death fueled renewed scrutiny about the use of the ketamine and led Colorado's health department to issue a new rule limiting when emergency workers can use it.

Last year, the city of Aurora agreed to pay \$15 million to settle a lawsuit brought by McClain's parents. The lawsuit alleged the force officers used against McClain and his struggle to survive it dramatically increased the amount of lactic acid in his system, leading to his death, possibly along with the large dose of ketamine he was given.

The outside investigation commissioned by the city faulted the police probe into McClain's arrest for not pressing for answers about how officers treated him. It found there was no evidence justifying officers' decision to stop McClain, who had been reported as suspicious because he was wearing a ski mask as he walked down the street waving his hands. He was not accused of breaking any law.

Police reform activist Candice Bailey had mixed emotions about seeing the amended autopsy.

"I do believe that it does get us a step closer to anything that is a semblance of justice," said Bailey, an activist in the city of Aurora who has led demonstrations over the death of McClain.

But Bailey added that she is "extremely saddened that there is still a controversy around whether or not the EMTs and officers should be held responsible for what they did, and as to whether or not this was actually murder."

'Fat Leonard' may be Venezuela bargaining chip, experts say

By JULIE WATSON and JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A fugitive defense contractor nicknamed "Fat Leonard" who claims to have incriminating sex photos of U.S. Navy brass could become the latest bargaining chip in Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's efforts to win official recognition from the Biden administration, according to experts.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 76 of 105

But it's unclear how hard the U.S. government will fight for the return of Leonard Glenn Francis, the Malaysian owner of a ship servicing company in Southeast Asia who is the central character in one of the largest bribery scandals in Pentagon history.

He fled home custody in San Diego on Sept. 4 and was arrested by Venezuelan police Tuesday attempting to board a flight at the Simon Bolivar International Airport outside Caracas. Francis had his first court appearance Thursday, according to a law enforcement official in Venezuela who spoke Friday to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss judicial proceedings.

The official, who had been briefed on the case, said now it is up to the United States to make the next move. U.S. authorities have 30 days to formally request his extradition, something that the official viewed as unlikely given that the Biden administration recognizes opposition leader Juan Guaidó — not Maduro — as the country's legitimate ruler.

Venezuela and the United States have an extradition agreement but it's not clear if U.S. authorities have made a formal request. In an email, a Department of Justice spokesperson said the agency does not comment on extradition-related matters. Even under normal circumstances, extraditions can take many months or even years to complete.

The Biden administration doesn't officially recognize Maduro's socialist government, has no embassy in Venezuela and has imposed crushing sanctions on the country that have further embittered relations.

U.S. indictments against Maduro and several members of his inner circle on narco-terrorism or money laundering charges has been a major irritant between the countries. The most serious case involves businessman Alex Saab, who was apprehended on a U.S. warrant in 2020 while making a fuel stop in Cape Verde en route to Iran. Maduro considers Saab a Venezuelan diplomat and has spared no effort fighting to bring him back.

"I have no doubt the Venezuelans will make hay of (Francis' arrest), especially because they have felt the effects of the long arm of the U.S. justice system," said David Smilde, a longtime expert on Venezuela who teaches at Tulane University.

Francis is the mastermind of a huge bribery scheme that ensnared dozens of Navy officials. Francis admitted to wooing them with sex parties in Asia in exchange for classified information on Navy ship routes that he used to benefit his Singapore-based company.

Francis pleaded guilty in 2015 and faced up to 25 years in prison. While awaiting sentencing, he was given home confinement in San Diego to receive medical care. He provided information to U.S. prosecutors that secured the convictions of 33 of 34 defendants.

But with the case nearing its end and his sentencing hearing just weeks away, he cut off his ankle monitor and disappeared across the border into Mexico. Venezuelan authorities say he then went to Cuba and then Venezuela, and was planning to go to Russia when he was apprehended.

In his heyday, the towering man with a wide girth and gregarious personality wielded huge influence as a main point of contact for U.S. Navy ships across Asia. His family's ship servicing business, Singapore-based Glenn Defense Marine Asia Ltd. or GDMA, supplied food, water and fuel to vessels for decades.

He plied officers with Kobe beef, expensive cigars, concert tickets and sex parties at luxury hotels from Thailand to the Philippines. In exchange, commanders went as far as steering their ships, mostly from the Navy's 7th Fleet, to ports he controlled so he could cover up as much as \$35 million in fake charges.

It's unclear what information, if any, Francis has that could bring further embarrassment to the U.S. Navy. Still, Smilde said he wouldn't be surprised to see Francis pop up in a Venezuelan-government produced confession video hinting that he has more salacious details.

"I'm sure the Venezuelans would delight in that," he said.

Neither U.S. nor Venezuelan officials have released details about how Francis spent his time on the run or what he planned to do in Russia, but his travels to three countries in a period of two weeks indicate he had access to money and other help.

It's unclear if Francis had contacts in Russia offering to protect him, and if he did, what they wanted in return. Francis bragged about still holding compromising photos and videos of Navy officials.

"What really worried the United States the most was these officers being corrupted by me, that they

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 77 of 105

would be corruptible by the foreign powers," Francis said in an interview with podcaster Tom Wright, who created a nine-part series on the case last year.

Jason Forge, a former federal prosecutor in San Diego involved in high-profile extradition cases out of Mexico, said Francis may try to convince Venezuela that he's got something to offer, but Forge doubts he truly does. Francis, who was put under house arrest after undergoing surgeries, according to court documents, also has been a costly prisoner because of his failing health.

"Even assuming he has embarrassing photos and videos of various naval officers, unless they're of Hunter Biden at one of the parties, I just don't see the U.S. caring," he said, referring to Biden's son.

U.S. officials point out that Venezuela doesn't appear to have stopped Francis on his way into the country and could easily deport him on their own without any judicial proceeding.

World Bank head says he's not a climate denier, won't quit

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — World Bank President David Malpass said Friday he won't resign after coming under criticism for his remarks earlier this week regarding climate change.

At an event sponsored by The New York Times on Tuesday, Malpass wouldn't answer directly when asked whether the burning of fossil fuels has contributed to global warming. Instead, he said, "I am not a scientist."

In an interview with Politico Friday, Malpass said he wouldn't resign, and that he hasn't been asked to do so by any of the bank's member governments. He acknowledged he should have done a better job responding to questions on Tuesday, when he was asked to respond to a charge earlier that day from former Vice President Al Gore that he was a "climate denier."

"When asked, 'Are you a climate denier?' I should have said no," he said.

Malpass also said the World Bank is taking a "forceful leadership" position on climate issues.

"It's clear that greenhouse gas emissions from human activity are causing climate change," Malpass said in the Friday interview. "So the task for us, for the world, is to pull together the projects and the funding that actually has an impact."

Malpass was nominated to the position by former President Donald Trump in 2019, under the longstanding tradition that allows the U.S. to choose the head of the World Bank and European governments to pick the head of the International Monetary Fund. His five-year term ends in April 2024.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Friday that the Biden administration disagrees with Malpass' comments suggesting climate change is not caused by human activity.

Jean-Pierre did not say whether the administration would seek to remove Malpass, as that would require the approval of other World Bank members.

The Treasury Department "will hold Malpass accountable," Jean-Pierre said, "and support the many staff working to fight climate change at the World Bank. But again, removal would require a majority of stakeholders."

Environmentalists have urged that Malpass be pushed out if necessary.

"Climate denialism has no place in a world where millions of people are suffering from the ravages of this crisis," said Johanna Chao Kreilick, president of the Union of Concerned Scientists. "Malpass should be replaced immediately."

As shelters fill, NYC weighs tents to house migrants

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City's mayor says he plans to erect hangar-sized tents as temporary shelter for thousands of international migrants who have been bused into the Big Apple as part of a campaign by Republican governors to disrupt federal border policies.

The tents are among an array of options — from using cruise ships to summer camps — the city is considering as it struggles to find housing for an estimated 13,000 migrants who have wound up in New

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 78 of 105

York after being bused north from border towns in Texas and Arizona.

"This is not an everyday homelessness crisis, but a humanitarian crisis that requires a different approach," New York Mayor Eric Adams said in a statement Thursday.

New York City's huge system of homeless shelters has been straining to accommodate the unexpected new flow of migrants seeking asylum in the United States.

In Arizona and Texas, officials have loading people on buses for free trips to Washington and New York City. More recently, Florida, which has a Republican governor running for reelection, flew migrants — at public cost — to Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts.

Adams said the city had opened 23 emergency shelters — and was considering 38 more — to handle the people bused into the city since May. The city also recently opened a new, multimillion dollar intake center to help the newcomers quickly get settled.

The first tent has been proposed for a remote corner of the Bronx, a parking lot at a popular city beach on Long Island Sound where public transportation is limited. Officials are looking into other areas.

A rendering of the likely design of the facility, released by the city, showed rows and rows of cots. Presumably, the tent would be heated, as autumn nights in the city can be quite cool, but the city released few details.

City officials said these facilities — which they call "humanitarian emergency response and relief centers" — would only house migrants for up to four days while the city arranged other types of shelter.

Immigration advocates said the plan was not well thought out.

"While we recognize there is urgency in meeting the very real needs of asylum seeking families while our shelter system remains over-burdened, we believe that any effort to open a temporary relief camp at Orchard Beach is ridiculous and likely to cause more harm than good, especially as the fall turns into winter," said Murad Awawdeh, the executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition.

"We fear that what was meant to be a temporary solution will become an inadequate permanent one," he said.

Groups advocating for the homeless said they were reserving judgment.

"We just don't have enough detail to about what their plan is to form an opinion," said Josh Goldfein, a staff attorney with the Legal Aid Society. "If the goal here is to sort of quickly assess what people need and get them connected to services that will help them, then that will be great."

But he said the proposal has yet to be fleshed out.

"All we know, is a location, and a picture of a big tent," he said. "We don't know what's going to be in it — or who."

In a joint statement, the Legal Aid Society and the Coalition for the Homeless said it was working with city officials to come up with "a viable solution that satisfies New York's legal and moral obligation to provide safe and adequate shelter to all who seek it, including asylum seekers."

Earlier this month, Adams had floated the idea of housing hundreds of migrants on cruise ships.

Critics pounced on that idea, saying he needs to offer more lasting solutions to a problem that has long vexed the city: How to find permanent shelter for the city's unhoused — not just new migrants but for the considerable population of the homeless.

Overall, the number of people staying nightly in New York City's homeless shelters had fallen in recent years, partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. That led city officials to reduce shelter capacity, leaving the system unprepared for the sudden surge in people needing help.

Occupied Ukraine holds Kremlin-staged vote on joining Russia

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Kremlin-orchestrated referendum got underway Friday in occupied regions of Ukraine that sought to make them part of Russia, with some officials carrying ballots to apartment blocks accompanied by gun-toting police. Kyiv and the West condemned it as a rigged election whose result was preordained by Moscow.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 79 of 105

Meanwhile, in a grim reminder of the brutality of the 7-month-old invasion, U.N. experts and Ukrainian officials pointed to new evidence of Russian war crimes. Kharkiv region officials said a mass burial site in the eastern city of Izium held hundreds of bodies, including at least 30 displaying signs of torture.

The referendums in the Luhansk, Kherson and partly Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk regions were widely seen as a prelude to Moscow annexing the regions. The voting, which was overseen by authorities installed by Russia, is scheduled to run through Tuesday and is almost certain to go the Kremlin's way.

Authorities in the Kherson region said residents of a small Moscow-controlled area of the neighboring Mykolaiv province also will be able to vote, and that small area was "incorporated" into Kherson until all of Mykolaiv is taken over by Russian forces.

Ukraine and the West said the vote was an illegitimate attempt by Moscow to slice away a large part of the country, stretching from the Russian border to the Crimean Peninsula. A similar referendum took place in Crimea in 2014 before Moscow annexed it, a move that most of the world considered illegal.

Citing safety reasons, election officials carried ballots to homes and set up mobile polling stations for the four-day voting period. Russian state TV showed one such election team accompanied by a masked police officer carrying an assault rifle.

Ivan Fedorov, the Ukrainian mayor of Melitopol in the Zaporizhzhia region, told The Associated Press that Russians and residents of Crimea were brought into his city to urge people to vote.

"The Russians see an overwhelming reluctance and fear to attend the referendum and are forced to bring people... to create an image and an illusion of the vote," he said. "Groups of collaborators and Russians along with armed soldiers are doing a door-to-door poll, but few people open the doors to them."

Voting also occurred in Russia, where refugees and other residents from those regions cast ballots.

Denis Pushilin, the Moscow-backed separatist leader in the Donetsk region, called the referendum "a historical milestone."

Lawmaker Vyacheslav Volodin, the speaker of Russia's State Duma, said in an online statement to the regions: "If you decide to become part of the Russian Federation, we will support you."

Thousands attended pro-Kremlin rallies across Russia in support the referendums, news agencies reported. "Long live the one, great, united Russian people!" one speaker told the large crowd at a central Moscow rally and concert titled, "We Don't Abandon Our Own."

Luhansk Gov. Serhii Haidai accused officials of taking down the names of people who voted against joining Russia. In online posts, Haidai also alleged that Russian officials threatened to kick down the doors of anyone who didn't want to vote.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged Ukrainians in occupied regions to undermine the referendums and to share information about the people conducting "this farce." He also urged Ukrainians to avoid being called up in the Russian mobilization announced Wednesday.

"But if you do end up in the Russian army, then sabotage any enemy activity, interfere with any Russian operations, give us all important information about the occupiers. ... And at the first opportunity, switch to our positions," he said in his nightly address.

President Vladimir Putin's partial mobilization of reservists could add about 300,000 troops, his defense minister said. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissed as false media reports of plans to muster up to 1.2 million troops.

Across the vast country, men hugged their weeping family members before departing as part of the call-up, which has raised fears that a wider draft might follow. Anti-war activists planned more protests Saturday.

Other Russian men tried desperately to leave the country, buying up scarce plane tickets and creating traffic jams hours or even days long at some borders. The lines of cars were so long at the border with Kazakhstan that some people abandoned their vehicles and walked — just as some Ukrainians did after Russia invaded their country Feb. 24.

Russian authorities sought to calm public fears over the call-up. Lawmakers introduced a bill Friday to suspend or reduce loan payments for those called to duty, and media emphasized that they would be paid

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 80 of 105

the same as professional soldiers and that their civilian jobs would be held for them.

The Defense Ministry said many of those working in high tech, communications or finance will be exempt, the Tass news agency reported.

Amid the mobilization and referendums, the horrors of the conflict persisted.

Kharkiv regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov and regional police chief Volodymyr Tymoshko said at least 30 of the 436 bodies exhumed so far in Iziurm bore signs of torture. Among them were the bodies of 21 Ukrainian soldiers, some found with their hands bound behind their backs, they said.

Russian forces occupied Iziurm for six months before being pushed out by a Ukrainian counteroffensive this month. The exhumations, which began a week ago, are nearing an end, as investigators work on identifying victims and how they died. A mobile DNA lab was parked at the edge of the burial site.

"Each body has its own story," Synyehubov said.

Experts commissioned by the U.N. Human Rights Council also presented evidence of potential war crimes, including beatings, electric shocks and forced nudity in Russian detention facilities, and expressed grave concerns about extrajudicial killings the team was working to document in Kharkiv and the regions of Kyiv, Chernihiv and Sumy.

With world opinion pushing Moscow deeper into isolation over the war, Russia lashed out against the West. Its U.S. ambassador, Anatoly Antonov, said at a Moscow conference Friday about the 1962 Cuban missile crisis that Washington is trying to bring Russia "to its knees" and divide it into "several fiefdoms" while stripping it of its nuclear weapons and its permanent seat at the U.N. Security Council.

In new reports of fighting, Ukraine's presidential office said 10 civilians were killed and 39 others wounded by Russian shelling in nine regions. Battles continued in the southern Kherson province during the vote, it said, while Ukrainian forces meted out 280 attacks on Russian command posts, munitions depots and weapons.

Heavy fighting also continued in the Donetsk area, where Russian attacks targeted Toretsk, Sloviansk and several smaller towns. Russian shelling in Nikopol and Marhanets on the western bank of the Dnieper River killed two people and wounded nine.

In other developments, Kyiv expelled Iran's ambassador and reduced staff at the Iranian Embassy in response to Tehran's "supply of weapons to Russia for war on Ukrainian territory," said Oleh Nikolenko, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry. Ukraine reported shooting down an Iranian-made Mohajer-6 drone that can be used for surveillance or to carry precision-guided weapons, adding that it destroyed four other Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones.

Earlier Friday, Ukrainian officials said Russia had attacked the port city of Odesa with Iranian-made drones, killing one person.

Dow sinks to 2022 low as recession fears roil world markets

By DAMIAN J. TROISE and ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writers

Stocks fell sharply worldwide Friday on worries an already slowing global economy could fall into recession as central banks raise the pressure with additional interest rate hikes.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 1.6%, closing at its lowest level since late 2020. The S&P 500 fell 1.7%, close to its 2022 low set in mid-June, while the Nasdaq slid 1.8%.

The selling capped another rough week on Wall Street, leaving the major indexes with their fifth weekly loss in six weeks.

Energy prices closed sharply lower as traders worried about a possible recession. Treasury yields, which affect rates on mortgages and other kinds of loans, held at multiyear highs.

European stocks fell just as sharply or more after preliminary data there suggested business activity had its worst monthly contraction since the start of 2021. Adding to the pressure was a new plan announced in London to cut taxes, which sent U.K. yields soaring because it could ultimately force its central bank to raise rates even more sharply.

The Federal Reserve and other central banks around the world aggressively hiked interest rates this week

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 81 of 105

in hopes of undercutting high inflation, with more big increases promised for the future. Such moves put the brakes on economies by design, in hopes that slower purchases by households and businesses will deflate inflationary pressures. But they also threaten a recession, if they rise too far or too quickly.

Besides Friday's discouraging data on European business activity, a separate report suggested U.S. activity is also still shrinking, though not quite as badly as in earlier months.

"Financial markets are now fully absorbing the Fed's harsh message that there will be no retreat from the inflation fight," Douglas Porter, chief economist at BMO Capital Markets, wrote in a research report.

U.S. crude oil prices slid 5.7% to their lowest levels since early this year on worries that a weaker global economy will burn less fuel. Cryptocurrency prices also fell sharply because higher interest rates tend to hit hardest the investments that look the priciest or the most risky.

Even gold fell in the worldwide rout, as bonds paying higher yields make investments that pay no interest look less attractive. Meanwhile the U.S. dollar has been moving sharply higher against other currencies. That can hurt profits for U.S. companies with lots of overseas business, as well as put a financial squeeze on much of the developing world.

The S&P 500 fell 64.76 points to 3,693.23, its fourth straight drop. The Dow, which at one point was down more than 800 points, lost 486.27 points to close at 29,590.41. The Nasdaq fell 198.88 points to 10,867.93.

Smaller company stocks did even worse. The Russell 2000 fell 42.72 points, or 2.5%, to close at 1,679.59.

More than 85% of stocks in the S&P 500 closed in the red, with technology companies, retailers and banks among the biggest weights on the benchmark index.

The Federal Reserve on Wednesday lifted its benchmark rate, which affects many consumer and business loans, to a range of 3% to 3.25%. It was at virtually zero at the start of the year. The Fed also released a forecast suggesting its benchmark rate could be 4.4% by the year's end, a full point higher than envisioned in June.

Treasury yields have climbed to multiyear highs as interest rates rise. The yield on the 2-year Treasury, which tends to follow expectations for Federal Reserve action, rose to 4.20% from 4.12% late Thursday. It is trading at its highest level since 2007. The yield on the 10-year Treasury, which influences mortgage rates, slipped to 3.69% from 3.71%.

Goldman Sachs strategists say a majority of their clients now see a "hard landing" that pulls the economy sharply lower as inevitable. The question for them is just on the timing, magnitude and length of a potential recession.

Higher interest rates hurt all kinds of investments, but stocks could stay steady as long as corporate profits grow strongly. The problem is that many analysts are beginning to cut their forecasts for upcoming earnings because of higher rates and worries about a possible recession.

"Increasingly, market psychology has transitioned from concerns over inflation to worries that, at a minimum, corporate profits will decline as economic growth slows demand," said Quincy Krosby, chief global strategist for LPL Financial.

In the U.S., the jobs market has remained remarkably solid, and many analysts think the economy grew in the summer quarter after shrinking in the first six months of the year. But the encouraging signs also suggest the Fed may have to jack rates even higher to get the cooling needed to bring down inflation.

Some key areas of the economy are already weakening. Mortgage rates have reached 14-year highs, causing sales of existing homes to drop 20% in the past year. But other areas that do best when rates are low are also hurting.

In Europe, meanwhile, the already fragile economy is dealing with the effects of war on its eastern front following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The European Central Bank is hiking its key interest rate to combat inflation even as the region's economy is already expected to plunge into a recession. And in Asia, China's economy is contending with still-strict measures meant to limit COVID infections that also hurt businesses.

While Friday's economic reports were discouraging, few on Wall Street saw them as enough to convince the Fed and other central banks to soften their stance on raising rates. So they just reinforced the fear that rates will keep rising in the face of already slowing economies.

Economics Writer Christopher Rugaber and Business Writers Joe McDonald and Matt Ott contributed to this report.

The AP Interview: Pakistani leader details flood devastation

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Flooding likely worsened by climate change has submerged one-third of Pakistan's territory and left 33 million of its people scrambling to survive, according to Pakistan's prime minister, who says he came to the United Nations this year to tell the world that "tomorrow, this tragedy can fall on some other country."

In a wide-ranging interview with The Associated Press, Shahbaz Sharif exhorted world leaders gathered for their annual meeting at the General Assembly to stand together and raise resources "to build resilient infrastructure, to build adaptation, so that our future generations are saved."

The initial estimate of losses to the economy as a result of the three-month flooding disaster is \$30 billion, Sharif said, and he asked U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday to hold a donors' conference quickly. The U.N. chief agreed, Sharif said.

"Thousands of kilometers of roads have been smashed, washed away — railway bridges, railway track, communications, underpasses, transport. All this requires funds," Sharif said. "We need funds to provide livelihood to our people."

Sharif, the brother of ousted former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, took office in April after a week of turmoil in Pakistan. He replaced Imran Khan, a cricket star turned politician who was one of the country's highest-profile leaders of the past generation and retains broad influence. Khan was ousted in a no-confidence vote after 3½ years in office.

While climate change likely increased rainfall by up to 50% late last month in two southern Pakistan provinces, global warming wasn't the biggest cause of the country's catastrophic flooding, according to a new scientific analysis. Pakistan's overall vulnerability, including people living in harm's way, was the chief factor.

But human-caused climate change "also plays a really important role here," study senior author Friederike Otto, a climate scientist at Imperial College of London, said earlier this month.

Whatever the case, Sharif said the impact on his country is immense. More than 1,600 people have died, including hundreds of children. Crops on 4 million acres have been washed away. Millions of houses have been damaged or completely destroyed, and life savings have disappeared in the devastating floods triggered by monsoon rains.

Framing Pakistan as a victim of climate change worsened by other nations' actions, Sharif said Pakistan is responsible for less than 1% of the carbon emissions that cause global warming. "We are," the prime minister said, "a victim of something we have nothing to do with."

He echoed the sentiments Friday afternoon when addressing fellow leaders at the General Assembly, telling them that other places were next. "One thing is very clear," he said. "What happened in Pakistan will not stay in Pakistan."

MONEY AND FOOD

Even before the floods began in mid-June, Pakistan was facing serious challenges from grain shortages and skyrocketing crude oil prices sparked mainly by Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine and the war that has followed. Sharif said skyrocketing prices have put the import of oil "beyond our capacity," and — with the damage and destruction from the massive flooding — solutions have become "extremely difficult."

Pakistan may have to import about a million tons of wheat because of the destruction of farmland. He said it could come from Russia, but the country is open to other offers. The country also needs fertilizer because factories involved in their production are closed.

Sharif said the country has "a very robust, transparent mechanism already in place" to ensure that all aid items are delivered to people in need. In addition, he said, "I will ensure third-party audit of every penny through international well-reputed companies."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 83 of 105

The Pakistani leader said he met top officials from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and appealed for a moratorium on loan repayments and deferment of other conditions until the flood situation improves.

"They sounded very supportive," Sharif said, but he stressed that a delay "can spell huge consequences" — both for the economy and for the Pakistani people.

RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS

One dimension of grain purchases taps into one of Pakistan's most existential issues — its relationship with neighboring India.

Would Pakistan consider buying grain from India if needed? Sharif said that notion is impeded by "a legal bottleneck" — Kashmir, the Himalayan territory claimed by both countries but divided between them. It has been at the center of two of the four wars India has fought with Pakistan and China.

"India is a neighbor, and Pakistan would very much like to live like a peaceful neighbor with India," Sharif said. "But that has certain prerequisites. India has to understand that unless and until the burning issue of Kashmir is resolved through peaceful talks ... like peaceful neighbors, with the sincerity of purpose, we will not be able to live in peace."

"And that is a great shame and embarrassment," he said. "Because in this day and age, we need our resources to feed our people, to educate them, to provide job opportunities, to provide health opportunities. India can't afford to spend money on buying ammunition and defense equipment. Nor can Pakistan."

On the other side of Pakistan, to the west, sits Afghanistan — a place that shares geography, strategic interests and much ethnic heritage with Sharif's nation. Sharif said its Taliban rulers, who have been in power for a year, have "a golden opportunity to ensure peace and progress" for the people by adhering to the Doha Agreement, which the nation's previous, more internationally minded government signed in February 2020 with former U.S. president Donald Trump's administration.

The Taliban should provide equal opportunities including education through college for girls, job opportunities for women, respect for human rights, and for that Afghan assets should be unfrozen, the prime minister said.

The Doha Agreement called for the United States to withdraw its forces, which current President Joe Biden did in a chaotic pullout as the Taliban were taking over the country in August 2021. The pact stipulated commitments the Taliban were expected to make to prevent terrorism, including obligations to renounce al-Qaida and prevent Afghan soil from being used to plot attacks on the U.S. or its allies as it was before 9/11.

If the Taliban signed the agreement, Sharif said, "they must respect it."

"This is what law-abiding, peace-loving international community, including myself, expect from them," he said. "And let's work together in that direction."

US-PAKISTANI RELATIONS

Relations between Pakistan and the United States have vacillated between strong and tenuous for more than a generation. After 9/11, the two were allies against extremism even as, many asserted, elements within Pakistan's army and government were encouraging it.

Today, former prime minister Khan's anti-American rhetoric of recent years has fueled anger at the United States in Pakistan and created some setbacks in ties.

In the interview, Sharif said his government wants "good, warm relations" with the United States and wants to work with Biden to "remove any kind of misunderstanding and confusion."

In careful language that reflected his efforts to balance international and domestic constituencies, he sought to distance himself from Khan's approach — and to reaffirm and restore the kind of ties that he said the people he represents would want.

"What the previous government did, in this behalf, was most uncalled for, was detrimental to Pakistan's sovereign interests," Sharif said. "It was definitely not in line with what ordinary Pakistanis would believe and expect."

Russian men join exodus, fearing call-up to fight in Ukraine

By KHALIL HAMRA and MEHMET GUZEL Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — Military-aged men fled Russia in droves Friday, filling planes and causing traffic jams at border crossings to avoid being rounded up to fight in Ukraine following the Kremlin's partial military mobilization.

Queues stretching for 10 kilometers (6 miles) formed on a road leading to the southern border with Georgia, according to Yandex Maps, a Russian online map service.

The lines of cars were so long at the border with Kazakhstan that some people abandoned their vehicles and proceeded on foot — just as some Ukrainians did after Russia invaded their country on Feb. 24.

Meanwhile, dozens of flights out of Russia — with tickets sold at sky-high prices — carried men to international destinations such as Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Serbia, where Russians don't need visas.

Among those who reached Turkey was a 41-year-old who landed in Istanbul with a suitcase and a backpack and plans to start a new life in Israel.

"I'm against this war, and I'm not going to be a part of it. I'm not going to be a murderer. I'm not going to kill people," said the man, who identified himself only as Yevgeny to avoid potential retribution against his family left behind in Russia.

He referred to Russian President Vladimir Putin as a "war criminal."

Yevgeny decided to flee after Putin announced a partial military call-up on Wednesday. The total number of reservists involved could be as high as 300,000.

Some Russian men also fled to neighboring Belarus, Russia's close ally. But that carried risk.

The Nasha Niva newspaper, one of the oldest independent newspapers in Belarus, reported that Belarusian security services were ordered to track down Russians fleeing from the draft, find them in hotels and rented apartments and report them to Russian authorities.

Russian authorities tried to calm an anxious public about the draft.

Legislators introduced a bill Friday that would suspend or reduce loan payments for Russians called up for duty. News outlets emphasized that draftees would have the same status as professional soldiers and be paid the same, and that their civilian jobs would be held for them.

The Defense Ministry said that many people who work in high tech, communications or finance will be exempt from the call-up "to ensure the operations" of those fields, the Tass news agency reported.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the fact that Russians were leaving their country to avoid conscription shows that the war in Ukraine is "unpopular."

"What Putin is doing — he is not coming from a place of strength," Jean-Pierre told reporters. "He is coming from a place of weakness."

The exodus unfolded as a Kremlin-orchestrated referendum got underway seeking to make occupied regions of Ukraine part of Russia. Kyiv and the West condemned it as a rigged election whose result was preordained by Moscow.

German government officials voiced a desire to help Russian men deserting military service, and they called for a European solution.

"Those who bravely stand up to Putin's regime and thereby put themselves in great danger can apply for asylum in Germany on the grounds of political persecution," the spokesman for German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said.

The spokesman, Maximilian Kall, said deserters and those refusing to be drafted would receive refugee status in Germany if they are at risk of serious repression, though every case is examined individually.

But they would first have to make it to Germany, which has no land border with Russia, and like other European Union countries has become far more difficult for Russians to travel to.

The EU banned direct flights between its 27 member states and Russia after the attack on Ukraine, and recently agreed to limit issuing Schengen visas, which allow free movement across much of Europe.

Four out of five EU countries that border Russia — Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland — also recently decided to turn away Russian tourists.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 85 of 105

Some European officials view fleeing Russians as potential security risks. They hope that by not opening their borders, it will increase pressure against Putin at home.

Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics said Thursday that many of those fleeing "were fine with killing Ukrainians. They did not protest then. It is not right to consider them as conscientious objectors."

The one EU country that is still accepting Russians with Schengen visas is Finland, which has a 1,340-kilometer (830-mile) border with Russia.

Finland border guards said Friday that the number of people entering from Russia has climbed sharply, with media reporting a 107% increase compared with last week.

At Vaalimaa, one of the busiest crossings on the border, the line of waiting cars stretched for half a kilometer (a third of a mile), the Finnish Border Guard said.

Finnish broadcaster MTV carried interviews with Russian men who had just crossed into Finland at the Virolahti border crossing, including with a man named Yuri from Moscow who said that no "sane person" wants to go to war.

A Russian man from St. Petersburg, Andrei Balakirov, said he had been mentally prepared to leave Russia for half a year but put it off until the mobilization.

"I think it's a really bad thing," he said.

Valery, a man from Samara who was heading to Spain, agreed, calling the mobilization "a great tragedy."

"It's hard to describe what's happening. I feel sorry for those who are forced to fight against their will. I've heard stories that people have been given these orders right in the streets — scary."

Syrian official says so far, 77 dead in migrant boat sinking

By FAY ABUELGASIM and BILAL HUSSEIN Associated Press

ARIDA BORDER CROSSING, Lebanon (AP) — At least 77 people were killed when a boat carrying migrants from Lebanon sank off Syria this week, the country's health minister said Friday, amid fears the death toll could be far higher.

The incident was deadliest so far as a surging number of Lebanese, Syrians, and Palestinians have been trying to flee crisis-hit Lebanon by sea for a better future in Europe. Tens of thousands have lost their jobs while the Lebanese pound has dropped more than 90% in value, eradicating the purchasing power of thousands of families that now live in extreme poverty.

Syrian authorities said victims' relatives have started crossing from Lebanon into Syria to help identify their loved ones and retrieve their bodies. The vessel left Lebanon on Tuesday and news of what happened first started to emerge on Thursday afternoon. The boat was carrying Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinians.

Syrian state-run TV quoted Health Minister Mohammed Hassan Ghabbash as saying 20 people were rescued and were being treated at al-Basel hospital in Syria's coastal city of Tartus. He added that medical authorities have been on alert since Thursday afternoon to help in the search operations.

An official at al-Basel, speaking on condition of anonymity under regulations, told The Associated Press that eight of those rescued were in intensive care. The official also confirmed the 77 deaths. There were conflicting reports on how many people were on board the vessel when it sank, with some saying at least 120. Details about the ship, such as its size and capacity, were also not clear.

Lebanese Transport Minister Ali Hamie said the survivors included 12 Syrians, five Lebanese and three Palestinians. Eight bodies have been brought back to Lebanon early Friday, according to Lebanese Interior Minister Bassam Mawlawi.

After sunset Friday, bodies of more victims, including two Palestinians, were brought to Lebanon. They were taken in seven ambulances and headed south from the Arida border crossing toward the northern city of Tripoli.

Syrian state media said authorities handed over the bodies of nine Lebanese and two Palestinians to the Lebanese Red Cross at the Arida border crossing.

Palestinian Salim Khalaf, whose relative is missing in the disaster, spoke at the border crossing. The migrants, he said, had no choice but to take the dangerous trip to escape misery in Lebanon.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 86 of 105

"Letting the fish just eat us is better than living here," he said of Lebanon. Then, speaking about those who perished, Khalaf added: "They reached a point where they want to die at sea."

Earlier in the day, Tartus governor Abdul-Halim Khalil told the pro-government Sham FM Radio that the search was underway for more bodies off his country's coast. Khalil said the boat sank on Wednesday.

Syria's state news agency, SANA, quoted a port official as saying that 31 bodies were washed ashore while the rest were picked up by Syrian boats in a search operation that started Thursday evening.

Wissam Tellawi, one of the survivors being treated at al-Basel, lost two daughters. His wife and two sons are still missing. The bodies of his daughters, Mae and Maya, were brought to Lebanon early Friday and buried in their northern hometown of Qarqaf.

"He told me by telephone, 'I am fine' but the children are lost," said Tellawi's father, who identified himself as Abu Mahmoud. The father told the local Al-Jadeed TV that his son gave smugglers the family's apartment in return for taking him and his family to Europe.

In the aftermath of the disaster, the Lebanese army said troops stormed Friday the homes of several suspected smugglers, detaining four in the northern city of Tripoli, Lebanon's second-largest and most impoverished. Three others were detained in the nearby village of Deir Ammar.

The military said the suspects were involved in smuggling of migrants by sea while others were planning to buy boats for the same reason.

Lebanon,— with a population of 6 million, including 1 million Syrian refugees, has been in the grips of a severe economic meltdown since late 2019 that has pulled over three-quarters of the population into poverty.

For years, it was a country that received refugees from Mideast wars and conflicts but the economic crisis, rooted in decades of corruption and mismanagement, has changed that dramatically.

Prices have been skyrocketing as a result of hyperinflation, forcing many to sell their belongings to pay for smugglers to take them to Europe as the migration intensified in recent months.

In April, a boat carrying dozens of Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians trying to migrate by sea to Italy went down more than 5 kilometers (3 miles) from Tripoli, following a confrontation with the Lebanese navy. Dozens were killed in the incident.

On Wednesday, Lebanese officials said naval forces rescued a boat carrying 55 migrants after it faced technical problems about 11 kilometers (7 miles) off the coast of the northern region of Akkar. It said those rescued included two pregnant women and two children.

Pro-government rallies held in Iran amid mass protests

By The Associated Press undefined

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iranian counterprotesters gathered across the country on Friday in a show of support for authorities after nearly a week of anti-government protests and unrest over the death of a young woman who was being held by the morality police.

Thousands attended a rally in the capital, Tehran, where they waved Iranian flags, and similar demonstrations were held in other cities. The government claimed the demonstrations of support were spontaneous. Similar rallies have been held during past periods of widespread protests.

The pro-government demonstrators chanted against America and Israel, according to state media, reflecting the official line that blames the latest unrest on hostile foreign countries.

State TV suggested late on Friday that the death toll from this week's unrest could be as high as 35, raising an earlier estimate of 26. Anti-government protesters and security forces have clashed in several major cities in the most severe political violence since 2019, when rights groups say hundreds were killed amid demonstrations against a hike in state-controlled gasoline prices.

Iran has also disrupted internet access and tightened restrictions on popular platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp, which can be used to organize rallies.

In response, the U.S. Treasury Department said it would allow American tech firms to expand their business in Iran to boost internet access for the Iranian people. Iran is under heavy U.S. and international

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 87 of 105

sanctions.

A state TV newswoman said late Friday that 35 protesters and policemen had been killed since the protests erupted last Saturday after the funeral of the 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, without elaborating. She said official statistics would be released later, but authorities have not provided a full accounting of deaths and injuries during past unrest.

A tally by The Associated Press, based on statements from state-run and semiofficial media, shows that at least 11 people have been killed. Most recently, the deputy governor of Qazvin, Abolhasan Kabiri, said that a citizen and paramilitary officer had been killed there.

The crisis unfolding in Iran began as a public outpouring of anger over the the death of Amini, a young woman who was arrested by the morality police in Tehran last week for allegedly wearing her Islamic headscarf too loosely. The police said she died of a heart attack and was not mistreated, but her family has cast doubt on that account.

Amini's death has sparked sharp condemnation from Western countries and the United Nations. Iranians across at least 13 cities from the capital, Tehran, to Amini's northwest Kurdish hometown of Saqez have poured into the streets, voicing pent-up anger over social and political repression.

"The death has tapped into broader antigovernment sentiment in the Islamic Republic and especially the frustration of women," wrote political risk firm Eurasia Group. It noted that Iran's hard-liners have intensified their crackdown on women's clothing over the past year since former judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi became president.

"The prospect of the leadership offering concessions to Iranian women is minimal," it said. "In the cold calculus of Iranian leaders, the protests have likely gone far enough and a more forceful response is required to quell the unrest."

Raisi condemned the protests as he arrived back in Iran after addressing the United Nations General Assembly earlier this week.

"We have announced many times that if anyone has a fair comment, we will listen to it. But anarchy? Disturbing national security? The security of people? No one will succumb to this," he said.

Videos on social media show protesters in Tehran torching a police car and confronting officers. Others show gunfire ringing out as protesters bolt from riot police, shouting: "They are shooting at people! Oh my God, they're killing people!"

In the northwestern city of Neyshabur, protesters cheered over an overturned police car. Footage from Tehran and Mashhad shows women waving their obligatory headscarves, known as hijab, in the air like flags while chanting, "Freedom!"

Separately, hackers have targeted a number of government websites in recent days, taking some of them down at least briefly. On Friday, hackers interrupted Iran's Channel 3 on a popular streaming website and played videos in support of the protests. Normal programming was restored a couple of minutes later.

The protests have grown into an open challenge to the theocracy established after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The chants have been scathing, with some chanting "Death to the dictator!" and "Mullahs must be gone!"

Local officials have announced the arrest of dozens of protesters. Hasan Hosseinpour, deputy police chief in the northern Gilan province, reported 211 people detained there on Thursday. The government of the western Hamadan province said 58 demonstrators had been arrested.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists said Friday that at least 10 reporters have been arrested since the start of the protests, many of them during late night raids on their homes by security forces who did not identify themselves.

London-based watchdog Amnesty International has accused security forces of beating protesters with batons and firing metal pellets at close range. Videos show police and paramilitary officers using live fire, tear gas and water cannons to disperse demonstrators.

Iran has grappled with waves of protests in the recent past, mainly over a long-running economic crisis exacerbated by American sanctions linked to its nuclear program. In November 2019, the country saw the deadliest violence since the revolution, as protests erupted over gas price hikes.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 88 of 105

Economic hardship remains a major source of anger today as the prices of basic necessities soar and the Iranian currency declines in value.

The Biden administration and European allies have been working to revive the 2015 nuclear accord, in which Iran curbed its nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief, but the talks have stalled for months.

The Eurasia Group said the protests make any immediate return to the agreement less likely, as Iran's government will be more hesitant to make concessions at a time of domestic unrest and the United States will be reluctant to sign a deal as Iran violently cracks down on dissent.

'Crucial' vote could move Italy to right; many might boycott

By FRANCES D'EMILIO and COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italians will vote on Sunday in what is being billed as a crucial election as Europe reels from the repercussions of Russia's war in Ukraine. For the first time in Italy since the end of World War II, the election could propel a far-right leader into the premiership.

Soaring energy costs and quickly climbing prices for staples like bread — the consequences of Russia's invasion of breadbasket Ukraine — have pummeled many Italian families and businesses.

Against that bleak backdrop, Giorgia Meloni and her Brothers of Italy party — with neo-fascist roots and an agenda of God, homeland and Christian identity — appear to be the front-runners in Italy's parliamentary election.

They could be a test case for whether hard-right sentiment is gaining more traction in the 27-nation European Union. Recently, a right-wing party in Sweden surged in popularity by capitalizing on peoples' fears about crime.

No single party in Italy stands much chance of winning enough seats to govern alone, but right-wing and right-leaning centrists forged a campaign pact that could secure Meloni a parliamentary majority and propel her into power. Her main alliance partner is right-wing League party leader Matteo Salvini, who blames crime on migrants and has long been a staunch ideological booster of right-wing governments in Hungary and Poland.

"Elections in the middle of a war, in the midst of an energy crisis and the dawn of what is likely to be an economic crisis ... almost by definition are crucial elections," said Nathalie Tocci, director of Rome-based think tank the International Affairs Institute.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who ordered Moscow's invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, is gambling that "Europe will break" under the weight of economic and energy problems brought on by the war, Tocci told The Associated Press.

Salvini, who draws his voter base from business owners in Italy's north, has donned pro-Putin T-shirts in the past. Salvini has also questioned the wisdom of maintaining Western economic sanctions against Russia, saying they could hurt Italy's economic interests too much.

The publication of polls was halted 15 days before Sunday's vote, but before then they indicated Meloni's party would be the biggest vote-getter, just ahead of the center-left Democratic Party headed by former Premier Enrico Letta.

The campaign alliance linking Meloni to Salvini and former Premier Silvio Berlusconi confers a clear advantage over Letta under Italy's complex system of divvying up seats in Parliament.

Letta had hoped in vain for a campaign alliance with the left-leaning populist 5-Star Movement, the largest party in the outgoing legislature.

While it is a fraught moment for Europe, Sunday's election could see modern Italy's lowest-ever turnout. The last election, in 2018, saw record-low turnout of 73%. Pollster Lorenzo Pregliasco says this time the percentage could drop to as low as 66%.

Pregliasco, who heads the YouTrend polling company, says Italy's last three different governing coalitions since the last election have left Italians "disaffected, disappointed. They don't see their vote as something that matters."

The outgoing government is headed by former European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi. In early 2021,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 89 of 105

Italy's president tapped Draghi to form a unity government after the collapse of the second ruling coalition of 5-Star leader Giuseppe Conte.

In what Pregliasco called an "apparent paradox," polls indicate that "most Italians like Draghi and think his government did a good job." Yet Meloni, the sole major party leader to refuse to join Draghi's coalition, is polling the strongest.

As Tocci put it, Meloni's party is so popular "simply because it's the new kid on the block."

Draghi has said he doesn't want another term.

To Meloni's annoyance, criticism still dogs her that she hasn't made an unambiguous break with her party's roots in a neo-fascist movement founded by nostalgists for dictator Benito Mussolini after his regime's disastrous role in World War II. During the campaign, she declared that she is "no danger to democracy."

Some political analysts say worries about the fascist question aren't their main concern.

"I am afraid of incompetence, not the fascist threat," said Roberto D'Alimonte, a political science professor at LUISS, a private university in Rome. "She has not governed anything."

Meloni served as youth minister in Berlusconi's last government, which ended a decade ago.

Instead, her main right-wing coalition partner is worth worrying about, D'Alimonte told The AP.

"Salvini will be the troublemaker, not Meloni," he said. "It is not Meloni calling for the end of sanctions against Russia. It is Salvini. It is not Meloni calling for more debt or more deficit. It is Salvini."

But recent incidents have fed worries about Brothers of Italy.

A Brothers of Italy candidate in Sicily was suspended by his party after he posted phrases on social media showing appreciation for Hitler. Separately, a brother of one of Meloni's co-founders was spotted giving what appeared to be the fascist salute at a funeral for a relative. The brother denied that was what he was doing.

For years, the right wing has crusaded against unbridled immigration, after hundreds of thousands of migrants reached Italy's shores aboard smugglers' boats or vessels that rescued them in the Mediterranean Sea. Both Meloni and Salvini have thundered against what they see as an invasion of foreigners not sharing what they call Italy's "Christian" character.

Letta, who wants to facilitate citizenship for children of legal immigrants, has, too, played the fear card. In his party's campaign, ads on buses, half the image depicts a serious-looking Letta with his one-word motto, "Choose," with the other half featuring an ominous-looking image of Putin. Salvini and Berlusconi have both expressed admiration for the Russian leader. Meloni backs supplying arms so Ukraine can defend itself.

With energy bills as much as 10 times higher than a year ago, how to save workers' jobs ranks high among Italian voters' worries.

But perhaps with the exception of Salvini, who wants to revisit Italy's closed nuclear power plants, candidates haven't distinguished themselves in proposing solutions to the energy crisis. Nearly all are pushing for a EU cap on gas prices.

The perils of climate change haven't loomed large in the Italian campaign. Italy's tiny Greens party, a campaign partner of Letta, is forecast to capture barely a few seats in Parliament.

In-person voting starts in Minnesota, 3 other early states

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — In-person voting for the midterm elections opened Friday in Minnesota, South Dakota, Virginia and Wyoming, kicking off a six-week sprint to Election Day in a landscape that has changed much since the pandemic drove a shift to mail balloting in the 2020 presidential contest.

Twenty people voted in the first hour as Minneapolis opened its early voting center, taking advantage of generous rules that election officials credit with making Minnesota a perennial leader in voter turnout. First in when the doors opened was Conrad Zbikowski, a 29-year-old communications and digital consultant who said he has voted early since at least 2017.

"I like to vote early because you never know what might happen on Election Day," said Zbikowski, dis-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 90 of 105

playing his civic pride with a T-shirt that bore the sailboat logo of the City of Lakes. "You might get sick, you might get COVID, you might get in a car crash, there's many things that can happen. But what you do have control over is being able to vote early and getting that ballot in."

The start of in-person voting comes as the nation continues to grapple with the fallout from nearly two years of false claims that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from former President Donald Trump due to widespread fraud and manipulation of voting machines. Those conspiracy theories, promoted by a constellation of Trump allies in the campaign, on social media and at conferences held across the country, have taken a toll on public confidence in U.S. elections.

They've also led to tightening of rules that govern mail ballots in several Republican-led states as well as an exodus of experienced election workers, who have faced an onslaught of harassment and threats since the 2020 election.

But nearly two years since that election, no evidence has emerged to suggest widespread fraud or manipulation while reviews in state after state have upheld the results showing President Joe Biden won.

Saturday also is the deadline by which election officials must send ballots to their military and overseas voters. North Carolina started mailing out absentee ballots Sept. 9.

Early in-person voting is offered in 46 states and the District of Columbia, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. States may use different ways to describe it, with some calling it in-person absentee voting or advanced voting. In some cases, it mirrors Election Day voting with polling locations equipped with poll workers and voting machines. Elsewhere, it involves voters requesting, completing and submitting an absentee ballot in person at their local election office.

Early voting periods vary by state, with some offering as few as three days and others extending to 46 days. The average is 23 days, according to the conference of legislatures.

This year, voting will unfold in a much different environment than two years ago, when the coronavirus prompted a major increase in the use of mail ballots as voters sought to avoid crowded polling places. States adopted policies to promote mail voting, with a few states opting to send mail ballots to all registered voters and others expanding the use of drop boxes.

While some have made those changes permanent, others have rolled back them back. For instance, Georgia will have fewer drop boxes this year and has added ID requirements to mail ballots under legislation pushed by Republican state lawmakers.

In Wyoming, a steady stream of voters filed into the lone early polling place in Cheyenne, which offered a refuge from winds that toppled a "Vote Here" sign. About 60 people had voted there by midday, Laramie County Clerk Debra Lee said.

"It's less people and we don't have to worry," said one early voter, Brent Dolence of Cheyenne. "Things move faster and you don't have to wait so much."

Unlike elsewhere in the U.S., poll workers in Laramie County haven't been subjected to threats and harassment, Lee said, but they've received plenty of questions from voters about machines and the county's lone ballot drop box.

"They're really looking at things and asking questions," Lee said. "In a good way. You know, wanting information. They're curious."

Minnesota's ballot includes races for governor and other statewide offices, with control of the Legislature at stake, too.

Zbikowski declined to say for whom he voted. But he said he doesn't take the right to vote for granted, given that his family came to America from Russia when it didn't have free elections. As a part-time poll worker — he was off-duty Friday — he said he's seen Minnesota's safeguards firsthand and has full confidence in the integrity of the process.

Other early voters included first-timers Ronald Johnson and his wife, Judith Weyl, who voted on Election Day in 2020. They both said they voted a straight Democratic ticket.

"It just feels like this election is so important, life is so busy, I just wanted to have closure on this as quickly as possible," Johnson said.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 91 of 105

Johnson, a 74-year-old mental health counselor, said he wanted to support candidates who will preserve a Minnesota election system that he said has integrity.

He said he "absolutely" supports the state's chief elections officer, Secretary of State Steve Simon, over GOP challenger Kim Crockett, who has called the 2020 election a "train wreck" and has advocated for a return to voting mostly on Election Day. Simon, in contrast, calls the 2020 election "fundamentally fair, honest, accurate and secure," and defends the changes that he oversaw to make voting safer in the pandemic.

"We really care about protecting democracy," said Weyl, 73.

Aaron Bommarito, a 48-year-old teacher who also said he voted a straight Democratic ticket, said he has no concerns about his votes being counted properly and has "absolute confidence in the system." He said voting early was a spur-of-the-moment decision. He just happened to be driving by the voting center and seized the moment.

"I dropped my two kids off at school, and the 'Vote Here' sign was the next thing I saw," he said.

Advocates seek more say in how opioid settlements are spent

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and SAMANTHA HENDRICKSON Associated Press/Report for America

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — The tattoos on Billie Stafford's hands — inspired by street art and full of references to her work helping prevent drug-related deaths — have become an indelible memorial to the friend who inked them and the opioid crisis that killed him in April.

As a panel starts considering how to distribute Ohio's share of multimillion-dollar legal settlements with drugmakers and distributors over the toll of opioids, Stafford is concerned that most of the members don't bring that same burden of personal loss to their spending recommendations.

"They don't have to come and write 20 names on a (memorial) wall because everyone's dying," said Stafford, whose friend David Seymour died of an overdose and who co-founded a group that supports people addicted to opioids and their loved ones.

Across the U.S., people in recovery and families of those who died from overdoses fear they won't be heard on the state-level panels recommending or deciding on the use of big pieces of proposed and finalized settlements, which are worth more than \$40 billion, according to an Associated Press tally.

The money is seen as crucial to stemming a crisis that deepened amid the coronavirus pandemic, with opioids involved in most of the record 107,000 overdose-related deaths in the U.S. last year.

"If we approach this in a very educated process, we have a real opportunity to move the needle for patients and families for generations to come," said Dr. Adam Scioli, the medical director at Caron Treatment Centers, which operates in several East Coast areas.

After money from 1990s tobacco settlements went to laying fiber-optic cable, repairing roads and other initiatives that had little to do with public health, the opioid deals were crafted to direct most funds toward combatting the drug crisis.

The settlements list strategies the money can fund, including paying for the overdose reversal drug naloxone; educating children about dangers of opioids; expanding screening and interventions for pregnant women; and helping people get into treatment. State and local governments have leeway, though.

For the people on a mission to stem drug deaths, the details matter. Advocates want to see the money used to make it easier to get treatment, to provide related housing, transportation and other services, and to provide materials to test drug supplies for fentanyl, the synthetic opioid involved in most recent fatal overdoses.

Two advocacy groups are on a monthlong "Mobilize Recovery" national bus tour, partly to push for representation of the recovery community — people in recovery, their families, families of those who died, and those who try to help all of them — in allocation decisions.

"The people closest to the problem are also closest to the solution," Voices Project founder Ryan Hampton said.

In Ohio, critics say voices of those most impacted aren't reflected enough on the OneOhio Recovery Foundation board making spending decisions. Only a few of the 29 members have disclosed personal ex-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 92 of 105

periences — one identifying as a person in recovery for decades, one as the parent of someone with an addiction, and two who said they knew people with addictions. Most members are government officials. Just one is Black.

“Right now, we have no say-so and no representation as to how this money is going to be used to help us,” said Nathaniel Jordan, executive director of Columbus Kappa Foundation, which works with low-income and Black communities, where opioid overdoses have been increasing.

An advocacy group sued the nonprofit OneOhio foundation in August over concerns about its transparency. OneOhio subsequently said it would voluntarily follow open meetings and public records laws that govern public agencies, though the lawsuit remains pending.

“The Board members are eager to engage the advocacy community and Ohioans whose lives have been impacted by addiction because they know their feedback will improve the Foundation’s work,” OneOhio spokesperson Connie Luck said by email.

The issue is not only who has seats on key committees, but also whether those closest to the crisis have clout.

Nevada included recovery community members such as Debi Nadler on the council advising the state on the more than \$300 million it is expected to get.

“My true thought is it’s a dog-and-pony show,” said Nadler, who founded the group Moms Against Drugs after her son died of an overdose.

Terry Kerns, the substance abuse and law enforcement coordinator for the Nevada attorney general’s office, said the group is influenced by people in recovery and those who work with people using drugs — and that some people appointed to seats not set aside for those who have used opioids are also in recovery.

“I feel there’s probably more than adequate representation,” Kerns said.

Advocates say the shifting nature of the opioid crisis with the rise of fentanyl makes it important to listen to people who are using drugs now.

“I’ve been in recovery for years,” said Courtney Allen, the organizing director of the Maine Recovery Advocacy Project, who was appointed to a settlement advisory council in her state. “The substance-use crisis eight years ago was very different from the substance-use crisis today.”

In Wisconsin, Republican lawmakers thought Democratic Gov. Tony Evers’ administration didn’t do enough outreach to law enforcement as it made plans for spending \$31 million in settlement money for next year. So the GOP-led Joint Committee on Finance this month eliminated proposed funds for family support centers and trimmed other areas to set aside \$3 million for public safety agencies to use, including for treatment of jail inmates.

Rep. Mark Born, co-chair of the committee, said public safety workers deal with opioid issues even in far-flung communities not served by treatment facilities. “It’s not just drug arrests,” he said.

Jesse Heffernan, who is in recovery and co-owns an addiction recovery services business, is wary of the changes, which he said were made without the open input and research that went into the original plan.

“When it turns into a partisan issue, communities lose,” he said.

Advocates’ push for clout has changed the situation in some states.

New York officials announced in July that the Opioid Fund Advisory Board would make recommendations on all settlement money after originally indicating the group would not have a say on most of the \$240 million-plus expected this year.

Board member Avi Israel, whose son died by suicide after years of addiction, says the group is still meeting too infrequently and not digging into the big decisions. He worries most money will end up going to state agencies.

“We’re talking about a year before anybody gets any money,” Israel said, noting thousands more could die before programs are launched or expanded.

The chair of the New York board, Albany County mental health commissioner Stephen Giordano, said he expects to have recommendations ready for the Legislature and governor by the Nov. 1 deadline — and that having a report done earlier wouldn’t mean money would go out to service providers sooner.

"I've also come to see," Giordano said, "that not everyone is going to like anything we do."

Breyer: Supreme Court leaker still appears to be a mystery

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's a Washington mystery that no one seems able to unravel. The Supreme Court apparently still hasn't found the person who leaked a draft of the court's major abortion decision earlier this year.

In a television interview airing this weekend, retired Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer, who left the court in June when the justices began their summer break, says he hasn't heard that the person's identity has been determined.

Breyer, 84, was speaking with CNN anchor Chris Wallace. According to a transcript provided by the network, Wallace asked about the leak, which happened in May: "Within 24 hours the chief justice ordered an investigation of the leaker. Have they found him or her?"

"Not to my knowledge, but ... I'm not privy to it," Breyer responds. Wallace presses: "So in those months since, the chief justice never said, 'Hey, we got our man or woman?'"

"To my knowledge, no," again responded Breyer, who despite being retired maintains an office at the Supreme Court. The interview is to air Sunday on "Who's Talking to Chris Wallace?"

Other justices have also suggested recently that the identity of the leaker remains unknown to the court. At a conference in Colorado this month Justice Neil Gorsuch said it is "terribly important" to identify the leaker and he is expecting a report on the progress of the investigation, "I hope soon." Justice Elena Kagan also said recently she does not know if the investigation Roberts ordered has determined the source of the leak.

Breyer, a liberal appointed to the court by President Bill Clinton, also spoke on a range of other topics with Wallace.

He was a about Virginia Thomas, a conservative activist and the wife of Justice Clarence Thomas, and her involvement in helping former President Donald Trump try to overturn his election defeat. Thomas has faced criticism for texting with White House chief of staff Mark Meadows and contacting lawmakers in Arizona and Wisconsin in the weeks after the election. She recently agreed to participate in a voluntary interview with the House panel investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection.

"I strongly believe that women who are wise, including wives of Supreme Court justices, have to make the decisions about how to lead their lives, careers, what kind of career etc., for themselves. So on this sort of issue, I understand where you're going, but I'm not going there. ... I'm not going to criticize Ginni Thomas, whom I like. I'm not going to criticize Clarence whom I like. And there we are," Breyer said.

Breyer, who watched his liberal colleague Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg opt not to retire when President Barack Obama could have named a like-minded replacement, said he would miss being on the court but that it was time to leave. Ginsburg died near the end of former President Donald Trump's term, and he named the conservative Justice Amy Coney Barret to replace her. Barret was confirmed just days before the presidential election that ousted Trump from office.

"I've done this for a long time. Other people should have a chance. The world does change. And we don't know, frankly, what would happen, if I just stayed there and stayed there. How long would I have to stay there? ... I owe loyalty to the court, which means don't muck things up. Do things in a regular order," Breyer said.

Post-Fiona fuel disruptions spark fear in Puerto Rico

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

CAGUAS, Puerto Rico (AP) — A growing number of businesses, including grocery stores and gas stations, are temporarily closing across Puerto Rico as power outages caused by Hurricane Fiona drag on in the U.S. territory, sparking concern about the availability of fuel and basic goods.

Hand-written signs warning of closures have been popping up more frequently, eliciting sighs and groans from customers on an island where nearly 60% of 1.47 million clients still do not have power five days

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 94 of 105

after the storm hit.

Betty Merced, a retiree who lives in the southern coastal city of Salinas, said she has spent several days looking for diesel to fill up her generator to no avail. She uses a sleep apnea machine and cannot risk going without it.

"There are a lot of people with a lot of needs," she said. "If there is no diesel, we're going to be very much in harm's way."

Merced said she would travel to the nearby town of Santa Isabel on Friday, and if she doesn't find diesel there, she will drive more than an hour to the northern city of Caguas, where at least one convenience store had a "No gas" sign on its door Thursday evening.

"I didn't think we were going to be so many days without power," she said.

Gasoline also was unavailable in Salinas after all gas stations shut down Wednesday, said community leader Wanda Ríos Colorado.

"When I saw that, my stomach almost turned," she said, adding that it gave her flashbacks of Hurricane Maria, a Category 4 storm that hit Puerto Rico in September 2017, resulting in nearly 3,000 deaths and sparking severe shortages of fuel, food, water and cash.

People also have struggled to get their prescriptions as some pharmacies temporarily close.

Puerto Rico's Department of Consumer Affairs said there is no shortage of fuel, but rather a disruption to the system as a result of flooding, landslides and an island-wide power outage caused by Fiona when it slammed into Puerto Rico's southwestern corner Sunday as a Category 1 storm.

Some fuel stations were unable to reopen or could not be refilled in the storm's early aftermath, officials said.

Consumer Affairs Secretary Edan Rivera sought to temper concerns, saying that "there is no basis to talk about a fuel shortage in Puerto Rico." He added that his agency also has found sufficient supplies of basic goods.

On Friday, Gov. Pedro Pierluisi of Puerto Rico activated the National Guard to help distribute diesel fuel to hospitals and supermarkets. The force is also supplying generators used to operate potable water plants and telecommunications towers.

On Thursday evening, Rivera announced that crews finally restored power to a gasoline distribution terminal in the southeastern town of Yabucoa that had been operating at a third of its capacity because it was running on a generator.

Rivera said this would speed up distribution of fuel across the island because the terminal could now operate 24 hours a day until the island recovers from the storm.

He said there is 14 days' worth of regular gasoline, 25 for diesel and 11 for premium.

"There's a peak in demand in the most affected areas, but it has been normalizing as trucks arrive," he said.

Rivera added that some wholesalers have taken measures to prevent retailers from hoarding fuel.

"Some will say they have received less product, but it's not that they're getting less. They asked for a lot, and to err on the side of caution, they're not being given everything they ask for," he said.

Rivera also noted that a container ship carrying 300,000 barrels of diesel would arrive Friday and the product would be distributed starting Saturday.

Meanwhile, Puerto Rico's Water and Sewer Authority said that of the 956,000 customers out of 1.32 million who have had water service restored since Fiona, more than 400,000 clients have water thanks to generators that depend on diesel.

Government officials said they expected to restore power by Friday in areas that were not severely affected by the storm, although they have not said when people living in storm-ravaged areas might have electricity.

U.S. President Joe Biden pledged Thursday to help Puerto Rico recover from Fiona, saying, "We are with you, we are not going to walk away."

He recently approved an emergency disaster declaration and a major disaster declaration, which would free up more federal assistance to those affected by the hurricane. Biden also announced 100% federal

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 95 of 105

funding for debris removal, search and rescue efforts, power and water restoration and shelter and food for one month.

"We'll do everything we can to meet the urgent needs you have," he said. "And we know they're real, and they're significant."

Oz releases health records to spotlight Fetterman's stroke

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Dr. Mehmet Oz, the Republican nominee for U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania, released his health records as he maneuvers to keep questions about Democratic rival John Fetterman's recovery from a stroke front and center in the hotly contested campaign.

Dr. Rebecca Kurth in New York City wrote in a four-page letter that she found the 62-year-old heart surgeon-turned-TV celebrity to be in "excellent health" in an annual checkup Thursday.

The letter noted that Oz has a total cholesterol level that is "borderline elevated" but can be addressed by diet, and referenced that in 2010 he had a polyp -- a growth that sometimes can become cancerous -- removed from his colon. An electrocardiogram — a test that records electrical signals in the heart to detect heart problems — he had Thursday came out normal.

"Your examination is healthy, and the blood tests are favorable," Kurth wrote. She recommended no medication.

The release of the health records comes as Oz is trying to close a gap in the polls and is increasingly making Fetterman's fitness to serve a central theme in his campaign.

Fetterman, 53, has been silent about releasing medical records or providing access for reporters to question his doctors, now more than four months after he suffered a stroke in May that has had lingering effects on his speech and hearing.

Two editorial boards, of The Washington Post and the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, have called for Fetterman to release medical records after his refusal to debate Oz more than once. The Post-Gazette said that should include cognitive tests and making his doctors available to reporters.

It said Oz should release his medical records, too — a request to which Oz quickly agreed.

In a statement, Oz said "voters should have full transparency when it comes to the health status of candidates running for office." Oz, a heart surgeon, is best known for "The Dr. Oz Show," which he hosted on daytime TV for 13 years.

Fetterman's campaign again made no commitment Friday to releasing records or providing access to his doctors.

Rather, he attacked Oz in a statement that revives some of the themes Fetterman has advanced during the campaign — including highlighting long-standing criticism that Oz often promoted questionable products and medical advice on his show.

"In June, I released a letter from my doctor where he clearly stated that I am fit to serve," Fetterman said in the statement. "Dr. Oz built his entire career by lying to people about health. I trust my actual doctors over the opinion of a charlatan who played one on TV."

Fetterman has been receiving speech therapy and the letter from his cardiologist said he will be fine and able to serve in the Senate if he eats healthy foods, takes prescribed medication and exercises.

The race in the presidential battleground to replace retiring Republican Sen. Pat Toomey could help determine control of the closely divided Senate, and Democrats view it as perhaps their best opportunity to pick up a seat out of just a handful of close races nationally.

While it is customary for presidential candidates to release health records, there is no such custom in races for the U.S. Senate. Some U.S. senators have, in the past, released medical records when running for president.

Oz, who has been endorsed by former President Donald Trump, also has questioned Fetterman's truthfulness in disclosing the effects of his stroke.

Fetterman, the state's lieutenant governor, maintains that doctors expect him to make a full recovery

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 96 of 105

from the stroke and that he is quickly improving, cognitively unaffected and maintaining the healthiest habits of his life.

Fetterman suffered the stroke on May 13, four days before he easily won his Democratic primary. His victory came hours after he underwent surgery to implant a pacemaker with a defibrillator. Three weeks after the stroke, Fetterman revealed that he had "almost died" and his cardiologist's letter disclosed he had a serious and potentially fatal heart condition.

Fetterman has been campaigning and speaking at public events, but speaks haltingly at times, garbles an occasional word and struggles to hear through background noise and quickly process what he's hearing. He recently agreed to one debate against Oz, to be held Oct. 25, though Oz had pressed for more.

Fetterman will receive closed-captioning at the debate, but the candidates are still bickering about the terms. Oz is pushing to expand it to 90 minutes, from 60 minutes, to account for any delays from closed captioning.

Publicly, top Democrats, including President Joe Biden, have sought to calm party nerves over Fetterman's condition, saying they are confident he is capable of serving.

Still, Fetterman has given reporters limited access to question him directly, doing just a few interviews since the stroke, all through video with closed-captioning to help him with auditory processing.

In a 2016 Senate contest in Illinois, Democrat Tammy Duckworth released years of medical records when there were questions about the fitness of Republican U.S. Sen. Mark Kirk, who had suffered a stroke in 2012.

Kirk was still suffering the effects of the stroke four years later, and, like Fetterman, did not provide access to his doctors or medical records. Still, Duckworth said during a debate that she thought Kirk was capable of doing the job but "the problem is he's not doing it."

Late in the race, Kirk's campaign released a one-page letter from a treating physician that said the senator had made a "full cognitive recovery" while still speaking haltingly, dealing with limited use of his left leg and the inability to use his left arm, the Chicago Tribune reported at the time.

Kirk ended up losing his reelection bid.

Bargain hunter scores 700-year-old medieval times document

By DAVID SHARP Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — A bargain hunter who went to an estate sale in Maine to find a KitchenAid mixer, a bookshelf or vintage clothing walked away with a 700-year-old treasure.

Instead of a kitchen appliance, Will Sideri stumbled upon a framed document hanging on a wall. It had elaborate script in Latin, along with musical notes and gold flourishes. A sticker said 1285 AD. Based on what he'd seen in a manuscripts class at Colby College, the document looked downright medieval.

And it was a bargain at \$75.

Academics confirmed the parchment was from The Beauvais Missal, used in the Beauvais Cathedral in France, and dated to the late 13th century. It was used about 700 years ago in Roman Catholic worship, they said.

An expert on manuscripts said the document, first reported by the Maine Monitor, could be worth as much as \$10,000.

After spying the unusual manuscript, Sideri contacted his former Colby College professor, who was familiar with it because there's another page in the college collection. The professor reached out to another academic who'd researched the document. They quickly confirmed the authenticity.

The parchment was part of a prayer book and priests' liturgy, said Lisa Fagin Davis, executive director of the Medieval Academy of America and a professor of manuscript studies at Simmons University in Boston.

The full missal was once owned by William Randolph Hearst, the newspaper publisher, before being sold in the 1940s and, much to the consternation of today's academics, was divvied up into individual pages, she said.

The practice was common in the early 20th century. "Thousands of unique manuscripts were destroyed and scattered this way," Davis said.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 97 of 105

Davis has painstakingly researched The Beauvais Missal, and has tracked down more than 100 individual pages across the country. All told, the missal numbered 309 pages in its original form.

The page purchased by Sideri is of particular interest to scholars.

It's a treasure both because of its age and condition, which is far better than the other page in the Colby collection, said Megan Cook, Sideri's former professor, who teaches medieval literature at Colby.

The parchment is worth upward of \$10,000, according to Davis. But Sideri said he has no intention of selling it.

He said he likes the history and beauty of the parchment — and the story of how he stumbled upon it. "This is something at the end of the day that I know is cool," he said. "I didn't buy this expecting to sell it."

Interview: Sudan's ruling general won't run in elections

By AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Sudan's ruling military general, who mounted a coup nearly a year ago, said he will not run in future elections for a civilian-led government but offered no timeline on when a vote might happen in order for him to relinquish power.

Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan spoke with The Associated Press on Thursday on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly's high-level leaders' meeting. It marked nearly one year after the coup upended the Arabic-speaking African nation's short-lived transition to democracy after three decades of repressive rule by strongman Omar al-Bashir.

Asked if he would consider running in future elections, Burhan replied: "I don't think so." When pressed further, he said: "I do not have a desire to put myself forward (as a candidate) nor do I want to continue in this work."

Underpinning last year's coup were tensions that had been building between supporters of military rule and those who support civilian rule, with both sides frustrated by the country's worsening economic conditions.

Sudan has been mired in political turmoil for over three years. Its economy has teetered and inflation was expected to hit a staggering 245% this year, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Since the coup last October, pro-democracy protesters have marched through the streets demanding the generals hand over power to civilians. They've denounced Burhan's takeover, which occurred when the military dissolved the transitional government of Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok as well as the Sovereign Council, a power-sharing body of military officers and civilians that had been ruling Sudan since late 2019.

Troops have opened fire at protesters, killing some of the marchers and detaining hundreds. While no police or security forces have been convicted in the deaths, Burhan said around five or six are under investigation.

"No one killed protesters in the way that's being depicted," he said. "Protesters clashed with police, and the police dealt with them according to the law to protect public property."

Burhan said that once an elected government is in place, the armed forces would be another institution of that government rather than retain a higher status.

During the interview, Burhan said he wouldn't run in future elections. But he stopped short of giving a date for when elections will be held, despite previously saying a vote could be held in July 2023. Instead, he said the gridlock lies with political groups that need to agree on a date for the vote. He insisted the military had no role in that discussion.

"We are talking about political participation and widening that participation, whether that is Hamdok or someone else, this person will not succeed without a wide base to rule Sudan," Burhan said. "The only authority to rule is through elections, with no one imposing their will on another."

He also brushed aside strains within his own transitional government, denying there were any disagreements with the deputy chief of Sudan's ruling military council, Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known by his nickname Hamedti. Local media over the past weeks reported disputes between the two

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 98 of 105

generals. Dagalo has also acknowledged the failure of the October military takeover.

In February 2020, Burhan met with then-Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Uganda, in a major diplomatic breakthrough that paved the way for Sudan to normalize ties with Israel. The meeting was part of a series of U.S.-brokered deals between Israel and four Arab countries.

Israel and Sudan have since crafted security and intelligence relationships that have seen officials exchange meetings repeatedly in unannounced trips.

Asked if he, as Sudan's leader, would visit Israel, he said: "The basis of relations is reconciliation. Therefore, if an invitation was presented and there is the means for this, I will go."

Amid the political upheaval, millions of Sudanese are suffering from high prices and a currency that's dropped dramatically in value against the dollar. The ruling military leader blamed countries and institutions, which he did not name, for being behind Sudan's deteriorating economic situation.

Sudan is in the midst of a deepening food crisis caused by 'a cocktail of factors,' according to the country's World Food Program representative, Eddie Rowe, who spoke at a U.N. news conference on Friday.

Sudan has seen two years of poor harvests, a summer of devastating flooding and is struggling to access vital grain imports from eastern Europe following the war in Ukraine. In response to October's coup, many major UN donors have withdrawn funding from the country.

To help ease Sudan's crisis, Rowe called for lasting peace, a reliable government, and further international aid and support.

Following the coup, the Biden administration suspended \$700 million in financial assistance intended to support Sudan's transition to a fully civilian government. The State Department said the full aid package, which may have included other aid beyond the \$700 million, had been put on "pause" pending a review of developments in Khartoum.

There are those "who promised to provide assistance to Sudan, but they did not honor their promises," Burhan said. "There was much support from those external actors but regretfully this assistance ceased for political purposes."

Bank directors urge firing of Trump official in ethics probe

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Executive directors of the Inter-American Development Bank voted unanimously Thursday to recommend firing a former Trump official as president of the Washington-based institution, a person familiar with the vote said.

The move came after an investigation conducted at the bank board's request determined that Mauricio Claver-Carone violated ethics rules by favoring a top aide with whom he had a romantic relationship, according to a report obtained by The Associated Press.

The recommendation to remove Claver-Carone came in a closed-door meeting of the bank's 14 executive directors, according to the person, who insisted on not being quoted by name. The ultimate decision to fire Claver-Carone now rests with the finance officials who sit on the Board of Governors representing all 48 of the bank's member nations.

Among those pushing for Claver-Carone's removal is the Biden administration, which said it was troubled by Claver-Carone's refusal to fully cooperate with an independent probe.

"His creation of a climate of fear of retaliation among staff and borrowing countries has forfeited the confidence of the Bank's staff and shareholders and necessitates a change in leadership," a Treasury Department spokesperson said.

Claver-Carone remained defiant in the aftermath of the vote, saying in a statement that replacing him would somehow embolden China, which saw its influence in the bank expand dramatically during the Obama administration. He provided no evidence to back that claim.

"It's shameful the U.S. commented to the press before notifying me and that it is not defending two Americans against what is clearly fabricated information," he said.

The AP obtained the confidential investigative report by a law firm hired by the bank's board to look into

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 99 of 105

an anonymous complaint of misconduct against Claver-Carone.

Investigators said it is reasonable to conclude he carried on a relationship with his chief of staff since at least 2019, when both held senior positions on the National Security Council. They said the purported relationship prompted one U.S. official at the time to warn that it posed a counterintelligence risk.

Exhibit A in the 21-page report is a "contract" that the two purportedly drew up on the back of a place mat in the summer of 2019 while they dined at a steakhouse in Medellin, Colombia. Both were there attending the annual meeting of the Organization of American States.

In it, they allegedly outline a timeline for divorcing their spouses and getting married. There is also a "breach clause" stating that any failure to fulfill the terms would bring "sadness and heartbreak" that could only be mitigated by "candlewax and a naughty box" from an oceanfront hotel in Claver-Carone's native Miami.

"We deserve absolute happiness. May only God part w/ this covenant," according to the contract, a photo of which was provided to investigators by the woman's former husband, who told investigators he found the place mat in her purse when she returned from the trip.

The purported contract is one of several details in the report that have Claver-Carone fighting to save his job. They include allegations he had a 1 a.m. hotel room rendezvous with his chief of staff, sent her a poem on a Sunday morning titled "My Soul is in a Hurry" and — perhaps most troubling — awarded her 40% pay raises in violation of the bank's conflict-of-interest policies.

Claver-Carone has disputed the report's accuracy, strongly denouncing the manner in which the review was conducted and offering no hint that he is considering resignation.

According to investigators, he has denied ever having — now or before — a romantic relationship with his longtime right hand.

His chief of staff denied the allegations in the anonymous complaint and told investigators she never violated the IDB's code of ethics, the report said. In a written submission to investigators, she also complained that she had been denied due process.

The AP isn't naming Claver-Carone's aide because the report, which is labeled "confidential," hasn't been made public.

"Neither I nor any other IDB staff member has been given an opportunity to review the final investigative report, respond to its conclusions, or correct inaccuracies," Claver-Carone said in a statement Tuesday.

The findings recall accusations of ethical lapses against another Republican atop a multilateral institution, former Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, who resigned as head of the World Bank in 2007 for arranging a generous pay raise for his girlfriend.

The Inter-American Development Bank is the biggest multilateral lender to Latin America, disbursing as much as \$23 billion every year in efforts to alleviate poverty in the region.

The U.S. is the largest shareholder in the Washington-based bank and some inside the White House have made no secret of their dislike for Claver-Carone, whose election as IDB chief in the final months of the Trump presidency broke with tradition that a Latin American head the bank.

Some of the more salacious claims referenced in the report could not be substantiated by New York-based Davis Polk. The law firm also found no evidence that Claver-Carone knowingly broke the bank's travel policies to cover up a romantic relationship, or retaliated against any bank employees, as was alleged in an anonymous complaint sent in March to the bank's board.

Still, Davis Polk harshly criticized Claver-Carone and his chief of staff for failing to cooperate fully with their investigation — considering it a violation of bank policies and principles.

For example, the report said Claver-Carone failed to hand over his bank-issued mobile phone for analysis although he did provide a forensic report conducted by a consultant. Claver-Carone also didn't share messages from his personal phone or Gmail account with his chief of staff, the report said.

"Particularly in light of their failure to cooperate, it would be reasonable to conclude that the evidence of a prior relationship, and the additional circumstantial evidence of a current relationship while they were both at the Bank, constitute a violation of the applicable Bank policies," the report said.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 100 of 105

Davis Polk's report said Claver-Carone raised his aide's pay by 40% within a year. It said that one of the raises and a change of title was ordered by Claver-Carone a day after an email exchange in which she complained about not getting sufficient respect from her co-workers.

"You figure it out. It's your bank," she wrote, according to the report.

Davis Polk, which also conducted the investigation that led to Andrew Cuomo's resignation as governor of New York, faulted Claver-Carone for making employment decisions about someone with whom it believes he had been romantically involved. However, it said that other executives received similarly-sized increases and his chief of staff's current salary of \$420,000 is in line with her predecessor's compensation.

Claver-Carone when confronted with photographs of the purported place mat "contract" during an interview this month told investigators that he had never seen the document and denied it was his handwriting or signature. He stated that the document was fraudulent and part of a scheme by his aide's ex-husband to harm her.

In a letter to the bank's general counsel, seen by AP, divorce lawyers for the chief of staff said her former husband had a history of cruelty and revenge that was raised in divorce proceedings. They said any evidence he supplied investigators should not be deemed credible.

However, two independent handwriting experts, one who previously worked for the FBI, concluded there was a high probability that the handwriting on the place mat — excerpts of which are displayed in the report — match Claver-Carone's penmanship in bank documents. Claver-Carone refused to submit a handwriting sample as part of the probe, the report said.

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

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Ad misleads on treaty regulating global arms trade

CLAIM: President Joe Biden just announced that he is adding the U.S. as a signatory to the United Nations "Small Arms Treaty," which would "establish an international gun control registry" in which other countries can "track the 'end user' of every rifle, shotgun, and handgun sold in the world."

THE FACTS: There is no "U.N. Small Arms Treaty." A separate U.N. agreement, the Arms Trade Treaty, regulates the international trade of a range of weapons, but does not track domestic gun sales. The false claim about an "international gun control registry" was shared in a Facebook advertisement by a gun rights group stoking fears about threats to the Second Amendment. The group, the "American Firearms Association," claims in its Facebook ad that Biden "has just announced that he is adding America as a signatory to the U.N. Small Arms Treaty, setting the stage for a full ratification vote in the U.S. Senate." "The U.N. Small Arms Treaty would establish an international gun control registry, allowing Communist China, European socialists, and 3rd World dictators to track the 'end user' of every rifle, shotgun, and handgun sold in the world," continues the post, which links to a petition asking for users' contact information. The post calls on supporters of the Second Amendment to oppose the treaty. But there is no treaty called the "U.N. Small Arms Treaty," and the treaty that is being referenced does not record private gun sales in any country, experts say. The actual treaty, the U.N. Arms Trade Treaty, deals not only with small arms such as rifles and pistols, but battle tanks, armored combat vehicles, large-caliber artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships and more, the AP has reported. The U.N. in 2013 adopted the treaty to keep weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists and human rights violators. The treaty prohibits countries that ratify it from exporting conventional weapons if they violate arms embargoes, or if they promote acts of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes. It does encourage its parties to maintain national records regarding exports of conventional arms and says such records should include the "end user." But that's a recommendation about recording exports that a country makes to another

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 101 of 105

country, not gun sales to individuals within a country, said Jennifer Erickson, an associate professor of political science and international studies at Boston College. Experts note that the treaty was written to explicitly make clear it has no bearing on domestic gun rights or sales. The treaty's preamble, for example, states that the agreement is "Reaffirming the sovereign right of any State to regulate and control conventional arms exclusively within its territory, pursuant to its own legal or constitutional system." The U.N. has "no gun control registry in terms of private ownership, whatsoever," Erickson said. Erickson said the U.S. government already uses "end-use" monitoring by recording where it sends weapons. "There is only in the Arms Trade Treaty a focus on cross-border transfers, so not domestic sales or ownership," said Rachel Stohl, vice president of research programs at the Stimson Center, a nonpartisan think tank focused on international security. "It's really looking at sales between governments. And it applies to the entire range of conventional weapons, not just small arms and light weapons." The U.S. signed the treaty in 2013, though the Senate never ratified it — which means the country is a signatory of the agreement, but not an official party and bound by it. In 2019, Trump announced that he was revoking the country's status as a signatory, though that move was symbolic. The U.N. still lists the U.S. as a signatory to the treaty, though in a footnote online it acknowledges that, in a July 2019 communication, the U.S. said it did not intend to become a party to the treaty and that it has no legal obligations in relation to it. Contrary to the ad's claim, Biden has not yet taken any action to reverse the U.S.'s public position on the treaty, Stohl said. An inquiry to one of the directors of the American Firearms Association was not immediately returned.

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

Baseless claims about safety of mRNA vaccines circulate online

CLAIM: Humans and other mammals injected with an mRNA vaccine die within five years.

THE FACTS: There is no scientific evidence to suggest humans or other mammals given an mRNA vaccine die within five years, experts told the AP. Social media users are reviving concerns that mRNA-based vaccines, including those that are used to combat COVID-19, are extremely deadly. "No mammal injected with mRNA has ever survived longer than 5 years. The die-off has begun," one user on Twitter wrote in a post that's been liked or shared more than 17,000 times. But there's no scientific proof that the mRNA vaccination shortens life expectancy or has led to mass die offs in humans or other mammals since research began on them decades ago, experts told the AP "Nothing of the scale suggested has happened," Dr. Daniel Kuritzkes, chief of infectious diseases at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, told the AP. "The vast majority of the millions who have been injected are doing just fine." Vaccines utilizing messenger RNA, or mRNA, teach cells how to make a protein that will trigger an immune response that protects a person from becoming seriously ill from a disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The molecule was first discovered in the early 1960s and research into its uses in medical treatment progressed into the 1970s and 1980s, according to Johns Hopkins University's School of Public Health. A flu vaccine based on mRNA was tested on mice in the 1990s, but the first vaccines for rabies and influenza weren't tested on humans until recently. Kuritzkes said no deaths from those vaccines were reported in those trials. Meanwhile, hundreds of millions of people worldwide have been inoculated against COVID-19 in the last couple of years and reports of death after vaccination remain rare. Healthcare providers are required to report any death after a COVID-19 shot to the federal government's Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS), even if it's unclear whether the vaccine was the cause. More than 600 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in the U.S. from December 2020 through last week, according to the CDC. During that time, there have been more than 16,500 preliminary reports of death, or 0.0027% of those that have received a COVID-19 vaccine. Of those, the CDC has identified just nine deaths causally associated with rare blood clots caused by the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which is not mRNA based like those produced by Pfizer and Moderna. Kuritzkes also notes that mRNA only lasts in the body for a short period of time before rapidly degrading, making it unlikely that it would cause long term effects. "The fact that we're just now getting to the five-year mark for some of the earliest studies is not evidence that people die from the vaccines," he said. "Just evidence that five years have yet to elapse for many trials. Sort of like saying nobody who voted in the 2020 presidential election has lived more than

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 102 of 105

five years.”

— Associated Press writer Philip Marcelo in New York contributed this report.

Video of traffic at the Finnish-Russian border misrepresented

CLAIM: Video shows lines of cars waiting at the Russian-Finnish border after Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a partial mobilization of reservists on Wednesday amid the war in Ukraine.

THE FACTS: The video was filmed at the Vaalimaa border crossing point between Russia and Finland on Aug. 29, weeks before Putin announced the partial mobilization of Russian reservists to Ukraine. Following Putin’s announcement, social media users misrepresented a video showing traffic at the border crossing point in Finland, about a three hour drive from St. Petersburg, Russia. The original video, which was posted to YouTube and TikTok on Sept. 19, shows a long line of cars at the border crossing point. Social media users then took the clip out of context, falsely claiming that it captured Russians fleeing to Finland. “#Breaking: just in - The traffic jam at the border with#Russia/#Finland has pilled up to 35KM and is rising by the hour, it is the only border who is still open for Russian civilians with shengen visas, after#Putin announced he will send 300.000 new troops to#Ukraine,” a tweet with more than 2.7 million views falsely claimed. Igor Parri, the TikTok user who posted the original video confirmed to The Associated Press in an email that he filmed it on Aug. 29. He sent the AP the original video to verify that he filmed it and noted that the video “was just depicting the quite typical line” at the border. The Finish border authority on Wednesday publicly responded to the claims circulating widely on social media, noting that traffic conditions at the border remained normal. “Situation at Finnish Russian border is normal, both at green border and in border traffic,” Matti Pitkäniitty, a senior official with the Finnish border authority wrote in a statement posted to Twitter. “Just talked to our officers in charge. There is normal queuing in border traffic...” Pitkäniitty then tweeted on Thursday that traffic from Russia was at a “higher level than usual,” but was comparable to weekend traffic. In a statement to reporters on Thursday, Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin said that the country was considering ways to reduce Russian transit to Finland, after Putin’s announcement. Putin’s announcement on Wednesday sparked anti-war demonstrations across the country that resulted in almost 1,200 arrests, the AP reported. Some Russians rushed to buy plane tickets to flee the country.

Florida ranks 48th in teacher pay, not 9th

CLAIM: When the Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis took office, Florida ranked 26th in the nation for teacher pay. Today the state ranks 9th in teacher pay.

THE FACTS: Florida most recently ranked 48th in the nation in average public school teacher pay and was ranked 47th when DeSantis took office, according to the National Education Association, which compiles the data annually. The Florida Republican Party misled social media users this month when it posted on its verified Twitter and Facebook accounts that the state was among the best in the nation for teacher pay. “When Governor DeSantis took office Florida ranked 26th in the nation for teacher pay, today we are 9th,” the party wrote. “Every year he fights to ensure Florida teachers get the support and funding they need.” However, national salary data contradicts those numbers. The National Center for Education Statistics and several other online sources for such data get their salary information from the NEA, the nation’s largest teacher’s union, which compiles most of its data from state education departments. NEA data shows that in the 2018-2019 school year, when DeSantis entered office, Florida ranked 47th in the nation for average public school teacher pay, giving teachers an average annual salary of \$48,314. It ranked 48th in the 2020-2021 school year, giving teachers an average of \$51,009. The state is estimated to continue to rank 48th for the 2021-2022 school year, according to Staci Maiers, an NEA spokesperson. The governor’s press office in a news release in March touted the 9th-in-the-nation ranking, but referred to starting salary, rather than average teacher salary. “In 2020, the average starting salary for a teacher in Florida was \$40,000 (26th in the nation), and with today’s funding, it will now be at least \$47,000 (9th in the nation),” the release said. Those numbers also aren’t an exact match for the NEA’s data, which show that in the 2019-2020 school

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 103 of 105

year, Florida ranked 29th in the nation for average public school teacher starting salary, according to Mairers. Estimates for the 2020-2021 school year show Florida ranking 16th in the nation on this benchmark. And based on the data from that school year, which is the most recent data available, a \$47,000 starting salary would place Florida at 11th in the nation, not 9th. Cassandra Palelis, press secretary for the Florida Department of Education, explained that the press release from March featured previous data from the NEA, which was later updated. She said Florida's estimated starting salary for the 2022-2023 school year is more than \$48,000 per year, which would rank 9th in the nation according to NEA data. The Florida Republican Party didn't respond to emailed requests for comment.

— Associated Press writer Ali Swenson in New York contributed this report.

Vatican cyclist spreading the pope's message at worlds

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer

VATICAN CITY (AP) — A plain white helmet like the pope's skullcap.

The Holy See's crossed keys seal stamped on his white and yellow jersey over his heart.

Dutch-born cyclist Rien Schuurhuis will carry an enormous sense of duty when he races for the Vatican in Sunday's road race at the cycling world championships in Wollongong, Australia — marking a first in the city-state's increasing use of sports as an instrument of dialogue, peace and solidarity.

"It's an incredible honor," Schuurhuis told The Associated Press in a phone interview from Australia on Friday. "I think the real emotion is still yet to come when I'm standing there at the start line.

"This is a great first step in the direction of what the pope believes in achieving through sports (with) inclusiveness and fraternity," Schuurhuis added. "Everyone on the sports field — or on the roads in this case — is equal, no matter their backgrounds, religion or age."

Vatican athletes have recently participated as non-scoring competitors in the Games of the Small States of Europe — open to nations with fewer than 1 million people — and the Mediterranean Games.

The cycling worlds mark the first time that a Vatican athlete will compete as a regular scoring competitor, after the International Cycling Union recognized the Holy See as its 200th member last year.

"As Pope Francis said when he met with a group of riders in 2019, the beautiful thing about cycling is that when you drop behind because you've fallen or because you punctured your tire, your teammates slow down and help you catch up with the main pack," said Athletica Vaticana president Giampaolo Mattei, who oversees the team. "That's something that should carry over to life in general."

The 40-year-old Schuurhuis qualified for the team because he is married to Australia's ambassador to the Vatican, Chiara Porro.

He holds Dutch and Australian passports but athletically now represents the Vatican.

"I was able to ride a bike before I could walk" Schuurhuis said about growing up in the cycling-crazy Netherlands.

Schuurhuis previously raced on the UCI's Continental Circuit, one level below the elite World Tour.

"He's a good cyclist. That's a high level," said Valerio Agnoli, Schuurhuis' volunteer coach and a former teammate of Grand Tour winners Ivan Basso and Vincenzo Nibali.

Schuurhuis, whose day job is now running a company that supplies materials for 3D printers, trains on Rome's traffic-clogged roads. He sometimes heads out to the Alban Hills, where the pope's traditional summer residence is at Castel Gandolfo.

Besides a recent photo opp, Schuurhuis doesn't really ride inside the Vatican.

"I think I did it once with my son," he said. "But it's not really allowed to go through St. Peter's Square. So I think we were told off by the police."

Schuurhuis doesn't expect to come close to winning. His main goal is to spread the pope's message.

Like when he participated in a church event with Indigenous Australians on Friday, or when Belgian standout Wout van Aert sought him out during training a day earlier.

"When people see that very special white and yellow jersey it makes them curious," Agnoli said.

Agnoli noted how cycling takes place on open roads, passes by people's homes and isn't restricted to

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 104 of 105

paying ticketholders inside a stadium or arena.

"That's the great thing about cycling," Agnoli said. "I was chosen by the Vatican for this job because my role as a cyclist was that of a team helper. I helped teammates win the Giro d'Italia and the Spanish Vuelta."

In another example of the values held within cycling, Mattei pointed to how Gino Bartali, the 1938 Tour de France winner who smuggled forged documents inside his bicycle frame to help rescue Jews during Germany's occupation of Italy in World War II, is currently being considered for beatification by the Vatican, the first step to possible sainthood.

Vatican officials would like to one day field a team in the Olympics.

"To go to the Olympics would require creating an Olympic committee and being recognized by the International Olympic Committee," Mattei said. "That takes time."

Competing in a world championships, however, is a big step toward Olympic participation.

So will the pope be watching Schuurhuis on TV?

"The time difference presents a problem," Mattei said, noting that the race in Australia starts at 2:15 a.m. Vatican time and that Pope Francis is traveling to the southern Italian city of Matera on Sunday. "But maybe he'll watch a replay."

Today in History: September 24, "60 Minutes" premieres

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Sept. 24, the 267th day of 2022. There are 98 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Sept. 24, 1960, the USS Enterprise, the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, was launched at Newport News, Virginia.

On this date:

In 1789, President George Washington signed a Judiciary Act establishing America's federal court system and creating the post of attorney general.

In 1869, thousands of businessmen were ruined in a Wall Street panic known as "Black Friday" after financiers Jay Gould and James Fisk attempted to corner the gold market.

In 1957, the Los Angeles-bound Brooklyn Dodgers played their last game at Ebbets Field, defeating the Pittsburgh Pirates 2-0.

In 1963, the U.S. Senate ratified a treaty with Britain and the Soviet Union limiting nuclear testing.

In 1968, the TV news magazine "60 Minutes" premiered on CBS; the undercover police drama "The Mod Squad" premiered on ABC.

In 1969, the trial of the Chicago Eight (later seven) began. (Five were later convicted of crossing state lines to incite riots at the 1968 Democratic convention, but the convictions were ultimately overturned.)

In 1976, former hostage Patricia Hearst was sentenced to seven years in prison for her part in a 1974 bank robbery in San Francisco carried out by the Symbionese Liberation Army. (Hearst was released after 22 months after receiving clemency from President Jimmy Carter.)

In 1996, the United States and 70 other countries became the first to sign a treaty at the United Nations to end all testing and development of nuclear weapons. (The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty has yet to enter into force because of the refusal so far of eight nations — including the United States — to ratify it.)

In 2001, President George W. Bush ordered a freeze on the assets of 27 people and organizations with suspected links to terrorism, including Islamic militant Osama bin Laden, and urged other nations to do likewise.

In 2015, a stampede and crush of Muslim pilgrims occurred at an intersection near a holy site in Saudi Arabia; The Associated Press estimated that more than 2,400 people were killed, while the official Saudi toll stood at 769.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Sept. 24, 2022 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 079 ~ 105 of 105

In 2019, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi launched a formal impeachment inquiry against President Donald Trump; the probe focused partly on whether Trump abused his presidential powers and sought help from the government of Ukraine to undermine Democratic foe Joe Biden. (Trump would be acquitted by the Republican-controlled Senate on two impeachment charges.)

In 2020, President Donald Trump's refusal to commit to a peaceful transfer of power if he were to lose the November election drew swift blowback from both parties in Congress, with Senate GOP leader Mitch McConnell saying that the winner "will be inaugurated on January 20th."

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama told the ABC talk show "The View" there was "no doubt" that the assault of the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya, that killed four Americans, including the U.S. ambassador, "wasn't just a mob action" but a sign of extremism in nations lacking stability. Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney accused Obama of minimizing the Benghazi attack as a mere "bump in the road."

Five years ago: More than 200 NFL players kneeled or sat during the national anthem after President Donald Trump criticized the players' protests in a speech and a series of tweets. Trump signed a proclamation to replace his expiring travel ban on visitors from six Muslim-majority countries; citizens from eight countries would now face new restrictions on entry to the country. German Chancellor Angela Merkel won a fourth term in office, but voters weakened her conservatives and a nationalist, anti-migrant party surged into Germany's parliament.

One year ago: A Republican-backed review of the 2020 presidential election in Arizona's largest county ended without providing proof to support former President Donald Trump's false claims of a stolen election; the vote tally from a firm hired by Republican lawmakers found that President Joe Biden won in the county by 360 more votes than in the official results that were certified. California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a law removing the word "alien" from various sections of the state code; the word, which was criticized as being dehumanizing and offensive, would be replaced with terms like "noncitizen" or "immigrant."

Today's Birthdays: Singer Phyllis "Jiggs" Allbut Sirico (The Angels) is 80. Political commentator Lou Dobbs is 77. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Joe Greene is 76. Actor Gordon Clapp is 74. Actor Harriet Walter is 72. Songwriter Holly Knight is 66. Actor Kevin Sorbo is 64. Actor-writer Nia Vardalos is 60. Rock musician Shawn Crahan (AKA Clown) (Slipknot) is 53. Country musician Marty Mitchell is 53. Actor Megan Ward is 53. Singer-musician Marty Cinton (No Mercy) is 51. Contemporary Christian musician Juan DeVevo (Casting Crowns) is 47. Actor Ian Bochen is 46. Actor Justin Bruening is 43. Olympic gold medal gymnast Paul Hamm (hahm) is 40. Actor Erik Stocklin is 40. Actor Spencer Treat Clark is 35. Actor Grey Damon is 35. Actor Kyle Sullivan is 34. Actor Ben Platt is 29.