

Groton Daily Independent

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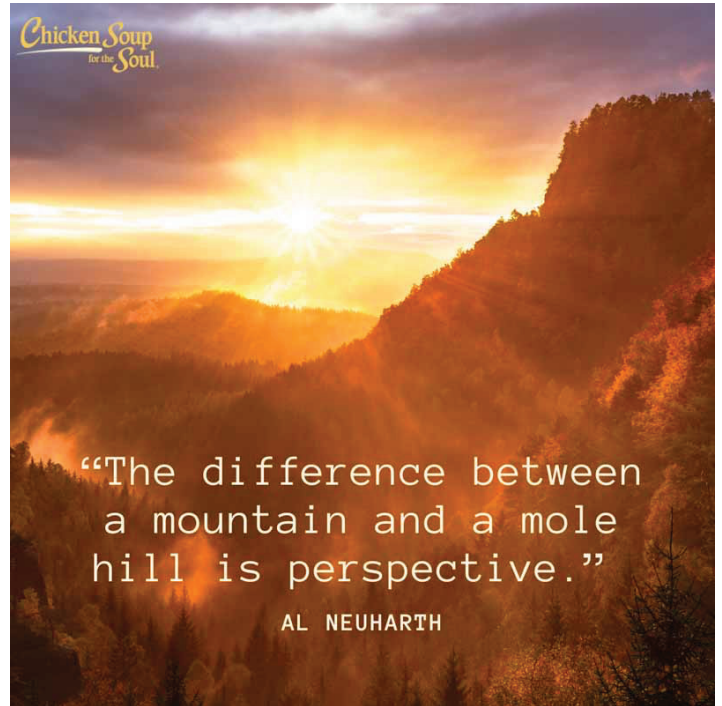
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Tuesday, Oct. 11

Northwestern Middle School Music Festival

PSAT Pre-Administration

7 p.m.: School Board Meeting

Wednesday, Oct. 12

8:30 a.m.: PSAT Grades 10 and 11 (Optional)

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

UMC: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.; Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 13

Region 1A Cross Country Meet at Webster, 3:30 p.m.

Volleyball at Deuel (7th and 8th at 4 p.m., C match at 5 p.m. followed by JV and Varsity)

5 p.m.: Combined 7th/8th FB at Webster

**HELP
WANTED!**

Part time cashier wanted at Ken's Food Fair of Groton. Must be available any hours including weekends. Stop at the store and see Lionel or Matt.

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

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

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Groton Chamber of Commerce October 5, 2022

12pm City Hall

- Individuals present: Katelyn Nehlich, Carol Kutter, April Abeln, and Kellie Locke
- Coffee from Beauty Brew Boutique was purchased by the Chamber for all to enjoy.
- Minutes from the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Nehlich and seconded by Locke. All members present voted aye.
- Treasurer's report was given. Dacotah Bank checking account balance is \$28,496.48. \$1,007.34 is in the Bucks account. Report was approved by Abeln and seconded by Locke. All members present voted aye.
- 2022 Chamber shirt orders will re-open November 1 with November 23 deadline. A Facebook giveaway of 5 shirts will be done on the same dates with viewers commenting what they are grateful for. A possible Christmas Facebook giveaway was also discussed. GHS activity giveaways will cease.
- Pumpkin Fest was a huge success.
- GDI Live sponsorship ads are going well.
- A quote from Rustic Cuts for new tumblers was presented. Abeln will ask for a sample of the rustic design on a leather tumbler. Website will be added and South Dakota will be removed.
- 2023 events have been added to the Glacial Lakes events calendar.
- November/December ads have been submitted to SD and Aberdeen Magazines.
- Moved by Abeln and seconded by Nehlich to place the November/December ad the week of November 2 and our 'Tis the Season to Shop Local ad the week of November 16 in The Groton Independent. All members present voted aye.
- Appointing a different member to the Advertising Coordinator position was tabled.
- Abeln will send the Glacial Lakes ad to Geffdog for the Publication Program Literature Drop and will have a proof ready for the next meeting for rack cards.
- Holiday boxes will not be done.
- Motion by Abeln and seconded by Nehlich to gift \$200 to the Santa Day event. All members present voted aye.
- Motion by Abeln and seconded by Nehlich to order all supplies needed to mail 2023 dues notices with envelopes being purchased from The Groton Independent. All members present voted aye. Window clings will also be purchased using the rustic chamber design. Dues mailing date is scheduled for October 26, 5:30 p.m. at President Carol's house. BYOB.
- Smith Autobody would like to wait until they have their signage installed to have their new business welcome. A new business welcome was planned for October 6, 12:30pm at Lavish Luxury Salon Suite.
- Next meeting:
 - o November 2nd at City Hall 12-1pm
- Upcoming events
 - o 10/07/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
 - o 10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
 - o 10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
 - o 11/11-13/2022 Front Porch 605 Christmas at the Barn 10am-5pm each day
 - o 11/19/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm
 - o 11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
 - o 12/03/2022 Holiday Tour of Homes & Silent Auction at Olive Grove Golf Course 4-7pm o 12/10/2022 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm
 - o 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed at the Community Center 10am-1pm
 - o 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm

Broman awarded Distinguished Alumni Award at MSUM

by Dorene Nelson



Stacy Broman

Stacy Broman, daughter of the late Leonard and Gwen Broman, Groton, was recently awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award from Moorhead State University (MSUM). The award recognizes alumni who have made significant contributions to their professional fields and communities.

After graduating from Groton High School in 1981, Broman received her Bachelor's Degree in Economics from Moorhead State followed by her Juris Doctor Degree from Hamline University School of Law.

"While I was in high school, I participated in speech and debate activities," Broman said. "My mother Gwen was the high school librarian and the oral interp coach while John Westby was the debate coach."

"Under their leadership and guidance, I learned many valuable lessons that have been beneficial to my law career," she explained. "I was one of the team members that brought home Groton's first State Championship Debate Trophy!"

"I decided to go to MSUM after high school so that I could attend a great college and yet not be too far from home. I'm an only child so wanted to be close enough to see my parents frequently," Broman smiled. "While attending college,

I majored in economics since I found the subject interesting and thought it might be good preparation for law school."

"As a freshman I joined a sorority and the speech team, both of which provided me with many life-long friends and wonderful memories," she admitted. "As a matter of fact, I met my husband and his parents at MSUM."

"I am now a partner at Meagher & Geer PLLP, a firm that represents insurers in complex litigation and bad faith matters nationally," Broman explained. "As a result of the opportunities offered here and the work I was able to do, I have been honored to be on a number of 'best lawyer' lists."

"The firm I work for has 86 lawyers in four different offices across the country," she stated. "In 2013 and again in 2023 (next year's awards have already been announced), I was named the Best Insurance Lawyer of the Year for Minneapolis."

"I have found being a lawyer to be a challenging and fulfilling career," Broman said. "If you have a passion for the law and it's what you really want to do, there are so many opportunities."

"I served on the board of directors of the Federation of Defense and Corporate Counsel (FDCC) and co-chaired its diversity committee," she said. "In July 2020, I received the FDCC Diversity Award for my support of diversity efforts both within and outside the legal community."

"I also volunteer and help raise funds for Southern Minnesota Legal Services, an agency that provides free, high-quality legal assistance to low-income people facing critical civil matters," Broman explained.

"Growing up in the Mid -West helped me to learn the value of hard work and giving back," she says. "There are so many who are less fortunate and there is such a need for good legal work."

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

October 11, 2022 – 7:00 PM – GHS Library Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of September 12 school board meeting, September 15 special school board meeting, and September 26 school board meeting as drafted or amended.
2. Approval of September 2022 District bills for payment.
3. Approval of September Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
4. Approval of September 2022 School Lunch Report.
5. Approval of September 2022 School Transportation Report.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Program Overview Presentations
 - a. Technology...A. Helvig
 - b. Library/Media...B. Madsen, T. Dunker
3. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

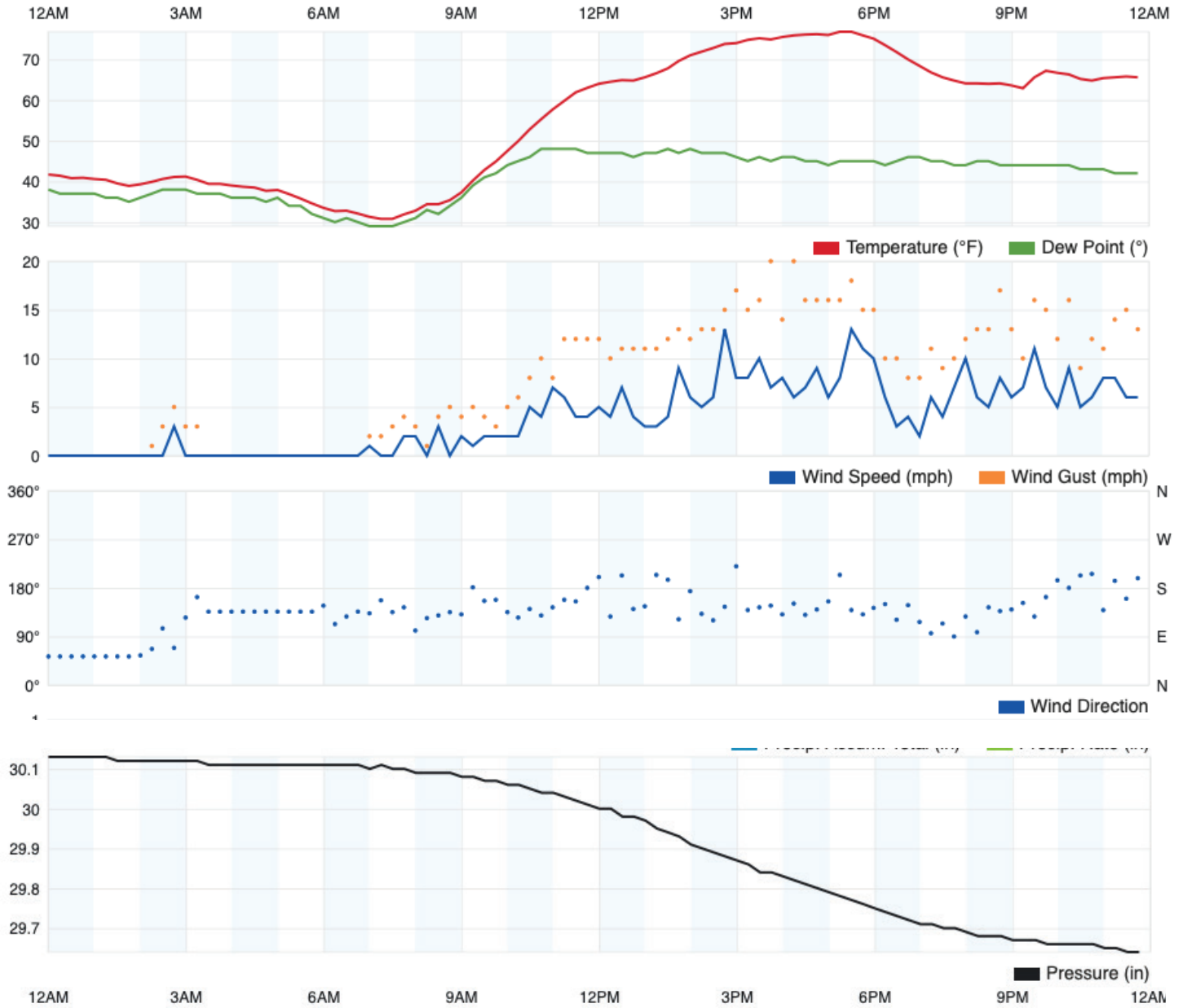
1. Executive session pursuant SDCL1-25-2(4) negotiations.

ADJOURN

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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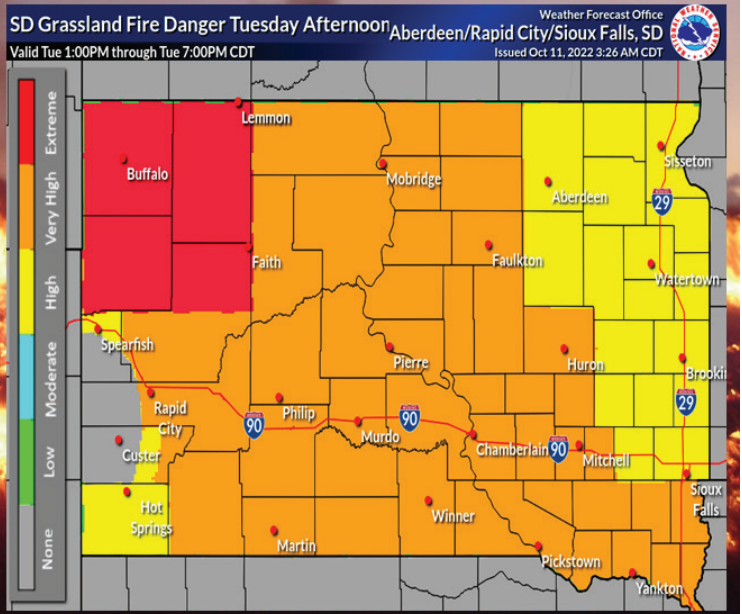
Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
Sunny then Increasing Clouds and Breezy	Mostly Cloudy and Breezy then Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Breezy then Mostly Clear	Sunny and Breezy
High: 74 °F	Low: 41 °F	High: 57 °F	Low: 36 °F	High: 52 °F



Windy With Elevated Fire Danger Next Few Days

Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/abr

	Maximum Temperature Forecast								Maximum
	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	
Aberdeen	68	71	74	72	71	68	64	60	74
Britton	68	71	72	73	72	69	66	59	73
Eagle Butte	65	66	64	63	61	59	58	55	66
Eureka	65	66	68	65	63	61	57	54	68
Gettysburg	66	69	68	65	63	60	57	54	69
Kennebec	69	71	74	72	70	68	64	60	74
McIntosh	61	61	62	60	59	59	56	53	62
Milbank	71	73	75	77	75	74	71	65	77
Miller	71	75	77	75	73	71	66	60	77
Mobridge	65	66	68	65	65	63	60	56	68
Murdo	68	71	72	70	67	66	61	58	72
Pierre	67	70	72	70	68	66	62	59	72
Redfield	69	73	74	76	74	70	68	62	76
Sisseton	72	74	75	76	75	71	69	62	76
Watertown	67	71	74	74	75	72	69	66	75
Webster	68	70	72	73	72	69	67	60	73
Wheaton	70	74	75	77	76	73	70	63	77



Temperatures ahead of a cold front will end up some 10 to 20 degrees above normal. The combination of windy and dry conditions means elevated potential for fires for the next few days.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 77 °F at 5:18 PM

Low Temp: 31 °F at 7:10 AM

Wind: 31 °F at 7:10 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 13 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 93 in 2015

Record Low: 16 in 1935

Average High: 62°F

Average Low: 36°F

Average Precip in Oct.: .83

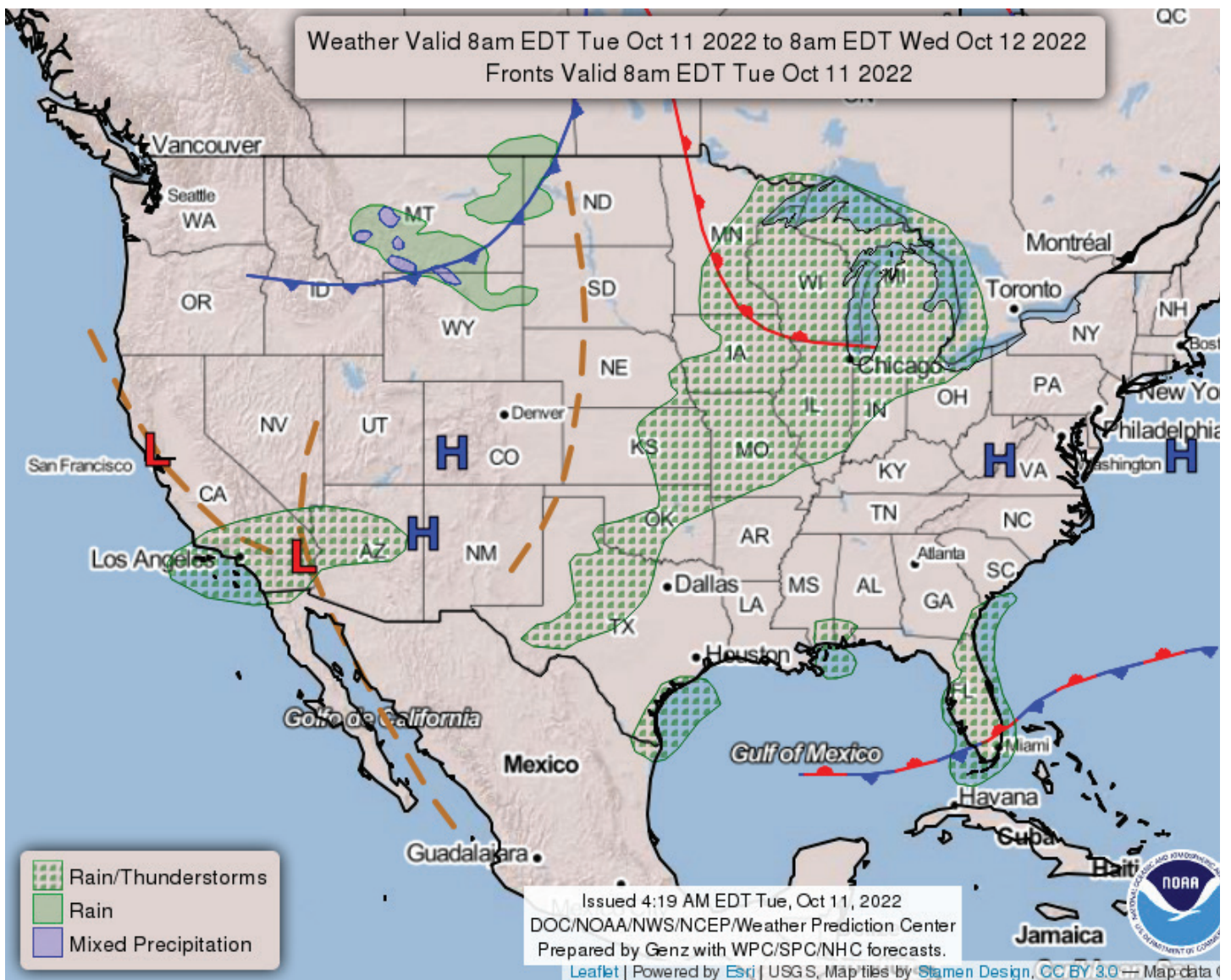
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.45

Average Precip to date: 19.16

Precip Year to Date: 16.50

Sunset Tonight: 6:55:50 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:43:35 AM



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Today in Weather History

October 11, 1997: High winds and hail caused nearly \$20,000 in damage to rural Meade County homes.

1846: A major hurricane, possibly a Category 5, moved through the Caribbean Sea. This Great Havana Hurricane struck western Cuba on 10 October. It hit the Florida Keys on 11 October, destroying the old Key West Lighthouse and Fort Zachary Taylor.

1906: Games 1 and 2 of all Chicago World Series were played amid snow flurries. Snow would not happen again in a World Series until 1997. The high temperature for game 3 played on this day was 43 degrees.

1925 - Widespread early season snows fell in the northeastern U.S., with as much as two feet in New Hampshire and Vermont. The heavy snow blocked roads and cancelled football games. (David Ludlum)

1954 - A deluge of 6.72 inches of rain in 48 hours flooded the Chicago River, causing ten million dollars damage in the Chicago area. (9th-11th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - More than thirty cities in the Upper Midwest reported record low temperatures for the date, including Waterloo IA and Scottsbluff NE where the mercury dipped to 16 degrees. Tropical Storm Floyd brought heavy rain to southern Florida, moisture from Hurricane Ramon produced heavy rain in southern California, and heavy snow blanketed the mountains of New York State and Vermont. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Low pressure brought gale force winds to the Great Lakes Region, with snow and sleet reported in some areas. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the north central U.S. The mercury hit 84 degrees at Cutbank MT and Worland WY. The temperature at Gunnison CO soared from a morning low of 12 degrees to a high of 66 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Much of the nation enjoyed "Indian Summer" type weather. Nine cities in the central U.S. reported record highs for the date as temperatures warmed into the 80s and 90s. Record highs included 90 degrees at Grand Island NE and 97 degrees at Waco TX. Strong winds along a cold front crossing the Northern High Plains Region gusted to 80 mph at Ames Monument WY during the early morning. (The National Weather Summary)

2005: A tropical depression, formerly Hurricane Vince, became the first tropical cyclone to make landfall in Spain since 1842.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

NO ONE CAN ESCAPE

Proverbs 15 contains fifteen references to the "tongue." Between two of the references, verses two and four, we come across another word that is important in the process of communication: "eyes." Although we do not ordinarily think of the eyes as part of the communication process, but in this verse it is: "The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good."

One of the words we use to describe the nature of God is "omniscient." It means that God is "all knowing, all wise, and all seeing." Used in this verse, "the eyes of the Lord," implies that God "sees" what we say. Scripture, very clearly and frequently, teaches us that "God knows everything." His Word emphasizes this fact. So, we need not wonder if He can actually "see what we say."

It is almost frightening to reflect on "keeping watch on the wicked and the good." Keeping watch made me think of the stories my brother and sisters often told me: "Be careful! Mom has eyes in the back of her head." In other words, her face may be looking in one direction, but that does not mean she cannot see what is going on when she is not looking.

The author of Hebrews reminds us that "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

We must never fool ourselves because we are His children and expect favors if we are disobedient to His Word. Everyone is accountable to Him for everything and anything!

Prayer: Lord, may we be mindful that You watch us closely and do our best to please You. Empower us to be obedient to Your Word and expectations. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. Proverbs 15:3



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

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2022-23 Community Events

- 07/21/2022: Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/22/2022: Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
07/24/2022: Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20
07/27/2022: Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm
08/05/2022: Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
08/12/2022: GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
No Date Set: Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot
09/10/2022: Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
09/11/2022: 6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3-5pm
09/11/2022: Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10 a.m.
09/02-04: Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/01/2022: Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/07/2022: Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/31/2022: Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2022: United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/19/2022: Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course
12/10/2022: Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm
01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
07/04/2023 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start (4th of July)
07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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

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Groton, SD 57445-0034

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Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Lotto America

04-08-14-32-44, Star Ball: 4, ASB: 4

(four, eight, fourteen, thirty-two, forty-four; Star Ball: four; ASB: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$26,100,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 445,000,000

Powerball

03-06-11-17-22, Powerball: 11, Power Play: 2

(three, six, eleven, seventeen, twenty-two; Powerball: eleven; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$421,000,000

Supreme Court to hear case that could raise price of pork

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court will hear arguments over a California animal cruelty law that could raise the cost of bacon and other pork products nationwide.

The case's outcome is important to the nation's \$26-billion-a-year pork industry, but the outcome could also limit states' ability to pass laws with impact outside their borders, from laws aimed at combating climate change to others intended to regulate prescription drug prices.

The case before the court on Tuesday involves California's Proposition 12, which voters passed in 2018. It said that pork sold in the state needs to come from pigs whose mothers were raised with at least 24 square feet of space, including the ability to lie down and turn around. That rules out the confined "gestation crates," metal enclosures that are common in the pork industry.

Two industry groups, the Iowa-based National Pork Producers Council and the American Farm Bureau Federation, sued over the proposition. They say that while Californians consume 13% of the pork eaten in the United States, nearly 100% of it comes from hogs raised outside the state, primarily where the industry is concentrated in the Midwest and North Carolina. The vast majority of sows, meanwhile, aren't raised under conditions that would meet Proposition 12's standards.

The question for the high court is whether California has impermissibly burdened the pork market and improperly regulated an industry outside its borders.

Pork producers argue that 72% of farmers use individual pens for sows that don't allow them to turn around and that even farmers who house sows in larger group pens don't provide the space California would require.

They also say that the way the pork market works, with cuts of meat from various producers being combined before sale, it's likely all pork would have to meet California standards, regardless of where it's sold. Complying with Proposition 12 could cost the industry \$290 million to \$350 million, they say.

So far, lower courts have sided with California and animal-welfare groups that had supported the proposition. But for a number of reasons the law has yet to go into effect.

The Biden administration, for its part, is urging the justices to side with pork producers. The administration says Proposition 12 would be a "wholesale change in how pork is raised and marketed in this country." And it says the proposition has "thrown a giant wrench into the workings of the interstate market in pork."

California's Proposition 12 also covers other animals. It says egg-laying hens and calves being raised for veal need to be raised in conditions in which they have enough room to lie down, stand up and turn around freely. Those parts of the law aren't at issue in the case.

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The case is National Pork Producers Council v. Ross, 21-468.

Monday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Baltic def. Tri-Valley, 25-19, 25-17, 25-15

Canton def. Alcester-Hudson, 25-19, 25-14, 25-8

Colman-Egan def. Oldham-Ramona/Rutland, 21-25, 25-19, 25-11, 25-21

Deubrook def. Webster, 25-9, 25-15, 25-14

Elkton-Lake Benton def. Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op, 25-5, 25-9, 25-14

Estelline/Hendricks def. Sisseton, 25-23, 25-19, 25-18

Garretson def. Lennox, 25-10, 25-10, 25-18

Howard def. Sanborn Central/Woonsocket, 25-18, 25-13, 25-18

Ipswich def. Mobridge-Pollock, 25-21, 12-25, 25-16, 22-25, 15-13

St. Francis Indian def. Crazy Horse, 25-7, 25-17, 25-9

Viborg-Hurley def. Scotland, 25-12, 26-24, 25-19

White River def. Bennett County, 25-21, 25-12, 25-16

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

Sacred items in Massachusetts museum to be returned to Sioux

By MARK PRATT Associated Press

About 150 items considered sacred by the Sioux peoples that have been stored at a small Massachusetts museum for more than a century are being returned, museum and tribal officials announced Monday.

The items including weapons, pipes, moccasins and clothing — about seven or eight of which are thought to have a direct link to the the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre — are due to be formally handed over during a ceremony scheduled for Nov. 5, Ann Meilus, president of the board at the Founders Museum in Barre, said during a news conference on a day that several people present noted is more commonly being celebrated as Indigenous Peoples Day.

"This is not our history of Barre. This is the Lakota Sioux's history, and we should honor the Lakota Sioux and what they desire," she said.

It is a repatriation project that has been decades in the making.

The return of the items is a chance to "begin that process of healing," Kevin Killer, president of the Oglala Sioux tribe said.

The items being returned are just a tiny fraction of an estimated 870,000 Native American artifacts — including nearly 110,000 human remains — in the possession of the nation's most prestigious colleges, museums and even the federal government that under federal law are supposed to be returned to the tribes under the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, often referred to as or NAGPRA.

While the Barre museum maintains that as a private institution that does not receive federal funding, it is not subject to NAGPRA, returning items in its collection that belong to Indigenous tribes is the right thing to do, Meilus said.

Wendell Yellow Bull, a descendant of Wounded Knee victim Joseph Horn Cloud, said the items will be stored at Oglala Lakota College until tribal leaders decide what to do with them.

"Upon the return of the items, there will be a mass meeting and a very meticulous discussion on how and what we're going to do with the items," he said. "Most of all, there are items from the massacre site, so a lot of preparations and ceremonies must take place in order for us to proceed forward."

More than 200 men, women, children and elderly people were killed on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in December 1890 in one of the country's worst massacres of Native Americans. Congress issued a formal apology to the Sioux Nation for the massacre in 1991.

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The Barre museum acquired its Indigenous collection from Frank Root, a 19th century native of the town about 70 miles (112 kilometers) west of Boston. He was a traveling shoe salesman who collected the items on his journeys, and once had a road show that rivaled P.T. Barnum's extravaganzas, Meilus said.

The items being returned to the Sioux people have all been authenticated by multiple experts, including tribal experts. The museum has other Indigenous items not believed to have originated with the Sioux.

Artist Michael He Crow used his expertise of traditional Lakota Sioux artwork and craftsmanship.

"I am able to recognize some of the designs and the colors that the Lakota used at that time," he said.

There was a time when specific designs could be traced back to a particular family, but because those designs have been reproduced and replicated so many times over the years, that is now nearly impossible, he said.

Israel announces sea deal with Lebanon, but doubts remain

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's prime minister said Tuesday that the country has reached a "historic agreement" with neighboring Lebanon over their shared maritime border after months of U.S.-brokered negotiations.

The agreement would mark a major breakthrough in relations with the two countries, which formally have been at war since Israel's establishment in 1948. But the deal still faces some obstacles, including key legal and political challenges in Israel. There was no immediate confirmation by Lebanon that a deal had been reached.

At stake are rights over exploiting undersea natural gas reserves in areas of the eastern Mediterranean that the two countries — which do not have diplomatic relations — claim.

Premier Yair Lapid called the deal an "historic achievement that will strengthen Israel's security, inject billions into Israel's economy, and ensure the stability of our northern border."

The agreement is expected to enable additional natural gas production in the Mediterranean. Lebanon hopes gas exploration will help lift its country out of its spiraling economic crisis.

Lebanon and Israel both claim some 860 square kilometers (330 square miles) of the Mediterranean Sea. Under the agreement, those waters would be divided along a line straddling a strategic natural gas field.

According to a senior Israeli official, Lebanon would be allowed to produce gas from that field, called "Qana," but pay royalties to Israel for any gas produced from the Israeli side. Lebanon has been working with the French energy giant Total on preparations for exploring the field.

The agreement would also leave in place an existing "buoy line" that serves as a de facto border between the two countries, the official said. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was discussing behind-the-scenes negotiations.

Many leading security figures, both active and retired, have hailed the deal because it could lower tensions with Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, which has repeatedly threatened to strike Israeli natural gas assets in the Mediterranean. With Lebanon now having a stake in the region's natural gas industry, experts believe the sides will think twice before opening up another war.

The two sides fought a monthlong war in 2006, and Israel considers the heavily armed Hezbollah to be its most immediate military threat.

"It might help create and strengthen the mutual deterrence between Israel and Hezbollah," said Yoel Guzansky, a senior fellow at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies. "This is a very positive thing for Israel."

The final draft of the agreement will be brought before Israel's caretaker government for approval this week ahead of the Nov. 1 election, when the country goes to the polls for the fifth time in under four years.

Approval is not guaranteed. Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has claimed Lapid does not have the authority to sign an agreement and vowed to cancel what he calls a "disgraceful deal" if re-elected.

The Kohelet Policy Forum, an influential conservative think tank, already has filed a challenge to the Supreme Court trying to block the deal.

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Eugene Kontorovich, the forum's director of international law, claimed the agreement requires parliamentary approval. He accused the government of trying to rush through an agreement under pressure from Hezbollah. "This means Hezbollah now overrides Israel's democracy," he said.

Senior U.S. energy envoy Amos Hochstein, whom Washington appointed a year ago to mediate talks, delivered a modified proposal of the maritime border deal to lead Lebanese negotiator, Deputy Speaker Elias Bou Saab late Monday night, according to local media and officials.

President Michel Aoun's office said the latest version of the proposal "satisfies Lebanon, meets its demands, and preserves its rights to its natural resources," and will hold consultations with officials before making an announcement.

Kremlin war hawks demand more devastating strikes on Ukraine

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Moscow's barrage of missile strikes on cities all across Ukraine has elicited celebratory comments from Russian officials and pro-Kremlin pundits, who in recent weeks have actively criticized the Russian military for a series of embarrassing setbacks on the battlefield.

Russian nationalist commentators and state media war correspondents lauded Monday's attack as an appropriate, and long-awaited, response to a successful Ukrainian counteroffensive and a weekend attack on the bridge between Russia and Crimea, the prized Black Sea peninsula Russia annexed in 2014.

Many of them argued that Moscow should keep up the intensity of Monday's strikes to win the war now. Some analysts suggested that Russian President Vladimir Putin was becoming a hostage of his allies' views on how the campaign in Ukraine should unfold.

"Putin's initiative is weakening, and he is becoming more dependent on circumstances and those who are forging the 'victory' (in Ukraine) for him," Tatyana Stanovaya, founder of the independent R.Politik think tank, wrote in an online commentary Monday.

"The fear of defeat is so strong, especially for those who are now fully immersed in this military venture, that Putin's indecisiveness, with his logic of 'We have not started anything yet' and 'Restrained tactics have paid off' has become a problem," the analyst said.

For weeks, Putin's supporters have called for drastic battlefield steps in Ukraine. The exhortations intensified over the weekend after an explosion on the Kerch Bridge linking Crimea to Russia; the bridge, Europe's longest, is a prominent symbol of Russian military might. Putin himself opened the span in 2018.

"And?" Margarita Simonyan, head of Russia's state-funded RT television, wondered on social media about Moscow's response to the Saturday bridge attack.

"This is one of those cases when the country needs to show we can hit back," wrote Alexander Kots, a war correspondent for the popular pro-Kremlin tabloid newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda.

Senior Russian lawmaker Sergei Mironov, who leads the state-backed A Just Russia party, tweeted Saturday that Moscow should disregard Western opinion in formulating its answer to the conspicuous attack.

"It is time for fighting! Fiercely, even cruelly. Without looking back at whatever censures from the West," Mironov, who leads the state-backed A Just Russia party, tweeted Saturday. "There won't be any bigger sanctions. They won't say any worse words. We need to do our thing. We started it — we should go till the end. There is no way back. Time to respond!"

The response came Monday morning, when Russia simultaneously launched dozens of missiles at Ukrainian cities, killing and wounding scores and inflicting unprecedented damage on Ukraine's critical infrastructure. The strikes, which hit 15 Ukrainian cities, most of them regional capitals, knocked out power lines, damaged railway stations and roads, and left cities without water supplies.

For the first time in months, Russian missiles exploded in the heart of Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, in dangerous proximity to government buildings.

Putin said Monday the strikes were in retaliation for what he called Kyiv's "terrorist" actions targeting the Kerch Bridge, and vowed a "tough" and "proportionate" response should Ukraine carry out further attacks that threaten Russia's security.

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"No one should have any doubts about it," he said.

"Here comes the response," RT's Simonyan tweeted on Monday after the attacks. "The Crimean bridge was that very red line from the very beginning."

Ramzan Kadyrov, the strongman leader of Chechnya, a Russian region in the North Caucasus, said he was now "100% happy" with the course of the Kremlin's "special military operation" in Ukraine. Kadyrov was among the most ardent proponents of "more drastic measures," including the use of low-yield nuclear weapons.

The Moscow-installed governor of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, described Monday's strikes as "good news." The cheering by Kremlin supporters came with demands for Putin and the Russian military to keep up the pace and intensity of the attacks and the damage inflicted on Ukraine's infrastructure.

Aksyonov said that "had such actions to destroy the enemy's infrastructure been taken every day, then we would have finished everything in May and the Kyiv regime would have been defeated."

"I hope that now the pace of the operation will not slow down," Aksyonov wrote.

RT's top host, Anton Krasovsky, posted a video of himself Monday dancing on a balcony in a cap bearing a Z, the symbol that Russian forces painted on military vehicles while invading Ukraine. In another Telegram post, he said the damage to Ukraine's power lines was "not enough! Not enough!"

Another state TV journalist, Andrei Medvedev, called Monday's attacks "a logical step, which not just the society has long demanded — the military situation demanded a different approach to the hostilities."

"And so it happened. But does it change much?" Medvedev, who works for Russia's state TV group VG-TRK and holds a seat on the Moscow City Council, wrote on Telegram.

"If the strikes on the critical infrastructure become regular, if the strikes on railways, bridges and power plants become part of our tactics, then yes, it does change (the situation)," Medvedev wrote. "But for now, according to (official) statements, a decision to plunge Ukraine into medieval times has not been made,"

Political analyst Stanovaya said in a Telegram post that Putin had faced "powerful pressures" before Monday's bombardment "to move onto aggressive actions, massive bombings," and that prompted the Russian leader to act.

"As of today, one can say that Putin was persuaded to resort to a more aggressive line. And it corresponds with his understanding on the situation. But it is a slippery slope — there is no way back," Stanovaya wrote.

Thai day care massacre victims prepared for funeral rites

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA Associated Press

UTHAI SAWAN, Thailand (AP) — The bodies of the many of the young victims whose lives were snuffed out in last week's massacre at a day care center in rural northeastern Thailand were dressed Tuesday as doctors, soldiers or astronauts — what they wanted to be when they grew up — before they were to be cremated in the evening at Buddhist temples.

The gun and knife attack carried out by a former policeman Thursday on the Young Children's Development Center in Uthai Sawan killed 36 people, including 24 children.

Families of the victims gathered for the start of a shared cremation ceremony that marks an end to three days of funeral rites. Mourners also placed children's toys, candles, and incense sticks in front of portraits of the victims at Rat Samakee temple, just 3 kilometers (2 miles) from the scene of the bloodshed.

Volunteer rescue worker Attarith Muangmangkang said his organization arranged for the costumes and assisted the families with changing the victims' outfits.

"The more we talked (to the families), we realized that these children also had dreams of becoming doctors, soldiers, astronauts, or police officers," Attarith said. "We provided those uniforms for them."

Petchrung Sriphirom, 73, was one of many local residents who traveled to the temple to offer condolences to the families and make a small donation to help with funeral costs, which is a common Thai tradition.

"I just want to help our friends and share our thoughts with them," said Petchrung. "We are not talking about money or anything but rather sharing our thoughts and feelings as a fellow human being,"

Rat Samakee temple will cremate 19 bodies in a simultaneous cremation ceremony Tuesday evening

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along with two other nearby temples that account for the other victims.

The temples have installed makeshift pyres to deal with the high number of bodies from last week's massacre, which was the biggest mass killing by an individual in the country's history.

Tourists flock to Japan after COVID restrictions lifted

By YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Eager to admire colorful foliage, eat sushi and go shopping, droves of tourists from abroad began arriving in Japan on Tuesday, with the end of pandemic-fighting border restrictions that had been in place for more than two years.

"We got the news that we can finally come. We are really, really happy," said Nadine Lackmann, a German who was among the crowd of tourists arriving at Tokyo's Haneda airport.

Travelers like Lackmann are expected to deliver a sorely needed 5 trillion yen (\$35 billion) boost to the world's third-largest economy. And the flood of visitors is expected to keep growing.

A daily limit of 50,000 arrivals is gone. Airlines have added flights in response to the full re-opening of borders. Visa-free travel is back for short-term business visits and tourism from more than 60 countries.

David Beall, a photographer based in Los Angeles who's been to Japan 12 times, has already booked a flight, planning to go to Fukui, Kyoto, Osaka, and Tokyo. The last time he was in Japan was in October 2019. But it's everyday things the American is looking forward to, like eating Japan's popular pork cutlet dish, tonkatsu.

"As cliched as it sounds, just being back in Japan after all this time is what I am most looking forward to. That of course includes hopefully meeting new people, eating the food that I've missed like good tonkatsu, being in nature at that time of the year, riding the trains," he said.

As a tip for others planning trips, he recommends getting a Japan Rail Pass and a Suica or some other pre-paid card that allows cashless payments for easy travel.

About 32 million tourists visited Japan in 2019, before COVID-19. Their return is welcome for good reason. Many will have more spending power because the Japanese yen has declined in recent months in value compared to the U.S. dollar, the euro and other currencies.

The only protocols left for entry are that you must be fully vaccinated with one booster or have a negative PCR test within 72 hours of departure. Virtually all visitors from the U.S., the rest of Asia, Europe and South America who fulfill those requirements won't have to quarantine.

In August, during the most recent coronavirus surge in Japan, nationwide daily new infections topped 200,000. By now, both case numbers and deaths have dwindled. Last week, daily deaths averaged eight people nationwide. The government has provided free COVID-19 vaccines, especially encouraging the elderly and the medically vulnerable to get inoculated.

Visitors may have to adjust to face masks, worn by most Japanese just about everywhere outside their own homes. Many stores and restaurants require customers to wear masks and sanitize their hands. Some establishments still close early, or have shuttered completely.

But bookings from abroad with Japanese carrier All Nippon Airways Co., or ANA, have already jumped five-fold compared to last week, while bookings of flights out of Japan have doubled.

Air Canada said bookings for Canadian travel to Japan jumped 51% this month compared to September, while the number of travelers from Japan to Canada grew 16% over the same period.

The Japanese economy can use the influx of tourist spending.

Fitch Ratings forecasts that Japan's economy will grow at a 1.7% annual pace this year and by 1.3% in 2023, supported by easy credit, a recovery for service industries and a gradual fix for supply-chain problems, which will boost manufacturing and exports.

Japan had basically shut its borders to tourists, but started allowing packaged tours in June. Many people opted to wait for open-ended individual travel before booking their tickets.

With declining nervousness about the risks of infections, Japanese also are traveling more — encouraged by discounts offered by airlines, bullet trains, "onsen" hot springs resorts and hotels to jumpstart

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the ailing travel industry.

Although Japan offers various attractions from the ski slopes of northern Hokkaido to the semi-tropical beaches of the Okinawa islands in the south, experts say these months are the best for enjoying what Japan has to offer.

The mountains are vibrant with brilliant autumn foliage; the weather is moderate, not freezing, sweltering or humid; seafood, grapes, chestnuts and other culinary delights are fresh and plentiful.

"Now we are all ready to welcome people from abroad," said Shuso Imada, general manager at the Japan Sake and Shochu Information Center.

His job is to promote sake rice wine and shochu liquor made from barley, potatoes or other vegetables, domestically and abroad.

"Autumn is the best season to enjoy Japanese food with sake and shochu," he said.

That's why Javier Perez Toledo waited more than a year for his honeymoon.

"We are really passionate about the country," he said, arriving from Spain. "We are so happy that we could come."

Analysis: NFL can't find elusive sweet spot to protect QBs

By ARNIE STAPLETON AP Pro Football Writer

One week, the NFL is getting blasted for not taking care of its quarterbacks. The next, it's being lambasted for treating them like they're crystal.

Tua Tagovailoa's return to the field after stumbling to the sideline two weeks ago set in motion the mid-season modification of the league's concussion policies, and the first one restrained by the stricter rules in Week 5 was none other than his backup.

On his first snap of Miami's 40-17 loss to the Jets on Sunday, Teddy Bridgewater was popped in the chest by a blitz on his first snap.

Although Dolphins coach Mike McDaniels said afterward that Bridgewater passed all tests and displayed no concussion symptoms, a spotter saw him stumble after the play, so he was removed as a result of the revised policy.

Then came Grady Jarrett's textbook sack of Tom Brady on Sunday and Chris Jones' strip sack of Derek Carr on Monday night, both of which were nullified by debatable calls that sent current and former NFL personnel into a Twitter frenzy.

In Tampa, Jarrett was penalized for taking down Brady in the fourth quarter, a ruling that helped the Buccaneers run out the clock and fend off the Falcons 21-15. It was the second straight week referee Jerome Boger made the critical call late in the game on a play that didn't seem to warrant a flag.

A week earlier, Boger's roughing call helped the Buffalo Bills on a drive that ended with Tyler Bass kicking a 21-yard field goal as time expired to beat the Baltimore Ravens 23-20.

"What I had was the defender grabbed the quarterback while he was still in the pocket, and unnecessarily throwing him to the ground," Boger told a pool reporter after the Bucs-Falcons game.

Jarrett's hit was nothing like Bengals 340-pound defensive tackle Josh Tupou's hit on Tagovailoa in Week 4 when he grabbed the quarterback and threw him backward, slamming Tagovailoa's head into the ground. Tagovailoa was stretchered off the field and hospitalized.

Tupou wasn't penalized for sacking Tagovailoa. Neither Josh Allen nor Brady were injured on the hits Boger called roughing.

Nor was Carr injured when referee Carl Cheffer's crew called roughing on Jones, who wrested the ball from Carr as they tumbled to the turf.

Cheffer explained to a pool reporter after the Chiefs' 30-29 win over the Raiders that he whistled Jones for landing on Carr "with full body weight." Cheffer said the fumble was irrelevant because the QB "still gets passing protection until he can defend himself."

Hall of Fame coach Tony Dungy disagreed with the call.

"This is not football anymore," tweeted Dungy, who called out the NFL last week after Bucs tight end

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Cameron Brate was allowed to re-enter a game despite suffering a concussion.

"I know we have to protect the QB but Chris Jones was recovering a fumble," added Dungy. "We have gotten ridiculous with this."

Cowboys linebacker Micah Parsons complained that the NFL wants every game to be like the no-tackle affairs the Pro Bowl has become in recent years, adding, "Change the rules or just make the league 7 on 7!!"

Former Seattle star Richard Sherman tweeted, "Imagine when they decide a playoff game with one of the Roughing calls. Cannot brace the fall when one hand is holding the football! Bad."

The criticism was just as strong Sunday after Brady benefitted from the problematic penalty called by Boger.

"It's just not a foul," said former NFL head of officials Dean Blandino of "The 33rd Team.

"Grady, he just wraps up Tom Brady, takes him to the ground. There wasn't anything additional. He didn't lift and drive him to the ground, there were no body weight, there wasn't anything head/neck area, at the knee area or below," Blandino said. "It just doesn't fit into any bucket of roughing the passer."

Dungy said on NBC's "Football Night in America" pregame show after Jarrett's roughing call that the erroneous roughing calls have to be addressed by the league office.

"If you cannot tackle the quarterback," Dungy said, "it's going to be impossible to play defense."

Robert Griffin III tweeted: "The Falcons got ROBBED. Hitting the QB hard does not equal Roughing the Passer even if it's Tom Brady."

In Tagovailoa's case, the NFL acted quickly for safety's sake to close a loophole in its concussion policy.

Especially at a time the league has embraced legalized gambling, if it doesn't move just as swiftly to reexamine its roughing the passer benchmarks and make such calls reviewable it could very well be the league's integrity that takes the next big hit.

Missiles hit Ukrainian city, alarms elsewhere keep up fear

By ADAM SCHRECK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A new round of missile attacks struck the southern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia Tuesday, as the death toll from the previous day's widespread Russian missile barrage across Ukraine rose to 19.

Missiles struck a school, a medical facility and residential buildings in Zaporizhzhia, city council secretary Anatoliy Kurtev said. The State Emergency Service said 12 S-300 missiles slammed into public facilities, setting off a large fire in the area. One person was killed.

The S-300 was originally designed as a long-range surface-to-air missile. Russia has increasingly resorted to using repurposed versions of the weapon to strike targets on the ground.

The morning's air raid warnings extended throughout the country, sending some residents back into shelters after months of relative calm in the capital and many other cities. That earlier lull had led many Ukrainians to ignore the regular sirens, but Monday's attacks gave them new urgency.

Beside the usual sirens, residents in the capital, Kyiv, were jolted early Tuesday by a new type of loud alarm that blared automatically from mobile phones. The caustic-sounding alert was accompanied by a text warning of the possibility of missile strikes.

The state emergencies service said 19 people died and 105 people were wounded in Monday's missile strikes that targeted critical infrastructure facilities in Kyiv and 12 other regions. More than 300 cities and towns were without power, from the Ukrainian capital all the way to Lviv on the border with Poland. Many of the attacks occurred far from the war's front lines.

With Ukrainian forces growing increasingly bold following a series of battlefield successes, a cornered Kremlin is ratcheting up Cold War-era rhetoric and fanning concerns it could broaden the war and suck in more combatants.

Russia's deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov, warned Tuesday that Western military assistance to Kyiv including training Ukrainian soldiers in NATO countries and feeding Ukraine real-time satellite data to target Russian forces has "increasingly drawn Western nations into the conflict on the part of the Kyiv regime."

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Ryabkov said in remarks carried by the state RIA-Novosti news agency that "Russia will be forced to take relevant countermeasures, including asymmetrical ones." He said that although Russia isn't "interested in a direct clash" with the U.S. and NATO, "we hope that Washington and other Western capitals are aware of the danger of an uncontrollable escalation."

Ryabkov's warning follows Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's announcement that he and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin have agreed to create a joint "regional grouping of troops" to thwart what Lukashenko claimed is a potential Ukrainian assault on Belarus.

The Ukrainian army general staff said Tuesday it has not seen evidence of troop movements or a buildup of offensive forces in Belarus but warned that Russia could continue to strike "peaceful neighborhoods" and critical infrastructure in Ukraine with missiles.

"The enemy is not able to stop the successful counteroffensive of the Defense Forces in the Kharkiv and Kherson directions, so it is trying to intimidate and sow panic among the population of Ukraine," the military's general staff said.

The Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said it's unlikely a joint Russian-Belarus force would launch an attack on Ukraine from the north.

Analysts at the think tank said the Russian component of such a force would "likely be comprised of low-readiness mobilized men or conscripts who likely will not pose a significant conventional military threat to Ukraine."

One use for the joint force could be to keep some Ukrainian troops bogged down around Kyiv to defend the capital, preventing them from being deployed to more active fronts where they can press their counter-offensive, the institute said.

Although Ukrainian officials said Russia's missile strikes on Monday made no "practical military sense," Putin said the "precision weapons" attack was in retaliation for what he claimed were Kyiv's "terrorist" actions — a reference to Ukraine's attempts to repel Moscow's invasion, including an attack Saturday on a key bridge between Russia and the annexed Crimean Peninsula. Putin alleged the bridge attack was masterminded by Ukrainian special services.

Putin vowed a "tough" and "proportionate" response if further Ukrainian attacks threaten Russia's security. "No one should have any doubts about it," he told Russia's Security Council by video.

Putin's increasingly frequent descriptions of Ukraine's actions as terrorist could portend even more bold and draconian actions. But in Monday's speech, Putin — whose partial troop mobilization order last month triggered an exodus of hundreds of thousands of men of fighting age — stopped short of escalating his "special military operation" to a counterterrorism campaign or martial law.

That didn't stop the speaker of the lower house of the Russian parliament on Tuesday from likening Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to deceased al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. He also said Western politicians supporting Ukraine "are effectively sponsoring terrorism" and that "there can be no talks with terrorists."

Zelenskyy has repeatedly called on world leaders to declare Russia a terrorist state because of its attacks on civilians and alleged war crimes.

Empty shelves or unaffordable food: Tunisia's crisis deepens

By BOUAZZA BEN BOUAZZA Associated Press

TUNIS, Tunisia (AP) — Tunisians have been hit with soaring food prices and shortages of basic staples in recent weeks, threatening to turn simmering discontent in the North African country — the cradle of the Arab Spring protests — into larger turmoil.

Sugar, vegetable oil, rice and even bottled water periodically disappear from supermarkets and grocery stores. People stand in line for hours for these food essentials that have long been subsidized and are now increasingly available in rations only. When they do appear on the shelves, many people cannot afford to pay the staggering price for them.

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"I came to shop and found people fighting to buy and the prices were very high," said shopper Amina Hamdi, 63, despairing at trying to buy basic goods.

"It is not possible to live without food," said Aicha during a recent shopping trip to the fish and meat market in Tunis. "We can live without furniture, construction material, but we have to eat." She only gave her first name for fear of persecution by police for speaking out.

The government has blamed speculators, black market hoarders and the war in Ukraine, but economic experts say the government's own budget crisis, and its inability to negotiate a long-sought loan from the International Monetary Fund, have added to Tunisia's troubles.

Fights sometimes break out at food market queues, and scattered protests and sporadic clashes with police over rising prices and shortages have occurred around the country. In a suburb of the capital, Tunis, a young itinerant fruit vendor recently killed himself after police seized the scales he used to weigh his wares.

His act of desperation revived memories of the 2010 self-immolation of another Tunisian vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, which prompted protests that led to the ouster of long-time dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, and provoked similar uprisings around the Arab world.

The Ministry of Commerce promised last month that shortages would ease, announcing the import of 20,000 tons of sugar from India to be available in time for Moulded, the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. But the night before the holiday, citizens formed long lines in front of supermarkets in the hope of getting a package of sugar, an essential food to prepare traditional dishes for the religious holiday.

Food isn't the only thing in short supply. Lacking energy resources like those in neighboring Libya and Algeria, Tunisia relies heavily on imports, and its long-running economic troubles mean it has limited leverage on international markets to secure the goods it needs.

Inflation has reached a record rate of 9.1%, the highest in three decades, according to the National Institute of Statistics.

The Central Bank of Tunisia (BCT) added a hit by increasing bank fees and interest rates, hindering access to consumer loans.

In Douar Hicher, an impoverished suburb on the outskirts of Tunis considered a barometer of popular discontent, hundreds of people took to the streets at night last month to denounce the deterioration of their living conditions.

With cries of "work, freedom, dignity" — the flagship slogan of the 2010-2011 revolution — demonstrators blocked the town's main artery by setting fire to tires, braving the police who sprayed tear gas to disperse them.

"Enough of speeches and promises, people are gripped by hunger and poverty," read a banner erected by the demonstrators, their anger at the government and political elites palpable.

After sacking the prime minister and dissolving parliament, President Kais Saied has granted himself sweeping powers over the past year. He said the moves were necessary to save the country amid protracted political and economic crisis, and many Tunisians welcomed them, but critics and Western allies say the power grab jeopardizes Tunisia's young democracy.

Saied attributes the scarcity of food products and the rise in prices to "speculators" and those who hold a monopoly on goods they store in illegal depots. He suggested that his main political rivals, the Islamist movement Ennahdha, had some role, which the party firmly denies.

In a statement, the Salvation Front, a coalition of five opposition parties and several independent groups, called the demonstrations a sign of "a general explosion and the collapse of the social and political order."

The general secretary of the powerful trade union UGTT, Nouredine Taboubi, blames the state's overburdened budget.

The government is currently negotiating a \$2 billion to \$4 billion loan with the IMF to cope with a budget deficit aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the fallout from Russia's war in Ukraine. A high-ranking Tunisian delegation went to Washington on Saturday in the hope of finalizing a deal.

In return, Tunisia will have to commit to painful reforms, including shrinking the public administration sector — one of the world's largest — which eats up about a third of the state budget. The IMF is also demanding the gradual lifting of subsidies and the privatization of state-owned enterprises, which implies

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massive layoffs and a worsening of unemployment, already at 18% according to the latest World Bank figures

Faced with such bleak prospects, Tunisians increasingly no longer hesitate to put their lives in danger to try to reach Europe in search of a better life.

The Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights, an NGO that closely monitors migration, says 507 Tunisian migrants have died or gone missing so far in 2022 as they attempt the perilous crossing of the Mediterranean Sea.

According to National Guard spokesman Houssameddine Jebabli, the coast guard thwarted more than 1,500 attempts at illegal migration to Italy from January to September 2022, involving entire families including nearly 2,500 children.

Pope marks 60th anniversary of Second Vatican Council

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis is commemorating the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, the landmark meetings that brought the 2,000-year-old Catholic Church into the modern era, amid continued disagreement about what the council taught that divides the faithful today.

Francis is celebrating a Mass on Tuesday in honor of St. John XXIII, who convened the council and presided over its opening sessions. Tuesday's commemoration opens with a reading of John's inaugural speech and ends with a re-enactment of the candle-lit procession that lit up St. Peter's Square on the night of Oct. 11, 1962.

On that night, the "good pope" came to the window of the Apostolic Palace and delivered his famous "moonlight speech" to the thousands of people who had gathered below. Whereas pre-Vatican II popes usually spoke in formal terms, John surprised the crowd with an impromptu, pastoral speech urging the faithful to go home to their children and give them a hug and tell them "this is the caress of the pope."

The council would last for another three years and outlive John, who died in 1963 of stomach cancer. But when it was over, council fathers had agreed to major changes in the life of the church, such as allowing Mass to be celebrated in local languages rather than Latin and strengthening the role of laity in the everyday life of the church. The council also encouraged efforts to improve relations among Christians and revolutionized the church's relations with Jews, including the step to remove the phrase "perfidious Jews" from the liturgy.

Francis, 85, is the first pope to have been ordained after the council, and his priorities are very much inspired by it.

"Above all peace, above all the poor church," said Vatican II historian Alberto Melloni. In a telephone interview, Melloni also pointed to Francis' insistence on a "synodal" or decentralized church, with an emphasis on laity. The latter is clearly evident in his decision to allow laypeople, including women, to head Vatican offices and in the two-year "synod" process in which ordinary Catholic faithful have contributed their thoughts on the life and mission of the church.

But Vatican II still very much divides the church, with progressives seeing it as a break from the past and conservatives seeing it as fully in line with church tradition and chafing at the "spirit of Vatican II" progressive read of it. Francis has in some ways exacerbated those divisions by re-imposing restrictions on the celebration of the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass.

"John XXIII did not convoke Vatican II to reinvent Catholicism," writes church historian George Weigel in his new book "To Sanctify the World: The Vital Legacy of Vatican II."

"As he put it in his opening address, the council's 'greatest concern' must be the more effective presentation of Catholic truth in full" through a new language and vocabulary that could be understood in the modern world, Weigel wrote in excerpts recently published in the Wall Street Journal.

Vatican II coincided with the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the United States and Russia came as close as they ever had to nuclear war. Looking ahead to Tuesday's anniversary of Vatican II, Francis noted over the weekend that Russia is threatening to use its nuclear arsenal in its war in Ukraine.

"Why can't we learn from history?" Francis asked. "Even in those times, there was grave conflict and tensions, but they chose the path of peace."

Demand soars for kids' books addressing violence, trauma

By CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press/Report for America

CHICAGO (AP) — As the new school year swings into gear, some students carry heavier worries than keeping up with homework: Demand has been growing steadily for children's books that address traumatic events such as school shootings.

Sales of books for young readers on violence, grief, and emotions have increased for nine straight years, with nearly six million copies sold in 2021 — more than double the amount in 2012, according to NPD BookScan, which tracks U.S. retail sales of print books.

As anxiety and depression rates have soared among young Americans, educators and advocates say children's books can play a role in helping them cope.

"While it might be second nature to try to shield kids from the harsher realities of life and scary news, it's proving difficult to avoid big society issues," said Kristine Enderle, editorial director at Magination Press, the children's publishing arm of the American Psychology Association. "Kids face these issues and challenges in their day-to-day life."

One book, "I'm Not Scared ... I'm Prepared," was reprinted several times to meet demand after the massacre at Uvalde's Robb Elementary School in May, according to the National Center for Youth Issues, the nonprofit group that published the book. The story, first published in 2014, features a teacher who shows children what to do when a "dangerous someone" is in their school.

Bookstores around the country see interest in titles from the genre rise and fall depending on local and national headlines, according to bookseller Barnes & Noble.

Some newer titles engage directly with real-world gun violence.

In "Numb to This," a graphic novel released this month, author Kindra Neely details the 2015 Umpqua Community College shooting in Oregon, which she survived, and the aftermath as she tries to heal amid repeated shootings elsewhere. Initially, Little, Brown Books for Young Readers editorial director Andrea Colvin said she was shocked when Keely pitched the idea.

"I had to remember that, yes, this is what our stories are like now. This is what young people have experienced," Colvin said.

Michele Gay, whose 7-year-old daughter Josephine was killed in the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, turned to children's books herself to help her two surviving daughters. One picture book she read to them was "The Ant Hill Disaster," about a boy ant who is afraid to go back to school after it is destroyed.

"It was one of many books that was of comfort to them and gave them a little bit of confidence to just face one more day, one more minute, because we can do it together," said Gay, who advocates for improved security in schools through a nonprofit she co-founded, Safe and Sound Schools.

Parents should make sure books addressing trauma are age-appropriate and backed by psychologists, experts say.

It's important to be aware of whether children are aware of or feeling stress about frightening things in the news, said Aryeh Sova, a Chicago psychologist who works with children who attended the July 4 parade in suburban Highland Park, Illinois, where seven people were killed in a shooting. A child asking lots of questions about an event may signify that they are anxious or fixated on it, he said.

"If it's coming from the kid's need, then books could be a great way for kids to learn and to read together with their parents and to review it on their own and to process it at their own speed, at their own pace," Sova said.

But bringing up violence when a child isn't worried about it could increase their anxiety unnecessarily, Sova said.

Some young children experience gun violence at alarmingly high rates, particularly in communities of color.

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For them, it is important to start early to address the effects, said Ian Ellis James, an Emmy award-winning Sesame Street writer known by his stage name William Electric Black. He is the author of the illustrated children's book "A Gun Is Not Fun." He said young children in areas afflicted by gun violence are more aware of it than parents may think.

"They know about flowers and candles and cards in the street. They walk by them every day," he said. Through children's literature and theater, Black works to reduce urban gun violence. "If you start when they're 5, and you go back when you're 6, 7, 8, 9, you're going to change the behavior," he said.

In the spring, he will collaborate with New York public school P.S. 155 in East Harlem with a series of gun violence awareness and prevention workshops for early readers, using puppets, storytelling and repetition.

"They won't even get rid of assault weapons here in this country. So my thing is, we have to go in and we've got to help them help themselves save themselves," Black said. "We're really kind of failing at that."

Roughing-the-passer call prompts officiating scrutiny

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Chiefs defensive tackle Chris Jones believes the NFL should allow video review of roughing-the-passer penalties after his controversial call — the second in as many days — nearly cost the Kansas City Chiefs in their come-from-behind 30-29 victory over the Las Vegas Raiders on Monday night.

The Chiefs had just scored to trim their deficit to 17-7 when Jones stripped Raiders quarterback Derek Carr from behind just before halftime. The Pro Bowl defensive tackle landed on Carr while also coming up with the ball — replays showed it was clearly loose and that Jones cleanly recovered — but referee Carl Cheffers threw a flag for roughing the passer.

The play happened with less than two minutes to go and was not reviewed.

Chiefs coach Andy Reid stormed off the sideline to argue with every official within earshot. And after the teams traded field goals, leaving the Raiders ahead 20-10 at halftime, Reid cornered Cheffers again as they headed to the locker room.

"The quarterback is in the pocket and he's in a passing posture. He gets full protection of all the aspects of what we give the quarterback in a passing posture," Cheffers told a pool reporter after the game. "My ruling was the defender landed on him with full body weight. The quarterback is protected from being tackled with full body weight."

That explanation didn't sit well in the Kansas City locker room.

Especially with the culprit.

"It's costing teams games," Jones said. "How should I tackle people? How should I not roll on him? I'm trying my best. I'm 325 pounds, OK? What do you want me to do? I'm going full speed trying to get the quarterback."

When players emerged for the second half, Kansas City fans booed Cheffers more loudly than the hated Raiders (1-4), and the call — and the energized Arrowhead Stadium — seemed to galvanize their team. Travis Kelce had three of his fourth TD catches in the second second half and the defense made a stand in the final minute to escape with the win.

"I've seen (Reid) angry," Mahomes said later, "but not about a call on the football field."

The call came one day after Atlanta defensive tackle Grady Jarrett was flagged by referee Jerome Boger for a seemingly innocuous tackle of Tampa Bay quarterback Tom Brady. The penalty gave the Buccaneers a first down and allowed them to run out the clock on a 21-15 victory, rather than giving the Falcons a chance to drive for the win.

"What I had was the defender grabbed the quarterback while he was still in the pocket, and unnecessarily throwing him to the ground," Boger told a pool reporter after the game. "That is what I was making my decision based upon."

The NFL was criticized for its failure to protect quarterbacks after Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa was taken off the field on a stretcher following a violent hit in a game against Cincinnati. Tagovailoa sustained a concussion when his head slammed to the turf on a tackle by the Bengals' Josh Tupou, who was

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not flagged on the play.

In the NFL rulebook, it states: "Any physical acts against a player who is in a passing posture (i.e. before, during, or after a pass) which, in the referee's judgment, are unwarranted by the circumstances of the play will be called as fouls."

The rulebook also notes: "When in doubt about a roughness call or potentially dangerous tactic against the quarterback, the referee should always call roughing the passer."

Jones offered a solution: Allow replays of roughing-the-passer calls.

"Especially in critical situations in games," he said. "We've got to be able to review it in the booth, you know what I mean? I think that's the next step for the NFL as a whole. If we're going to call it penalty at that high (of rate), then we've got to be able to review it and make sure, because sometimes looks can be deceiving."

Meanwhile, the Chiefs have had plenty of conflicts with Cheffers in the past.

The biggest came during the 2016 playoffs against Pittsburgh, when Cheffers called left tackle Eric Fisher for holding that negated what would have been a tying two-point conversion. The Steelers won 18-16 to advance to the AFC title game, and Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce said Cheffers "shouldn't even be able to work at ... Foot Locker."

Their opinion of the referee surely didn't improve Monday night.

"You want to protect the players in all aspects of the game, but at the same time, there's a common-sense factor," Mahomes said. "The refs watch tape and they practice, just like we do. I'm sure they'll go back and make the corrections."

Chiefs hold on for wild 30-29 victory over rival Raiders

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The Kansas City Chiefs headed off to the locker room facing a big hole against the Las Vegas Raiders on Monday night, everything from the big plays to the officiating calls going the way of their longtime AFC West rivals.

One call in particular lit a fire under them.

It was a dubious penalty on Chiefs defensive tackle Chris Jones for roughing Raiders quarterback Derek Carr, and nobody in the Kansas City locker room could believe it. But rather than stew over it, or lament their 10-point deficit, Patrick Mahomes and the rest of the Chiefs used it as motivation to storm from behind for the 30-29 victory.

"There was anger just about how we had played up to that point," said Mahomes, who threw four touchdown passes to tight end Travis Kelce. "We needed everybody to go out there and take the fight to them."

The Raiders still had a chance when Davante Adams, who earlier had hauled in a 58-yard touchdown catch, added a 48-yarder with 4:29 to go. It came after Kelce's final touchdown catch, when Kansas City failed on a 2-point try that left the score 30-23. But rather than kick a tying extra point, Raiders coach Josh McDaniels also went for 2.

Josh Jacobs, who had shredded the Chiefs defense all night, was stuffed at the goal line.

The Raiders got the ball back one last time with 2:29 left, and a long third-down pass to Adams down the Kansas City sideline appeared to get them in field-goal range. But the play was reviewed and Adams failed to get both feet in bounds, and Carr threw incomplete on fourth-and-1 with 47 seconds left before the Chiefs ran out the clock.

"We didn't fall apart on each other," Chiefs safety Justin Reid said. "We battled through adversity."

Carr finished with 241 yards passing, and Jacobs ran for 133 yards and a score, as the Raiders lost to the Chiefs (4-1) for the fourth straight time. Daniel Carlson was 3 for 3 on field goals, extending his streak to 38 in a row.

What he wouldn't have given for a chance at No. 39.

"We had a chance," Daniels said. "We just didn't make one or two plays there at the end to finish it."

The game of twists and turns began with the Raiders failing to score on their opening drive for the first

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time all season.

They made up for it on the next one.

Facing fourth-and-inches in their own territory, McDaniels sent his offense back on the field. But rather than run Jacobs up the middle, or sneak with Carr, he aired it out to Adams, who ran past Rashad Fenton for the 58-yard TD catch.

Adams and the Raiders continued to pick on Fenton later in the half, when a pass interference moved Las Vegas deep into Chiefs territory. Adams drew another penalty on Jaylen Watson in the end zone, setting up Jacobs' short TD plunge.

It was 17-0 when Kelce finally reached the end zone for the Chiefs, but it appeared as if the momentum had turned when Jones stripped Carr from behind and landed him. But despite the ball clearly coming out, and the Pro Bowl defensive tackle coming away with it, referee Carl Cheffers threw a penalty flag and called Jones for roughing the passer.

Chiefs coach Andy Reid stormed off the sideline to argue. And after the teams traded field goals in the final minutes, leaving the Raiders ahead 20-10, Reid cornered Cheffers and lit into him again as the teams headed to the locker room.

"I got it off my chest," Reid said. "I said what I needed to say."

The questionable penalty came one day after another questionable roughing call by referee Jerome Boger on Atlanta's Grady Jarrett against Tampa Bay quarterback Tom Brady sealed the Buccaneers' win over the Falcons.

Cheffers told a pool reporter that Carr "gets full protection of all aspects of what we give the quarterback in a passing posture. So when he was tackled, my ruling was the defender landed on him with full body weight."

Mahomes said: "It wasn't the greatest call in the world. You have to find a way to bounce back and we did."

Did they ever.

The Chiefs opened the second half with a 75-yard march that Kelce capped with his second TD reception. And after they forced a quick punt, the Chiefs went 57 yards and watched Kelce haul in his third to give Kansas City a 24-20 lead.

Midway through the fourth quarter, it was the Chiefs who got a penalty gift.

They were leading 24-23 when fill-in kicker Matthew Wright, whose 59-yarder before halftime set the franchise record for longest field goal, yanked a 37-yarder left. But defensive end Malcolm Koonce was called for holding, giving Kansas City an automatic first down, and Mahomes found Kelce once again four plays later to extend the lead to 30-24.

The teams traded touchdowns — and missed conversions — down the stretch as the Chiefs escaped with the win.

"We're close but close doesn't count in this game," Carr said. "It's frustrating."

INJURIES

Raiders: TE Darren Waller left with a hamstring injury in the first half. TE Foster Moreau (knee) already was unavailable despite returning to practice Saturday.

Chiefs: DT Tershawn Wharton tore his left ACL early in the game. ... OL Trey Smith (pectoral muscle) was inactive after starting the first 21 games of his career. DE Mike Danna (calf) and K Harrison Butker (ankle) also were inactive.

UP NEXT

The Raiders get next week off before facing the Texans on Oct. 23 in Las Vegas.

The Chiefs host the Bills on Sunday in a rematch of January's playoff overtime thriller.

Conservative PACs inject millions into local school races

By COLLIN BINKLEY and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

As Republicans and Democrats fight for control of Congress this fall, a growing collection of conservative

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political action groups is targeting its efforts closer to home: at local school boards.

Their aim is to gain control of more school systems and push back against what they see as a liberal tide in public education classrooms, libraries, sports fields, even building plans.

Once seen as sleepy affairs with little interest outside their communities, school board elections started to heat up last year as parents aired frustrations with pandemic policies. As those issues fade, right-leaning groups are spending millions on candidates who promise to scale back teachings on race and sexuality, remove offending books from libraries and nix plans for gender-neutral bathrooms or transgender-inclusive sports teams.

Democrats have countered with their own campaigns portraying Republicans as extremists who want to ban books and rewrite history.

At the center of the conservative effort is the 1776 Project PAC, which formed last year to push back against the New York Times' 1619 Project, which provides free lesson plans that center U.S. history around slavery and its lasting impacts. Last fall and this spring, the 1776 group succeeded in elevating conservative majorities to office in dozens of school districts across the U.S., propelling candidates who have gone on to fire superintendents and enact sweeping "bills of rights" for parents.

In the wake of recent victories in Texas and Pennsylvania — and having spent \$2 million between April 2021 and this August, according to campaign finance filings — the group is campaigning for dozens of candidates this fall. It's supporting candidates in Maryland's Frederick and Carroll counties, in Bentonville, Arkansas, and 20 candidates across southern Michigan.

Its candidates have won not only in deeply red locales but also in districts near liberal strongholds, including Philadelphia and Minneapolis. And after this November, the group hopes to expand further.

"Places we're not supposed to typically win, we've won in," said Ryan Girdusky, founder of the group. "I think we can do it again."

In Florida, recent school board races saw an influx of attention — and money — from conservative groups, including some that had never gotten involved in school races.

The American Principles Project, a Washington think tank, put a combined \$25,000 behind four candidates for the Polk County board. The group made its first foray into school boards at the behest of local activists, its leader said, and it's weighing whether to continue elsewhere. The group's fundraising average surged from under \$50,000 the year before the pandemic to about \$2 million now.

"We lean heavily into retaking federal power," said Terry Schilling, the think tank's president. "But if you don't also take over the local school boards, you're not going to have local allies there to actually reverse the policies that these guys have been implementing."

In a move never before seen in the state, Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis endorsed a slate of school board candidates, putting his weight behind conservatives who share his opposition to lessons on sexuality and what he deems critical race theory. Most of the DeSantis-backed candidates won in their August races, in some cases replacing conservative members who had more moderate views than the firebrand governor.

The movement claims to be an opposing force to left-leaning teachers unions. They see the unions as a well-funded enemy that promotes radical classroom lessons on race and sexuality — a favorite smear is to call the unions "groomers." The unions, which also support candidates, have called it a fiction meant to stoke distrust in public schools.

In Maryland's Frederick County, the 1776 group is backing three school board candidates against four endorsed by education unions. The conservatives are running as the "Education Not Indoctrination" slate, with a digital ad saying children are being "held captive" by schools. The ad shows a picture of stacked books bearing the words "equity," "grooming," "indoctrination" and "critical race theory."

Karen Yoho, a board member running for re-election, said outside figures have stoked fears about critical race theory and other lessons that aren't taught in Frederick County.

The discourse has mostly stayed civil in her area, but Yoho takes exception to the accusation that teachers are "grooming" children.

"I find it disgusting," said Yoho, a retired teacher whose children went through the district. "It makes my

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heart hurt. And then I kind of get mad and I get defensive.”

In Texas, Patriot Mobile — a wireless company that promotes conservative causes — has emerged as a political force in school board races. Earlier this year, its political arm spent more than \$400,000 out of \$800,000 raised to boost candidates in a handful of races in the northern Texas county where the company is based. All of its favored candidates won, putting conservatives in control of four districts.

The group did not respond to requests for comment, but a statement released after the spring victories said Texas was “just the beginning.”

Some GOP strategists have cautioned against the focus on education, saying it could backfire with more moderate voters. Results so far have been mixed — the 1776 Project claims a 70% win rate, but conservative candidates in some areas have fallen flat in recent elections.

Still, the number of groups that have banded together under the umbrella of parental rights seems only to be growing. It includes national organizations such as Moms for Liberty, along with smaller grassroots groups.

“There is a very stiff resistance to the concerted and intentional effort to make radical ideas about race and gender part of the school day. Parents don’t like it,” said Jonathan Butcher, an education fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation.

The foundation and its political wing have been hosting training sessions encouraging parents to run for school boards, teaching them the basics about budgeting but also about the perceived dangers of what the group deems critical race theory.

For decades, education was seen as its “own little game” that was buffered from national politics, said Jeffrey Henig, a political science and education professor at Columbia University’s Teachers College who has written about outside funding in school board elections. Now, he said, local races are becoming battlegrounds for broader debates.

He said education is unlikely to be a decisive issue in the November election — it’s overshadowed by abortion and the economy — but it can still be wielded to “amplify local discontent” and push more voters to the polls.

Republicans are using the tactic this fall as they look to unseat Democrats at all levels of government.

In Michigan, the American Principles Project is paying for TV ads against the Democratic governor where a narrator reads sexually explicit passages from the graphic novel “Gender Queer.” It claims that “this is the kind of literature that Gretchen Whitmer wants your kids exposed to,” while giant red letters appear saying “stop grooming our kids.”

Similar TV ads are being aired in Arizona to attack Sen. Mark Kelly, and in Maine against Gov. Janet Mills, both Democrats.

Supreme Court to hear case that could raise price of pork

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court will hear arguments over a California animal cruelty law that could raise the cost of bacon and other pork products nationwide.

The case’s outcome is important to the nation’s \$26-billion-a-year pork industry, but the outcome could also limit states’ ability to pass laws with impact outside their borders, from laws aimed at combating climate change to others intended to regulate prescription drug prices.

The case before the court on Tuesday involves California’s Proposition 12, which voters passed in 2018. It said that pork sold in the state needs to come from pigs whose mothers were raised with at least 24 square feet of space, including the ability to lie down and turn around. That rules out the confined “gestation crates,” metal enclosures that are common in the pork industry.

Two industry groups, the Iowa-based National Pork Producers Council and the American Farm Bureau Federation, sued over the proposition. They say that while Californians consume 13% of the pork eaten in the United States, nearly 100% of it comes from hogs raised outside the state, primarily where the industry is concentrated in the Midwest and North Carolina. The vast majority of sows, meanwhile, aren’t

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raised under conditions that would meet Proposition 12's standards.

The question for the high court is whether California has impermissibly burdened the pork market and improperly regulated an industry outside its borders.

Pork producers argue that 72% of farmers use individual pens for sows that don't allow them to turn around and that even farmers who house sows in larger group pens don't provide the space California would require.

They also say that the way the pork market works, with cuts of meat from various producers being combined before sale, it's likely all pork would have to meet California standards, regardless of where it's sold. Complying with Proposition 12 could cost the industry \$290 million to \$350 million, they say.

So far, lower courts have sided with California and animal-welfare groups that had supported the proposition. But for a number of reasons the law has yet to go into effect.

The Biden administration, for its part, is urging the justices to side with pork producers. The administration says Proposition 12 would be a "wholesale change in how pork is raised and marketed in this country." And it says the proposition has "thrown a giant wrench into the workings of the interstate market in pork."

California's Proposition 12 also covers other animals. It says egg-laying hens and calves being raised for veal need to be raised in conditions in which they have enough room to lie down, stand up and turn around freely. Those parts of the law aren't at issue in the case.

The case is National Pork Producers Council v. Ross, 21-468.

Florida shrimpers race to get battered fleet back to sea

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

FORT MYERS BEACH, Fla. (AP) — The seafood industry in southwest Florida is racing against time and the elements to save what's left of a major shrimping fleet — and a lifestyle — that was battered by Hurricane Ian.

The storm's ferocious wind and powerful surge hurled a couple dozen shrimp boats atop wharves and homes along the harbor on Estero Island. Jesse Clapham, who oversees a dozen trawlers for a large seafood company at Fort Myers Beach, is trying to get boats back to sea as quickly as possible — before their engines, winches and pulleys seize up from being out of the water.

One of two shrimpers that didn't sink or get tossed onto land went out Sunday, but the victory was small compared with the task ahead.

"There's 300 people who work for us and all of them are out of a job right now. I'm sure they'd rather just mow all this stuff down and build a giant condo here, but we're not going to give up," said Clapham, who manages the fishing fleet at Erickson and Jensen Seafood, which he said handles \$10 million in shrimp annually.

The company's fractured wharves, flooded office and processing house are located on Main Street beside another large seafood company, Trico Shrimp Co. There, a crane lifted the outrigger of grounded shrimper Aces & Eights — the first step toward getting it back in the water. Across the yard, the massive Kayden Nicole and Renee Lynn sat side-by-side in the parking lot, stern to bow.

Shrimping is the largest piece of Florida's seafood industry, with a value of almost \$52 billion in 2016, state statistics show. Gulf of Mexico shrimp from Fort Myers has been shipped all over the United States for generations.

Now, it's a matter of when the fishing can resume and whether there will still be experienced crews to operate the boats when that happens.

Deckhand Michele Bryant didn't just lose a job when the boat where she works was grounded, she lost her home. Shrimping crews are at sea for as long as two months at a time, she said, so members often don't have homes on land.

"I've got nowhere to stay," she said. "I'm living in a tent."

Richard Brown's situation is just as precarious. A citizen of Guyana who was working on a boat out of Miami when Ian hit southwest Florida, Brown rode out the storm on one of four boats that were lashed

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together along a harbor seawall.

"We tried to fight the storm. The lines were bursting. We kept replacing them but when the wind turned everybody was on land," he said.

There's no way to catch shrimp on a boat surrounded by dirt, so Brown is staying busy scraping barnacles off the hull of the Gulf Star. "It's like it's on dry dock," he said — but he's no more sure what to do now than at the height of the storm.

"It was terrifying — the worst experience," said Brown, who is more than 2,160 miles (3,480 kilometers) from his home in South America. "I was just thinking, 'You could abandon the ship.' But where are you going?"

Seafood fleets along the Gulf Coast are used to getting wiped out by hurricanes. Katrina pummeled the industry from Louisiana to Alabama in 2005, and the seafood business in southern Louisiana is still recovering from Hurricane Ida's punch last year. But this part of Florida hasn't seen a storm like Ian in a century, leaving people to wonder what happens next.

Dale Kalliainen and his brother followed their father into the shrimping business and owns the trawler Night Wind, which landed amid a mobile home park near a bridge. He said high fuel prices and low-cost imported seafood took a bite out the industry long before Ian did its worst.

"There used to be 300 boats in this harbor and now there's maybe 50," he said. "It's going to be probably years before this business is even close to being back to what it was."

Clapham, the 47-year-old fleet manager, has spent his entire life on shrimp boats. The industry already operates on a thin margin and needs help recovering from Ian, he said.

"These boats go out and catch \$60,000, \$70,000 worth of shrimp a month, but it costs \$30,000 to \$50,000 to put fuel on them and groceries and supplies, and then you've got to pay the crew. And sometimes these boats' (catches) don't even pay for everything," he said. "We take money from one boat and get another boat going and send 'em back fishing just to keep going."

Fight for Black voters intensifies in close Pa. Senate race

By MIKE CATALINI and MARC LEVY Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — As Sheila Armstrong grew emotional in recounting how her brother and nephew were killed in Philadelphia, Dr. Mehmet Oz — sitting next to her inside a Black church, their chairs arranged a bit like his former daytime TV show set — placed a comforting hand on her shoulder.

Later, he gave her a hug, and said, "How do you cope?"

Two days later, on a stage 4 miles away, Oz's Democratic rival for Pennsylvania's U.S. Senate seat, John Fetterman, stood with Lee and Dennis Horton and spoke of his efforts as lieutenant governor to free the two Black men from life sentences.

"Almost 30 years in prison, condemned to die in prison as innocent men, and I fought to make sure they come out to their families," Fetterman told the crowd.

Black voters are at the center of an increasingly competitive battle in a race that could tilt control of the Senate, as Democrats try to harness outrage over the Supreme Court's abortion decision and Republicans tap the national playbook to focus on crime in cities.

They are perhaps the Democratic Party's most loyal supporters. About 9 in 10 Black voters nationally went for Joe Biden in 2020, according to AP VoteCast, an expansive survey of more than 110,000 voters nationwide. In Pennsylvania, the support was similar, at 94%.

There's no evidence of a looming mass defection to Republicans like Oz. But if he can peel off even a small share — or a critical mass of Black voters choose not to vote — it might prove consequential in a race that polls show as close.

In Philadelphia, where Black voters are the largest bloc in the swing state's biggest Democratic bastion, some activists question Democrats' outreach and fret about turnout.

Charles Ellison, the executive producer and host of Reality Check, a daily public affairs program on Philadelphia's prominent Black-themed WURD radio, said Democrats lack a unified message tailored for

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the Black community and didn't undertake a long-term investment in Black voter outreach.

"There's just not this realization that's occurring that Pennsylvania is a national battleground and Philadelphia is the cornerstone in that," Ellison said. "And the only way you're going to get Philadelphia and the only way you're going to get Pennsylvania is through maximum Black voter turnout."

Fetterman may benefit from this year's governor's race.

In it, Democrat Josh Shapiro's campaign said it is investing \$3 million in Black voter outreach while his opponent, Republican Doug Mastriano, has drawn criticism from members of his own party for focusing almost exclusively on his right-wing base.

Shapiro is also making regular visits to Black churches and businesses, has rolled out a platform to expand pathways to jobs and create wealth in Black communities, and endorsed a Black man, Austin Davis, for lieutenant governor.

In the Senate race, millions of dollars in Republican attack ads aired on TV in Philadelphia before Fetterman — who spent much of the summer off the campaign trail recovering from a stroke — held his first public political event there in late September.

For Oz, crime is a primary thrust. He has held two public safety-themed town halls in Black communities, suggesting that Democrats have failed to protect them from violence and drugs.

Republicans frequently point to gun violence in Philadelphia and have sought to undercut one of Fetterman's avenues of appeal to Black voters: his efforts as lieutenant governor to free the over-incarcerated, rehabilitated or innocent. Republicans cast it as freeing dangerous criminals to roam the streets.

Fetterman and Democrats call that a lie and fearmongering that underestimates support among Black voters for giving second chances. And they say Black voters know they can trust Fetterman to support the things they care about, like voting rights legislation in Congress.

Plus, Oz is former President Donald Trump's endorsed candidate.

"I think most Black people would say he was one of the worst presidents for Black people in our lifetime," said Sharif Street, the state Democratic Party chair and the first Black person to hold the position. "I don't think a TV commercial can override what people know to already be true."

At Fetterman's rally at a recreation center in northeast Philadelphia, at least a half-dozen Black supporters introduced Fetterman.

One of the speakers, the Rev. Mark Tyler, said Fetterman supports things that Black voters care about, such as bringing jobs to "America's poorest big city," ending environmental racism and supporting stronger funding for city schools. Fetterman also supports criminal justice reform and ending gun violence, Tyler said.

"He did it as a mayor in Braddock and understands what it is to have to sit and stand with grieving Black families after such a tragic incident," Tyler said.

As Fetterman stood onstage with the Hortons — brothers who had their life sentences commuted after nearly 30 years in prison, and now work for Fetterman's campaign — he took aim at Oz's attacks for his work to free the men. Oz's campaign has called the Hortons "convicted murderers" and Fetterman "the most pro-murderer candidate for the Senate in the entire country."

The Hortons were convicted of second-degree murder in a fatal shooting during a robbery in a Philadelphia bar — crimes they maintained they didn't commit. Despite opposition from the victim's brother, Gov. Tom Wolf freed the men in late 2020, noting they had served 27 years after turning down plea deals for 5 to 10 years.

"What does it say about a person's character if they will fight to make sure innocent men will die in prison versus a man that will fight to make sure that they're able to get back with their families?" Fetterman asked the crowd. "That's the choice."

Oz-allied groups have also aired TV ads reviving a 2013 incident in which Fetterman — as Braddock's mayor — grabbed his shotgun and pursued a jogging Black man whom he suspected had been involved in gunfire nearby. No one was charged in the incident and Fetterman has said he didn't know the man's race before he confronted him.

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to listen and find solutions to problems that Democrats have let fester.

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Love Williams, a 25-year-old registered Democrat who came to Oz's event at the invitation of a friend, said he wasn't sure he'll vote this fall after feeling like Biden has underdelivered for Black people.

Asked by Williams what he'd do to help his community, Oz said he'd push for more tax dollars for private schools and to open liquefied natural gas export stations in the city to bring wealth into the community.

Williams said afterward that he wasn't sold on Oz — or Oz's ideas, either.

The event, he said, came off as "just a political stop for one politician."

Fight for Black voters intensifies in close Pa. Senate race

By MIKE CATALINI and MARC LEVY Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — As Sheila Armstrong grew emotional in recounting how her brother and nephew were killed in Philadelphia, Dr. Mehmet Oz — sitting next to her inside a Black church, their chairs arranged a bit like his former daytime TV show set — placed a comforting hand on her shoulder.

Later, he gave her a hug, and said, "How do you cope?"

Two days later, on a stage 4 miles away, Oz's Democratic rival for Pennsylvania's U.S. Senate seat, John Fetterman, stood with Lee and Dennis Horton and spoke of his efforts as lieutenant governor to free the two Black men from life sentences.

"Almost 30 years in prison, condemned to die in prison as innocent men, and I fought to make sure they come out to their families," Fetterman told the crowd.

Black voters are at the center of an increasingly competitive battle in a race that could tilt control of the Senate, as Democrats try to harness outrage over the Supreme Court's abortion decision and Republicans tap the national playbook to focus on crime in cities.

They are perhaps the Democratic Party's most loyal supporters. About 9 in 10 Black voters nationally went for Joe Biden in 2020, according to AP VoteCast, an expansive survey of more than 110,000 voters nationwide. In Pennsylvania, the support was similar, at 94%.

There's no evidence of a looming mass defection to Republicans like Oz. But if he can peel off even a small share — or a critical mass of Black voters choose not to vote — it might prove consequential in a race that polls show as close.

In Philadelphia, where Black voters are the largest bloc in the swing state's biggest Democratic bastion, some activists question Democrats' outreach and fret about turnout.

Charles Ellison, the executive producer and host of Reality Check, a daily public affairs program on Philadelphia's prominent Black-themed WURD radio, said Democrats lack a unified message tailored for the Black community and didn't undertake a long-term investment in Black voter outreach.

"There's just not this realization that's occurring that Pennsylvania is a national battleground and Philadelphia is the cornerstone in that," Ellison said. "And the only way you're going to get Philadelphia and the only way you're going to get Pennsylvania is through maximum Black voter turnout."

Fetterman may benefit from this year's governor's race.

In it, Democrat Josh Shapiro's campaign said it is investing \$3 million in Black voter outreach while his opponent, Republican Doug Mastriano, has drawn criticism from members of his own party for focusing almost exclusively on his right-wing base.

Shapiro is also making regular visits to Black churches and businesses, has rolled out a platform to expand pathways to jobs and create wealth in Black communities, and endorsed a Black man, Austin Davis, for lieutenant governor.

In the Senate race, millions of dollars in Republican attack ads aired on TV in Philadelphia before Fetterman — who spent much of the summer off the campaign trail recovering from a stroke — held his first public political event there in late September.

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For Oz, crime is a primary thrust. He has held two public safety-themed town halls in Black communities, suggesting that Democrats have failed to protect them from violence and drugs.

Republicans frequently point to gun violence in Philadelphia and have sought to undercut one of Fetterman's avenues of appeal to Black voters: his efforts as lieutenant governor to free the over-incarcerated, rehabilitated or innocent. Republicans cast it as freeing dangerous criminals to roam the streets.

Fetterman and Democrats call that a lie and fearmongering that underestimates support among Black voters for giving second chances. And they say Black voters know they can trust Fetterman to support the things they care about, like voting rights legislation in Congress.

Plus, Oz is former President Donald Trump's endorsed candidate.

"I think most Black people would say he was one of the worst presidents for Black people in our lifetime," said Sharif Street, the state Democratic Party chair and the first Black person to hold the position. "I don't think a TV commercial can override what people know to already be true."

At Fetterman's rally at a recreation center in northeast Philadelphia, at least a half-dozen Black supporters introduced Fetterman.

One of the speakers, the Rev. Mark Tyler, said Fetterman supports things that Black voters care about, such as bringing jobs to "America's poorest big city," ending environmental racism and supporting stronger funding for city schools. Fetterman also supports criminal justice reform and ending gun violence, Tyler said.

"He did it as a mayor in Braddock and understands what it is to have to sit and stand with grieving Black families after such a tragic incident," Tyler said.

As Fetterman stood onstage with the Hortons — brothers who had their life sentences commuted after nearly 30 years in prison, and now work for Fetterman's campaign — he took aim at Oz's attacks for his work to free the men. Oz's campaign has called the Hortons "convicted murderers" and Fetterman "the most pro-murderer candidate for the Senate in the entire country."

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Ohio Senate debate with Ryan, Vance descends into attacks

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — The first debate between Democratic U.S. Rep. Tim Ryan and Republican JD

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Vance descended quickly into attacks Monday, with the candidates for Ohio's open U.S. Senate seat accusing each other of being responsible for job losses and putting party loyalty ahead of voters' needs.

Vance said Ryan had supported policies that led to a 10-year-old girl in Ohio being raped. Ryan said Vance had started a "fake nonprofit" to help people overcome addiction issues. The two accused each other of being beholden to their party, with Ryan echoing a comment from former President Donald Trump in calling Vance an "a— kisser" and Vance saying Ryan's 100% voting record with President Joe Biden means he's not the reasonable moderate he says he is.

The face-off between Ryan, a 10-term congressman, and Vance, a venture capitalist and author of "Hill-billy Elegy," for the seat being vacated by retiring GOP Sen. Rob Portman was one of the most contentious debates of the general election season so far. The race is one of the most expensive and closely watched of the midterms, with Democrats viewing it as a possible pickup opportunity in November.

Both candidates sought to tailor their messages to the working-class voters who could determine the election in an evening peppered with barbs and one-liners.

Ryan sought to paint Vance as an extremist, someone who associates with "crazies" from his party who falsely claim the 2020 election was stolen, support national abortion restrictions and contributed to the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

"You're running around with Ron DeSantis, the governor of Florida, who wants to ban books. You're running around with (Sen.) Lindsey Graham, who wants a national abortion ban. You're running around with (Rep.) Marjorie Taylor Greene, who's the absolute looniest politician in America," Ryan said.

Vance suggested Ryan's focus on allegation of extremism was meant as a distraction from pocketbook issues important to voters, such as inflation and the price of groceries.

"It's close to Halloween and Tim Ryan has put on a costume where he pretends to be a reasonable moderate." Had he been, Vance said, "Youngstown may not have lost 50,000 manufacturing jobs during your 20 years."

Ryan said: "I'm not gonna apologize for spending 20 years of my adult life slogging away to try to help one of the hardest economically hit regions of Ohio and dedicating my life to help that region come back. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, JD. You went off to California, you were drinking wine and eating cheese."

Vance countered that he left Ohio at 18 to join the Marines, and after working in Silicon Valley, he returned to Ohio to raise his family and start a business.

During questioning about China, Ryan said Vance invested in China as a venture capitalist, the type of business move that exacerbated job losses in Ohio's manufacturing base. "The problem we're having now with inflation is our supply chains all went to China, and guys like him made a whole lot of money off that," Ryan said.

Vance said it is Democratic economic policies that have harmed manufacturing, saying, "They have completely gone to war against America's energy sector." He said he could not remember investing in China.

On abortion, Vance did not answer whether he would support Graham's proposed national ban after 15 weeks of pregnancy, with some exceptions. Vance said he thinks different states would likely want different laws but "some minimum national standard is totally fine with me."

He called himself "pro-life" but said he has "always believed in reasonable exceptions."

Ryan said he supports codifying the abortion rights established in Roe v. Wade, which was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in June. He said he opposes Ohio's law banning most abortions after fetal cardiac activity has been detected, as early as six weeks into pregnancy, which was blocked Friday.

Vance agreed with Ryan that a 10-year-old Ohio rape victim should not have had to leave the state for an abortion, but he said the fact the suspect was in the country illegally was a failure of weak border policies.

"You voted so many times against the border wall funding, so many times for amnesty, Tim," Vance said. "If you had done your job, she would have never been raped in the first place."

On foreign policy, the pair parted ways on what the U.S. response should be if Russian President Vladimir Putin were to launch nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

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Ryan said the U.S. should be prepared with a "swift and significant response," while Vance countered that the United States needs a "foreign policy establishment that puts the interests of our citizens first."

Ryan responded: "If JD had his way, Putin would be through Ukraine at this point. He'd be going into Poland."

"If I had my way," Vance retorted, "you'd put money at the southern border, Tim, instead of launching tons of money into Ukraine." It echoed comments Vance had made in an interview before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, saying he didn't "really care what happens to Ukraine one way or another" because he wanted to see Biden focus on his own country's border security.

Vance said, however, that Taiwan was a "much different situation" than Ukraine because of its importance to U.S. national security. "The reason why Taiwan is different is because they make so many of our semiconductors, our computer chips. The entire modern economy would collapse without it," Vance said.

Ryan sought at points to put some distance between himself and his party, repeating his earlier comments that Biden shouldn't run for a second term in 2024 and calling Vice President Kamala Harris "absolutely wrong" to say that the southern border was secure.

"I'm not here to just get in a fight or just tiptoe the Democratic Party line," Ryan said. "I'm here to speak the truth."

Ryan said Vance didn't have the courage to stand up to people in his own party, noting that during an Ohio rally last month, Trump, who endorsed Vance, said, "JD is kissing my a--, he wants my support so (much)."

Vance retorted: "I'm not going to take lessons on dignity and self-respect from a guy caught on video kissing up to Chuck Schumer and begging him for a promotion to his next job. That's the kind of guy Tim Ryan is."

While the general election debate between Ryan and Vance was acrimonious, it didn't lead to a near-physical altercation, as an Ohio GOP Senate debate back in March during the primary season did. Former state Treasurer Josh Mandel and investment banker Mike Gibbons found themselves face to face on the debate stage, shouting at each other, while Vance told the two to stop fighting.

"Sit down. Come on," Vance said, sitting in a row with the remaining candidates. "This is ridiculous."

At the end of Monday's debate, Vance and Ryan shook hands.

New Zealand proposes taxing cow burps, angering farmers

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — New Zealand's government on Tuesday proposed taxing the greenhouse gasses that farm animals make from burping and peeing as part of a plan to tackle climate change.

The government said the farm levy would be a world first, and that farmers should be able to recoup the cost by charging more for climate-friendly products.

But farmers quickly condemned the plan. Federated Farmers, the industry's main lobby group, said the plan would "rip the guts out of small-town New Zealand" and see farms replaced with trees.

Federated Farmers President Andrew Hoggard said farmers had been trying to work with the government for more than two years on an emissions reduction plan that wouldn't decrease food production.

"Our plan was to keep farmers farming," Hoggard said. Instead, he said farmers would be selling their farms "so fast you won't even hear the dogs barking on the back of the ute (pickup truck) as they drive off."

Opposition lawmakers from the conservative ACT Party said the plan would actually increase worldwide emissions by moving farming to other countries that were less efficient at making food.

New Zealand's farming industry is vital to its economy. Dairy products, including those used to make infant formula in China, are the nation's largest export earner.

There are just 5 million people in New Zealand but some 10 million beef and dairy cattle and 26 million sheep.

The outsized industry has made New Zealand unusual in that about half of its greenhouse gas emissions come from farms. Farm animals produce gasses that warm the planet, particularly methane from cattle burps and nitrous oxide from their urine.

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The debate in New Zealand is part of a broader global reckoning about farming's impact on the environment and the steps some say are needed for mitigation.

In the Netherlands, farmers have dumped hay bales on roads and driven tractors along busy highways to protest government proposals to slash emissions of damaging pollutants.

In New Zealand, the government has pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make the country carbon neutral by 2050. Part of that plan includes a pledge that it will reduce methane emissions from farm animals by 10% by 2030 and by up to 47% by 2050.

Under the government's proposed plan, farmers would start to pay for emissions in 2025, with the pricing yet to be finalized.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said all the money collected from the proposed farm levy would be put back into the industry to fund new technology, research and incentive payments for farmers.

"New Zealand's farmers are set to be the first in the world to reduce agricultural emissions, positioning our biggest export market for the competitive advantage that brings in a world increasingly discerning about the provenance of their food," Ardern said.

Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor said it was an exciting opportunity for New Zealand and its farmers.

"Farmers are already experiencing the impact of climate change with more regular drought and flooding," O'Connor said. "Taking the lead on agricultural emissions is both good for the environment and our economy."

The liberal Labour government's proposal harks back to a similar but unsuccessful proposal made by a previous Labour government in 2003 to tax farm animals for their methane emissions.

Farmers back then also vehemently opposed the idea, and political opponents ridiculed it as a "fart tax" — although a "burp tax" would have been more technically accurate as most of the methane emissions come from belching. The government eventually abandoned the plan.

According to opinion polls, Ardern's Labour Party has slipped in popularity and fallen behind the main opposition National Party since Ardern won a second term in 2020 in a landslide victory of historic proportions.

If Ardern's government can't find agreement on the proposal with farmers, who have considerable political sway in New Zealand, it's likely to make it more difficult for Ardern to win reelection next year when the nation goes back to the polls.

Nobelist Annie Ernaux draws hundreds to New York bookstore

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Since Annie Ernaux won the Nobel literature prize last week, the French author's books have gained enough new admirers that many titles are out of stock on Amazon.com and at physical bookstores, some unavailable for a month or more. But at Albertine Books on Manhattan's Upper East Side, her appearance Monday night felt less like an introduction than a gathering of old friends, French and American alike.

The event, reachable on the second floor via a winding staircase within the Cultural Services of the French Embassy, had sold out well before the Nobel was announced. On Monday, an early line of attendees extended around the corner, with hundreds eventually packed inside, including an overflow crowd that watched her through a video feed from the floor below.

Greeted by an ovation from a standing-room-only audience that included fellow authors Garth Greenwell and Rachel Kushner, the 82-year-old Ernaux spoke at length and at an energetic pace, through her translator, about her career and the writing process.

Her expansive answers contrasted with the economical style of her famously short, autobiographical books, among them the 64-page "Simple Passion" and the 96-page "Happening," her candid recollection about having an illegal abortion in 1963 that was adapted last year into a French-language film of the same name.

The night was billed "The Art of Capturing Life in Writing." Ernaux, interviewed by author Kate Zambreno, likened her work to a long-term exploration of her mind, echoing a common sentiment among authors: They write to discover what they think.

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"Literature appeared to me as the only means to reach what I call either truth or reality," she said. "It is a way to make things clear, not in a simple manner — on the contrary to write things makes them more complex. It is a way, also, that so long as something has not been written it doesn't really exist."

Raised in rural Normandy, Ernaux was praised by Nobel judges for showing "great courage and clinical acuity" in revealing "the agony of the experience of class, describing shame, humiliation, jealousy or inability to see who you are." Ernaux said Monday night that her goal was never to write a "beautiful book" or be part of the literary world that now celebrates her, but to articulate her thoughts and experiences and make them recognizable to others.

Zambreno recalled a moment in "Happening" when Ernaux goes to the library to research abortion yet can find no books that mention it. Ernaux explained that books had "nourished and fed" her since childhood, and that she was as sensitive to what they didn't include as to what they did.

"Happening" was itself a kind of corrective, and one she was confident would resonate, especially since the U.S. Supreme Court's overturned Roe v. Wade last summer. Ernaux remembered her advocacy for the right to an abortion, which France legalized in 1975, and her gratitude for the "sorority" of peers with whom she could share her story.

But not even the most intimate discussions had the lasting power of placing words within a bound text.

"Years later, after I had an abortion, in the 2000s when I chose to write about what I called an 'event' or a 'happening,' people would ask me 'Why are you returning to this?'" she said. "And it's because I had the feeling that there was something there that needed to be undone, to be look at, to be explored. And it was only through narrative that that 'happening' could be looked at that way."

28 dead as Julia drenches Central America with rainfall

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — Former Hurricane Julia has dissipated, but is still drenching Guatemala and El Salvador with torrential rains Monday after it reemerged in the Pacific following a pounding of Nicaragua.

At least 28 people were reported dead as a direct or indirect result of the storm.

Guatemala's disaster prevention agency said five people died after a hillside collapsed on their house in Alta Verapaz province, burying them. And in Huehuetenango province, near Mexico, nine people died, including a soldier killed while performing rescue work.

Authorities in El Salvador said five Salvadoran army soldiers died after a wall collapsed at a house where they sought refuge in the town of Comasagua, where hundreds of police and soldiers have been conducting anti-gang raids. Another soldier was injured.

Two other people died in the eastern El Salvador town of Guatajiagua after heavy rains caused a wall of their home to collapse. Another man in El Salvador died when he was swept away by a current, and another died when a tree fell on him.

Rivers overflowed their banks and El Salvador declared a state of emergency and opened 80 storm shelters.

In neighboring Honduras, a 22-year-old woman died when she was swept away by currents, and three people died when their boat swamped or capsized in northern Honduras. A man in Nicaragua was killed by a falling tree.

Julia hit Nicaragua's central Caribbean coast early Sunday as a hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 85 mph (140 kph) and survived the passage over the country's mountainous terrain, entering the Pacific late in the day as a tropical storm..

By Monday, Julia had moved inland over Guatemala and its winds were down to 30 mph (45 kph).

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Julia was centered about 80 miles (125 kilometers) west-northwest of Guatemala City, and was moving west-northwest at 15 mph (24 kph).

The center said floods and mudslides were possible across Central America and southern Mexico through Tuesday, with the storm expected to bring as much as 15 inches (38 centimeters) of rain in isolated areas.

In Guatemala, two people were listed as missing and two were hospitalized, and about 1,300 people had to leave their homes because of flooding and rising streams.

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Julia was expected to dissipate later Monday as it passes along the Guatemalan coast.

Colombia's national disaster agency reported Sunday that Julia blew the roofs off several houses and knocked over trees as it blasted past San Andres Island east of Nicaragua. There were no immediate reports of fatalities

In Nicaragua, Vice President Rosario Murillo told TN8 television that 9,500 people had been evacuated to shelters.

Heavy rains and evacuations were also reported in Panama, Honduras and Costa Rica, where some highways were closed due to the downpours.

Search for victims done, Florida coast aims for Ian recovery

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

FORT MYERS, Fla. (AP) — An army of 42,000 utility workers has restored electricity to more than 2.5 million businesses and homes in Florida since Hurricane Ian's onslaught, and Brenda Palmer's place is among them. By the government's count, she and her husband, Ralph, are part of a success story.

Yet turning on the lights in a wrecked mobile home that's likely beyond repair and reeks of dried river mud and mold isn't much solace to people who lost a lifetime of work in a few hours of wind, rain and rising seawater. Sorting through soggy old photos of her kids in the shaded ruins of her carport, Palmer couldn't help but cry.

"Everybody says, 'You can't save everything, mom,' " she said. "You know, it's my life. It's MY life. It's gone."

With the major search for victims over and a large swath of Florida's southwest coast settling in for the long slog of recovering from a rare direct hit by a major hurricane, residents are bracing for what will be months, if not years, of work. Mourning lost heirlooms will be hard; so will fights with insurance companies and decisions about what to do next.

Around the corner from the Palmers in Coach Light Manor, a retirement community of 179 mobile homes that was flooded by two creeks and a canal, a sad realization hit Susan Colby sometime between the first time she saw her soggy home after Ian and Sunday, when she was picking through its remains.

"I'm 86 years old, and I'm homeless," she said. "It's just crazy. I mean, never in my life did I dream that I wouldn't have a home. But it's gone."

State officials confirmed eight more deaths linked to the storm late Monday, bringing Florida's toll to 102 — just over half of those in hardest-hit Lee County, where the powerful Category 4 hurricane came ashore with 155 mph (259 kph) winds on Sept 28. Overall, 111 deaths have been blamed on the storm, also including five deaths in North Carolina, one in Virginia and three in Cuba.

It was the third-deadliest storm to hit the U.S. mainland this century behind Hurricane Katrina, which left about 1,400 people dead, and Hurricane Sandy, which killed 233 despite weakening to a tropical storm just before landfall.

At a makeshift memorial set up in a downtown park along the Caloosahatchee River, Holly Harmon got tearful Monday while placing yellow roses beside photos of people lost to the storm. She said it was the first time she had been able to visit because she had to wait for an inspector from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to assess damage to her home.

"My heart is just hurting for so many of the people we've known and grown with and everything they've lost," said Harmon, 27.

While Gov. Ron DeSantis has heaped lavish praise on his administration for the early phases of the recovery, including getting running water and lights back on and erecting a temporary bridge to Pine Island, much more remains to be done. There are still mountains of debris to remove; it's hard to find a road that isn't lined with waterlogged carpet, ruined furniture, moldy mattresses and pieces of homes.

On the road to Estero Island, scene of the worst damage to Fort Myers Beach, workers are using heavy machines with huge grapples to snatch debris out of swampy areas and deposit it into trucks. Boats of all sizes, from dinghies to huge shrimpers and charter fishing vessels, block roads and sit atop buildings.

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DeSantis said at least some of the roadmap for the coming months in southwest Florida may come from the Florida Panhandle, where Category 5 Hurricane Michael wiped out Mexico Beach and much of Panama City in 2018. Panama City leaders will be brought in to offer advice on the cleanup, DeSantis told a weekend news conference.

"They're going to come down on the ground, they're going to inspect, and then they've going to offer some advice to the local officials here in Lee County, Fort Myers Beach and other places," DeSantis said. "You can do what you want. You don't have to accept their advice. But I tell you that was a major, major effort."

In a region full of retirees, many of whom moved South to get away from the chill of Northern winters, Luther Marth worries that it might be more difficult for some to recover from the psychological effects of Ian than the physical destruction. Two men in their 70s already have taken their own lives after seeing the destruction, officials said.

Fort Myers was sideswiped by Hurricane Irma in 2017, but Marth said that storm was nothing like Ian, and the emotional toll will be greater, especially for older folks.

"I'm 88 years old. People my age struggle," said Marth, who counts himself and his wife, Jacqueline, among the lucky despite losing a car and thousands of dollars worth of fishing gear, tools and more when their garage filled with more than 5 feet (1.52 meters) of water.

"If you got wiped out financially, you don't want to start over again. You don't have the will to start again," Marth said. "So those are the people my heart breaks for."

Los Angeles Council president resigns after racist remarks

By JOHN ANTCZAK Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The president of the Los Angeles City Council resigned from the post Monday after she was heard making racist comments and other coarse remarks in a leaked recording of a conversation with other Latino leaders.

Council President Nury Martinez issued an apology and expressed shame.

"In the end, it is not my apologies that matter most; it will be the actions I take from this day forward. I hope that you will give me the opportunity to make amends," she said in a statement. "Therefore, effective immediately I am resigning as President of the Los Angeles City Council."

The statement did not say she would resign her council seat. There was no immediate response to a call and email sent to her office.

Martinez said in the recorded conversation that white Councilmember Mike Bonin handled his young Black son as if he were an "accessory" and described the son as behaving "Parece changuito," or "like a monkey," the Los Angeles Times reported Sunday.

Martinez also referred to Bonin as a "little bitch" and at another point mocked Oaxacans, the Times said.

"I see a lot of little short dark people," Martinez said in reference to a particular area of the largely Hispanic Koreatown neighborhood.

"I was like, I don't know where these people are from, I don't know what village they came (from), how they got here," Martinez said, adding "Tan feos" — "They're ugly."

The recording's content rocked the political establishment just weeks before elections for the mayor's office and several council seats.

Bonin and his husband, Sean Arian, were part of a growing chorus calling for the resignations of Martinez and two other council members who were involved.

"The entirety of the recorded conversation ... displayed a repeated and vulgar anti-Black sentiment, and a coordinated effort to weaken Black political representation in Los Angeles," they said.

Also demanding the council members' resignations were labor leaders, indigenous groups, the state Democratic Party, U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla, U.S. Rep. Adam B. Schiff and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti.

"Bigotry, violence, and division too often live in unseen and unheard places, but have severe consequences on the lives of our fellow Angelenos when they are not confronted and left to infect our public

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and private lives," Garcetti said in a statement

The conversation was recorded in October 2021, and others present were Councilmembers Gil Cedillo and Kevin de León and Los Angeles County Federation of Labor President Ron Herrera, the Times reported. The overall discussion was about frustrations with redistricting maps produced by a city commission.

The Times reported that the approximately hourlong audio was posted on Reddit by a now-suspended user, and that it was unclear who recorded the audio and whether anyone else was present at the meeting.

Martinez initially issued an apology after the Times article appeared online.

"In a moment of intense frustration and anger, I let the situation get the best of me and I hold myself accountable for these comments. For that I am sorry," she said.

"The context of this conversation was concern over the redistricting process and concern about the potential negative impact it might have on communities of color," she said. "My work speaks for itself. I've worked hard to lead this city through its most difficult time."

Martinez, whose district website describes her as "a glass-ceiling shattering leader who brings profound life experience as the proud daughter of working-class immigrants," was elected to the council in 2013 and became the council's first Latina president in 2020.

De León, a former state legislator, referred at one point in the conversation to Bonin as the council's "fourth Black member."

"Mike Bonin won't f---ing ever say peep about Latinos. He'll never say a f---ing word about us," he said.

During the part in which Martinez likened Bonin's son to an "accessory," De León appeared to compare Bonin's handling of the child to "when Nury brings her Goyard bag or the Louis Vuitton bag."

"Su negrito, like on the side," Martinez responded.

Bonin's son came up in a tangent of the conversation in which Martinez suggested the child misbehaved while they were riding on a float in a Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade, the Times said.

"They're raising him like a little white kid," Martinez said. "I was like, this kid needs a beatdown. Let me take him around the corner and then I'll bring him back."

De León said in a statement that the comments were inappropriate.

"I regret appearing to condone and even contribute to certain insensitive comments made about a colleague and his family in private," he said. "I've reached out to that colleague personally."

Cedillo issued a statement of apology Monday.

"While I did not engage in the conversation in question, I was present at times during this meeting last year," he said. "It is my instinct to hold others accountable when they use derogatory or racially divisive language. Clearly, I should have intervened."

Herrera, the labor official, said in an apology that there is "no excuse for the vile remarks made in that room," and that he "didn't step up to stop them," the Times reported.

In their statement, Bonin and his husband said Martinez was unfit for public office.

"No child should ever be subjected to such racist, mean and dehumanizing comments, especially from a public official. It is painful to know he will someday read these comments," they said.

Three Black members of the council issued a joint statement saying it was "a very dark day in LA politics for African-Americans, the LGBTQ+ community, Indigenous people and Angelenos who have put their faith in their local government."

Councilmembers Curren Price, Heather Hutt and Marqueece Harris-Dawson said that a facade had come crashing down.

"This is 2022 and we will not turn a blind eye to the blatant prejudice, discrimination and racism that has been put on full display for the whole world to see," they said.

Shockwaves roiled the mayoral race.

Martinez had endorsed U.S. Rep. Karen Bass, who is seeking to become the first Black woman to lead the nation's second-most populous city.

"Let me be clear about what was on those tapes: appalling, anti-Black racism," Bass said in a statement.

"All those in the room must be held accountable, and I've spent the day speaking with Black and Latino

leaders about how to ensure this doesn't divide our city," Bass added.

Her opponent, billionaire developer Rick Caruso, said it was a "heartbreaking day for our proud, diverse city," and he called for all three involved to resign from the council.

"Now, we must unite and strongly repudiate what was said," Caruso said in a statement.

California governor's wife among accusers at Weinstein trial

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jennifer Siebel Newsom, a documentary filmmaker and actor who is married to California Gov. Gavin Newsom, is among the accusers of Harvey Weinstein who will testify at his rape and sexual assault trial that began Monday, her attorney said.

"Like many other women, my client was sexually assaulted by Harvey Weinstein at a purported business meeting that turned out to be a trap," Newsom's attorney Elizabeth Fegan said in a statement. "She intends to testify at his trial in order to seek some measure of justice for survivors, and as part of her life's work to improve the lives of women."

Weinstein, the 70-year-old former movie mogul who is serving a 23-year prison sentence after a conviction in New York, has pleaded not guilty to 11 counts of rape and sexual assault involving Newsom and four other women. All of them will testify as Jane Doe during the eight-week trial in a Los Angeles court, where jury selection began Monday.

The Associated Press does not normally name people who say they've been sexually abused, but Newsom agreed to be named through her attorney.

The news of her involvement was first reported by The Los Angeles Times.

Newsom, 48, appeared in small roles in dozens of films and television shows between 2002 and 2011. Recently she has directed documentaries including "The Great American Lie" in 2020 and "Fair Play" from this year. Both deal with gender in society.

She wrote about her experience with Weinstein in a 2017 essay in the Huffington Post after the New York Times and New Yorker stories made him a magnet of the #MeToo movement, but gave few details.

Weinstein, who is being held in a Los Angeles County jail, was brought Monday into court in a wheelchair through a side door, and climbed from it carefully into a seat next to one of his lawyers at the defense table. He was wearing a blue suit, which he is allowed to change into from his jail attire during the trial.

He stood with the rest of the room as the first panel of 67 prospective jurors were brought in, but sat down about halfway through the process. He waved at them from his seat when his lawyers introduced them.

The jurors were given a lengthy questionnaire intended to screen out those who need to be dismissed. Both the questions and answers on the forms are private, but previous hearings on its contents revealed that it contains questions on how much media coverage of Weinstein they have seen, and whether they have formed opinions from it, though the judge rejected questions on specific stories and media outlets.

The prosecution will be allowed to introduce as evidence parts of Weinstein's conviction for rape and sexual assault, where the state's highest court has agreed to hear his appeal.

The questionnaire also includes a question about a California law that says the testimony alone of a sexual assault victim can be sufficient evidence to convict if a juror believes them.

The jurors were also given a long list of names of witnesses in the coming trial, including those of the accusers to determine whether they have any connection to them. The initial witness list in the case had more than 270 names, though fewer than half that are expected. Most of the prospective witness list has not been made public.

One witness, Barbara Schneeweiss, a producer on "Project Runway" and other television shows, was present in court early Monday and was told by a judge she was on call to come in at any time.

Two more panels of up to 75 jurors will be brought in Tuesday and Wednesday. Questioning of individual jurors is not expected to begin until next week, and opening statements may not begin for two weeks.

The trial comes five years after women's stories about Weinstein made the #MeToo movement explode.

Weinstein is charged with four counts of rape and seven other sexual assault counts.

Most of the incidents in his indictment, like Newsom's, happened under the guise of business meetings at luxury hotels in Beverly Hills and Los Angeles, which Weinstein used as his California headquarters and where he could be seen during awards season and throughout the year. Four of them occurred during Oscars week 2013, when Weinstein releases "Silver Linings Playbook" and "Django Unchained" would win Academy Awards.

Russia unleashes biggest attacks in Ukraine in months

By ADAM SCHRECK and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia retaliated Monday for an attack on a critical bridge by unleashing its most widespread strikes against Ukraine in months, a lethal barrage that smashed civilian targets, knocked out power and water, shattered buildings and killed at least 14 people.

Ukraine's Emergency Service said nearly 100 people were wounded in the morning rush hour attacks that Russia launched from the air, sea and land against at least 14 regions, spanning from Lviv in the west to Kharkiv in the east. Many of the attacks occurred far from the war's front lines.

Though Russia said missiles targeted military and energy facilities, some struck civilian areas while people were heading to work and school. One hit a playground in downtown Kyiv and another struck a university.

The attacks plunged much of the country into a blackout, depriving hundreds of thousands of people of electricity into Monday night and creating a shortage so severe Ukrainian authorities asked people to conserve and announced they will stop power exports to Europe starting Tuesday. Power outages also often deprive residents of water, given the system's reliance on electricity to run pumps and other equipment.

Andriy Yermak, a senior adviser to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said the strikes had no "practical military sense" and that Russia's goal was to cause a "humanitarian catastrophe."

Russian President Vladimir Putin said his forces targeted key energy infrastructure and military command facilities with "precision weapons" in retaliation for what he claimed were Kyiv's "terrorist" actions — a reference to Ukraine's attempts to repel Moscow's invasion, including an attack Saturday on a key bridge between Russia and the annexed Crimean Peninsula. Putin alleged the bridge attack was masterminded by Ukrainian special services.

Putin vowed a "tough" and "proportionate" response if further Ukrainian attacks threaten Russia's security. "No one should have any doubts about it," he told Russia's Security Council by video.

The Russian president has been under intense domestic pressure to take more aggressive action to stop a largely successful Ukrainian counteroffensive and to react forcefully to Saturday's attack on the Kerch bridge, whose construction he used to cement his 2014 annexation of Crimea.

Putin's increasingly frequent descriptions of Ukraine's actions as terrorist could portend even more bold and draconian actions. But in Monday's speech, Putin — whose partial troop mobilization order last month triggered an exodus of hundreds of thousands of men of fighting age — stopped short of escalating his "special military operation" to a counterterrorism campaign or martial law. Zelenskyy has repeatedly called on world leaders to declare Russia a terrorist state because of its attacks on civilians and alleged war crimes.

Moscow's war in Ukraine is approaching its eight-month mark, and the Kremlin has been reeling from humiliating battlefield setbacks in areas of eastern Ukraine it is trying to annex.

The head of Ukraine's law enforcement said Monday's attacks damaged 70 infrastructure sites, of which 29 are critical. Zelenskyy said that of the 84 cruise missiles and 24 drones Russia fired, Ukrainian forces shot down 56.

Blasts struck in the capital's Shevchenko district, which includes the historic old town and government offices, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said.

Some of the strikes hit near the government quarter in the capital's symbolic heart, where parliament and other major landmarks are located. A glass-covered office tower was significantly damaged, with most of its blue-tinted windows blown out.

Zelenskyy, in a video address, referred to the rush hour timing of Monday's attacks, saying Russia "chose

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such a time and such targets on purpose to inflict the most damage.”

The strikes sent residents of Ukraine’s two largest cities — Kyiv and Kharkiv — into bomb shelters, including subway stations.

Zelenskyy’s wife, Olena, posted a video showing people sheltering on the stairs of a Kyiv subway station singing a Ukrainian folk song, “In a Cherry Garden,” whose final lines are: “My dear mother, you are old and I’m happy and young. I want to live, to love.”

While air raid sirens have continued throughout the war, in Kyiv and elsewhere many Ukrainians had been ignoring the warnings after months of calm.

Just as traffic was picking up Monday morning, a commuter minibus was struck near Kyiv National University. Nearby, at least one missile landed in Shevchenko Park, leaving a large hole near a children’s playground.

Another target was the Klitschko pedestrian bridge — a central Kyiv landmark with glass panels. Video footage showed a huge explosion under the bridge, with smoke rising, and a man running away, apparently unhurt. The mayor posted a video later while walking on the bridge, pointing out a crater on a sidewalk below and broken glass and missile fragments on the bridge surface.

Air raid sirens sounded in every region of Ukraine except Russia-annexed Crimea for four straight hours.

Associated Press journalists saw bodies at an industrial site on the outskirts of Dnipro. Four people were killed and 19 injured in the city, officials said. Witnesses said one missile landed in front of a bus, damaging the vehicle but not killing any passengers.

Natalia Nesterenko, a mathematician, saw one missile fly by her Dnipro apartment balcony as she was in her kitchen, then she heard two explosions.

“It’s very dangerous. I immediately called my kids to see how they are because anyone can be hit — women, children,” she said.

Kharkiv was hit three times, Mayor Ihor Terekhov said. The strikes knocked out the electricity and water supply. Energy infrastructure was also hit in Lviv, regional Gov. Maksym Kozytskyi said.

Three cruise missiles launched against Ukraine from Russian ships in the Black Sea crossed Moldova’s airspace, said the country’s foreign affairs minister, Nicu Popescu.

The attacks prompted fresh international condemnation of Russia.

The Group of Seven industrial powers scheduled a video conference Tuesday on the situation, which Zelenskyy will address.

U.S. President Joe Biden said in a statement the missile attacks that killed civilians “again demonstrate the utter brutality of Mr. Putin’s illegal war on the Ukrainian people.” He said the United States and its allies will “continue to impose costs on Russia for its aggression, hold Putin and Russia accountable for its atrocities and war crimes, and provide the support necessary for Ukrainian forces to defend their country and their freedom.” In a phone call later Monday, Biden told Zelenskyy the United States agreed to his request to provide advanced air defense systems.

French President Emanuel Macron expressed “extreme concern.” British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly tweeted that “Russia’s firing of missiles into civilian areas of Ukraine is unacceptable.”

Some feared Monday’s attacks may represent the start a new Russian offensive. As a precaution, Ukraine switched all schools to online learning.

In an ominous move, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko announced that he and Putin agreed to create a joint “regional grouping of troops.” He offered no details.

Lukashenko repeated his claims that Ukraine is plotting an attack on Belarus, sparking fears he would take preemptive action. His defense minister, Viktor Khrenin, later issued a video warning Ukraine not to provoke Belarus, but added: “We don’t want to fight.”

GOP makes push to weaken Democrats’ grip on Texas border

By PAUL J. WEBER and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

HARLINGEN, Texas (AP) — Just weeks before Election Day in Texas, once again there is big money, new

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signs of shifting voters and bold predictions of an upset that will turn heads across the U.S.

But this time, it's coming from Republicans.

"We are going to turn the Rio Grande Valley red," said Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, kicking off a rally in the Texas border city of Harlingen.

As Democrats embark on another October blitz in pursuit of flipping America's biggest red state, Republicans are taking a swing of their own: making a play for the mostly Hispanic southern border on Nov. 8 after years of writing off the region that is overwhelmingly controlled by Democrats.

The task — like Democrat Beto O'Rourke's underdog campaign to unseat Abbott — is an uphill climb. But it is another way Republicans are putting plenty at stake on the Texas border, given that they are already refocusing the final sprint of the 2022 midterms on portraying the 1,200-mile boundary as rife with escalating danger and disorder as record number of migrants enter from Mexico.

Border Democrats say dramatic moves to bus and fly migrants across the country will backfire with voters, but also acknowledge they can no longer coast into office.

Still, the rare sight of contested races on the Texas border has widened cracks in an important Democratic stronghold two years after former President Donald Trump's significant gains with Hispanic voters during the 2020 election caused both parties to scramble in unexpected ways.

"This is the first time we've ever had this many competitive races where the Democrats are like, 'What are we going to do?'" said Republican Carlos Cascos, a onetime border Democrat who switched parties and later served as Abbott's first secretary of state.

He doesn't see Republicans sweeping races in the Rio Grande Valley, home to roughly 1.5 million people. But, he says, "I think this area has been taken for granted a lot. In the Valley, you're born two things: a Catholic and a Democrat. Things are changing."

Democrats still hold advantages in South Texas — decades of incumbency, a culture of residents voting Democratic, and more moderate candidates who are less vulnerable to GOP attacks on the left and more critical of President Joe Biden when his approval ratings remain low and inflation is still high.

But Republican Rep. Mayra Flores' victory in a special election this year, becoming the first Texas Latina in the U.S. House, reflected the shifting ground. Rep. Vicente Gonzalez, a South Texas Democrat, switched districts to more favorable territory and is hoping to unseat her for a full term in November.

Democrats have dismissed dramatic moves by Abbott and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, two potential 2024 presidential contenders, to send migrants to places like Washington, New York and Martha's Vineyard. But Republicans counter that more liberal voters in big cities far from the border are ignoring problems that are hitting largely working-class South Texans.

Running for what's arguably Texas' most competitive House seat, which stretches from east of San Antonio to border communities including McAllen, Republican Monica De La Cruz blamed "an elite class that just does not get it because illegal immigration has virtually no impact on their lives."

"Wall Street bankers don't have to worry about a poor Central American migrant undercutting their wages," De La Cruz told reporters recently. She is running against Democrat Michelle Vallejo in the district that Gonzalez is vacating.

Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley is set to campaign with Flores and de la Cruz on the border Monday — an unusual display of national GOP political force for South Texas.

Those efforts to control the political narrative coincides with the Republican Party opening 38 minority outreach community centers around the country, including in McAllen and another border city, Laredo, as well as in heavily Hispanic Houston and San Antonio.

Some offer services like tutoring for U.S. citizen classes and tax advice. They've also hosted movie nights, pot-luck dinners and business roundtables, as well as courses on topics like crypto currency. Some have been open for more than a year.

The GOP says it has spent millions on Hispanic outreach nationwide, including 30-plus ad buys in Spanish-language media encompassing digital, TV, radio and print. It also has a record 32 Hispanic Republican nominees on House ballots around the country, although many are underdogs.

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Democrats, for their part, opened a national field office in McAllen in April and have three staffers working on the area's congressional race, the party's first such investment in recent memory.

Richard Gonzales, Democratic Party chair of Hidalgo County, which includes McAllen, said party officials hold weekly Zoom calls with O'Rourke's campaign to coordinate efforts that have focused on boosting turnout, especially among non-active voters. He said gains in 2020 by Trump and the Republicans were real but "very candidate specific" and unlikely to "translate to future races."

O'Rourke, who in the past ran unsuccessfully for Senate and president, also heads a nonprofit called Powered By People. In 2020, he organized phone banking that saw volunteers contact voters in Webb County — which includes Laredo, where less than 40% of eligible voters cast ballots in the 2018 Senate race — hoping to boost turnout for Biden.

The group registered thousands of Webb County voters, and eventually saw turnout climb to 50% of eligible voters in the 2020 election. But Trump sharply increased his support in Webb County, taking nearly 26,000 votes, about double his 2016 raw vote total — and captured about 38% overall support there, compared with about 23% in 2016.

"People want to say that the Democrats are done down here, that the Republicans are taking over. That is not true," Gonzales said. "What this has done is it has woken up the Democrats down here and made us realize, 'Hey, we can't take this for granted anymore.'"

Small business group files suit over Biden student loan plan

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A small-business advocacy group has filed a new lawsuit seeking to block the Biden administration's efforts to forgive student loan debt for tens of millions of Americans — the latest legal challenge to the program.

The suit, filed Monday by the Job Creators Network Foundation, argues the Biden administration violated federal procedures by failing to seek public input on the program. It's one of a handful of lawsuits that have been filed by conservative business groups, attorneys and Republican lawmakers in recent weeks as the Biden administration tries to push forward with its plan to cancel billions in debt before November's midterm elections.

Elaine Parker, president of Job Creators Network Foundation, slammed the program as executive overreach and complained that it does nothing to address the root cause of rising debt: the "outrageous increase in college tuition that outpaces inflation every single year."

"This bailout is going to affect everyone in this country because of the mass size of the program," she said. "And everyone should have the opportunity to provide their views to the government." She added: "These universities need to be held accountable for this student debt crisis."

The Job Creators Network Foundation has previously turned to the courts to try to block the Biden administration's COVID-19 vaccine mandate on businesses. It also sued Major League Baseball in 2021 for moving the All-Star game out of Atlanta over objections to changes to Georgia's voting laws. That lawsuit, which cited losses to local businesses, was later dropped.

The new lawsuit is one of a growing number of legal challenges trying to halt the proposal laid out by President Joe Biden in late August to cancel up to \$20,000 in debt for certain borrowers.

Six Republican-led states filed suit late last month, accusing the Biden administration of overstepping its executive powers, as did the Pacific Legal Foundation, a Sacramento, California, legal advocacy group. Their lawsuit, filed in federal court in Indiana, calls the plan an illegal overreach that would increase state tax burdens for some Americans who get their debt forgiven.

Meanwhile, a federal judge in Wisconsin last week dismissed a lawsuit from a local taxpayers group, the Brown County Taxpayers Association, that sought to block the program, ruling that the group didn't have standing to bring the lawsuit. The group had argued that Biden's order unlawfully circumvented Congress' power over spending and said the plan was discriminatory because it sought to give particular help to borrowers of color.

The latest lawsuit, filed in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas against the U.S. Education Department and its secretary, Miguel Cardona, takes issue with how the plan was developed. It alleges the Biden administration violated the Administrative Procedure Act's notice-and-comment procedures. It also challenges the administration's legal justification for the program.

The suit includes two plaintiffs: one who does not qualify for debt forgiveness because the plan excludes commercially held loans that are not in default, and one who did not receive a Pell grant and is therefore entitled to less debt forgiveness under the plan.

"Behind closed doors, the Department promulgated a new Debt Forgiveness Program that will affect tens of millions of Americans and cost hundreds of billions of dollars," the lawsuit reads. "Instead of providing notice and seeking comment from the public, the Department hammered out the critical details of the Program in secret and with an eye toward securing debt forgiveness in time for the November election."

It also alleges the department "made numerous arbitrary decisions about the Program, including which individuals will receive debt forgiveness, how much of their debt will be forgiven, and which types of debt will qualify for the Program."

"The result of this arbitrariness is predictable: some will benefit handsomely, some will be shortchanged, and others will be left out entirely," it reads.

The case was assigned to U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor, who most notably ruled in 2018 that the Affordable Care Act was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court reversed that decision last year. O'Connor, an appointee of former President George W. Bush, also has ruled against other policies pursued by Democratic administrations. Last month, he ruled that an ACA provision that required coverage of an HIV prevention drug violates a Texas employer's religious beliefs.

Civil lawsuits filed in the federal court in Fort Worth have a 90% chance of going either to O'Connor or Judge Mark Pittman, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, according to a 2020 order of the court.

White House spokesman Abdullah Hasan responded with a statement defending the loan forgiveness program.

"While opponents of our plan are siding with special interests and trying every which way to keep millions of middle-class Americans in debt, the President and his Administration are fighting to lawfully give middle-class families some breathing room as they recover from the pandemic and prepare to resume loan payments in January," he said in a statement.

The Biden debt forgiveness program will cancel \$10,000 in student loan debt for individuals making less than \$125,000 a year or households making less than \$250,000. Pell grant recipients, who typically demonstrate more financial need, will be eligible for an additional \$10,000.

The Biden administration used an act passed after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks as legal justification for the program. The law gives the administration "sweeping authority" to reduce or eliminate student debt during times of national emergency, the Justice Department said in an August legal opinion. The administration cited the COVID-19 pandemic as its emergency.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates the program will cost taxpayers \$400 billion over the next three decades.

Protests in Iran over woman's death reach key oil industry

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Workers at refineries crucial for Iran's oil and natural gas production protested Monday over the death of a 22-year-old woman, online videos appeared to show, escalating the crisis faced by Tehran.

The demonstrations in Abadan and Asaluyeh mark the first time the unrest surrounding the death of Mahsa Amini threatened the industry crucial to the coffers of Iran's long-sanctioned theocratic government.

While it remains unclear if other workers will follow, the protests come as demonstrations rage on in cities, towns and villages across Iran over the Sept. 16 death of Amini after her arrest by the country's

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morality police in Tehran. Early on Monday, the sound of apparent gunshots and explosions echoed through the streets of a city in western Iran, while security forces reportedly killed one man in a nearby village, activists said.

Iran's government insists Amini was not mistreated, but her family says her body showed bruises and other signs of beating. Subsequent videos have shown security forces beating and shoving female protesters, including women who have torn off their mandatory headscarf, or hijab.

From the capital, Tehran, and elsewhere, online videos have emerged despite authorities disrupting the internet. Videos on Monday showed university and high school students demonstrating and chanting, with some women and girls marching through the streets without headscarves as the protests continue into a fourth week. The demonstrations represent one of the biggest challenges to Iran's theocracy since the 2009 Green Movement protests.

Online videos analyzed by The Associated Press showed dozens of workers gathered at the refineries in Asaluyeh, some 925 kilometers (575 miles) south of Tehran, on the Persian Gulf. The vast complex takes in natural gas from the massive offshore natural gas field that Iran shares with Qatar.

In one video, the gathered workers — some with their faces covered — chant "shameless" and "death to the dictator." The chants have been features across protests dealing with Amini's death.

"This is the bloody year Seyyed Ali will be overthrown," the protesters chanted, refusing to use the title ayatollah to refer to Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. An ayatollah is a high-ranking Shiite cleric.

The details in the videos correspond with each and to known features of the facility compared against satellite photos taken Sunday.

Iran did not acknowledge any disruption at the facility, though the semiofficial Tasnim news agency described the incident as a salary dispute. Iran is one of the world's top natural gas suppliers, just after the U.S. and Russia.

In Abadan, a city once home to the world's largest oil refinery, videos also showed workers walking off the job. The New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran cited a statement it said came from the Contractual Oil Workers Protest Organizing Council that called for a strike over "the suppression and killings."

"We declare that now is the time for widespread protests and to prepare ourselves for nationwide and back-breaking strikes," the statement said. "This is the beginning of the road and we will continue our protests together with the entire nation day after day."

The violence early Monday in western Iran occurred in Sanandaj, the capital of Iran's Kurdistan province, as well as in the village of Salas Babajani near the border with Iraq, according to a Kurdish group called the Hengaw Organization for Human Rights. Amini was Kurdish and her death has been felt particularly in Iran's Kurdish region, where demonstrations began Sept. 17 at her funeral there.

Hengaw posted footage it described as smoke rising in one neighborhood in Sanandaj, with what sounded like rapid rifle fire echoing through the night sky. The shouts of people could be heard.

There was no immediate word if people had been hurt in the violence. Hengaw later posted a video online of what appeared to be collected shell casings from rifles and shotguns, as well as spent tear gas canisters.

Authorities offered no immediate explanation about the violence early Monday in Sanandaj, some 400 kilometers (250 miles) west of Tehran. Esmail Zarei Kousha, the governor of Iran's Kurdistan province, alleged without providing evidence that unknown groups "plotted to kill young people on the streets" on Saturday, the semiofficial Fars news agency reported Monday.

Kousha also accused these unnamed groups that day of shooting a young man in the head and killing him — an attack that activists have roundly blamed on Iranian security forces. They say Iranian forces opened fire after the man honked his car horn at them. Honking has become one of the ways activists have been expressing civil disobedience — an action that has seen riot police in other videos smashing the windshields of passing vehicles.

In the village of Salas Babajani, some 100 kilometers (60 miles) southwest of Sanandaj, Iranian security forces repeatedly shot a 22-year-old man protesting there who later died of his wounds, Hengaw said. It said others had been wounded in the shooting.

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It remains unclear how many people have been killed so far. State television last suggested at least 41 people had been killed in the demonstrations as of Sept. 24. There's been no update from Iran's government since.

An Oslo-based group, Iran Human Rights, estimates at least 185 people have been killed. This includes an estimated 90 people killed by security forces in the eastern Iranian city of Zahedan amid demonstrations against a police officer accused of rape in a separate case. Iranian authorities have described the Zahedan violence as involving unnamed separatists, without providing details or evidence.

Meanwhile, a prison riot has struck the city of Rasht, killing several inmates there, a prosecutor reportedly said. It wasn't immediately clear if the riot at Lakan Prison was linked to the ongoing protests, though Rasht has seen heavy demonstrations in recent weeks since Amini's death.

The semiofficial Mehr news agency quoted Gilan provincial prosecutor Mehdi Fallah Miri as saying, "some prisoners died because of their wounds as the electricity was cut (at the prison) because of the damage." He also alleged prisoners refused to allow authorities access to those wounded.

Miri described the riot as breaking out in a wing of a prison housing death penalty inmates.

New this week: 'Halloween Ends,' 'Rosaline' and The 1975

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's a collection curated by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists of what's arriving on TV, streaming services and music platforms this week.

MOVIES

— Is it really time to say goodbye to Jamie Lee Curtis' Laurie Strode? That's the idea behind "Halloween Ends," which promises some kind of conclusion to the Michael Myers saga, which has been going on now for 45 years, and as the promos tease "only one of them will survive." Director David Gordon Green returns to close his modern trilogy, which will be released in theaters and on Peacock on Friday. The last film, "Halloween Kills," ended on a cliffhanger with a mob rising up to hunt down Michael Myers. Green said in an interview recently that, "Any frustration that was expressed about the last one, I kind of just smile and say, 'Hold tight, here we come.'"

— "Booksmart" star Kaitlyn Dever lends her comedic skills to "Rosaline," a cheeky twist on the "Romeo and Juliet" story focused on Romeo's briefly mentioned ex. Dever plays the title character who has just discovered that her love (Kyle Allen) has become interested in someone else, Juliet (Isabela Merced), and she takes it upon herself to try to sabotage the new relationship. Coming to Hulu on Friday, "Rosaline" is based on a young adult novel by Rebecca Serle, adapted for the screen by "(500) Days of Summer" scribes Scott Neustadter and Michael H. Weber and directed by Karen Maine ("Obvious Child"). Minnie Driver and Bradley Whitford co-star. It could make a thematically appropriate double feature with Lena Dunham's "Catherine Called Birdy," over on Prime Video.

— On video on demand, you can also check out "Piggy," a horror that got good buzz out of the Sundance Film Festival early this year. The film stars Laura Galán as a teenage girl who is overweight and bullied by the locals in the Spanish countryside where she spends her summers. But things take a turn when she finds that her tormenters have been kidnapped and she has to figure out what to do about it. It's the feature debut of Carlota Pereda, who wrote the script, and whose work on the film drew comparisons to Brian De Palma and "Carrie."

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr

MUSIC

— With "Being Funny In a Foreign Language," The 1975 continue their tradition of long and cryptic album titles. The only clues about the direction of their latest, 11-track collection is some of its singles — the funky "Happiness," the sweet, uncynical throwback "I'm In Love With You" and the ambitious, totally cynical and progressive "Part of the Band," with singer Matty Healy's memorable lyrics: "Am I ironically woke? The butt of my joke? Or I am just some post-coke, average, skinny bloke calling his ego imagination?" So where does that seem to lead? So far, just good music.

— Red Hot Chili Peppers aren't ready to stop spicing up our lives this year. Their album "Return of the

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Dream Canteen," comes out Friday, their second album release of 2022, following "Unlimited Love" from April. Once again, they've joined forces with longtime producer and creative confidant Rick Rubin, with an early single being "Tippa My Tongue." In between albums, the band won the prestigious Global Icon Award and performed at the MTV Video Music Awards. The band says the new album "is everything we are and ever dreamed of being. It's packed. Made with the blood of our hearts."

— If you're feeling down, who is there? Exactly. We mean dance diva Betty Who. It's virtually impossible to be down after listening to her 14-track "BIG!" — brimming with self-love and acceptance. "I won't apologize for taking up space/I'm not gonna fight it/I belong out of place," she sings on the title track. The project's debut single, "Blow Out My Candle," is pure empowerment pop and "She Can Dance" sees Betty looking back to an earlier, less conscious self: "Second choice and second best/Couldn't say the things she meant/Or find the missing pieces that were broke/But she could dance."

— Global trailblazer and provocateur M.I.A. is back and you better make room. "Beep, beep! Yeah, I'm tryna come through," she sings on the hypnotic "Beep" from the new album, "Meta." Other singles include "The One" and "Popular," where M.I.A.'s sarcastic view of fame is hard to hide: "Suddenly it's about me, 'bout me/ Now you wanna be around me, 'round me." The follow-up to 2016's "Aim," "Mata" is years in the making, its compositions recorded in London, Los Angeles, Italy, Bali, Jakarta and St Vincent.

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

TELEVISION

— "Supernatural," which ended its 15-year-run in 2020, begat a comic book series, novels and, finally, a spin-off about brothers Sam and Dean Winchester's parents. Dean (Jensen Ackles) serves as narrator for "The Winchesters," which traces the love story of John Winchester (Drake Rodger) and Mary Campbell (Meg Donnelly) in the 1970s. He's a newly returned Vietnam War veteran, she's fighting her own battles as a demon hunter, and they are intent on uncovering secrets kept by both their families. The series debuts Tuesday on the CW.

— "High School," the 2019 memoir by indie pop duo and twins Tegan and Sara Quin, has been adapted for an eponymously named series set in 1990s Canada. TikTok creators Railey and Seazynn Gilliland, also twins, play the teenage versions of, respectively, Tegan and Sara, in the coming-of-age story flavored by the era of grunge. Cobie Smulders and Kyle Bornheimer guest star as the twins' parents in "High School," which debuts Friday on the Amazon Freevee streaming service.

— "Shantaram" is another book-based series, this time the novel of the same name by Gregory David Roberts. In vividly depicted 1980s Bombay, India, fugitive Lin Ford (Charlie Hunnam) is trying to disappear into a new life but finds that old patterns and love are getting in the way. It's a grueling journey for Lin, as it was in the novel that Roberts has said incorporates elements of his own life, including drugs, prison and an unlikely role as healer. The Apple TV+ series debuts with three episodes on Friday, with the remaining nine episodes released weekly.

Analysts: Russian missiles seek to levy pain, could backfire

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Russian missiles that rained down Monday on cities across Ukraine, bringing fear and destruction to areas that had seen months of relative calm, are an escalation in Moscow's war against its neighbor.

But military analysts say it's far from clear whether the strikes mark a turning point in a war that has killed thousands of Ukrainians and sent millions fleeing from their homes.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said the attacks were retaliation for a blast Saturday that damaged a showpiece bridge linking Russia to Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula seized by Moscow in 2014. Putin called the Kerch Bridge attack an "act of terrorism" and vowed a "tough" response to any further attacks that threaten Russia's security.

Simon Smith, a former British ambassador to Ukraine, said the Russian leader was trying to send "a 'You ain't seen nothing yet' message" to Ukraine.

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Smith said the hail of Russian missiles onto civilian areas was “psychological and physical intimidation” – but also “an act of desperation” from a Russian leader whose troops are losing territory in parts of eastern Ukraine that Moscow has already annexed.

“This is very much Putin on the back foot,” said Smith, who heads the Ukraine Forum at the think-tank Chatham House. “He is on the defensive.”

Russia’s defense ministry said it had targeted “military command and communication facilities and energy infrastructure,” but Ukraine accused Moscow of indiscriminately hitting civilian areas. Ukrainian authorities said Russia fired 84 missiles against 10 cities, with 56 of them neutralized by air defenses. At least a dozen people were killed and over 60 wounded in the missile strikes, officials said.

“Russia is seeking to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses,” Justin Crump, chief executive of security consultancy Sibylline, told the BBC. “That’s something they have tried throughout the conflict, but never on this scale.”

Crump said Ukraine will likely seek more surface-to-air missiles from Western allies to strengthen its air defenses. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is due to speak Tuesday to Group of Seven leaders during a video conference.

Michael Clarke, a visiting professor in war studies at King’s College London, said Monday’s attacks, while brutal, likely were not a turning point in the war, “because in a way, the Russians are already doing their worst.”

Ukrainians are finding mass graves and evidence of torture — and are undertaking war crimes investigations — in cities and towns recaptured after months of Russian occupation.

“In increasing the worst, all they do is bring more civilian misery to Ukraine, which will harden the resolve (of Ukrainians),” Clarke said. “And they are still losing on the ground.”

Monday’s fierce bombardment came two days after Putin put air force chief Gen. Sergei Surovikin in command of all Russian forces in Ukraine. Surovikin previously led Russian forces in Syria and was accused of overseeing a brutal bombardment that destroyed much of the city of Aleppo.

Sidharth Kaushal, a research fellow at military think-tank the Royal United Services Institute, said Surovikin’s appointment probably will not bring a major change to Russia’s military campaign.

“He has had a career that’s been blighted by accusations of both corruption and brutality,” Kaushal said. “So that may be some insight into how he will approach it. But then again, the Russian approach has already been quite brutal.”

Kaushal said Russia had “used a pretty phenomenal number of missiles” in the war so far and could run short of some of modern precision weapons. But he said Russia had “large numbers of stockpiled holdovers from the Soviet era” and still retained a capacity to inflict heavy damage on Ukraine.

“Given the sheer number of targets, and given that overall, the Russian missiles in terms of their accuracy and performance have been reasonably good, you would expect at least some bits of Ukrainian critical infrastructure, some things like power grids, to be destroyed over the course of the campaign,” Kaushal said.

Andriy Yermak, a senior adviser to Zelenskyy, said Russia was seeking “to psychologically break Ukrainians, to make us wish the war ended no matter how.”

But Ukraine said it would not back down.

Kyiv has not officially claimed responsibility for the Crimea bridge attack, but Ukraine’s ambassador to Britain, Vadym Prystaiko, on Monday called the bridge a legitimate military target and said Kyiv’s forces would strike more sites of high military significance to Russia.

“We are not targeting Russian civilian infrastructure anywhere, especially beyond the Ukrainian official borders with Russia,” he told Times Radio. “But to achieve the victory, we will have to push further and further.”

Smith, the former ambassador, said Monday’s attacks were not “game-changing.” But he said Putin, faced with Ukrainian advances on the ground, had opened up “a new dimension” in the war.

“If Putin knows that deploying hundreds of thousands of his armed forces in Ukraine is going to be a

dead loss because they are so poorly commanded and poorly equipped, then he is going to be looking for ways of visiting death and destruction on Ukraine from a greater distance," Smith said — and that raises significant questions for Ukraine's Western allies.

"The countries supporting Ukraine need to think about the ways they can help Ukraine defend itself against that," Smith said.

Social Security boost will help millions of kids, too

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Seventy-year-old Cassandra Gentry is looking forward to a hefty cost-of-living increase in her Social Security benefits — not for herself but to pay for haircuts for her two grandchildren and put food on the table.

The three live in a Washington apartment building that houses 50 "grandfamilies" — where grandparents take care of children who do not have parents present.

Gentry, who took in her grandkids to keep them in a safe environment, says the boost in benefits will help her make ends meet. "I never thought about contributing to Social Security when I was working, but now that's what I depend on," the communications retiree said. "I depend on my Social Security to care for these kids."

Social Security's cost of living adjustment, otherwise known as the COLA, for 2023 is expected to be around 9% or even higher, the highest in 40 years, analysts estimate. It will be announced Thursday morning.

It's not just old people who will gain. About 4 million children receive benefits, and an untold number of others also will be helped because they're being cared for by Social Security beneficiaries, sometimes their grandparents.

The impact will be immense, especially for low-income retirees like Gentry, who feels the painful sting of high food and energy costs as she cares for a growing 12-year-old granddaughter and 16-year-old grandson. "They eat everything," she joked.

She said the financial boost "is going to help us, and it's going to be a benefit because the cost of everything has gone up."

High inflation remains a burden on the broader economy, which has caused the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates in hopes of cooling high prices.

But in many ways, inflation hits older Americans harder than the rest of the population. Medical costs are a big part of the burden.

Coupled with a decline in Medicare Part B premium, the Social Security COLA will put more money in the hands of the 70 million Americans who receive benefits, including the growing number of grandfamilies like Gentry's. According to the U.S. Census, in 2020, there were about 2.4 million grandparents responsible for their grandchildren.

That number has increased exponentially since the government has adopted a "kinship care" approach to child welfare, which centers on keeping kids in homes with their next of kin, as opposed to foster care.

And in turn, while Social Security is generally regarded as a program for older Americans, it also is the nation's largest children's support program.

Since the pandemic, Social Security has become even more important for children, as "COVID has taken a lot of parents," said Maya Rockey Moore Cummings, a nonresident senior fellow at Brookings Metro, which is part of the Brookings Institution, and the CEO of Global Policy Solutions, a social change strategy firm.

The National Institutes of Health reported last October that at least 140,000 U.S. children under age 18 had lost a parent or guardian due to COVID.

Cummings says she estimates the actual number is much higher. "We should understand the increase in the COLA will have a positive net benefit on the entire household — not just older members of the family," she said.

Gentry is an advocate for grandparents who raise their grandkids, and the building her family lives in is

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at capacity. She said many of the grandparents, who are African American and support each other in their tight-knit community, rely solely on Social Security for their income.

A study by Global Policy Solutions shows that African American children are in the greatest need of the added help from Social Security benefits.

Grandparent caregivers are 60% more likely to live in poverty than are grandparents not raising grandchildren, according to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

The Child Tax Credit program, which was expanded during the pandemic, helped tens of millions of kids and their families, contributing to a 46% decline in child poverty since 2020, according to a September Census report.

But that program has ended and already there are indications that child poverty is increasing.

Nancy Altman, co-director of Social Security Works, an advocacy group, said "benefits in many other federal programs are eroding — but the COLA makes Social Security unique."

"And for the children who receive Social Security benefits," both directly and indirectly, "low-income kids benefit the most," she said.

William Arnone, chief executive of the National Academy of Social Insurance, an advocacy organization for Social Security, said while the expected COLA is "generous, it is just a catch-up" for many older Americans who are often more impacted by price hikes caused by inflation, especially grandparents taking care of grandkids.

"With Social Security, all generations benefit," Arnone said.

Gentry said she hopes more grandfamily communities like hers pop up around the country so residents can provide support for one another when resources are not readily available.

She said she'd also like to see more federal programs factor in grandparents like her when making policy determinations.

"I always say our grandparents are heroes, because we stepped in when nobody else would," she said. "And we did the job."

United Methodists are breaking up in a slow-motion schism

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

United Methodists have for generations been a mainstay of the American religious landscape — one of the most geographically widespread of the major Protestant denominations, their steeples visible on urban streets, in county seats and along country roads, their ethos marked by a firm yet quiet faith, simple worship and earnest social service.

But the United Methodist Church is also the latest of several mainline Protestant denominations in America to begin fracturing, just as Episcopal, Lutheran and Presbyterian denominations lost significant minorities of churches and members this century amid debates over sexuality and theology.

In annual regional gatherings across the U.S. earlier this year, United Methodists approved requests of about 300 congregations to quit the denomination, according to United Methodist News Service. Special meetings in the second half of the year are expected to vote on as many as 1,000 more, according to the conservative advocacy group Wesleyan Covenant Association.

Scores of churches in Georgia, and hundreds in Texas, are considering disaffiliation. Some aren't waiting for permission to leave: More than 100 congregations in Florida and North Carolina have filed or threatened lawsuits to break out.

Those departing are still a fraction of the estimated 30,000 congregations in the United States alone, with nearly 13,000 more abroad, according to recent UMC statistics.

But large United Methodist congregations are moving to the exits, including some of the largest in Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas.

The flashpoints are the denomination's bans on same-sex marriages and ordaining openly LGBTQ clergy — though many see these as symptoms for deeper differences in views on justice, theology and scriptural authority. The denomination has repeatedly upheld these bans at legislative General Conferences, but

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some U.S. churches and clergy have defied them.

This spring, conservatives launched a new Global Methodist Church, where they are determined both to maintain and to enforce such bans.

A proposal to amicably divide the denomination and its assets, unveiled in early 2020, has lost its once-broad support after years of pandemic-related delays to the legislative General Conference, whose vote was needed to ratify it.

Now the breakup and the negotiations are happening piecemeal — one regional conference at a time.

New York Bishop Thomas Bickerton, president of the Council of Bishops, issued a statement in August denouncing “a constant barrage of negative rhetoric that is filled with falsehood and inaccuracies” by breakaway groups. In particular, he disputed allegations that the church is changing core doctrines.

But he said the denomination seeks to find a balance between encouraging churches to stay yet enabling them to go.

“It’s a both/and,” Bickerton said in an interview. “We want people to know straight up front that we don’t want them to leave. We need traditionalists, we need centrists, we need progressives willing to engage in a healthy debate to discern what God’s will is.”

But more departures are expected next year.

In just the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference, about 300 of its 800 churches have begun inquiring about the process of leaving by the end of 2023, according to the Wesleyan Covenant Association. Not all may follow through, but some see it as inevitable.

“We feel like to stay the same in our mission and theology, we need to change denominations,” said the Rev. Steve Cordle, lead pastor of Crossroads Church. Based in Oakdale, Pennsylvania, it’s one of the largest congregations in the conference. It’s considering going independent or joining the Global Methodist Church.

A few miles away in Bethel Park, another Pittsburgh suburb, Christ United Methodist Church remains committed to the denomination.

The Rev. Chris Morgan said his church has a “big tent” of liberals and conservatives with most congregants “leaning in toward the center.” The church recently hosted an educational series on hot topics including the schism, guns, abortion and COVID-19.

“Instead of becoming like society, we’re trying to become an example of what it looks like to disagree and still treat people with respect and care and love,” Morgan said.

He was far from the only one to see a parallel between the Methodist debates and broader societal polarization.

“We live in a world of division. Just look at our political front,” said Bishop David Graves, who oversees the South Georgia and Alabama-West Florida conferences. Both conferences have dozens of congregations moving to the exits, though the large majority are staying so far.

Graves said he wants to help enable churches to leave if they want to but has spent long hours urging them to consider all the factors and be sure it is God’s will.

“It’s very taxing,” he said. “Those are intense meetings.”

Conservatives say denominational leaders are making it difficult for those who want to leave to do so, however.

Currently churches may leave after paying two years’ worth of “apportionments” — essentially denominational dues — plus their share of unfunded pension liabilities. Conferences may also impose additional requirements, and some are asking for a percentage of the property value of church buildings.

“In many cases, (the requirements) are onerous, they are punitive,” said the Rev. Jay Therrell, president of the Wesleyan Covenant Association, a conservative advocacy group that is working to help churches jump to the Global Methodist Church.

Bishop Karen Oliveto of the UMC’s Mountain Sky region — who in 2016 became the UMC’s first openly lesbian bishop — said via email it is “extremely wounding to LGBTQ persons that our very personhood is being used as a wedge to disrupt unity in the church.” She expressed hope that UMC churches “will be safe places for all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.”

Conservatives have lamented that UMC has failed to enforce its Book of Discipline on standards for or-

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dination and marriage.

Oliveto said, however, that sometimes "the Holy Spirit runs ahead of us and gives us a glimpse of the future to which we are called. This is certainly the case across the denomination, where LGBTQ persons have been examined at every step of the ordination process and found to possess the gifts and graces for ordained ministry."

United Methodists are part of a global movement that traces their origins to the 18th-century English revivalist John Wesley, who emphasized personal piety, evangelism and social service.

American membership has declined to about 6.5 million, from a peak of 11 million in the 1960s. Overseas membership soared to match or exceed that of the U.S., fueled mostly by growth and mergers in Africa.

It's too early to say if there will be widespread departures from international churches. African churches, for instance, often combine conservative stances on sexual issues with progressive views on the economy and colonialism's legacy.

Several African bishops issued a statement denouncing conservative advocacy groups, including one called the Africa Initiative, for collaborating to "destroy our United Methodist Church."

The Africa Initiative replied that it respected the bishops but would continue its efforts "to see biblical Christianity taught, lived and sustained."

Neal Christie of the Love Your Neighbor Coalition, a partnership of progressive and ethnically based Methodist advocacy groups, said the "notion that outside the United States there's one monolithic voice is a caricature."

The coalition is promoting a more decentralized church where regions could make their own decisions on issues such as LGBTQ inclusion based on their cultural contexts.

"We believe this is a big tent church, that the church is big enough for all," he said.

But after decades of controversy, some are done.

"The traditionalists decided this is like a toxic relationship now, and we're just harming each other," said the Rev. Laura Saffell, chairperson of the Western Pennsylvania chapter of the Wesleyan Covenant Association. "The best we can do is bless and send" each other their separate ways.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene rises from GOP fringe to front

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Marjorie Taylor Greene took her seat directly behind Republican House leader Kevin McCarthy, a proximity to power for the firebrand congresswoman that did not go unnoticed, as he unveiled the House GOP's midterm election agenda in Pennsylvania.

Days later, she appeared on stage warming up the crowd for Donald Trump, when the former president rallied voters in Michigan to cast ballots for Republicans, including for control of Congress.

Once shunned as a political pariah for her extremist rhetoric, the Georgia congresswoman who spent her first term in the House stripped of institutional power by Democrats is being celebrated by Republicans and welcomed into the GOP fold. If Republicans win the House majority in the November election, Greene is poised to become an influential player shaping the GOP agenda, an agitator with clout.

"No. 1, we need to impeach Joe Biden. No. 2, We need to impeach Secretary Mayorkas. And No. 3, we should impeach Merrick Garland," Greene told The Associated Press outside the U.S. Capitol. Alejandro Mayorkas is the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security and Garland the attorney general.

Scolding the media for having been "wrong about me" from the start, she said those who know better "take me very seriously."

"I'm going to be a strong legislator and I'll be a very involved member of Congress," she predicted. "I know how to work inside, and I know how to work outside. And I'm looking forward to doing that."

This is the outlook for the Republican Party in the Trump era, the normalizing of once fringe figures into the highest ranks of political power. It's a sign of the GOP's rightward drift that Greene's association with extremists and nationalists, violent rhetoric and remarks about Jewish people have found a home in elected office. Her ascent brings into focus the challenge ahead for McCarthy, whose GOP ranks are fill-

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ing with far-right political stars with the potential to play an oversized role in setting the policies, priorities and tone of the new Congress.

"I've said for a long time there's a battle for the heart and soul of the Republican Party," said Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, the No. 2 Democrat in the House, at a briefing ahead of the midterm elections.

When the congresswoman says outlandish things — as she did at the Trump rally earlier this month claiming "Democrats want Republicans dead, and they've already started the killings" — few Republican leaders dare a public or private rebuke of such incendiary language. In this case, she was exaggerating two local incidents involving politics, one that ended tragically in a fatality.

Greene's political currency stretches beyond her massive social media following and her ability to rake in sizable sums from donors. Her proximity to Trump makes her a force that cannot be ignored by what's left of her mainstream GOP colleagues.

McCarthy's allowance for Greene to sit front and center with leadership for the campaign rollout was not by accident but design. The Republican lawmakers in attendance celebrated her presence, calling it a sign of the GOP's "big tent" that welcomes all comers. But Greene's arrival also signaled a stark normalizing of the most extreme elements in the Republican Party.

Longtime political strategist Rick Wilson, a former Republican who left the party in the Trump era, calls Greene's brand of politics "government by trolling" that marks a dangerous new era for the GOP and will make it difficult to govern. McCarthy is in line to become House speaker if Republicans regain the majority.

"No matter what the trolling part of the Republican caucus does, you can't ever satisfy them," said Wilson, now at the Lincoln Project.

With the departure of the last vestiges of the anti-Trump wing of the House GOP — Liz Cheney defeated by a primary opponent and Adam Kinzinger deciding to step down rather than seek reelection — "that's it," Wilson said.

Greene swept onto the national stage in the 2020 election, catapulted forward even before she took office. As the lawmaker-elect from northwest Georgia, she attended a key organizing meeting at the Trump White House as lawmakers laid plans to object to the certification of Joe Biden's election on Jan. 6, 2021. When she arrived to be sworn into Congress, she wore a "Trump Won" face mask.

Democrats moved swiftly and unequivocally to reprimand Greene, voting to strip her of congressional committee assignments over her incendiary rhetoric, including trafficking in volatile conspiracy theories. Greene drew rebuke from her own party a few months later for comparing mandatory COVID-19 face masks to the treatment of Jewish people by Nazi Germany.

While some have tried to compare Greene to outspoken far-left lawmakers, it became clear even to Republican leaders that Greene stood in a category of her own.

At that time, McCarthy called her comments about the Holocaust "wrong" and "appalling." Greene later apologized.

In many ways, Greene's arrival in the House traces the arc of the Republican Party's rightward evolution from the Newt Gingrich revolution that brought conservatives to power in the 1994 election, to the "tea party" Republicans that regained the House majority in 2010.

Jack Kingston, a former Republican congressman who rose during those earlier eras, said McCarthy was smart in welcoming Greene to unfurl the House GOP's "Commitment to America" last month.

"He's got to work with her, and he knows that," Kingston said.

"Getting Marjorie Taylor Greene on board is very important," he said. "If you don't bring everybody in the tent, they're going to find their own niche."

In the interview, Greene said she is certain she will be reinstated on her congressional committees if Republicans win the majority, eyeing the House Oversight panel, and is talking to leadership about other opportunities in the new Congress.

Not only does Greene want to impeach Biden and Cabinet officials, she is eager to conduct investigations, including into the origins of COVID-19.

Last month, Greene unveiled legislation that is another priority — her bill to prohibit some gender reassignment procedures on minors — flanked by a dozen Republican lawmakers and leaders in the conserva-

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tive movement. Many of them praised the congresswoman for her work.

"I want to thank Marjorie Taylor Greene — who is soon to get her full legislative powers back, by the way," said Matt Schlapp, chairman of the Conservative Political Action Committee, who hugged her afterward.

"If this is the type of thing that you're going to have the courage to do, I think that's something everybody needs to understand," Schlapp said.

McCarthy and Greene appear to have come to an understanding that they need each other. The leader needs Greene to come into the GOP fold rather than throw rocks from outside. She needs McCarthy's blessing to regain committee assignments, enabling her to participate more fully in Congress and put her imprint on legislation.

At the Pennsylvania event McCarthy batted away questions about his ability to govern if Republicans win the majority.

"Name me one person in the conference that is opposed to this," he said afterward of their platform. "Is that a difference? Yes."

'Bucket list': White House garden tours prune a US divide

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There were the young women in fresh fall coats, a guy in a suit, hoodied parents with kids, all maneuvering for selfies with the White House south facade. The plant fans and the history fans leaned in to admire the perennials and centuries-old trees on the lawns where Commander the dog lolls and Marine One the helicopter lands.

Again and again, Secret Service agents rose to the challenge of the White House fall garden tour over the weekend, open to all comers with a free ticket: "Off the grass!" one agent in black uniform shouted, squaring his shoulders, not for the first time, not for the last. A straying visitor hopped back on the path.

An estimated 30,000 people in all strolled through the White House's black metal gates on Saturday and Sunday, as the red-uniformed Marine Band, overlooking the South Lawn, played everyone through.

With some of the most formidable of temporary security fencing down and pandemic restrictions eased, the tours on a not-rainy weekend were a throwback to the White House's early days, when there were fewer restrictions on access to the People's House. For a weekend, the tour sheared off some of the distance between the nation's executive and a curious, divided public.

The annual fall and spring tours open the gates on gardens more than 200 years old — the oldest continually maintained landscape in the United States, says the National Park Service

"It's sort of a bucket list thing to check off," said Ryan Harrison, 29. He and wife Lindsey Harrison, 30, came hours early from their Washington home to be in line at 7:07 a.m. Saturday. They wanted to see the Rose Garden, and maybe more.

"There's a chance the president will walk out and say hello," she said.

President Joe Biden, in fact, was at his home in Delaware.

There were limits to the hospitality: Grounds crews wheeled out evergreens in containers to block the path of a garden in the back, where the palm prints of grandkids and paw prints of pets offer a glimpse of the lives of the White House residents.

The human occupants weren't on hand, but the bees in the beehives were, scouting out head-high orange marigolds in the flourishing, blooming patch that hosts the kitchen vegetable garden started by Michelle Obama and the cutting-flower garden started by Jill Biden.

John Adams is credited with preparing ground for the first White House vegetable garden, although a reelection loss meant he left before the 1801 spring planting season, historians say. He hired white and Black workers during his time as president, although the White House Historical Association notes that other presidents brought Black people they held in slavery to work as gardeners.

The current head groundskeeper is Dale Haney, who was honored by the Bidens last week for his 50 years of service at the White House. In the minutes when the tour areas were open to journalists on the weekend but not yet the public at large, one gardener hauled off a last cart of limbs and leaves. Another tidied up with what appeared to be a battery-powered leaf blower (an aha moment for gardeners in these

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days of controversy over gasoline-powered ones).

Public access to the White House grounds may have hit its apogee in 1837, when Andrew Jackson celebrated George Washington's birthday by throwing open the White House doors to all — men and boys in frock coats and straw hats, women and girls in bonnets — who wanted a share of a donated 1,400-pound (635-kilogram) cheese.

"For hours did a crowd of men, women and boys hack at the cheese, many taking large hunks of it away with them," a journalist from the time wrote. "Nothing else was talked about at Washington that day."

World War II, 9/11 and other security concerns steadily carved away at access for ordinary Americans.

When first lady Pat Nixon started the spring and fall garden tours in 1973, the White House itself still was open to visitors lining up for tours.

These days, members of the public generally are asked to go through congressional offices for spots on White House tours. Families enter a lottery for a spot in the annual White House Easter egg roll.

For the garden tour weekends, the line wraps around the metal gates surrounding about 18 acres (7 hectares).

A VIP group that came in at the head of Saturday's garden tour was allowed close enough to peer in the windows, getting in the backdrop of people's photos of a serene Rose Garden brightened by yellow flowers, and raising questions about just who was getting first gnaw on the big cheese.

Rashida Holman-Jones, an administrator at the Washington-area SEED School, came through the gates with her 7-year-old twin girls, a 17-year-old student, Simona Weimer, and others.

Weimer was great with the compost and pitching in overall at the school's garden, Holman-Jones said. Holman-Jones got involved with school gardening as a direct outgrowth of Michelle Obama's gardening-friendly drive for better nutrition for kids.

At the time, "I wasn't into gardening," she said. "But I was really, really into Michelle Obama."

In the White House gardens this past weekend, well-pruned boxwood-like plantings kept all the red, green, yellow, purple and orange, pollinator-friendly fall blooms in line.

Topiary was big. Photos and plaques marked trees planted by past presidents, with Queen Elizabeth II, Hillary Clinton and others also part of the planting pedigrees. The oldest trees are identified as two southern magnolias, planted by Jackson.

On Saturday, a man in a suit edged close to the White House exterior. A Secret Service agent looming alongside hip-high shrubbery told him to get back.

Holman-Jones, a friend, and their beaming little girls pressed in for their photo. Weimer, from Ethiopia, got a photo for the folks back home, capturing her moment at the White House.

Questionable roughing the passer calls raise more questions

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Can't touch this.

Falcons defensive tackle Grady Jarrett found out the hard way how seriously some referees take protecting quarterbacks when he sacked Tom Brady and got flagged for roughing the passer in the fourth quarter of Atlanta's 21-15 loss at Tampa Bay on Sunday.

The questionable penalty that benefited Brady and the Buccaneers raised more concerns about interpretations of the rule. It was the second straight week referee Jerome Boger made the critical call late in a game on a play that didn't seem to warrant a flag.

Last week, it helped the Buffalo Bills on a drive that ended with Tyler Bass kicking a 21-yard field goal as time expired to beat the Baltimore Ravens 23-20.

This time, it allowed the Buccaneers to extend the final drive and eventually run out the clock.

Protecting quarterbacks has always been a point of emphasis for the NFL. That was magnified after Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa was taken off the field on a stretcher following a violent hit in a game against Cincinnati on Sept. 29. Tagovailoa sustained a concussion when 6-foot-3, 340-pound Bengals defensive tackle Josh Tupou threw him backward, slamming his head into the turf.

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Tupou wasn't penalized for sacking Tagovailoa. Neither Josh Allen nor Brady were injured on the hits Boger called roughing.

"What I had was the defender grabbed the quarterback while he was still in the pocket, and unnecessarily throwing him to the ground," Boger told a pool reporter after the game. "That is what I was making my decision based upon."

Buccaneers coach Todd Bowles, of course, understood the decision.

"I saw that one being called. I saw it against Tua when he got hit, and in the London game this morning," Bowles said. "I think they are starting to crack down on some of the things, slinging backs. I don't know. Right now, the way they are calling (it), I think a lot of people would've gotten that call."

In the NFL rulebook, it states: "Any physical acts against a player who is in a passing posture (i.e. before, during, or after a pass) which, in the referee's judgment, are unwarranted by the circumstances of the play will be called as fouls."

The rulebook also notes: "When in doubt about a roughness call or potentially dangerous tactic against the quarterback, the referee should always call roughing the passer."

Many analysts, including former quarterbacks, disagreed with Boger's call.

"The league office has to get that fixed," Hall of Fame coach Tony Dungy said on NBC's "Football Night in America" pregame show. "If you cannot tackle the quarterback, it's going to be impossible to play defense."

Robert Griffin III tweeted: "The Falcons got ROBBED. Hitting the QB hard does not equal Roughing the Passer even if it's Tom Brady."

Despite the perception that the 45-year-old Brady gets special treatment, the seven-time Super Bowl champion ranks 41st with .14 roughing calls per game since 2009. This was the first time Brady was the beneficiary of a roughing penalty this season. He only got one last year.

Jarrett was visibly upset about the penalty and refused to talk to reporters after the game. Falcons coach Arthur Smith wouldn't criticize the officials.

"Obviously from my vantage point, it looked like it was a bad call," Falcons cornerback Casey Hayward Jr. said. "But that's why you put the refs out there to make these calls. They pay these guys to make those calls. It looked bad (from) my standpoint - but like I said - I was on the back end. They put these guys there to make those calls."

Nobody wants to see any player endure a hit like the one that sent Tagovailoa to the hospital. But there's a difference between protecting quarterbacks and punishing defenders for playing football.

Finding a balance is the NFL's dilemma.

As suicides rise, US military seeks to address mental health

By ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After finishing a tour in Afghanistan in 2013, Dionne Williamson felt emotionally numb. More warning signs appeared during several years of subsequent overseas postings.

"It's like I lost me somewhere," said Williamson, a Navy lieutenant commander who experienced disorientation, depression, memory loss and chronic exhaustion. "I went to my captain and said, 'Sir, I need help. Something's wrong.'"

As the Pentagon seeks to confront spiraling suicide rates in the military ranks, Williamson's experiences shine a light on the realities for service members seeking mental health help. For most, simply acknowledging their difficulties can be intimidating. And what comes next can be frustrating and dispiriting.

Williamson, 46, eventually found stability through a monthlong hospitalization and a therapeutic program that incorporates horseback riding. But she had to fight for years to get the help she needed. "It's a wonder how I made it through," she said.

In March, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced the creation of an independent committee to review the military's mental health and suicide prevention programs.

According to Defense Department data, suicides among active-duty service members increased by more than 40% between 2015 and 2020. The numbers jumped by 15% in 2020 alone. In longtime suicide hotspot postings such as Alaska — service members and their families contend with extreme isolation and

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a harsh climate – the rate has doubled.

A 2021 study by the Cost of War Project concluded that since 9/11, four times as many service members and veterans have died by suicide as have perished in combat. The study detailed stress factors particular to military life: “high exposure to trauma — mental, physical, moral, and sexual — stress and burnout, the influence of the military’s hegemonic masculine culture, continued access to guns, and the difficulty of reintegrating into civilian life.”

The Pentagon did not respond to repeated requests for comment. But Austin has publicly acknowledged that the Pentagon’s current mental health offerings — including a Defense Suicide Prevention Office established in 2011 — have proven insufficient.

“It is imperative that we take care of all our teammates and continue to reinforce that mental health and suicide prevention remain a key priority,” Austin wrote in March. “Clearly we have more work to do.”

Last year the Army issued fresh guidelines to its commanders on how to handle mental health issues in the ranks, complete with briefing slides and a script. But daunting long-term challenges remain. Many soldiers fear the stigma of admitting to mental health issues within the internal military culture of self-sufficiency. And those who seek help often find that stigma is not only real, but compounded by bureaucratic obstacles.

Much like the issue of food insecurity in military families, a network of military-adjacent charitable organizations has tried to fill the gaps with a variety of programs and outreach efforts.

Some are purely recreational, such as an annual fishing tournament in Alaska designed to provide fresh air and socialization for service members. Others are more focused on self-care, like an Armed Services YMCA program that offers free childcare so that military parents can attend therapy sessions.

The situation in Alaska is particularly dire. In January, after a string of suicides, Command Sgt. Maj. Phil Blaisdell addressed his soldiers in an emotional Instagram post. “When did suicide become the answer,” he asked. “Please send me a DM if you need something. Please ...”

U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, said that while posting to Alaska can be a dream for some service members, it’s a solitary nightmare for others that needs to be addressed.

“You’ve got to be paying attention to this when you see the statistics jump as they are,” Murkowski said. “Right now, you’ve got everybody. You’ve got the Joint Chiefs looking at Alaska and saying, ‘Holy smokes, what’s going on up there?’”

The stresses of an Alaska posting are compounded by a shortage of on-the-ground therapists. During a visit to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Alaska earlier this year, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth heard from base health care workers who say they are understaffed, burned out and can’t see patients on a timely basis. If a soldier seeks help, they often have to wait weeks for an appointment.

“We have people who need our services and we can’t get to them,” one longtime counselor told Wormuth during a meeting. “We need staff and until we get them, we will continue to have soldiers die.”

The annual Combat Fishing Tournament in Seward, Alaska, was formed to “get the kids out of the barracks, get them off the base for the day and get them out of their heads,” said co-founder Keith Manternach.

The tournament, which was begun in 2007 and now involves more than 300 service members, includes a day of deep-water fishing followed by a celebratory banquet with prizes for the largest catch, smallest catch and the person who gets the sickest.

“I think there’s a huge element of mental health to it,” Manternach said.

It’s not just in Alaska.

Sgt. Antonio Rivera, an 18-year veteran who completed three tours in Iraq and a year at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, freely acknowledges that he has serious PTSD.

“I know that I need help. There’s signs and I’ve waited long enough,” said Rivera, 48, who is assigned to Fort Hood in Texas. “I don’t want my children to suffer because of me not going to get help.”

He’s doing yoga, but says he needs more. He’s reluctant to seek help inside the military.

“Personally I’d feel more comfortable being able to talk to someone outside,” he said. “It would allow me to open up a lot more without having to be worried about how it’s going to affect my career.”

Others who speak up say it’s a struggle to get assistance.

Despite the on-base presence of “tons of briefings and brochures on suicide and PTSD,” Williamson said

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she found herself fighting for years to get time off and therapy.

Eventually, she entered a monthlong in-patient program in Arizona. When she returned, a therapist recommended equine-assisted therapy, which proved to be a breakthrough.

Now Williamson is a regular at the Cloverleaf Equine Center in Clifton, Virginia, where riding sessions can be combined with a variety of therapeutic practices and exercises. Working with horses has long been used as a form for therapy for people with physical or mental disabilities and children diagnosed with autism. But in recent years, it has been embraced for helping service members with anxiety and PTSD.

"In order to be able to work with horses, you need to be able to regulate your emotions. They communicate through body language and energy," said Shelby Morrison, Cloverleaf's communications director. "They respond to energies around them. They respond to negativity, positivity, anxiety, excitement."

Military clients, Morrison said, come with "a lot of anxiety, depression, PTSD. ... We use the horse to get them out of their triggers."

For Williamson, the regular riding sessions have helped stabilize her. She still struggles, and she said her long campaign for treatment has damaged her relationship with multiple superior officers. She's currently on limited duty and isn't sure if she'll retire when she hits her 20-year anniversary in March.

Nevertheless, she says, the equine therapy has helped her feel optimistic for the first time in recent memory.

"Now even if I can't get out of bed, I make sure to come here," she said. "If I didn't come here, I don't know where I would even be."

EXPLAINER: A look at the Kevin Spacey-Anthony Rapp trial

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The second week of Kevin Spacey's #MeToo-era trial starts Tuesday in New York — but no criminal charges are involved.

Stage and screen star Anthony Rapp has sued Spacey, accusing him of assault, battery and intentionally inflicting emotional distress when Rapp was 14. The trial opened with jury selection Thursday in Manhattan. Here's what to know about Spacey, Rapp, the lawsuit and the case so far.

WHAT ALLEGATIONS AGAINST KEVIN SPACEY ARE INVOLVED IN THIS LAWSUIT?

Rapp said he attended a party at Spacey's Manhattan apartment in 1986, when he was 14 and acting in the Broadway play "Precious Sons."

At the end of the night, an inebriated Spacey allegedly picked Rapp up, placed him on his bed and climbed on top of him. Rapp said the then-26-year-old Spacey held him down tightly, but he was able to get away and left the apartment.

"I was pinned underneath him. I didn't know what to do," he testified last week.

Rapp filed the lawsuit in 2020 and is seeking compensatory and punitive damages up to \$40 million. He is due to continue his testimony Tuesday.

WHO IS ANTHONY RAPP?

Rapp is an actor who made his Broadway debut at 10. He later starred on Broadway in "Six Degrees of Separation," "You're A Good Man Charlie Brown" and had a breakout originating the role of Mark Cohen in the Tony- and Pulitzer Prize-winning musical "Rent." His screen credits include "Adventures in Babysitting," "Dazed and Confused" and currently the Paramount+ series "Star Trek: Discovery."

He was the first man to publicly accuse Spacey of inappropriate sexual advances, in 2017.

WHAT DOES SPACEY SAY ABOUT RAPP'S ALLEGATIONS?

After the allegations were made in 2017, Spacey posted on Twitter that he didn't remember the Rapp encounter.

"But if I did behave then as he describes, I owe him the sincerest apology for what would have been deeply inappropriate drunken behavior," he said.

Spacey had never disclosed his sexuality before but said Rapp's story encouraged him to come out as a gay man. Many observers thought it was an odd time for Spacey to address his sexuality or even saw

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his revelation as an attempt to deflect blame.

Spacey's attorneys said in a legal filing that Rapp's "allegations are, quite simply, false and never occurred."

On Thursday, a Spacey lawyer suggested that Rapp filed the suit because he is angry about his own stalled career.

"He grew bitter about not getting parts as an openly gay man," Jennifer L. Keller said. His team also proposed the allegations were the product of a young actor's inability to tell the difference between real life and a scene he played on Broadway eight times a week.

WHAT OTHER LEGAL BATTLES DOES SPACEY FACE?

In the United Kingdom, Spacey faces charges of sexually assaulting three men a decade or more ago. He pleaded not guilty in July during a hearing at London's Central Criminal Court. He is expected to go on trial there next year.

In a separate case, a Los Angeles judge ruled in August that Spacey and his production companies must pay the producers behind the Netflix series "House of Cards" close to \$31 million because of losses incurred by his 2017 firing for what the streaming giant said was the sexual harassment of crew members.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER ALLEGATIONS AGAINST SPACEY?

Several people have accused Spacey, but the legal record is mixed. The late Scandinavian writer Ari Behn, once married into the Norwegian royal family, accused Spacey of groping him at a Nobel Peace Prize concert but apparently never pursued legal action. Spacey didn't comment on the allegations.

The only U.S. criminal case brought thus far against Spacey ended with prosecutors in Massachusetts dropping indecent assault and battery charges after the accuser refused to testify about a missing cell-phone the defense said was key to the case. The accuser, who said Spacey had groped him at a Nantucket bar, also dropped a lawsuit.

A massage therapist in Los Angeles had also sued, accusing Spacey of sexual assault, but the lawsuit was dropped after the accuser died, The New York Times reported.

Rapp had originally filed the lawsuit alongside an anonymous plaintiff known as C.D. who also accused Spacey of assaulting him when he was 14. C.D. was removed from the case after a judge ordered him to reveal his identity.

WHAT ARE SPACEY AND RAPP DOING NOW?

Spacey — who, after the allegations broke, was notoriously edited out of the already finished "All the Money in the World" and replaced by Christopher Plummer as J. Paul Getty — has recently reemerged from Hollywood exile with appearances in several films, including the thriller "Peter Five Eight," the historical drama "1242 — Gateway To The West" and the Franco Nero-directed drama "The Man Who Drew God."

Rapp is filming the fifth season of "Star Trek: Discovery," had his film "Scrap" just released and has toured with his one-man show, "Anthony Rapp: Without You," about grief, hope and triumph. He has spoken up on behalf of #MeToo victims.

Today in History: October 11, Anita Hill accuses Thomas

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Oct. 11, the 284th day of 2022. There are 81 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 11, 1986, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev opened two days of talks in Reykjavik, Iceland, concerning arms control and human rights.

On this date:

In 1614, the New Netherland Co. was formed by a group of merchants from Amsterdam and Hoorn to set up fur trading in North America.

In 1809, just over three years after the famous Lewis and Clark expedition ended, Meriwether Lewis was found dead in a Tennessee inn, an apparent suicide; he was 35.

In 1884, American first lady Eleanor Roosevelt was born in New York City.

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In 1906, the San Francisco Board of Education ordered the city's Asian students segregated in a purely "Oriental" school. (The order was later rescinded at the behest of President Theodore Roosevelt, who promised to curb future Japanese immigration to the United States.)

In 1968, Apollo 7, the first manned Apollo mission, was launched with astronauts Wally Schirra (shih-RAH'), Donn Fulton Eisele and R. Walter Cunningham aboard. The government of Panama was overthrown in a military coup.

In 1984, Challenger astronaut Kathryn D. Sullivan became the first American woman to walk in space as she and fellow Mission Specialist David C. Leestma spent 3 1/2 hours outside the shuttle.

In 1991, testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Anita Hill accused Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexually harassing her; Thomas re-appeared before the panel to denounce the proceedings as a "high-tech lynching."

In 2002, former President Jimmy Carter was named the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 2005, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said it had finished pumping out the New Orleans metropolitan area, which was flooded by Hurricane Katrina six weeks earlier and then was swamped again by Hurricane Rita.

In 2006, the charge of treason was used for the first time in the U.S. war on terrorism, filed against Adam Yehiye Gadahn (ah-DAHM' YEH'-heh-yuh guh-DAHN'), also known as "Azzam the American," who'd appeared in propaganda videos for al-Qaida. (Gadahn was killed by a U.S. drone strike in Pakistan in Jan. 2015.)

In 2014, customs and health officials began taking the temperatures of passengers arriving at New York's Kennedy International Airport from three West African countries in a stepped-up screening effort meant to prevent the spread of the Ebola virus.

In 2020, the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Miami Heat 106-93 to win the NBA finals in six games; LeBron James scored 28 points as the NBA wrapped up a season that sent players to a "bubble" at Walt Disney World in Florida for three months because of the pandemic.

Ten years ago: Vice President Joe Biden and Republican opponent Paul Ryan squared off in their only debate of the 2012 campaign; the two repeatedly interrupted each other as they sparred over topics including the economy, taxes and Medicare.

Five years ago: The Boy Scouts of America announced that it would admit girls into the Cub Scouts starting in 2018 and establish a new program for older girls based on the Boy Scout curriculum, allowing them to aspire to the Eagle Scout rank. Strong winds fueled wildfires burning through California wine country; the confirmed death toll climbed to 23 as authorities ordered new evacuations. An American woman, Caitlan Coleman, her Canadian husband Joshua Boyle, and their children were freed, five years after they were seized by a terrorist network in the mountains of Afghanistan; officials said the couple and their three children - who'd been born in captivity - were rescued in a dramatic raid orchestrated by the U.S. and Pakistani governments.

One year ago: Jon Gruden resigned as coach of the Las Vegas Raiders following reports about messages he wrote years earlier that used offensive terms to refer to Blacks, gays and women. U.S.-based economist David Card won the Nobel Prize in economics for pioneering research demonstrating that an increase in the minimum wage doesn't hinder hiring, and immigrants don't lower pay for native-born workers. Benson Kipruto and Diana Kipyogei completed a Kenyan sweep in the Boston Marathon, which took place after a 30-month absence; the race was moved from its traditional spring date for the first time in its 125-year history because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry is 95. Actor Amitabh Bachchan is 80. Country singer Gene Watson is 79. Singer Daryl Hall (Hall and Oates) is 76. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., is 72. Actor-director Catlin Adams is 72. Country singer Paulette Carlson is 71. Original MTV VJ Mark Goodman is 70. Actor David Morse is 69. Actor Stephen Spinella is 66. Actor-writer-comedian Dawn French is 65. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Steve Young is 61. Actor Joan Cusack is 60. Rock musician Scott Johnson (Gin Blossoms) is 60. Comedy writer and TV host Michael J. Nelson is 58. Actor Sean Patrick Flanery

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is 57. Actor Lennie James is 57. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL player Chris Spielman is 57. Country singer-songwriter Todd Snider is 56. Actor-comedian Artie Lange is 55. Actor Jane Krakowski is 54. Actor Andrea Navedo is 53. Actor Constance Zimmer is 52. Rapper MC Lyte is 52. Bluegrass musician Leigh Gibson (The Gibson Brothers) is 51. Figure skater Kyoko Ina is 50. Actor Darien Sills-Evans is 48. Actor/writer Nat Faxon is 47. Actor Emily Deschanel is 46. Actor Matt Bomer is 45. Actor Trevor Donovan is 44. Actor Robert Christopher Riley is 42. Actor Michelle Trachtenberg is 37. Actor Lucy Griffiths is 36. Golfer Michelle Wie is 33. Rapper Cardi B is 30.