

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Community Calendar

### Thursday, Oct. 20

Senior Menu: Hamburger with bun, oven roasted potatoes, mixed vegetables, fruit, ice cream.

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Goulash, corn.

Emmanuel Lutheran WELCA final day packing LWR projects, potluck

UMC: Newsletter items due; UMW Final meeting, 1:30 p.m.; Bible Study with Ashley, 6:30 p.m.

### Friday, Oct. 21

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

School Breakfast: Eggs and sausage.

School LUnch: Fish nuggets, tiny whole potatoes.

Volleyball hosts Redfield. (8th grade match at 6 p.m. in gym, C match at 5 p.m. followed by JV and varsity. Wear NEON night.

### Saturday, Oct. 22

State Cross Country Meet in Huron

Emmanuel Lutheran WELCA fall retreat, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

### Sunday, Oct. 23

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Wor-

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



ship Service at 10:45 a.m.

St. John's worship, 9 a.m.; Zion Lutheran worship, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship/confirmation for Milestones for freshmen, 9 a.m.; No Sunday School; Serve at Bethesda, 2 p.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

UMC: Conde Worship, 8:30 a.m.; coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m. (third graders receive Bibles during worship); Sunday School after children's sermon during worship.



**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.**

**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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**#559 in a series**

## **Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller**

We're still pretty steady. Seven-day average for new cases is now at 37,655, barely down from the 38,530 I reported just four days ago. The pandemic total's creeping up and is now at 96,767,218. I have now resigned myself that we're going to hit 100 million reported cases; when I look back at the early days of this thing when we were horrified at the prospect of as many as 30,000 or 40,000 cases, I just don't know what to say about that. Hospitalizations are holding at 26,413, virtually unchanged from the 26,586 I reported a few days ago. Seven-day average deaths numbers have dropped a bit from 377 to 357 with a pandemic total of 1,061,183.

Surges in Europe have our public health officials' spidey senses tingling since whatever happens in Europe seems to follow here a few weeks later. Cases increased in Switzerland last week by 42 percent and in Portugal by 104 percent. Those are very bad numbers. There are also big increases in Austria, France, Germany, and Italy. In addition to cases, hospitalizations and deaths are up too, so this is probably a real thing, not just some aberration due to unusual amounts of testing. Travel disruptions are likely to ensue; airports in Europe are already reporting staffing shortages and announcing limits on traveler numbers. There are concerns on this side of the Atlantic that this surge might arrive in the US just in time to mess seriously with holiday travel. Experts are already suggesting elderly and immunocompromised individuals who had planned to travel might want to consider avoiding travel to crowded destinations and regions lacking quality medical care and thinking about instead traveling to places with mild weather that permits eating outdoors. Sanjana Ravi, visiting assistant scientist at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, is further suggesting postponement of all nonessential travel to Europe, especially if you're at high risk for severe disease. If you do plan to travel, she recommends you test before leaving and wear an N95 mask for the duration of transit. You may also wish to invest in travel medical insurance. It's been suggested those at high risk for severe disease may want to talk with their doctors about taking antiviral treatment along, just in case you get infected while traveling; I don't know whether prescribing guidelines permit this or whether it would be paid for in these circumstances—and this stuff is expensive. When planning your trip, you will also want to consider how much flexibility you have. If having to stay somewhere an extra several days when you get sick is going to be a big problem, you will want to take particular precautions when traveling or maybe think about putting the trip off entirely. The State Department has ended its travel designations for various countries, but does still issue country-specific travel advisories, so you would do well to check those too before leaving for a foreign destination.

No one thinks restrictions like distancing, travel limitations, or mandatory masking are likely to return either in Europe or here; so protecting yourself will be largely your responsibility when traveling—or staying home, for that matter. I will also note that, while Europe seems to show us our future most clearly in this pandemic, Asia is also experiencing a bump. Singapore reports a 44 percent increase in a week; worse, XBB went from 22 percent to 54 percent share of local cases in that time.

Our mix of subvariants continues to shift with BA.5 still losing ground to the newer models. After peaking in mid-August at 87 percent of new cases, it was down to 81.3 percent a week ago and has now dropped to just 67.8 percent this week. What's taking its place? Appears to be the sublineages we've been concerned about: BQ.1, BQ.1.1, and BF.7 collectively are now responsible for 17 percent of new cases. What's interesting is the breakdown for that: BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 together account for 11.4 percent; when we consider that together they were below one percent a week ago, that's some pretty fast growth. In the CDC's region that covers the Northeast, they account for over 20 percent of cases (25 percent in New York, which is also experiencing a sharp increase in hospitalizations), and that's right where every previous wave has begun in the US. These do appear to have a growth advantage, making them the most

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easily transmissible yet. There is some thought these may be pushing out our earlier worry, BA.2.75.2, a highly immune-evasive strain; but this is not yet clear. Since it is creeping up on our leader board too, it could be BA.2.75.2 is still in play too. Meanwhile, BQ.1.1 and BQ.1.1, descendants of BA.5 despite the different Pango numbers and right up there with BA.2.75.2 in terms of evasiveness, are coming on strong while we still have XBB waiting in the wings too. Jonathan Abraham, assistant professor of microbiology at Harvard Medical School, told the Washington Post that we're in a "constant evolutionary arms race" with this virus, so it's probably too soon to relax. We're not yet sure what all of this means in terms of which variants are going to move in over the coming weeks or the effectiveness of our new bivalent boosters that were targeted at BA.4 and BA.5. I do know that these bivalents are going to be closer than the prior vaccine iteration was on these BA.5 spawn, so I'd encourage you to get boosted before these become real trouble—which looks like it's not far off.

In case you've decided a booster really isn't worth the trouble, what with all the breakthrough infections, I want to share with you a summary of data from work done with the Veterans Health Administration database by scientists at the University of California, San Francisco and published in JAMA last week. They were working with medical records from a cohort of 1.6 million people who were vaccinated and boosted, three-quarters of whom were 65 and older and 70 percent of whom had a pre-existing health condition that put them at risk for severe Covid-19, that is, a population at unusually high risk. Data were collected for a period from July 1, 2021, to May 30, 2022 while Delta and Omicron were the dominant variants circulating in the US population; we should also remember that Delta infections were far more severe than Omicron infections have been, making it reasonable to expect worse outcomes in this study than you would see in the same folks today. These individuals were followed for 24 weeks, so this is an excellent snapshot of that population over time.

Here's a summary of findings:

- (1) Breakthrough infections overall: 1.25%
- (2) Hospitalized or died from Covid-19 pneumonia: just under 0.1% (0.089%).
- (3) Hospitalized or died from Covid-19 in immunocompromised people: 0.4%
- (4) Hospitalized or died from Covid-19 in those with pre-existing conditions that place them at high risk for severe disease: 0.07%
- (5) Hospitalized or died from Covid-19 in healthy people 65 or older: 0.02%
- (6) Hospitalized or died from Covid-19 in healthy people under 65: 0.01%

I do not have for comparison background data on the general population and certainly not on the unvaccinated portion of it—and I kind of doubt anyone else does either because I just don't think anyone's keeping that sort of record—but I can tell you that reported cases in the general population (which includes vaccinated as well as unvaccinated people) over that time span runs about 15 percent, some 12 times higher than in the vaccinated-and-boosted cohort studied here. If we could separate out just the not-fully-vaccinated-and-boosted population, there is every reason to think that gap would be larger, probably considerably so. Now, we know reported cases are a fraction of the actual number, but I have no reason to believe the underreporting is greater in this VA cohort than in the general population. In fact, given people who use the VA health system have access to no-cost health care, one might expect their reporting is generally higher than in the general population, so that if there are differences between the two, it would likely widen the gap between them. Looks to me like boosters are worth getting.

If you've been contemplating a possible surge in cases of Covid-19 or influenza or whatever other viruses we've been hearing about lately, you may be wondering how you can get yourself in optimal immunological shape for fall and winter. Well, I'm here for you. I read a compilation of recommendations from immunologists and infectious disease experts in the New York Times, so I'll summarize them here. There are four

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categories of steps you can take to bolster your immune responses.

First is exercise. Research shows the most influential lifestyle factor in immune function is activity; exercising five or more days per week reduces the likelihood of an upper respiratory infection by 43 percent compared with those who exercise less than one day per week. Turns out exercise stimulates T cells. The benefits are incremental, so exercising even one day is better than none and two is better than one; so do what you can. I read an article in the journal of the American College of Sports Medicine which says that exercise improves responses to vaccination, lowers chronic inflammation (which is a risk factor for all kinds of infection), and improves immune markers. It does this in several ways: One is reducing the negative effects of stress on the immune system, which are considerable. Exercise also stimulates T cells to multiply and engage more efficiently in immunologic surveillance, patrolling the body for intruders so we can respond to them; it also promotes the activity of cytokines that participate in the response. This effect is particularly marked in older people, a more susceptible population.

Next up is rest. This means not overdoing vigorous activity; this is probably a bad time for exercise injuries and their attendant inflammation. It also means adequate sleep. Sleep helps deal with stress so that it doesn't impair your responses and gives your body the opportunity to repair and restore itself.

The third important factor in optimizing your immune responses is diet. Brightly-colored fruits and vegetables provide flavonoids which reduce inflammation, a significant stressor on the immune system; research has found that at least three servings of fruit daily reduces the number of upper respiratory infections. Excess alcohol consumption suppresses the immune response; recommendations are to limit intake to no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women. And skip the miracle immune-boosting supplements; there is no evidence they reduce anything except your bank account.

And last (I know you're sick to death of hearing this), protect yourself from infection. Get vaccinated and boosted, reduce your potential for exposure to virus by exercising good judgement about where you go, especially if your area has high transmission, use testing in high-risk situations, and wear a mask in public indoor settings. Practice good hygiene: Wash your hands, stay home when you're sick, avoid people who are obviously sick. After all, there's no need to mount a response to the virus if you're never exposed in the first place.

I've read a round-up of the kinds of help available to patients who have post-Covid-19 alterations in the senses of smell and taste. Turns out there are resources available, even if you don't live next door to a major medical center. There is a serious lack of specialists who deal with these issues, and your average medical doctor doesn't really know much about diagnosis and treatment for them. This is a very narrow specialty. That lack of ready access to those with specialized expertise can be a problem because the later you intervene in these cases, the less likely the intervention is to be successful.

In response to those issues, 50 experts who do know things got together to create a "peer-reviewed compendium" of information for general practitioners, including guidelines for clinical assessment. Dr. Zara Patel, professor of otolaryngology and head and neck surgery at Stanford University School of Medicine, who is the person that convened this group of specialists, recommends you print that one-page assessment out and take it with you to your doctor when you go. You can find a pdf of the assessment at the following link: <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/23126649/p618.pdf>.

The article also outlined potential treatments and provided links to a number of resources for patients. I don't generally link news articles here, but I'm going to make an exception for this one because it doesn't make sense to reproduce it here and I think it could be useful to those who've been suffering these defi-

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ciencies after recovery from Covid-19. I hope it is helpful. Here's the link: <https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/15/health/long-covid-smell-loss-doctor-visit-wellness/index.html?fbclid=IwAR30IAcxWi2N8ghlgr50RkldMK3vAia5op1ofOi00QUWUn5SgNYZhHfsaWM>

I've read a paper published last week in Cell Reports from a team of researchers at the California National Primate Research Center at the University of California, Davis, who looked at neuronal damage in rhesus macaques infected with SARS-CoV-2. I was unable to access the published paper, but did find a pre-proof version which should be close to the final form that was published.

There has been some question whether the neurological manifestations of this infection were due to inflammation elicited in response to more generalized systemic infection or to actual infection of the brain itself by the virus. What the team found is that the virus is indeed detectable using high-resolution microscopy in the olfactory cortex and interconnected regions of the brain seven days after infection. It travels from the nose along the olfactory (smell-related) nerve to the olfactory cortex and directly infects neurons (nerve cells), accompanied by inflammation and neuronal damage.

They compared four experimentally-infected monkeys that were young and healthy, as well as four experimentally-infected aged ones with Type 2 diabetes, with six noninfected age-matched controls with and without Type 2 diabetes. The virus was found in the primary olfactory cortex in all infected animals, but it spread farther in the aged ones, which experienced worse neurological damage, including in areas involved in emotion, memory, and cognition, particularly in the brain regions known to be damaged in Alzheimer's disease. The virus was seen in several different types of brain cells, and the infected cells in aged monkeys had significant volume decreases in the cell bodies and in the dendrites (fibers that connect the cell with other neurons). There is some evidence the virus is causing inflammation in these cells, which are then broken down and removed; this inflammation can persist for several weeks. This removal of damaged cells is a pretty natural and generally beneficial response to any kind of damage, but the extent of inflammation in the aged macaques was intense enough to result in significant amounts of neuron destruction in their brains. Additionally, there were abnormalities in the connections between the blood supply and brain cells that disrupted what's called the blood-brain barrier, a normal anatomical arrangement that protects the brain from many damaging substances, organisms, and cells that might be circulating in the blood. These effects occurred in the first week of infection; the team speculated that there may be further viral access to brain tissue via other routes later in infection.

We should keep in mind a few factors: that a high dose of virus was used to experimentally induce the infections, that macaques are not people, that the number of subjects was very small, and also that there were very limited numbers of diabetic animals available for study. Nonetheless, these findings offer explanations consistent with what we know about neurologic symptoms that persist after acute infection, so they can't be dismissed at all. The research team is continuing to study these cells and the brains of monkeys infected several months ago in an attempt to nail down the extent and nature of the damage.

And that's all I have for you today. I hope you're staying well. We'll talk again.

## Conde National League

**Oct. 17 Team Standings:** Braves 20, Giants 14, Cubs 12, Tigers 11, Pirates 9, Mets 6

**Men's High Games:** Ryan Bethke 233, 187; Russ Bethke 233, 183; Jeff Lahammer 190, 182; Butch Farnen 181

**Men's High Series:** Ryan Bethke 599; Russ Bethke 594; Jeff Lahammer 499

**Women's High Games:** Vickie Kramp 198, 179; Joyce Walter 167; Sam Bahr 157

**Women's High Series:** Vickie Kramp 508, Joyce Walter 430, Michelle Johnson 411

**Oct. 10 Team Standings:** Braves 16, Giants 13, Pirates 9, Cubs 9, Tigers 7, Mets 6

**Men's High Games:** Jeff Lahammer 188; Ryan Bethke 182, 179; Justin Buckley 175

**Men's High Series:** Ryan Bethke 517, Jeff Lahammer 464, Chad Furney 440

**Women's High Games:** Michelle Johnson 179, Cheryl Reyelts 173, Vickie Kramp 170

**Women's High Series:** Vickie Kramp 487, Joyce Walter 452, Michelle Johnson 424

## GHS Students do internships

by Dorene Nelson

Groton Area High School offers a variety of business classes. One of these classes, School Internships, offers seniors the opportunity to work in various local businesses of their choice.

The purpose of this internship is to teach students responsibility by working for someone other than their family. It helps them learn how to work with the public and with customers who might not be all that agreeable at times.

Internships could also help students decide on a part-time job while they are in college or maybe even to help them choose a future occupation.

The business teacher, Becky Hubsch, has set up this experience for the students enrolled in her School Internship class.

All students must be at their chosen place of work during the first period of the school day. The student interns must contact the place they would like to work and have their own personal transportation.

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## Marzahn at Bierman Farm Service

Andrew Marzahn, son of Wade and Renee Marzahn, is interning at Bierman Farm Service. "I've done inventory, cleaning, and sweeping, the kind of work my father does at his own seed business," Andrew explained.



"Sometimes the work required can be a dirty, dusty job like the cleaning of grain augers that I did yesterday," he admitted. "Although there are a few different ways to clean out an auger, the best and safest method is by using a good air compressor."

"Dirty or not, this is an important job for both seed company owners and for farmers," Marzahn smiled! "Smooth and easy handling of seed plays a large part a successful farm industry."

"Today I am taking inventory of how many gallons of liquid RoundUp is on hand in the warehouse," he explained. "I have to look carefully at the labels since they are not all exactly the same."

"I really like this business where you set your own schedule," he stated. "The physical labor can be hard, but I don't mind hard work!"

"I participate in football, golf, and track," Marzahn listed. "After I graduate from high school, I plan to attend either SDSU, majoring in the agricultural field, or South Dakota School of mines, to become an industrial engineer."

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## Groton City Oct. 18 Meeting Minutes

October 18, 2022

The Groton City Council met on the above date at 7:00 p.m. at 120 N Main Street for their second monthly meeting with the following members present: Bahr, Babcock via telephone, Wambach, Wells, and Mayor Hanlon presiding. Also present were: Attorney Drew Johnson, Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich, Dwight Zerr, and Ken Hier. Members of the Carnival of Silver Skates committee were present including Katie Anderson, Nikki Kotzer, and Coralea Wolter.

Public comments were welcomed pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1, but none were received.

The Carnival of Silver Skates had continued discussion regarding the flooding of the ice-skating rink and the needed maintenance and supplies. They will return to the November 15th meeting for continued discussion and an update on maintenance progress.

The members of the Carnival of Silver Skates committee exited the meeting.

Discussion took place regarding the Wastewater Department.

Dwight Zerr exited the meeting.

Ken Hier of IMEG discussed the railroad permit and updated council regarding the progress on the water project.

Ken Hier exited the meeting.

Moved by Bahr and seconded by Wambach to approve Pay Request #2 to Dahme Construction Co, Inc. for \$620,243.14. All members present voted aye.

The minutes from the previous meeting were approved on a motion by Wells and seconded by Wambach. All members present voted aye.

Moved by Bahr and seconded by Wells to authorize the following bills for payment. All members present voted aye.

Payroll, \$25,413.76, Employee salaries; Executive, \$258.56, ; Administrative, \$4,311.57, ; Public Safety, \$8,852.80, ; Public Works, \$11,751.33, ; Culture & Recreation, \$239.50, ; SD Retirement System, \$12,493.22, Employee Retirement; USPS, \$268.18, Utility Billing Postage; Wes Graff, \$121.22, Utility Deposit Refund; Landon Johnson, \$190.86, Utility Deposit Refund; Cheryl Hanson, \$128.74, Utility Deposit Refund; City of Groton, \$59.14, Utility Deposit Applied to Bill; Dacotah Bank, \$5,487.32, Withholding/SS/Medicare; Dacotah Bank, \$2,949.79, Withholding/SS/Medicare; Dakotaland FCU, \$730.00, Employee Savings; Dacotah Bank, \$576.24, HSA Contributions; Dacotah Bank, \$50.00, HSA Contributions; SD State Treasurer, \$9,666.32, Sales and Excise Tax - September 2022; SD DANR, \$100.00, Stormwater Permit Fee; Andrea Eisenbeisz, \$189.42, Reimburse for Halloween candy; Web Water, \$17,042.16, Water Services - September 2022; EcoLab, \$106.00, Rubble Site Rodent Control; Darrel's Sinclair, \$182.90, Tire for mower, battery for skid steer; Harry Implement, Inc., \$482.37, Air filters, wheel assembly; Irby, Inc., \$5,536.50, Overhead supplies; Douglas Heinrich, \$138.75, Mileage Reimbursement/Employee Cell Phone Reimbursement - Sept/Oct; Kellie Locke, \$60.00, Employee Cell Phone Reimbursement - Sept/Oct; Med Flex; Branden Abeln, \$40.00, Employee Cell Phone Reimbursement - Sept/Oct; Landon Johnson, \$40.00, Employee Cell Phone Reimbursement - Sept/Oct; Paul Kosel, \$40.00, Employee Cell Phone Reimbursement - Sept/Oct; April Abeln, \$74.75, Employee Cell Phone Reimbursement - Sept/Oct; Med Flex; Heartland Waste, \$10,176.10, Garbage Hauling - September 2022; South Dakota 811, \$135.45, Message fees July thru September 2022; Stan Houston Equip. Co, Inc., \$175.00, Trencher rental; Locators & Supplies, Inc., \$160.84, (6) EZ See hydrant markers; Greg's Repair, \$896.48, 4 new tires for PD Tahoe; Fire Safety First, LLC, \$406.85, Annual maintenance and certification ; Aberdeen Chrysler Center, \$615.00, New battery and towing fee - Dodge Ram; NW Energy, \$100.00, Natural Gas Service - Swimming Pool ; Heartland Energy, \$46,475.43, Power Services - September 2022; WAPA, \$19,293.60, Power Services - September 2022; A&B Business Solutions, \$342.10, Printer lease; Dakota Pump & Control, \$12,056.91, Ground storage tank mixer; James Valley Telecommunications, \$786.97, Telephone & Internet Services; MJ's Sinclair, \$2,170.30, Fuel & car washes; Dacotah Bank Visa, \$735.25, Homecoming supplies, water samples, candy, hotel for Overhead School in Marshall, MN, postage, fuel; Ken's Food Fair, \$652.78, Fuel, coffee, bottled water; Jensen Feed & Grain, \$2,556.40, Road Salt; Brown

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County Treasurer, \$1,360.16, 2021 Real Estate Tax - 2nd Half; SDML Workers Comp Fund, \$18,165.00, 2023 Coverage Renewal; SD Supplemental Retirement, \$240.00, Supplemental Retirement; Aramark, \$43.84, Rug Rent; IMEG Corp., \$1,756.64, Professional Services - Boundary Survey - Cemetery; Altec Capital Services, LLC, \$2,189.93, Digger Truck Lease; Grand Slam Computers, Inc. , \$109.00, Thermaltake 500-watt PSU for shop computer; Amy Heinz, \$12.16, Adult Painting Class; AutoZone, Inc., \$72.51, Coolant & gasket; Dakota Supply Group, \$283.72, Exterior Light for City Shop

Moved by Wambach and seconded by Wells to approve the September finance report. All members present voted aye.

Moved by Babcock and seconded by Wambach to approve the 2022 Swimming Pool Report. All members present voted aye.

Moved by Bahr and seconded by Wells to approve the liquor license renewals for Jungle Lanes & Lounge, American Legion Post #39, Ken's Food Fair, Red Horse Inn, Olive Grove Golf Course, Dollar General, and MJ's Sinclair. All members present voted aye.

Discussion took place regarding the park bathrooms and possible funding options.

Moved by Wambach and seconded by Wells to adjourn into executive session for personnel and legal items 1-24-2 (1) & (3) at 8:53 p.m. All members present voted aye. Council reconvened into regular session at 9:01 p.m.

Moved by Wells and seconded by Bahr to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 p.m. All members present voted aye.

Scott Hanlon, Mayor

Douglas Heinrich, Finance Officer

## **Governor Noem Orders Flags at Half Staff in Honor of Former Governor Harvey Wollman**

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem announced that flags will be at half-staff from sunrise until sundown statewide, effective immediately, in honor of former Governor Harvey Wollman. Flags will remain at half-staff until the day of Governor Wollman's interment, which will be announced at a later time.

"Harvey Wollman stood up and answered the call of duty, stepping into the role of Governor at a difficult time for our state," said Governor Kristi Noem. "During his brief tenure as governor, he advanced water development in our state and helped bring about the eventual repeal of the state's personal property tax. In South Dakota, we honor our leaders. We honor their accomplishments. We honor our history."

Wollman ran for Lieutenant Governor on a ticket with Governor Richard Kneip in 1974. When Governor Kneip resigned to become the United States Ambassador to Singapore in 1978, Wollman stepped up to the role of Governor of South Dakota. Before serving in the executive branch, Wollman served in the State Senate from 1969-1975, including as Democrat leader from 1971-1974.

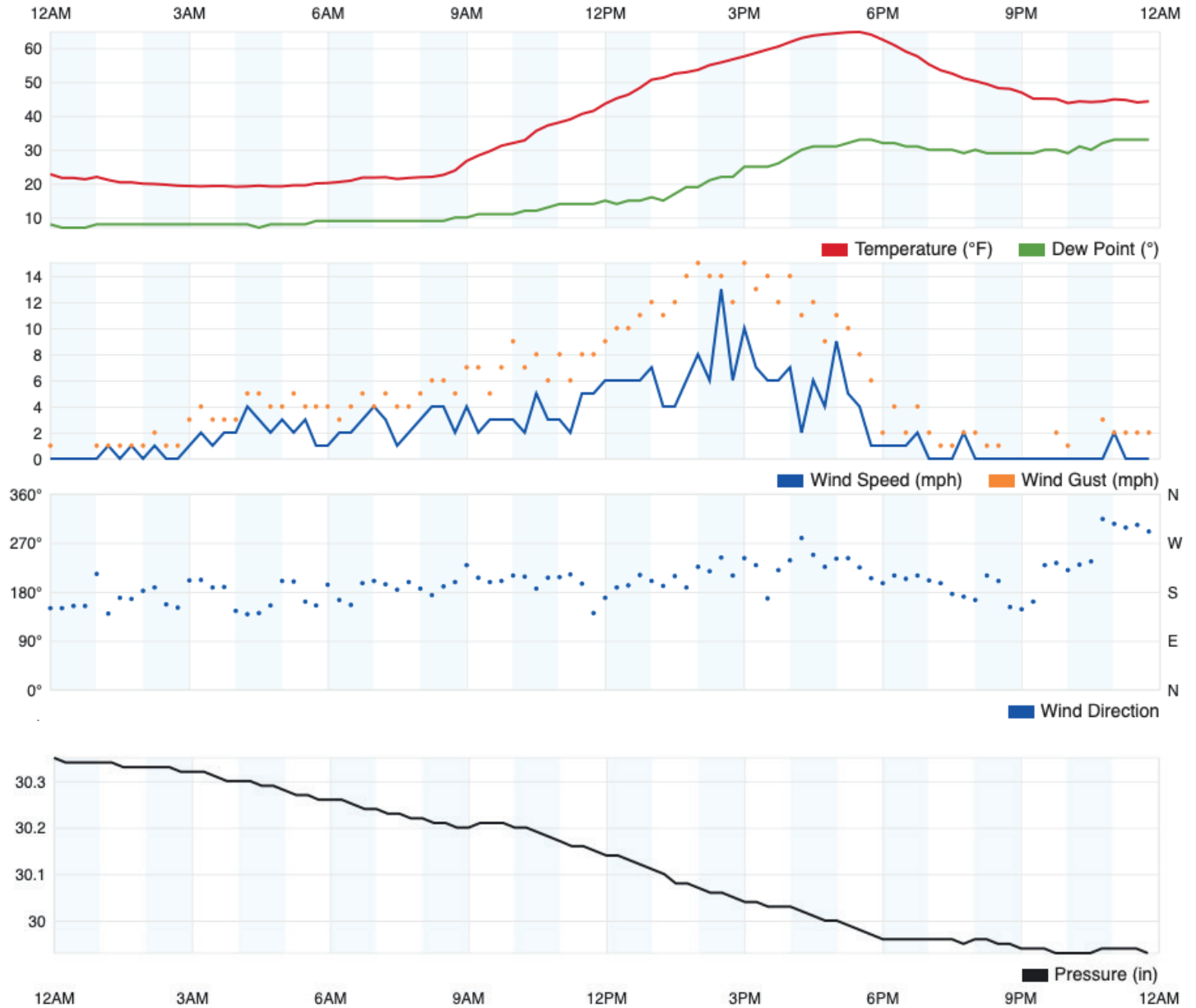
Details on funeral arrangements will be announced at a later time.



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Mostly Sunny

High: 70 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 42 °F

Friday



Mostly Sunny

High: 63 °F

Friday  
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 39 °F

Saturday



Partly Sunny

High: 68 °F



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Aberdeen, SD f t

Dry, breezy  
conditions and high  
fire danger

Warm and dry. Lighter winds. Highs in the 60s on Friday, climbing into the 60s to low 70s Saturday.

Today  
Oct 20

Friday - Saturday

Breezy and dry conditions, especially across central SD, will result in high to very high fire danger this afternoon. Highs will top out in the 60s across the east and climb into the upper 70s across central SD. A cold front will move through tonight, but temperatures will remain above average through Saturday with lighter winds.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 64.8 °F at 5:30 PM

Low Temp: 19.1 °F at 4:00 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 3:00 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 45 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 87 in 1947

Record Low: 12 in 1930

Average High: 57°F

Average Low: 31°F

Average Precip in Oct.: 1.51

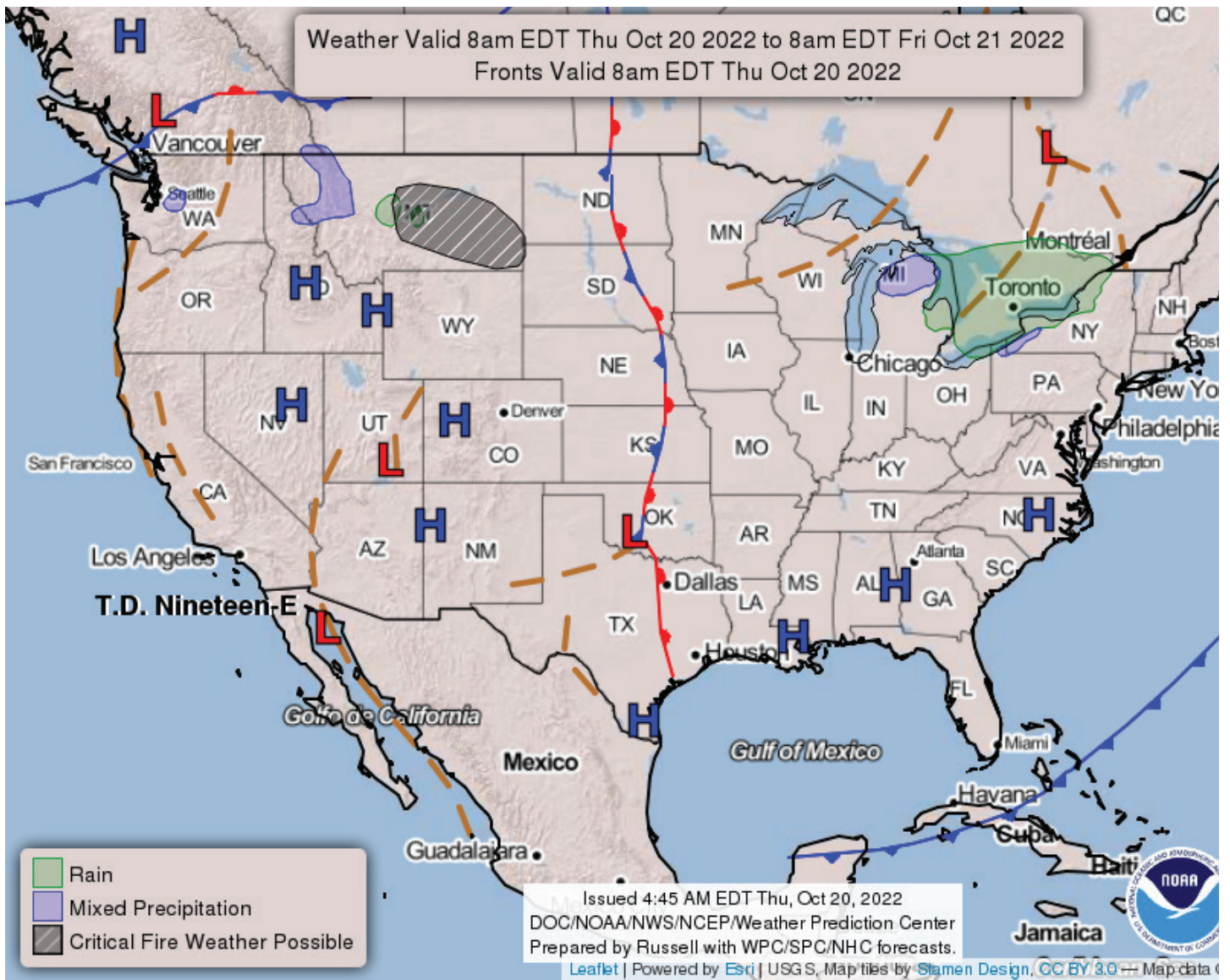
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.45

Average Precip to date: 19.84

Precip Year to Date: 16.50

Sunset Tonight: 6:40:05 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:55:32 AM



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## Today in Weather History

October 20, 1936: Heavy snow across the region brought snowfall totals upwards of 5 inches in Newcastle and Sundance with 5.5 inches reported in Dupree and 10 inches in Faith. Aberdeen saw 2 inches, while Mobridge had three inches from this event.

1770: An exceedingly great storm struck eastern New England causing extensive coastal damage from Massachusetts to Maine, and the highest tide in 47 years.

1956: While not a record, Esperanza Base in Antarctic warmed to 57.2 degrees on this date. The all-time warmest day at this base occurred on March 24, 2015, when the temperature reached 63.5 degrees. As of now, the 63.5 degrees has not been verified to be the warmest temperature recorded on the continent of Antarctica.

1983 - Remnants of Pacific Hurricane Tico caused extensive flooding in central and south central Oklahoma. Oklahoma City set daily rainfall records with 1.45 inch on the 19th, and 6.28 inches on the 20th. (17th-21st) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Cold arctic air invaded the Upper Midwest, and squalls in the Lake Superior snowbelt produced heavy snow in eastern Ashland County and northern Iron County of Wisconsin. Totals ranged up to 18 inches at Mellen. In the western U.S., the record high of 69 degrees at Seattle WA was their twenty-fifth of the year, their highest number of record highs for any given year. Bakersfield CA reported a record 146 days in a row with daily highs 80 degrees or above. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Unseasonably warm weather continued in the western U.S. In California, afternoon highs of 96 degrees at Redding and Red Bluff were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Forty-nine cities reported record low temperatures for the date as readings dipped into the 20s and 30s across much of the south central and southeastern U.S. Lows of 32 degrees at Lake Charles LA and 42 degrees at Lakeland FL were records for October, and Little Rock AR reported their earliest freeze of record. Snow blanketed the higher elevations of Georgia and the Carolinas. Melbourne FL dipped to 47 degrees shortly before midnight to surpass the record low established that morning. Showers and thunderstorms brought heavy rain to parts of the northeastern U.S. Autumn leaves on the ground clogged drains and ditches causing flooding. Up to 4.10 inches of rain soaked southern Vermont in three days. Flood waters washed 600 feet of railroad track, resulting in a train derailment. (The National Weather Summary)(Storm Data)

2004: Typhoon Tokage blasting across Japan triggers flash floods that wash away entire hillsides, killing 55 people and leaving at least 24 people missing.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHAT'S IN IT FOR GOD?

"Before you make a decision, make a plan or set a goal, ask these questions," said T.B. Matson, our ethics professor.

"Can I ask God to bless what I am about to do?"

"Is what I am planning to do going to honor God?"

"Would I feel comfortable to ask others to join me in prayer for what I am asking God to do for me?"

"Would others agree with me that what I am about to do will be God-honoring?"

We often act and react without pausing to pray about or even consider the consequences of our behavior. Sometimes when things seem to be getting out of control, we run to God and plead for Him to "correct this terrible mess I've created for Your name is at stake." Others may say, "Well, it looked good when I started but where is God now?"

Because of our sinful nature, we often act without seeking God's approval before setting out on a project. We think, plan, work and then wonder "what happened to my ideas?" when things go wrong. We forget the need to go to God first because of our desire to act independent and self-sufficient. If we look to and depend on God, we automatically admit we are insufficient on our own and need His help. And who wants to think they need help?

Wisely Solomon wrote, "Commit to the Lord whatever you do and your plans will succeed." The word used for "commit" literally means "roll over." So if in prayer, we "roll over" our plans to God for His blessing, protection, and guidance, we can expect them to succeed.

Prayer: Father, we pray that You will remove all pride from our hearts and help us realize our need for Your guidance. May we realize our need for You at all times. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. Proverbs 16:3



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  
11/13/2022: Snow Queen Contest  
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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## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) \_ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

01-09-15-23-30

(one, nine, fifteen, twenty-three, thirty)

Estimated jackpot: \$109,000

Lotto America

08-30-35-44-52, Star Ball: 7, ASB: 2

(eight, thirty, thirty-five, forty-four, fifty-two; Star Ball: seven; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$27,320,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 30,000,000

Powerball

06-08-15-27-42, Powerball: 10, Power Play: 3

(six, eight, fifteen, twenty-seven, forty-two; Powerball: ten; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$550,000,000

### Harvey Wollman, last South Dakota Democratic governor, dies

HURON, S.D. (AP) — Harvey Wollman, who 45 years ago became the last Democratic governor of South Dakota, has died. He was 87.

Wollman died of natural causes Tuesday at a hospital in Huron, his son, Mike, told The Associated Press.

Harvey Wollman had a short stint as governor. He was serving as South Dakota's lieutenant governor in 1978 when Gov. Richard Kneip was appointed U.S. ambassador to Singapore. Wollman's gubernatorial term lasted five months because he had already been defeated in the 1978 Democratic primary election by Roger McKellips prior to assuming office.

Republican Bill Janklow defeated McKellips for governor in the 1978 general election, starting the run of GOP control.

"He worked hard for people and politically it didn't work out for him as well as he had hoped, but boy, he loved his side of the state with all his heart," Mike Wollman said of his father.

Wollman was born on March 14, 1934, in Frankfort, South Dakota, and grew up on his family farm in Spink County, where he lived in the same house with his wife of 63 years, Anne.

A 1953 graduate of Doland High School, Wollman became motivated for public service by another Doland grad, Hubert H. Humphrey. As senior class president, Wollman was called upon to shepherd Humphrey around during a school reunion and was "really inspired by his style and his politics and his leadership," Mike Wollman said.

Harvey Wollman eventually became a key Democratic figure in the South Dakota Senate. He was elected to three consecutive terms and served as both majority leader and minority leader.

### Justice: Hotel sued for denying rooms to Native Americans

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The U.S. Department of Justice sued the owners of a Rapid City, South Dakota hotel on Wednesday, alleging that they violated the civil rights of Native Americans by trying to ban them from the property.

The Justice Department alleges that on at least two occasions in March, Connie Uhre and her son Nicho-



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las Uhre committed racial discrimination by turning away Native Americans who sought to book a room at the Grand Gateway Hotel.

Connie Uhre had also told other Rapid City hotel owners and managers that she did not want Native American customers there or in the hotel's bar, the Cheers Sports Lounge and Casino. A post on her Facebook account said she cannot "allow a Native American to enter our business including Cheers."

Uhre's comments and actions, which followed a fatal shooting involving two teenagers at the hotel, sparked large protests in Rapid City and condemnation from the city's mayor, Steve Allender.

Rapid City, known to many as the gateway to Mount Rushmore, is home to more than 77,000 people. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, at least 11% of its residents identify as American Indian or Alaska Native. The city has long seen racial tensions.

Nicholas Uhre said he and his mother had been under pressure from the Justice Department to enter a consent decree settling the matter, but there were "sticking points" in the negotiation. "I guess they are going to do what they are going to do," he said.

The Justice Department sued under a section of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that permits a judge to order changes to policies and practices at hotels and other venues, but does not allow the department to obtain monetary damages for customers who are victims of discrimination.

"Restricting access to a hotel based on a person's race is prohibited by federal law," U.S. Attorney for South Dakota Alison J. Ramsdell said in a statement.

The hotel owners have also been embroiled in separate lawsuits from the NDN Collective seeking monetary damages for the hotel's policy, a counter-suit against the Indigenous activist organization, and another lawsuit from Connie's son Judson Uhre, who said she harmed the family business when she "made a racially charged rant which was posted on a website with wide coverage and this led to financial loss of clients for the hotel as well as the damage to the hotel's reputation."

Nick Tilsen, the president of NDN Collective, credited the protests for prompting the federal civil rights suit, and said Rapid City's problems with racism persist beyond the hotel.

"Let this be a warning to the city of Rapid City," Tilsen said. "If they want to go after Indigenous people's rights, we're going to force institutions like the Department of Justice to hold people accountable."

## UN chief and Indian PM jointly launch climate action program

By SIBI ARASU Associated Press

BENGALURU, India (AP) — The Indian government's flagship program to encourage individual and collective action on climate was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the United Nations Secretary-General on Thursday.

Mission Life, where "life" is an acronym for "lifestyle for environment," is designed to encourage individual behaviors like switching off vehicle engines at traffic lights, turning off taps when not in use and switching to longer-lasting alternatives to single-use plastic bags. The government estimates those actions, if taken on a national scale, could significantly limit emissions, water use and waste.

The program hopes to "mobilize one billion Indians as well as people in other countries to become individuals who practice sustainable lifestyles," Param Iyer, CEO of Niti Aayog, a government-supported think tank that are spearheading the Mission Life program alongside India's federal environment and climate change ministry.

U.N. chief Antonio Guterres, who is on a three-day visit to India and was at the program's unveiling in the western Gujarat state, hoped the focus on more sustainable living "can spread throughout the world."

While they see the potential benefit of such a program to reduce emissions, climate experts are still unclear about how the project will play out.

"At an individual level, Mission Life is a welcome measure, both ethically and environmentally," said Nagraj Adve of the climate advocacy group, Teachers Against the Climate Crisis.

But he added that "the program needs to be complemented by enabling policies such as higher income and wealth taxes, making flights more expensive, promoting renewable energy and more public transport"

to encourage lifestyle changes.

"It still remains to be seen if the government will work towards all of this."

## **Study: Cancer-causing gas leaking from CA stoves, pipes**

By DREW COSTLEY AP Science Writer

Gas stoves in California homes are leaking cancer-causing benzene, researchers found in a new study published on Thursday, though they say more research is needed to understand how many homes have leaks.

In the study, published in Environmental Science and Technology on Thursday, researchers also estimated that over 4 tons of benzene per year are being leaked into the atmosphere from outdoor pipes that deliver the gas to buildings around California — the equivalent to the benzene emissions from nearly 60,000 vehicles. And those emissions are unaccounted for by the state.

The researchers collected samples of gas from 159 homes in different regions of California and measured to see what types of gases were being emitted into homes when stoves were off. They found that all of the samples they tested had hazardous air pollutants, like benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene (BTEX), all of which can have adverse health effects in humans with chronic exposure or acute exposure in larger amounts.

Of most concern to the researchers was benzene, a known carcinogen that can lead to leukemia and other cancers and blood disorders, according to the National Cancer Institute.

The finding could have major implications for indoor and outdoor air quality in California, which has the second highest level of residential natural gas use in the United States.

"What our science shows is that people in California are exposed to potentially hazardous levels of benzene from the gas that is piped into their homes," said Drew Michanowicz, a study co-author and senior scientist at PSE Healthy Energy, an energy research and policy institute. "We hope that policymakers will consider this data when they are making policy to ensure current and future policies are health-protective in light of this new research."

Homes in almost every region in the study — Greater Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento and Fresno — had benzene levels that far exceed the limit determined to be safe by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazards Assessment. But the region with the highest benzene levels by far was the North San Fernando and Santa Clarita valleys.

This finding in particular didn't surprise residents and health care workers in the region who spoke to The Associated Press about the study. That's because many of them experienced the largest-known natural gas leak in the nation in Aliso Canyon in 2015.

Back then, 100,000 tons of methane and other gases, including benzene, leaked from a failed well operated by Southern California Gas Co. It took nearly four months to get the leak under control and resulted in headaches, nausea and nose bleeds.

Dr. Jeffrey Nordella was a physician at an urgent care in the region during this time and remembers being puzzled by the variety of symptoms patients were experiencing. "I didn't have much to offer them," except to help them try to detox from the exposures, he said.

That was an acute exposure of a large amount of benzene, which is different from chronic exposure to smaller amounts, but "remember what the World Health Organization said: there's no safe level of benzene," he said.

Kyoko Hibino was one of the residents exposed to toxic air pollution as a result of the Aliso Canyon gas leak. After the leak, she started having a persistent cough and nosebleeds and eventually was diagnosed with breast cancer, which has also been linked to benzene exposure. Her cats also started having nosebleeds and one recently passed away from leukemia.

"I'd say let's take this study really seriously and understand how bad (benzene exposure) is," she said.

## **Truss faces clamor to quit amid UK government chaos**

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By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — U.K. Prime Minister Liz Truss was hanging on to power by a thread on Thursday, after a senior minister quit her government with a barrage of criticism and a vote in the House of Commons descended into chaos and acrimony.

A botched economic plan unveiled by the government last month triggered financial turmoil and a political crisis that has seen the replacement of Truss' Treasury chief, multiple policy U-turns and a breakdown of discipline in the governing Conservative Party.

Many Conservatives say Truss must resign — but she has remained defiant, saying she is “a fighter and not a quitter.”

Conservative lawmaker Simon Hoare said the government was in disarray.

“Nobody has a route plan. It's all sort of hand-to-hand fighting on a day-to-day basis,” he told the BBC on Thursday. He said Truss had “about 12 hours” to turn the situation around.

Through the morning, a growing number of Conservative members of Parliament called for Truss to step down and end the chaos.

“It's time for the prime minister to go,” said lawmaker Miriam Cates. Another, Steve Double, said: “She isn't up to the job, sadly.”

Newspapers that usually support the Conservatives were vitriolic. An editorial in the Daily Mail was headlined: “The wheels have come off the Tory clown car.”

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan, sent onto the airwaves Thursday morning to defend the government, insisted the administration was providing “stability.” But she was unable to guarantee Truss would lead the party into the next election.

“At the moment, I think that's the case,” she said.

With opinion polls giving the Labour Party a large and growing lead, many Conservatives now believe their only hope of avoiding electoral oblivion is to replace Truss. But they are divided about how to get rid of her, and over who should replace her.

The party is keen to avoid another divisive leadership contest like the race a few months ago that saw Truss defeat ex-Treasury chief Rishi Sunak. Among potential replacements — if only Conservative lawmakers can agree — are Sunak, House of Commons leader Penny Mordaunt and newly appointed Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt.

A national election doesn't have to be held until 2024, and under Conservative Party rules, Truss technically is safe from a leadership challenge for a year. The rules can be changed if enough lawmakers want it. There is fevered speculation about how many lawmakers have already submitted letters calling for a no-confidence vote.

In a major blow, Home Secretary Suella Braverman resigned Wednesday after breaching rules by sending an official document from her personal email account. She used her resignation letter to lambaste Truss, saying she had “concerns about the direction of this government.”

“The business of government relies upon people accepting responsibility for their mistakes,” she said in a thinly veiled dig at Truss.

Braverman was replaced as home secretary, the minister responsible for immigration and law and order, by former Cabinet minister Grant Shapps, a high-profile supporter of her defeated rival Sunak.

Truss faced more turmoil in Parliament Wednesday evening on a vote over fracking for shale gas — a practice that Truss wants to resume despite opposition from many Conservatives.

With a large Conservative majority in Parliament, an opposition call for a fracking ban was easily defeated, but some lawmakers were furious that Conservative Party whips said the vote would be treated as a confidence motion, meaning the government would fall if the motion passed.

There were angry scenes in the House of Commons, with party whips accused of using heavy-handed tactics to gain votes. Labour lawmaker Chris Bryant said he “saw members being physically manhandled ... and being bullied.” Conservative officials denied there had been manhandling.

Rumors swirled that Conservative Chief Whip Wendy Morton, who is responsible for party discipline, and

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her deputy had resigned. Hours later, Truss' office said both remained in their jobs.

The dramatic developments came days after Truss fired her Treasury chief, Kwasi Kwarteng, on Friday after the economic package the pair unveiled Sept. 23 spooked financial markets and triggered an economic and political crisis.

The plan's 45 billion pounds (\$50 billion) in unfunded tax cuts sparked turmoil on financial markets, hammering the value of the pound and increasing the cost of U.K. government borrowing. The Bank of England was forced to intervene to prevent the crisis from spreading to the wider economy and putting pension funds at risk.

On Monday Kwarteng's replacement, Hunt, scrapped almost all of Truss' tax cuts, along with her flagship energy policy and her promise of no public spending cuts. He said the government will need to save billions of pounds and there are "many difficult decisions" to be made before he sets out a medium-term fiscal plan on Oct. 31.

Speaking to lawmakers for the first time since the U-turn, Truss apologized Wednesday and admitted she had made mistakes during her six weeks in office, but insisted that by changing course she had "taken responsibility and made the right decisions in the interest of the country's economic stability."

Opposition lawmakers shouted "Resign!" as she spoke in the House of Commons.

But she insisted: "I am a fighter and not a quitter."

## EU leaders head into divisive summit on energy crisis

By RAF CASERT and SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European Union leaders were heading into a two-day summit Thursday with opposing views on whether, and how, the bloc could impose a gas price cap to contain the energy crisis fueled by Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine and his strategy to choke off gas supplies to the bloc at will.

At the opening of the summit, the need for rock-solid EU unity in confronting Russia will be highlighted by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is expected to address the 27 national leaders by video conference from Kyiv, asking for continued help to get his nation through the winter.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said early Thursday that Zelenskyy shouldn't have such worries. Reacting to Russian attacks targeting civilian infrastructure and spreading fear through cities with killer drones, Scholz said they amounted to "war crimes."

"Even such scorched-earth tactics won't help Russia win the war. They only strengthen the determination and staying power of Ukraine and its partners," he told Parliament in Berlin.

The upcoming cold season will also be front and center at EU headquarters, where leaders will turn their own heat on in what is expected to be talks that will run deep into the night, with any outcome on a joint energy approach an open question.

Natural gas prices spiraled out of control over the summer as EU nations sought to outbid one another to fill up their reserves for winter. Now EU leaders will seek to increasingly pool their purchases of gas and set a temporary price cap to make sure an overheated energy market doesn't return to haunt them again.

And where Angela Merkel was the soothing voice often brokering a compromise during her 16 years as German chancellor, her successor Scholz is now at the heart of a division in the bloc.

While many EU nations are ready to back a proposal to cap natural gas prices and keep it affordable for its 450 million citizens, Germany and the Netherlands have raised major issues about that, saying it would be unwieldy and could make sure that supplies just bypass the bloc.

Scholz told Germany's Parliament that "a politically set price cap always carries the risk that producers then sell their gas elsewhere — and we Europeans ultimately don't get more gas, but less."

He said the EU must consult closely with other gas consumers, such as Japan and South Korea, so that they don't compete with each other; and that it's important to talk with gas producers about "an appropriate price."

"I am convinced that countries such as the U.S., Canada or Norway, which stand by Ukraine in solidarity

together with us, have an interest in energy in Europe not becoming unaffordable.”

Germany and the Netherlands maintain that such market interventions could hurt both the availability of natural gas and incentives for governments and consumers to save it.

A plan for the EU to pool joint purchases of gas and measures to improve solidarity with EU nations most hurt by the spiraling energy prices were expected to receive much more support, diplomats said.

Russia is increasingly relying on drone strikes against Ukraine’s energy grid and civilian infrastructure and sowing panic with hits on Ukrainian cities, tactics that European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called “war crimes” and “pure terror” on Wednesday.

Diplomats are already assessing more sanctions to come. But Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s perceived friendliness toward the Kremlin, however, makes life tougher. Even though the previous EU sanctions targeting Russia have been approved all together, it has increasingly become difficult to keep Orban on board by agreeing to exemptions.

“The failed sanctions in Brussels are already an almost unbearable burden. We will urge the reconsideration of the war sanctions policy,” Orban wrote Wednesday, throwing down a political gauntlet to his colleagues.

## **Afghan couple accuse US Marine of abducting their baby**

By JULIET LINDERMAN, CLAIRE GALOFARO and MARTHA MENDOZA Associated Press

The young Afghan couple raced to the airport in Kabul, clutching their baby girl close amid the chaotic withdrawal of American troops last year.

The baby had been rescued two years earlier from the rubble of a U.S. Special Forces raid that killed her parents and five siblings. After months in a U.S. military hospital, she had gone to live with her cousin and his wife, this newlywed couple. Now, the family was bound for the United States for further medical treatment, with the aid of U.S. Marine Corps attorney Joshua Mast.

When the exhausted Afghans arrived at the airport in Washington D.C. in late August 2021, Mast pulled them out of the international arrivals line and led them to an inspecting officer, according to a lawsuit they filed last month. They were surprised when Mast presented an Afghan passport for the child, the couple said. But it was the last name printed on the document that stopped them cold: Mast.

They didn’t know it, but they would soon lose their baby.

This is a story about how one U.S. Marine became fiercely determined to bring home an Afghan war orphan, and praised it as an act of Christian faith to save her. Letters, emails and documents submitted in federal filings show that he used his status in the U.S. Armed Forces, appealed to high-ranking Trump administration officials and turned to small-town courts to adopt the baby, unbeknownst to the Afghan couple raising her 7,000 miles away.

The little girl, now 3 ½ years old, is at the center of a high-stakes tangle of at least four court cases. The Afghan couple, desperate to get her back, has sued Joshua and his wife Stephanie Mast. But the Masts insist they are her legal parents and “acted admirably” to protect her. They’ve asked a federal judge to dismiss the lawsuit.

The ordeal has drawn in the U.S. departments of Defense, Justice and State, which have argued that the attempt to spirit away a citizen of another country could significantly harm military and foreign relations. It has also meant that a child who survived a violent raid, was hospitalized for months and escaped the fall of Afghanistan has had to split her short life between two families, both of which now claim her.

Five days after the Afghans arrived in the U.S., they say Mast – custody papers in hand – took her away.

The Afghan woman collapsed onto the floor and pleaded with the Marine to give her baby back. Her husband said Mast had called him “brother” for months; so he begged him to act like one, with compassion. Instead, the Afghan family claims in court papers, Mast shoved the man and stomped his foot.

That was more than a year ago. The Afghan couple hasn’t seen her since.

“After they took her, our tears never stop,” the woman told The Associated Press. “Right now, we are just dead bodies. Our hearts are broken. We have no plans for a future without her. Food has no taste and sleep gives us no rest.”

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## PULLED FROM THE RUBBLE

The story of the baby unfolds in hundreds of pages of legal filings and documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, as well as interviews with those involved, pieced together in an AP investigation.

In a federal lawsuit filed in September, the Afghan family accuses the Masts of false imprisonment, conspiracy, fraud and assault. The family has asked the court to shield their identity out of concerns for their relatives back in Afghanistan, and they communicated with AP on the condition of remaining anonymous.

The Masts call the Afghan family's claims "outrageous, unmerited attacks" on their integrity. They argue in court filings that they have worked "to protect the child from physical, mental or emotional harm." They say the Afghan couple are "not her lawful parents," and Mast's attorney cast doubt on whether the Afghans were even related to the baby.

"Joshua and Stephanie Mast have done nothing but ensure she receives the medical care she requires, at great personal expense and sacrifice, and provide her a loving home," wrote the Masts' attorneys.

The baby's identity has been kept private, listed only as Baby L or Baby Doe. The Afghan couple had given the baby an Afghan name; the Masts gave her an American one.

Originally from Florida, Joshua Mast married his wife Stephanie and attended Liberty University, an evangelical Christian college in Lynchburg, Virginia. He graduated in 2008, and got his law degree there in 2014.

In 2019, they were living with their sons in Palmyra, a small rural Virginia town, when Joshua Mast was sent on a temporary assignment to Afghanistan. Mast, then a captain in the U.S. Marine Corps, was a military lawyer for the federal Center for Law and Military Operations. The U.S. Marines declined to comment publicly, along with other federal officials.

That September in 2019 was one of the deadliest months of the entire U.S. occupation in Afghanistan, with more than 110 civilians killed in the first week alone.

On Sept. 6, 2019, the U.S. attacked a remote compound.

No details about this event are publicly available, but in court documents Mast claims that classified reports show the U.S. government "sent helicopters full of special operators to capture or kill" a foreign fighter. Mast said that rather than surrender, a man detonated a suicide vest; five of his six children in the room were killed, and their mother was shot to death while resisting arrest.

Sehla Ashai and Maya Eckstein, attorneys for the Afghan couple, dispute Mast's account. They say the baby's parents were actually farmers, unaffiliated with any terrorist group. And they described the event as a tragedy that left two innocent civilians and five of their children dead.

Both sides agree that when the dust settled, U.S. troops pulled the badly injured infant from the rubble. The baby had a fractured skull, broken leg and serious burns.

She was about 2 months old.

Mast called the baby a "victim of terrorism." His attorney said she "miraculously survived."

## "DO THE RIGHT THING"

The baby was rushed to a military hospital, where she was placed in the care of the Defense Department.

The International Committee of the Red Cross told AP that they began searching for her family with the Afghan government, often a plodding process in rural parts of the country where record-keeping is scant. At first, they didn't even know the baby's name.

Meanwhile, Mast said, he was "aggressively" advocating to get her to the U.S. Over several months, he wrote to then-Vice President Mike Pence's office, according to exhibits filed in court. He said his colleagues in the military tried to talk to President Donald Trump about the baby during a Thanksgiving visit to Bagram Airfield. Mast also said he made four requests over two weeks to then-White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, asking for help to medically evacuate the baby "to be treated in a safe environment."

The Masts were represented by Joshua's brother Richard Mast, an attorney with the conservative Christian legal group Liberty Counsel, which says it is not involved in this case. None of the Masts responded to repeated requests for interviews.

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In emails to military officials, Mast alleged that Pence told the U.S. Embassy in Kabul to "make every effort" to get her to the United States. Mast signed his emails with a Bible verse: "Live for an Audience of one, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

Pence's spokesman, Marc Short, did not respond to requests for comment.

The U.S. Embassy never heard from Pence's office, said a Department of State official, who requested anonymity because they did not have permission to speak publicly about the situation. But they did begin getting highly unusual inquiries about the possibility of sending the baby to the U.S. The diplomats were rattled by the suggestion that the U.S. could just take her away; they believed the baby belonged to Afghanistan.

"I was aware that it may not be smooth sailing ahead, but that just made me more determined to do the right thing," the State Department official said.

About six weeks after the baby was rescued, the U.S. Embassy called for a meeting, attended by representatives of the Red Cross, the Afghan government and the American military, including Mast. The State Department wanted to make sure everyone understood its position: Under international humanitarian law, the U.S. was obliged to do everything possible to reunite the baby with her next of kin.

At the meeting, Mast asked about adoption, the State Department official said. Attendees from Afghanistan's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs explained that by Afghan law and custom, they had to place the baby with her biological family. If that did not work, the Afghan Children's Court would determine a proper guardian.

The American concept of adoption doesn't even exist in Afghanistan. Under Islamic law, a child's bloodline cannot be severed and their heritage is sacred. Instead of adoption, a guardianship system called kafala allows Muslims to take in orphans and raise them as family, without relinquishing the child's name or bloodline.

American adoptions from Afghanistan are rare and only possible for Muslim-American families of Afghan descent. The State Department recognizes 14 American adoptions from Afghanistan over the past decade, none in the past two years.

Yet two days after the embassy meeting, a letter was sent to U.S. officials in Kabul from Kimberley Motley, a near-celebrity American attorney in Afghanistan, the State Department official said. Motley wrote that she was representing an unnamed concerned American citizen who wished to adopt this baby. Motley declined to be interviewed by the AP.

Mast also continued his appeals to American politicians. The U.S. Embassy began hearing from Congressional staffers about the baby, and diplomats met with a military general, the official said.

The general in turn put a "gag order" on military personnel about the baby and said "no one was to advocate on her behalf," Mast wrote in a legal filing.

But he wasn't ready to give up.

## HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD

The Masts searched for a solution halfway around the world — in rural Fluvanna County, Virginia, where they lived.

They petitioned the local Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, describing the baby as a "stateless minor recovered off the battlefield." In early November 2019, a judge granted them legal custody. The name of this judge is not publicly available because juvenile records are sealed in Virginia.

A few days later, a certificate of foreign birth listed Joshua and Stephanie Mast as parents.

The custody order was based on the Masts' assertion that the Afghan government — specifically now-deposed President Ashraf Ghani — intended to waive jurisdiction over the child "in a matter of days," according to a hearing transcript. The waiver never arrived.

In an email to AP, Ghani's former deputy chief of staff Suhrob Ahmad said there is "no record of this alleged statement of waiver of Afghan jurisdiction." Ahmad said he and the head of the Administrative Office of the President do not remember any such request going through the court system as required.

The U.S. Embassy heard that Mast was granted custody. Military lawyers assured them that the Marine

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was just preparing in case Afghanistan waived jurisdiction, but would not interfere with the search for the baby's family, according to the State Department official.

Yet all along they planned to adopt the baby, according to records obtained from the state of Virginia under a Freedom of Information Act request. Richard Mast wrote the Attorney General's office in November 2019 that the Masts "will file for adoption as soon as statutorily possible."

In the meantime, Joshua Mast enrolled the baby in the Defense Department health care system, made an appointment at a U.S. International Adoption Clinic and asked to have her evacuated.

Then came a surprise: The Red Cross said they'd found her family. She was about five months old.

In late 2019, Afghan officials told the U.S. Embassy that the baby's paternal uncle had been identified, and he decided his son and daughter-in-law were best suited to take her, according to court records. They were young, educated newlyweds with no children yet of their own, and lived in a city with access to hospitals.

The young man worked in a medical office and ran a co-ed school, which is unusual in Afghanistan. His wife graduated from high school at the top of her class, and is fluent in three languages, including English. They had married for love, unlike many Afghans in arranged marriages.

Mast expressed doubts about the newly-found uncle, describing him in court records as "an anonymous person of unknown nationality" and claiming that turning the baby over to him was "inherently dangerous." He asked the Red Cross to put him in touch, but they refused.

In emails to a U.S. military office requesting evacuation, Mast alleged that he read more than 150 pages of classified documents, and concluded the child was a "stateless minor." Mast believed she was the daughter of transient terrorists who are citizens of no country, his attorney said. He also speculated that if reunited with her family, she could be made a child soldier or a suicide bomber, sold into sex trafficking, hit in a U.S. military strike, or stoned for being a girl.

But Afghanistan did not waver: the child was a citizen of their country.

Mast's attorney sent the U.S. Embassy a "cease and desist" letter warning them not to hand the baby over, according to the State Department official. But on February 26, 2020, the Masts learned that the U.S. was preparing to put the baby, now nearly 8 months old, on a plane early the following morning to join her family in another Afghan city.

The Masts, represented by Richard Mast, sued the secretaries of Defense and State in a federal court in Virginia, asking for an emergency restraining order to stop them. The Masts claimed they were the baby's "lawful permanent legal guardians."

Within hours, four federal attorneys — two from the Justice Department and two from the U.S. Attorney's Office — were on the phone, and Richard Mast was in Federal Judge Norman Moon's office.

Richard Mast said the baby should not be "condemned to suffer." He complained that the Afghan government had not conducted DNA testing to confirm the family they found was truly related to the child.

But the Justice Department attorneys said they had no right to mandate how the Afghan government vets the family, and that the Red Cross — which has reunited relatives in war zones for more than a century — had confirmed it was done properly. Further, the federal government's attorneys described the Masts' custody documents from state court as "unlawful," "deeply flawed and incorrect," and "issued on a false premise that has never happened" — that Afghanistan would waive jurisdiction.

Judge Moon asked Richard Mast: "Your client is not asking to adopt the child?"

"No sir," Mast responded. "He wants to get her medical treatment in the United States."

Justice Department attorneys argued that the United States must meet its international obligations. Attorney Alexander Haas put it simply: Taking another country's citizen to the United States "would have potentially profound implications on our military and foreign affairs interests."

Judge Moon ruled against the Masts, and the baby stayed in Afghanistan.

The next day, she was united with her biological family. The Afghan couple wept with joy.

"We didn't think she would come back to her family alive," said the young Afghan man. "It was the best day of our lives. After a long time, she had a chance to have a family again."



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## AN EXTRA MEASURE OF TENDERNESS

As the months passed in her new home in Afghanistan, the girl loved getting henna painted on her hands and dressing up in new clothes, the Afghan couple said. She always wanted to do her new mother's makeup, or brush her hair.

"She knew about Allah, about clothes, about the names of food," the woman wrote.

The couple cared for her as if she was their own daughter, but with an extra measure of tenderness because of the unimaginable tragedy she'd already suffered.

"We never wanted her to feel she couldn't have something she wanted," said the young man.

Meanwhile, Mast continued to worry that the child was "in an objectively dangerous situation," Richard Mast wrote in court documents. The Masts asked Kimberley Motley, the attorney, to track down the family, saying he wanted to get the child medical treatment in the U.S, Motley said in court records.

Motley contacted the Afghan family in March 2020, about a week after the baby was placed in her new home. Motley is named as a defendant in their lawsuit, but her attorney, Michael Hoernlein, told AP the claims against her are "meritless." In court documents, Motley's attorneys describe her role as professional and above-board, and asked that the claims against her be dismissed.

Motley had originally gone to Afghanistan in 2008 under an American-funded initiative to train local lawyers. She stayed, largely representing foreigners charged with crimes. She took on high-profile human rights cases, gave a TED Talk and wrote a book.

Over the course of a year, Motley called for updates about the child and occasionally asked for photos. In July, around the baby's first birthday, the couple sent Motley a snapshot of the child in swim trunks, smiling and splashing in a wading pool.

At the same time, the Masts' adoption case was still winding through the court system in Fluvanna County, Virginia. In December 2020, the state court granted the Masts a final adoption order based on the finding that the child "remains up to this point in time an orphaned, undocumented, stateless minor," according to a federal lawsuit. Fluvanna County Circuit Court Presiding Judge Richard E. Moore did not respond to repeated requests for clarity on how the cases progressed.

International adoption lawyers were baffled.

"If you have relatives there who are saying, 'no, no, no, we want our daughter, we want our little girl,' it's over," said Irene Steffas, an adoption and immigration attorney. "There is no way the U.S. is going to get into a match with another country when it comes to a child that's a citizen of that country."

Karen Law, a Virginia attorney who specializes in international adoption, said state law requires an accredited agency to visit three times over six months and compile a report before an adoption can be finalized. The child must be present for the visits — but this baby was thousands of miles away.

On July 10, 2021, around the baby's second birthday, Motley facilitated the first phone call between the Afghan couple and Joshua Mast, with the aid translator Ahmad Osmani, a Baptist pastor of Afghan descent. Mast told the Afghan couple that unless they sent the child to the United States for medical care, she could "be blind, brain damaged, and/or permanently physically disabled."

But the Afghan man now raising her, who had worked in the medical field, did not think her burn scars, a leg injury and mysterious allergic reactions amounted to a life-altering condition in the way Mast described. The couple declined sending the baby to the United States.

The woman was pregnant, and worried about the risk of such a long flight. They said they asked Mast: Could they take the baby to Pakistan or India for treatment instead?

The answer was no, their lawsuit says. The conversations continued for months. Osmani, the translator, vouched for the Masts and described them as kind and trustworthy, according to the lawsuit, which names him as a defendant.

Osmani did not respond to requests for comment. He asked a federal judge to throw out the lawsuit, and said he never deceived anyone. He was only a "mere translator."

His attorneys wrote: "No good deed goes unpunished."

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## "LIVING IN A DARK JAIL"

In late summer 2021, the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan. Mast said he contacted the family to bring the baby to the U.S. "before the country collapsed." He said he was "extremely concerned that they may not get another chance." The couple agreed.

Mast applied for special visas for the Afghan family and for relatives of Osmani, the translator, according to court records. They characterized the Afghan couple as an escort for a "U.S. military dependent" — the baby.

In an email to U.S. officials filed in court, Mast wrote that Osmani was "very instrumental to helping a U.S. Marine...adopt an Afghan child."

Soon, the Afghan family began their days-long journey to the U.S. Joshua Mast told them to say he was their lawyer.

"If anyone asks to talk about your documents, show them this text: I am Major Joshua Mast, USMC. I am a Judge Advocate..." Mast texted them detailed directions for how to deal with U.S. authorities, their lawsuit says.

When the family arrived in Germany for a stopover, Joshua Mast and his wife greeted them at the air force base. It was the first time they had met in person.

In Germany, the Masts visited the Afghan family's room three times to try to get the baby to travel separately with them, "insisting that it would be easier for the toddler to enter the United States that way," the Afghan couple recalled in their lawsuit. They refused to let the girl out of their sight.

When the Afghans finally landed in the United States, they began explaining that the child was too young to have Afghan documents. That's when they claim Joshua Mast pulled out an Afghan passport.

Inside was the same photo of the child in the wading pool, but altered to change the background, add a shirt and smooth her hair. Mast told the Afghans to "keep quiet" about having his name on her passport, their lawsuit alleges, so it would be easier to get medical care.

The Afghan couple asked to be taken to Fort Pickett Army National Guard base, a location specified by Mast, according to the lawsuit. Thousands of Afghan refugees were temporarily housed there.

Soon after, they said, soldiers came to their room and told them they were moving. A strange woman sat in the back of the van next to a car seat, according to court records, and the baby fussed as she buckled her in.

The van pulled up to a building they didn't recognize, where a woman who called herself a social worker said the Masts were the girl's legal guardians. Confused and frightened, the child cried and the couple begged.

But it did no good. Mast took the baby to his car, where his wife was waiting, the lawsuit says.

They had lost her.

In their heavily redacted response to the lawsuit, the Masts acknowledge they "took custody" of the child; they said their adoption order was valid and they did nothing wrong.

Richard Mast is also named as a defendant in the Afghan family's lawsuit. He wrote in legal documents that his brother's adoption of the child was "selfless;" it saved both the child, and the Afghan family fighting to get her back, "from the evils of life under the Taliban."

The Afghan couple believed that their baby was stolen, and they immediately sought help at Fort Pickett to get her back.

"But the playing field was not level," their attorney, Ashai, told the AP. The couple "were forced to navigate a complex and confusing system in a foreign country in which they had just arrived, after having survived the greatest trauma of their lives."

Meanwhile, the couple says in court documents, Osmani warned them not to contact a lawyer or the authorities, and suggested that Mast might give them the baby back if they dealt directly with him.

And so they tried to maintain contact with Mast. They were also scared of him. If he could abduct their child in broad daylight, they worried he might hurt them too, their lawyers wrote in legal filings.

The Afghan woman plunged into a deep depression and, despite being nine months pregnant, stopped

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eating and drinking. She could not sleep. Her husband was afraid to leave her alone.

"Since we have come to America, we have not felt happiness for even one day," the Afghan man told the AP. "We feel like we are living in a dark jail."

His wife gave birth to a girl on October 1, 2021. The young mother's grief became overwhelming. A month later, she considered suicide and was hospitalized.

Soon the couple sought legal help; by December 2021, the Afghan couple had asked the Fluvanna judge to reverse the adoption. But those proceedings, almost one year in, have been opaque and slow.

On Feb. 27, 2022, when the Afghan baby was 2 ½ years old, the Masts traveled to the Mennonite Christian Assembly in Fredericksburg, Ohio, to share their joy during a special church service. In a video advertising the event called "Walking in Faith," the pastor apologized to congregants that it would not be online, because the Marine would share "very confidential, classified information."

"Unforeseen events gave the couple an unexpected opportunity to stand up to protect innocent life," read the program flyer. "Come hear how God's mighty hand allowed for a remarkable deliverance."

Pastor John Risner told the AP that the Masts had requested the service be confidential, and he didn't want to betray their trust by disclosing any details.

All he would say is that their story is "amazing."

## NO HAPPINESS HERE

The fate of the Afghan child is now being debated in secret proceedings in a locked courtroom in the village of Palmyra, Virginia, home to about 100 people.

Earlier this month, Joshua Mast arrived at the Fluvanna County courthouse along with his wife and his brother Richard. Mast was dressed in his starched Marine uniform, holding his white and gold hat in his hand. The hearing stretched on for roughly eight hours.

The proceedings have been completely shielded from public view, mandated by presiding Judge Moore. The AP was not allowed inside the courtroom. Court clerk Tristana Treadway refused to provide even the docket number, saying she could "neither confirm nor deny" the case existed at all.

More than a dozen lawyers streamed into the courthouse, carting boxes of evidence, and each said they were forbidden from speaking.

Mast remains an active duty Marine, and has since been promoted to major. He now lives with his family in North Carolina. The Afghan toddler has been with them for more than a year.

In Texas, the Afghan couple continues to grieve the loss of the child. The baby the woman gave birth to shortly after arriving in the U.S. just turned 1. The young mother had planned to raise the girls as sisters.

But they've never met.

"There is nothing to celebrate without her. There is no happiness here," the Afghan man said. "We are counting the moments and days until she will come home."

## Ukraine's utilities threatened by Russia in war's new phase

By SABRA AYRES Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — When a missile struck a power station less than a mile from his apartment on the outskirts of Kyiv, Oleksander Maystrenko didn't panic, run to a bomb shelter or consider evacuating, even though he lives close to what suddenly has become the Russian military's main target in the war: anything related to Ukraine's vital infrastructure.

His neighbors also haven't budged, despite the fact that Tuesday's attack — marked by a loud explosion — killed three people, severely damaged two facilities inside the plant's compound and temporarily knocked out power to about 50,000 households, according to Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko.

"We aren't afraid because we aren't just prepared logistically; we are morally prepared," Maystrenko said outside his apartment building, where he and two neighbors sat on a bench and smoked only hours after the attack.

This is what the latest phase of Russia's nearly 8-month-old war in Ukraine looks like. Moscow has

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openly declared its intention to increasingly strike power stations, waterworks and other key infrastructure. One Ukrainian energy official said Wednesday that 40% of the country's electric power system had been severely damaged, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russian forces have destroyed 30% of Ukraine's power stations since Oct. 10.

But Maystrenko and his neighbors say they are prepared.

If the Russians knock out the power, there are stocks of flashlights and candles, he said. If there's no gas for stoves, he has a plan to build a rudimentary stove in front of the building's entrance and use firewood that has been collected to heat it. Water has been bottled and jars of pickled vegetables and canned goods have been safely stored.

Everyone knows to have plenty of blankets and warm clothes for the winter, he added.

"It's never been a secret that this power plant is a target, but we've been preparing since this war started," Maystrenko said. The preparations have created a sense of community as well as a united front among neighbors, who once knew each other only in passing and are now face a common enemy, he said.

The attacks have come at a critical time, with winter approaching. Klitschko said that Thursday marks the start of the heating season for Kyiv, which like most urban centers in Ukraine and even Russia uses a Soviet-era central system controlled by the city that provides heat for apartment buildings and businesses.

Following a meeting between Zelenskyy, government ministers, members of energy enterprises and some local officials, presidential adviser Kyrylo Tymoshenko said there would be power supply restrictions across Ukraine from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. beginning Thursday, along with the use of street lights being limited in some cities..

"Please take this seriously," Tymoshenko said on his Telegram channel. "This applies to residents of ALL regions of the country. ... These are forced steps. Therefore, we all work together on our front!"

One area where power and water were reported knocked out by shelling was Enerhodar, the southern city is next to the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, one of the war's most worrisome flashpoints. Missiles also severely damaged an energy facility near Zelenskyy's hometown of Kryvyi Rih in south-central Ukraine, cutting power to villages, towns and to one city district, the regional governor said.

Using energy supplies as a weapon isn't a new tactic for the Kremlin, particularly when it comes to Ukraine.

"Energy was always quite a holy cow for the Russians, and they claim that by controlling energy they can control the country," said Hanna Shelest, the director of security programs at Foreign Policy Council Ukrainian Prism, based in Kyiv.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who declared martial law in four illegally annexed regions of Ukraine, has used his ability to turn off the gas that passes through the country's extensive, Soviet-era pipeline as leverage. His tactic has been used not just against the government in Kyiv, but also against energy-dependent nations in Europe, who built pipelines via the Baltic Sea for Russian gas.

Under its new strategy, the Russian military hopes to destroy enough of Ukraine's infrastructure to make life so intolerable that residents will blame their own government, Shelest said.

Putin has called Ukraine a failed state and a historical part of Russia. In trying to make Ukrainians suffer, he hopes they will believe him, she said.

"What we see now is that it is definitely not working so well," Shelest said, adding that Ukrainians are increasingly directing their rage at Putin.

Zelenskyy's admission that Russia had knocked out nearly a third of Ukraine's power stations was noteworthy, said Mason Clark, an analyst at the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War.

"If the Russians can keep up that sustained damage, and the Ukrainians can't repair it, that could actually start to have an effect," he said.

Clark said he didn't believe Russia would be able to affect the Ukrainian population's overwhelming support for their military in taking back the territory seized by Moscow.

Recent attacks by what Kyiv describes as Iranian-supplied drones and missiles against civilian housing and other nonmilitary targets "seem to be just terror attacks, essentially to try to intimidate the Ukrainian population," he said.

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Russia has used such scare tactics throughout the war out of “a misguided belief that they will be able to force the Ukrainians to surrender and force negotiations,” Clark said.

From a military sense, Russia’s use of the Iranian-supplied drones and Kalibr and Iskander cruise missiles against Ukrainian infrastructure is a “very poor use of limited-precision munitions,” Clark said.

The Russians are struggling with dwindling supplies of these high-end weapons, he said, adding that a more strategic move would be to save them for the battlefield, because Ukraine’s air defenses have succeeded in intercepting and shooting down many of the drones.

“It’s a waste by the Russians of very expensive and limited systems in an attempt to likely achieve a terror effect that isn’t going to sway the Ukrainian government or population,” Clark said.

Repairing infrastructure often falls to local administrations to handle. The port city of Odesa in southern Ukraine designated crews to help neighboring Mykolaiv, which has been under Russian bombardment for weeks.

In the Kharkiv region, government official Roman Semenukha said Sunday that while repairs to heating systems were underway around the recently liberated city of Kupiansk, it’s a slow process that first must restore electricity, gas and water.

“I want to emphasize that private households will be connected to the gas supply, but the situation with high-rise buildings is a bit more complicated, for various reasons,” said Andrii Besedin, an adviser to the head of the Kharkiv military administration.

Regional authorities in Kharkiv also are assessing the need for firewood, Besedin said, adding that warming shelters will be set up and authorities would offer to evacuate those who want to leave for the winter.

“Those who wish to do so (will move) to safe areas, where there are all communications. We will work every day to restore the critical infrastructure of these networks,” he said.

## Fleeing Xi’s China, journalist makes fresh start abroad

By DAKE KANG Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Investigative journalist Wang Zhi’an once exposed corruption, land seizures, and medical malpractice in China, with millions of viewers and a powerful platform: state broadcaster CCTV.

Wang now lives alone in central Tokyo after being blacklisted in his homeland. His journey from on-air personality at the heart of China’s vast state media apparatus to reporter in exile illustrates how even government-backed critical reporting has been curtailed under Xi Jinping, China’s most authoritarian leader since Mao Zedong.

Unlike many muckrakers, Wang hasn’t given up. Deep in debt and armed with little more than a laptop, a tripod, and a camera borrowed from a friend, Wang is back in business — this time on YouTube and Twitter, both banned in China.

“Here I can tell the truth, and nobody will restrict me anymore,” Wang said, sitting in his Tokyo studio, a living room in his modest three-story walk-up.

Thousands of delegates are congregating in Beijing this week to reaffirm Xi as leader of the ruling Communist Party for a third term, at the country’s most important political meeting in a decade. Fearing arrest, Wang said he won’t return until Xi is out of power.

“He demands absolute obedience,” Wang said. “The media has become like the army: a tool that pledges unconditional allegiance to the party.”

Under Xi, China’s once feisty reporters have fallen in line. The Communist Party’s propaganda arm has taken direct control of agencies managing newspapers, broadcasters, and radio stations. A powerful new agency has silenced critical voices on the internet, creating a vast censorship apparatus powered by thousands of censors.

Privately, many Chinese journalists say Xi has quashed independent reporting. Publicly, they stay silent. Xi’s very name is mouthed carefully, in scripted lines, whispers or pseudonyms.

“The change these past 10 years has been dramatic,” said Zhan Jiang, a retired professor of journalism at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

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Wang never imagined a life outside China. A native of mountainous Shaanxi province, Wang joined CCTV in 1998 after obtaining a master's in history.

At the time, Chinese media was on the cusp of what Wang calls a "golden age." Investigative journalism flourished under then-leader Jiang Zemin, who talked Tibet and Taiwan with Western journalists, and Zhu Rongji, a tough, reform-minded premier who battled corruption.

It nurtured hopes of reform in China's one-party state — more like Singapore than the former Soviet Union, with some space for free discussion.

"Just because China is under the leadership of the Communist Party doesn't mean it can't have an active media," said Zhan, the retired professor.

At CCTV, Wang was first a producer, then commentator, before he moved to investigations in 2011.

There, he developed a reputation as a tough, experienced journalist, two former CCTV employees said, though they added his critical tendencies could make him difficult to work with. They declined to be named to speak candidly about Wang.

Soon after, Xi took power in 2012. At first, Wang looked forward to the new leadership. With the country's economic boom, officials raked in millions in brazen backdoor deals, their sons and daughters flashing Rolexes and racing Ferraris across Beijing's flyovers.

Xi promised to change all that, vowing to crush corruption. He visited a humble bun shop, portraying himself as a man of the people.

The crackdown came. Banquets were banned, red carpets rolled up, and thousands of officials arrested.

But as Xi consolidated power, signs of trouble started emerging at CCTV. Controls tightened. One by one, top reporters trickled out.

Then, in 2016, Xi visited CCTV and other state media.

"Party media should be surnamed the party," he declared, urging loyalty to the Communist Party above all else.

"We knew then there would be earth-shattering changes," Wang said.

Though Xi was combating corruption, instead of wielding transparency and the rule of law, Xi empowered a secretive organ of the party to detain officials instead.

"Xi doesn't think the media should be a watchdog," Wang said. "He thinks they just need to be propaganda organs."

The final straw, he said, was when an investigation he worked on for months was killed.

It was an expose of Beijing's ambulance dispatch system. Through backdoor connections, Wang found, an official had set up a parallel network that whisked patients to a second-rate clinic in Beijing's far north, generating revenue for hospital management but causing life-threatening delays.

But days before Wang's story went to air, the party's Central Propaganda Department said it was canning the story. Infuriated, Wang stopped coming to work, then resigned.

It wasn't just CCTV. Across China, thousands of journalists quit the industry.

At Caixin, a respected financial magazine, the politically connected editor-in-chief stepped aside. At the Beijing Daily News, a tabloid with a rebellious streak, the publisher stepped down and was later detained. At Southern Weekly, a revered liberal broadsheet, propaganda officials tangled with reporters.

Wang tried to continue. He switched outlets, hosting an interview show online that garnered tens of millions of views. But in June 2019, Wang's social media accounts were suddenly deleted, depriving him of millions of followers.

Overnight, Wang was politically toxic. His new outlet, once eager to capitalize on his star power, backed out of renewing his contract.

For a couple of years, Wang mulled what to do. The pandemic left him stranded during a visit to Japan, and when he returned to Beijing late last year, he heard he wouldn't be able to work in media again. If he wanted to stay in China, Wang realized, he'd have to quit the job he loved.

Wang made his choice: He bought a one-way ticket back to Japan.

"I can't go on in China," Wang said. "If I became a public relations director, it'd be a betrayal of my career."

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Now, Wang is teaching himself Japanese. He has learned how to edit video on his own and operate on a shoestring budget.

Since he started broadcasting in May, he has attracted many viewers, with nearly half a million followers on Twitter and 400,000 subscribers on YouTube. Though both are banned in China, Wang hopes his reports will trickle over China's Great Firewall and into the country.

His aim, Wang said, is fact-based news for mainland Chinese, one that stands apart from conspiracy-laden competitors driven by hatred of the government.

"Nobody believes a serious Chinese outlet can be established overseas," he said. "But I want to give it a try. I think it's very important for the whole Chinese-speaking world."

In July, he spent hundreds of thousands of dollars hiring a crew and flying to Ukraine. Wang said he wanted to bring frontline reporting to a Chinese audience – pointing out that only one channel viewable in mainland China sent reporters to the war.

The result, he said, was that China's coverage of the war was saturated with Russian misinformation.

"Such a large country with only one source of information on such a huge event," Wang said. "That's very sad."

Wang has plenty of detractors. Nationalists brand Wang a "traitor" online, questioning why he lives in Japan and accusing him of peddling "anti-China" content. On the other extreme, anti-Beijing activists suspect Wang's motives, pointing out he spent decades inside state media toeing the party line.

Zhang Dongshuo, a lawyer in Beijing, said he appreciates Wang's channel, tuning in occasionally to get news unavailable on state media. But Zhang added that Wang's lack of access has made his reports duller, and the difficulties of scaling China's firewall has shrunk his audience.

"It's going to be tough," Zhang said. "He's in an awkward situation."

Still, outside of Xi's China, Wang hopes there's space for someone like him. He narrates the news, talking China's "zero-COVID" policy and the recent party congress, peppered with observations drawn on his experience inside the system.

At times, he cuts in with commentary.

"We'll have to wait till the day journalists can truly express themselves freely," Wang said, signing off on a recent broadcast. "I hope that day comes soon."

## Cardi B battles with lawyer in racy mixtape artwork case

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP) — A heated exchange between rapper Cardi B and the lawyer for a man suing her for copyright infringement got so intense Wednesday that the judge briefly stopped the trial.

The Grammy winner delivered pointed answers to several questions by attorney A. Barry Cappello, who is representing a man who claims the rapper misused his likeness on the cover of a 2016 mixtape.

The testy back-and-forth between the Cappello and the star witness prompted U.S. District Judge Cormac Carney to send jurors out of the Santa Ana, California courtroom and tell both sides he was considering a mistrial. After a break, he called the arguing "unprofessional" and "not productive" but allowed questioning to resume – placing new restrictions for both sides.

Kevin Michael Brophy is seeking \$5 million from Cardi B over the appearance of some of his distinctive back tattoos on the mixtape's artwork, which shows a tattooed man from behind with his head between the rapper's legs.

The rapper said she felt Brophy hadn't suffered any consequences as a result of the artwork, yet has harassed her legally for five years. At one point she said she missed a special moment with her youngest child, who recently turned 1-year-old.

"I have empathy for people," she said. "I care about people. I feel like I'm being taken advantage of. I missed my child's first step by being here."

Brophy told jurors Tuesday that he felt "humiliated" by the racy artwork.

At one point, Cardi B pointed out that the man's face cannot be seen in the artwork. Capello asked her

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to calm down, but she instead barked back at the lawyer's contention that she knew about photo-editing software used to put Brophy's tattoos – which have been featured in magazines – on another model's body.

"It's not your client's back," she said about the image, which features a Black model. Brophy is white. The rapper said she posted a photo of the "famous Canadian model" on her social media.

Cardi B, whose real name is Belcalis Almanzar, said an artist used only a "small portion" of the tattoos without her knowledge. She had previously said the cover art – created by Timm Gooden — was transformative fair use of Brophy's likeness.

Cappello said Gooden was paid \$50 to create a design but was then told to find another tattoo after he turned in an initial draft. He said Gooden googled "back tattoos" before he found an image and pasted it on the cover.

Cardi B's lawyer, Peter Anderson, said Brophy and the mixtape image are unrelated, noting the model did not have neck tattoos, which Brophy does.

"It's not him," the rapper said. "To me, it doesn't look like his back at all. The tattoo was modified, which is protected by the First Amendment."

She said the image hasn't hindered Brophy's employment with a popular surf and skate apparel brand or his ability to travel the world for opportunities.

"He hasn't gotten fired from his job," said Cardi B, who implied that the mixtape was not a lucrative one for her. "He hasn't gotten a divorce. How has he suffered? He's still in a surf shop at his job. Please tell me how he's suffered."

Brophy, a self-described family man, said he sent a cease-and-desist letter to Cardi B's representatives to remove the image, but he never received a response. The rapper said she hadn't seen the letter.

At one point, Cardi B said she doesn't check her mailbox because that's for "old people" – leading some in the courtroom to chuckle.

When Cardi B left the courthouse, she was swarmed by around 30 high schoolers who were attempting to take selfies with her. As the rapper walked toward her vehicle with security, she smiled and waved before telling them she would be more responsive after the trial.

Last month, Cardi B pleaded guilty to a criminal case stemming from a pair of brawls at New York City strip clubs that required her to perform 15 days of community service. Earlier this year, the rapper was awarded \$1.25 million in a defamation lawsuit against a celebrity news blogger who posted videos falsely stating she used cocaine, had contracted herpes and engaged in prostitution.

## Mysterious breeding habits of aquarium fish vex experts

By VICTORIA MILKO and MARSHALL RITZEL Associated Press

PENYABANGAN, Indonesia (AP) — It took a broken air conditioner for Tom Bowling to figure out — after nearly eight months of failure — how to breed the coveted pink-yellow tropical fish known as blotched anthias.

Bowling, an ornamental fish breeder based in Palau, had kept the fish in cool water, trying to replicate the temperatures the deep-water creatures are usually found in. But when the air conditioner broke the water temperature rose by a few degrees overnight -- with surprising results. "They started spawning — they went crazy, laying eggs everywhere," said Bowling.

Experts around the world tinker over water temperature, futz with lights, and try various mixes of microscopic food particles in hopes of happening upon the particular and peculiar set of conditions that will inspire ornamental fish to breed. Experts hope to steer the aquarium fish trade away from wild-caught fish, which are often caught with poisons that can hurt coral ecosystems.

PROPER AMBIANCE REQUIRED

Most of the millions of glittering fish that dart around saltwater aquariums in the U.S., Europe, China and elsewhere are taken from coral reefs in the Philippines, Indonesia and other tropical countries.

Trappers often stun them using chemicals like cyanide. They are then transferred to middlemen and then flown across the globe, ending up in aquariums in homes, malls, restaurants and medical offices. Experts



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estimate “large percentages” die on the way.

Part of the problem: only about 4% of saltwater aquarium fish can be bred in captivity, largely because many have elaborate reproductive cycles and delicate early life stages that require sometimes mysterious conditions that scientists and breeders struggle to reproduce.

For decades experts have been working to unlock the secrets of marine fish breeding. Breakthroughs don't come quickly, said Paul Andersen, head of the Coral Reef Aquarium Fisheries Campaign, which works to support sustainable coral reef aquarium fisheries.

“It requires years of investment, research and development, oftentimes to make incremental steps,” he said. And then even longer, he said, to bring newly captive-bred species to market.

The Moorish idol, a black-and-yellow striped fish with a mane-like dorsal fin spine, requires lots of space. Squiggle-striped green mandarins prefer to spawn just before the sun sets, requiring very particular lighting cycles to breed in captivity. As Bowling discovered in Palau, blotched anthias require very specific temperatures.

“You've got to pay attention to all the parameters that will make a fish happy,” said Andersen. “Some species are really gentle, delicate and sensitive to these kinds of things.”

## FRAGILE EARLY DAYS

After fish spawn, breeders often find themselves facing the most challenging part of the process: the larval period, which is the time just after the fish hatches, before it develops into a juvenile. The flow of water has to be just right, but they are so fragile they have to be protected from filters and even tank walls.

The first feeding is also crucial, said Andrew Rhyne, a marine biology professor at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island. During the first days many larval fish don't have eyes or mouths, instead living off their yolk.

“When they finally do form eyes or mouths it's so important to have created an environment that allows them to get a first bite of zooplankton so they can get a little stronger and continue to grow,” said Rhyne. “That's kind of been the magic for all of this.”

Often that first bite is a critical part of the ocean food system that harbors its own mysteries: called copepods, they are microscopic crustaceans that provide vital nutrients to larval fish and are key for breeders around the world.

At the University of Florida Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory in Ruskin — where the blue tang “Dory” fish popularized by the movie Finding Nemo was successfully bred for the first time — associate professor Matt DiMaggio and his students have been working to produce copepods. But even the copepods haven't proven to be difficult to raise.

Mort than 10,000 miles away from the Florida lab, on the tropical northern coast of Bali, Indonesia, renowned fish breeder Wen-Ping Su walks between large cement fish tanks, his own zooplankton recipe churning in a circular tank nearby.

Su said he has 10 different keys to success that he's been developing for nearly two decades. Those keys have enabled him to breed fish that no one else has, including striped regal angelfish and frilly black-bodied, orange-rimmed pinnatus batfish.

## VALUABLE SECRETS

But asking Wen-Ping Su if he'll share details, his answer comes quickly, with his hands crossing to form an X in front of his big smile: “No.”

It's the same sentiment echoed by Bowling, who pauses when asked about sharing the secrets to his most high-profile successes. “That's the part I really don't want to tell you,” he laughs.

Those secrets are their livelihoods. The blotched anthias Bowling bred after the broken air conditioner are listed for \$700 on his company's website. Fish bred by Su also sell for hundreds of dollars online.

But in the past five years there are some organizations — such as Rising Tide Conservation, a non-governmental organization dedicated to developing and promoting aquaculture — that have worked to promote information sharing, said DiMaggio.

“That's helped to accelerate the number of species that we've been able to raise in during that time and the variety of species too,” he said, highlighting species such as wrasses, butterflyfish and tangs.

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Rhyne's research lab — which includes breeding toothy queen triggerfish and red-striped yasha gobies— has been working to share his research with breeders as well.

But Rhyne and other breeders concede that it's unlikely all aquarium fish will be raised in captivity because some are just too difficult, while others are so abundant in nature.

And breeding a fish doesn't guarantee it will make it to or do well on the market, said Rhyne. Captive bred fish cost more, and experts in the fish industry recognize that it will take time to convince consumers should pay more for them.

"How do we market aquaculture fish the way that we market organic foods, you know, and demand that premium price point?" said Andersen, from the Coral Reef Aquarium Fisheries Campaign. "The marketing is really important."

## **Pandas sent by China arrive in Qatar ahead of World Cup**

AL KHOR, Qatar (AP) — A pair of giant pandas sent as a gift from China arrived in Qatar on Wednesday ahead of next month's World Cup.

They will take up residence in an indoor enclosure in the desert nation designed to duplicate conditions in the dense forests of China's mountainous Sichuan province. Eight hundred kilograms (nearly 1,800 pounds) of fresh bamboo will be flown in each week to feed them.

Jing Jing, a 4-year-old male weighing 120 kilograms (265 pounds), has been given the Arabic name Suhail, and 3-year-old female Si Hai, at 70 kilograms (154 pounds), has been given the Arabic name Thuraya.

The pandas will quarantine for at least 21 days before visitors will be allowed to see them.

Qatar is expecting some 1.2 million visitors for the monthlong World Cup beginning Nov. 20. The gas-rich Gulf nation will be the first Muslim or Arab country to host the world's biggest sporting event.

Tim Bouts, the director of Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation, said that in addition to providing the perfect indoor climate for the pandas, the enclosure will also shield them from stressful noises while allowing them to interact with visitors.

"There was a lot of thinking which went into this building to make it, I think, the best building for pandas in the world," he said.

Pandas, which reproduce rarely in the wild and rely on a diet of bamboo in the mountains of western China, remain among the world's most threatened species. An estimated 1,800 pandas live in the wild, while another 500 are in zoos or reserves, mostly in Sichuan.

They are the unofficial national mascot of China, which has gifted pandas to 20 countries.

China's ambassador to Qatar, Zhou Jian, said the two pandas "will live a happy life here and bring more happiness, joy and a love to the people of Qatar and in this world."

## **Verlander Ks 11 to lead Astros over Yankees 4-2 in ALCS**

By KRISTIE RIEKEN AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — When Justin Verlander was laboring and needed 45 pitches to get through two innings, Astros manager Dusty Baker was worried he'd have to go to his bullpen early.

Instead, the veteran ace buckled down and found a groove, striking out 11 in six strong innings to lead Houston over the New York Yankees 4-2 in their AL Championship Series opener Wednesday night.

"This guy, he has mental toughness," Baker said. "When he's down and out and it looks like you got him in trouble, this guy, he can dial it up."

Yuli Gurriel launched a tiebreaking homer for Houston in the sixth. Chas McCormick and Jeremy Peña also went deep as the AL West champions improved to 4-0 in the playoffs after going 106-56 during the regular season.

The Astros are in their sixth consecutive ALCS, looking to reach the World Series for the fourth time in that span, against a New York team in the LCS for the first time since being eliminated by Houston in 2019.

The game was tied 1-all when Gurriel connected off reliever Clarke Schmidt for a solo shot into the left-

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field seats to put Houston on top. Two batters later, McCormick sent a sinker from Schmidt into right field to make it 3-1.

"I didn't do my job today," Schmidt said.

Verlander set a major league record with his eighth double-digit strikeout game in the postseason. He passed Clayton Kershaw (213) to become the career leader in postseason strikeouts with 219.

"As the game's going along, you just gain more confidence as you start making better pitches," Verlander said. "Once I started being able to execute my pitches the way I wanted, I feel like my confidence just kind of built upon that."

New York whiffed 17 times in all to only two for the Astros — the largest difference ever in a postseason game.

"They're obviously really dynamic," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said. "Outstanding starting pitching, but can shorten the game with the best of 'em. So we've got to find a way to break through against them."

Peña, whose 18th-inning home run completed a sweep of the Mariners in the ALDS, belted a homer off Frankie Montas to start the seventh and extend the lead to 4-1. Montas was pitching for the first time since Sept. 16 because of a shoulder injury that kept him off the Division Series roster.

Anthony Rizzo homered off Rafael Montero with two outs in the eighth to get the Yankees within two. Giancarlo Stanton singled before Josh Donaldson walked, spurring Baker to bring in closer Ryan Pressly.

He struck out Matt Carpenter to end the inning and pitched a 1-2-3 ninth to get the four-out save.

Carpenter, back recently from a broken foot, fanned all four times up.

"The way (Verlander) threw the ball tonight, I could have played for the last two months and it would have been a tough day," he said.

After struggling in Game 1 of the ALDS against Seattle, Verlander looked shaky early in this one, giving up a second-inning homer to Harrison Bader that put the Yankees up 1-0. It was Bader's fourth home run in six playoff games — his first four long balls with New York.

But the Astros tied it in the bottom half on an RBI double by Martín Maldonado.

The Astros had a few days off after eliminating Seattle on Saturday. The Yankees dealt with a quick turnaround after winning a rain-postponed Game 5 over the Guardians at home Tuesday before heading to Houston.

They had runners at second and third with one out in the third after a double by Stanton, but Verlander struck out Donaldson and Carpenter to escape the jam.

"I gave it everything I had to try to get a couple strikeouts and was able to do that," Verlander said. "Then from there, that kind of mentality, just keep making your pitches and a couple adjustments that I was able to make fairly quickly on the off-speed stuff really paid off."

Those were the first of six consecutive strikeouts for Verlander, which matched a postseason record. It's the second time he's tied the mark after also fanning six in a row in Game 3 of the 2013 ALCS for Detroit.

"I thought early we had our chances. I don't think he was real sharp early, but then he kind of dialed it in," Boone said. "He started really executing, staying away from trouble. I thought he spun the ball really well."

Verlander didn't allow a baserunner after the third inning, retiring his last 11 batters with nine strikeouts. When he fanned Carpenter to end the sixth, he pumped his fist and yelled before trotting off the field to a huge ovation from the mostly orange-clad home crowd.

"We couldn't really get anything going against him," said Yankees slugger Aaron Judge, who was 0 for 4. "We couldn't really come up with that timely hit early on to keep him on his toes."

The two-time Cy Young Award winner and nine-time All-Star permitted three hits and one run in his 32nd postseason start, 11th in a series opener. It was his first playoff win since 2019.

Peña doubled twice before his homer to give him seven hits this postseason. His three extra-base hits equaled a rookie record for a postseason game.

The clutch performances by Peña, who took over for Carlos Correa at shortstop this season, have helped the Astros this October as superstar Jose Altuve has struggled.

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"It's everything I've dreamed of," Peña said about his first postseason. "The environment, the fans, the crowd, the preparation that goes into every game. It's fun."

Altuve, a three-time batting champion, went 0 for 3 with a walk and is 0 for 19 this postseason.

Stanton played left field with Aaron Hicks sidelined for the rest of the postseason with a sprained knee he sustained in an outfield collision Tuesday. It was Stanton's first appearance in the field since July 21 and his rust showed early when he couldn't grab a fly ball that Peña hit for a double in the first.

New York starter Jameson Taillon walked Yordan Alvarez after that, but Judge robbed Alex Bregman of a hit and saved at least one run and maybe more when he made a diving catch in right field for the second out of the inning.

Taillon yielded four hits and a run in 4 1/3 innings.

PETTIS OUT

Astros third base coach Gary Pettis was out because of an illness. First base coach Omar Lopez filled in for Pettis, and quality control coach Dan Firova coached first.

CLEMENS RETURNS

Roger Clemens, who pitched for both the Yankees and Astros in a 24-year career that included a record seven Cy Young Awards, threw out the ceremonial first pitch.

He stepped a couple of feet in front of the rubber before throwing a perfect strike to Houston starter Lance McCullers.

"Every time I get out there, he looks further and further (away)," the 60-year-old Clemens said. "So, I'm just glad it made it there."

Asked for a prediction on the series, Clemens didn't give any insight into which team he's pulling for this week.

"I think it's going to go to seven games," he said. "And that's it."

UP NEXT

Framber Valdez (0-0, 3.18 ERA) opposes Luis Severino (0-0, 4.76) and the Yankees when the series continues Thursday night.

## Arizona farm gives refuge from pain, for man and beast alike

By MATT SEDENSKY AP National Writer

CORNVILLE, Ariz. (AP) — The leader has the name of her dead baby spelled out in beads on her left wrist, and standing before her is a mother so grief-choked by her young son's death that she flips on her side at one point in this creekside yoga class and sobs. In the next row, a woman whose daughter died by suicide goes through the poses next to a man with a tattoo of three little ducks, one for each of the children who was murdered.

Just beyond, in the fields of this sanctuary for the grieving, is a sheep whose babies were snatched by coyotes, a goat saved from slaughter and a horse that was badly mistreated carrying loads at the Grand Canyon.

Soon, the morning fog will lift and the chorus of cicadas will end the quiet. But for a moment, all is still, as if nature has paused to acknowledge this gathering of worldly suffering.

"There's a comfort in knowing," says Suzy Elghanayan, the mother whose young son died earlier this year of a seizure, "that we're all in the same place that we never wanted to be."

The world turns away from stories like theirs because it's too hard to imagine burying a child. So mourning people from around the globe journey to this patch of farmland just outside the red rocks of Sedona.

There is no talk at Selah Carefarm of ending the pain of loss, just of building the emotional muscle to handle it.

Here, the names of the dead can be spoken and the agony of loss can be shown. No one turns away.

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Joanne Cacciatore was a mother of three in a customer service job when her baby died during delivery. Long after she closed the lid to the tiny pink casket, the grief consumed her. She'd sob for hours and

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withered to 90 lbs. She didn't want to live. All she thought about was death.

"Every cell in my body aches," she wrote in her journal a few months after the death in 1994. "I won't smile as often as my old self. Smiling hurts now. Most everything hurts some days, even breathing."

Cacciatore became consumed with understanding the abyss of heartache she inhabited. But counseling and bereavement groups were as disappointing as the body of research Cacciatore found on traumatic loss.

So, she set out on twin paths for answers: Enrolling in college for the first time, focusing her studies on grief, and starting a support group and foundation for others like her.

Today, all these years after the death that set her on this journey, those academic and therapeutic pursuits have converged on the vegan farm, which opened five years ago. As plans for Selah took shape, Cacciatore was reminded of the two dogs who stayed by her side even when the depths of her sorrow were too much for many friends. So the farm is home to dozens of animals, many rescued from abuse and neglect, that are central to many visitors' experience here.

While most who come to Selah take part in counseling sessions, Cacciatore believes visitors' experiences with the animals can be just as transformative. Across the farm, stories repeat of someone washed over by a wave of grief only to find an animal seem to offer comfort – a donkey nestling its face in a crying woman's shoulder or a horse pressing its head against a grieving heart.

"There's a resonance," Cacciatore says. "There's a symbiosis,"

The 10-acre swath of valley feels something like a bohemian enclave crossed with a kibbutz. In the day, the sprawling expanse is baked in sun, all the way back to the creek at the farm's border, where a family of otters comes to play. At night, under star-flecked skies of indigo, paths are lit by lanterns and strings of bulbs glow, and all is quiet but the gentle flow of spring water snaking through irrigation ditches.

It is an oasis, but a constantly changing one, reinvented by each new visitor leaving their imprint.

On one tree, the grieving tie strips of fabric that rain like multicolored tickertape, remnants of their loved one's favorite shirts and socks and pillowcases. Nearby, little medallions stamped with the names of the dead twinkle in the breeze. And in a grotto beneath an ash tree, the brokenhearted have clipped prayer cards to the branches, left objects including a baseball and a toy truck, and painted dozens of stones memorializing someone gone too soon.

For Andy, "My Twin Forever." For Monica, "Loved Forever." For Jade, "Forever One Day Old."

Memories of the dead are everywhere. The farm's guest house was made possible by donors, just like everything else here, and names of their lost ones are on everything from benches to butterfly gardens.

After a few days here, many find the stories of their beloved have become so stitched into the farm's fabric it makes hallowed ground of earth on which the dead never set foot.

For Liz Castleman, it is a place she has come to feel her son Charlie's presence even more than home. A rock with a dinosaur painted on it honors him and a wooden bird soars with his name. Strawberries at the farm have even been forever rebranded as Charlieberries in recognition of his favorite fruit.

Few in Castleman's life can bear to hear about her son anymore, three years after he died before even reaching his third birthday. When she first came to the farm, part of her wondered if Cacciatore might somehow have the power to bring Charlie back. In a way, she did. She's returned five more times because here, people relish hearing of the whip-smart boy who made friends wherever he went, who'd do anything to earn a laugh, who was so outgoing in class a teacher dubbed him "Mayor of Babytown."

"All of the old safe spaces are gone. The farm, it really is the one safe space," says 46-year-old Castleman, whose son died while under anesthesia during an MRI, likely due to an underlying genetic disorder. "There's something, I don't know if it's magical, but you know that anything you say is OK and anything you feel is OK. It's just a complete bubble from the rest of the world."

Many who come here have been frustrated by communities and counselors who tell them to move on from their loss. They've been pushed to be medicated or plied with platitudes that hurt more than help. Friends tell a grieving mom that God needed an angel or ask a brokenhearted spouse why he's still wearing his wedding ring. Again and again, they're told to forget and move on.

Here, though, visitors learn the void will be with them, some way or another, forever.

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"I'm picturing my life with my grief always with me and how I'm going to live life with that grief," says 58-year-old Elghanayan, struggling to imagine her years unfolding without her 20-year-old son Luca, the compassionate, rock-climbing, surfing, piano-playing aspiring scientist. "I have to figure out how to get up and breathe every day and take one step every day and pray my years go by swiftly."

If it seems counterintuitive that coming to a place where every story is sad could actually uplift, Selah's adherents point to their own experiences on the farm and the inching progress they've made.

Erik Denton, a 35-year-old repeat visitor to Selah, is certain he can't ever get over the deaths of his three children last year, but he's functioning again. He does the dishes and makes his bed. He doesn't hole up alone for days at a time. He's again able to talk about the children he loves: 3-year-old Joanna, the firecracker who climbed trees and helped friends; 2-year-old Terry, the mischief maker who seemed to think no one was watching; and 6-month-old Sierra, the silly girl who just had begun to ooh and aah.

Denton's ex-girlfriend, the children's mother, has been charged in their drownings in a bathtub and sometimes repeating the story or hearing another mourner's tragedy becomes too much for him. But mostly, Denton feels as if he can connect with people here more than anywhere else.

"Even though we're surrounded by so much pain, we're together," he says.

A sense of solidarity is inescapable at Selah. Guests eagerly trade stories of their lost loved ones. And when someone is hurting, human or animal, they can count on others being by their side.

This day, Cacciatore is shaken because Shirin, a chocolate brown sheep with a white stripe across her belly, has been growing sicker and can't be coaxed to eat, not even her favorite cookies.

Shirin was rescued after her two babies were taken by coyotes. Her udders were full for lambs no longer around to feed. She remained so shaken by it all that no one could get close to her for weeks.

As Cacciatore awaits the veterinarian, she and a frequent farm guest, 57-year-old Jill Loforte Carroll, dote on the sheep. Cacciatore tries to coax Shirin to eat some leaves and Loforte Carroll cues a recording of "La Vie en Rose" sung by her daughter Sierra before the quietly observant, shyly funny 21-year-old died by suicide seven years ago.

For a moment, it's just three mournful moms sharing a patch of field.

When the vet arrives, their fears are confirmed, and as injections to euthanize are given, Cacciatore massages the sheep, repeatedly cooing reassuring words as her tears fall to the dirt below.

"It's OK, baby girl, it's OK," she says. "You're the prettiest girl."

By the time the vet looks up with a knowing nod, seven people crouch around Shirin, splayed across the field in such anguished drama it seems fit for a Renaissance painting. On a farm shaped by death, another has arrived, but those who gathered infused it with as much beauty and comfort as they could.

"It's not our children," Cacciatore says before burying Shirin beneath a hulking persimmon tree, "but it's still hard."

This is Cacciatore's life now, one she never could have imagined before her own tragedy. She has a Ph.D. and a research professorship at Arizona State University. A book on loss, "Bearing the Unbearable," was well received. A fiercely loyal following has found solace in her work and her counseling.

"I had a little girl who was born and who died, and it changed the trajectory of my life," she says. "But I'd give it back in a minute just to have her back."

## Election deniers could make deep changes to Arizona voting

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and BOB CHRISTIE Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Gathered at a table in the state Capitol a little less than two years ago, two Republicans and a Democrat took part in a ceremony proscribed in state law that made official Joe Biden's 10,500-vote victory in Arizona's 2020 presidential contest.

While sifting through pages, pen in hand and cameras rolling, Republican Gov. Doug Ducey stopped to silence the "hail to the chief" ringtone on his cell phone. It was a call from President Donald Trump, who was in the midst of a frenetic fight to reverse the results of the election he had lost. Ducey continued

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signing the papers, in what some saw as a dramatic affirmation of democracy at work.

How a similar scene would play out in 2024 if the three Republicans running for the top statewide offices win in November is anyone's guess. Each has said they would not have signed off on the 2020 results if they had held office at the time. Kari Lake, the Republican candidate for governor, and Mark Finchem, running for secretary of state, have signaled support for vastly overhauling election rules.

Lake, Finchem and Abraham Hamadeh, the attorney general nominee, are running for offices that play a central role in administering or certifying elections and earned Trump's support by spreading falsehoods about the 2020 election.

"When you have stolen, corrupt elections, you have serious consequences, even deadly consequences," Lake said in June while she was competing in the GOP primary. "And unfortunately, we had a stolen election, and we actually have an illegitimate president sitting in the White House."

Multiple reviews in battleground states, including in Arizona, dozens of court cases and Trump's own Department of Justice have found there was no widespread fraud in the 2020 presidential election.

Despite that, Republican candidates up and down the ballot continue to deny the legitimacy of Biden's election. Several are running for governor, secretary of state or attorney general in some of the battleground states where Trump disputed his loss, including Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Nevada.

The possibility of those candidates winning in November raises questions about what they might do regarding elections and certification of results once in office, especially in regard to the 2024 presidential race. Arizona's candidates for top statewide office offer a window into that possible future.

Election experts say any of the three, if elected, could try to tilt the 2024 election toward Trump if he runs again for president. That could happen through a refusal to certify an election he loses or long before that through pre-emptive changes to the election process.

Arizona has a recent history of extremely close elections, so small changes to its election laws could have a huge impact on the outcome and reverberate nationally.

The Republicans say they're motivated by boosting faith in elections, not returning Trump to power or helping his allies.

For her part, Lake said last month that she would certify the 2024 election if courts did not substantiate any official election challenges. That answer runs counter to her message through much of her campaign, when she said she would not have certified the 2020 results despite courts rejecting all challenges.

Finchem said in a text message that he would certify the election "as long as all lawful votes are counted and all votes cast are under the law." He did not respond to follow-up questions about who decides if the votes were lawful or whether he would accept results of court proceedings.

Hamadeh said in a statement that he would "faithfully follow the law."

The governor, secretary of state and attorney general in Arizona wield enormous power over election decisions big and small. If all three win, the steps they could take would be nearly limitless, according to Arizona election attorneys deeply versed in the laws, rules and norms that govern the process.

They could rewrite the state's elections procedures manual, a tome laying out in minute detail the rules for conducting elections and certification. It's written by the secretary of state and must be approved by the attorney general and governor. If all three sign off, the changes carry the force of law.

That's even without any of the more expansive changes that could be made by a Legislature that is almost certain to be controlled by Republicans.

"If you have people who are supportive of the Big Lie in charge of our elections, there's a lot of stuff they can do," said Jim Barton, a longtime Democratic election attorney in Arizona. "And they can do it in ways that look pretty boring."

Finchem, who was outside the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, but says he did not join rioters who attacked the building that day, has vowed to rewrite those rules. He's said little about what he would change.

He could create rules for accepting voter registrations, eliminate the right for county officials to provide drop boxes to accept mail ballots, and even refuse to accept filings for voter initiatives, just to name a few, Barton said.

On registration alone, the secretary could adopt small changes, such as when forms need to be turned

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in or the color of ink that must be used, and pass them off as needed to make processing easier, Barton said. Small changes affecting comparatively few voters could add up in a close race.

"Nobody's winning the elections anymore by 10%," Barton said. "So you don't have to say, 'Oh, I'm not going to count any of the votes from Pima County' to sway the vote. If you make it a little bit harder for low-income people to vote, then the state's not purple anymore."

And that's just the start if someone really wants to seize the reins of election rules and make small but substantive changes.

Eric Spencer, an attorney who represents Republican and conservative organizations and is a former state elections director, said a slew of rules could be changed under a new administration.

That could include eliminating unattended ballot drop boxes, which are convenient spots for voters to turn in their ballots. The trio also could pursue changes to rules for ballot-counting machines and the election canvass, in which elected leaders certify the results, Spencer said.

That's where "a new triumvirate could make some radical, radical changes," he said.

For example, a new secretary of state could remove a provision Spencer developed that says county and state officials must certify the election results and can't change the vote totals. Spencer developed that rule after a county official balked at certifying a local election in 2016 and nearly derailed the statewide certification.

Any controversy over certification could create a pretext for Arizona's electoral votes to be challenged when Congress meets to count them in early 2025.

As secretary of state, Finchem also would have unilateral authority to certify — or not — election equipment. He told CBS News that vote tabulating machines should be banned unless the manufacturer shares the source code.

No voting system manufacturers release the underlying software for their systems to protect code they regard as proprietary and to prevent hacking. Finchem and other Trump allies claim they can't trust the systems if they can't review the software that powers it line by line.

Lake and Finchem also both signaled they want to ensure that voting rolls are accurate, which election experts worry could lead them to purge certain voters or force people to continuously re-register.

"We must protect the count of all legal votes and quarantine votes that are outside of the law," Finchem said.

Lake, who has emerged as one of the most popular new figures in Trump's "Make America Great Again" movement, has avoided disclosing specific changes she would pursue for elections. But she's offered clues.

She has said she wants Arizonans to go to bed on election night knowing the results, which some regard as a threat to the mail balloting system used by the overwhelming majority of voters.

"I'm going to work with the lawmakers to make sure we have a system where voting is honest," Lake said. "I'm not sure what it's going to look like."

## WHO Syria boss accused of corruption, fraud, abuse, AP finds

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — Staffers at the World Health Organization's Syrian office have alleged that their boss mismanaged millions of dollars, plied government officials with gifts -- including computers, gold coins and cars -- and acted frivolously as COVID-19 swept the country.

More than 100 confidential documents, messages and other materials obtained by The Associated Press show WHO officials told investigators that the agency's Syria representative, Dr. Akjemal Magtymova, engaged in abusive behavior, pressured WHO staff to sign contracts with high-ranking Syrian government politicians and consistently misspent WHO and donor funds.

Magtymova declined to respond to questions about the allegations, saying that she was "prohibited" from sharing information "due to (her) obligations as a WHO staff member." She described the accusations as "defamatory."

Complaints from at least a dozen personnel have triggered one of the biggest internal WHO probes in years, at times involving more than 20 investigators, according to staffers linked to the investigation.



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WHO confirmed in a statement that it has been reviewing charges made against Magtymova and said it has also enlisted the help of external investigators.

"It has been a protracted and complex investigation, with the situation in the country and the challenges of gaining appropriate access, while ensuring the protection of staff, bringing additional complications," WHO said. The agency said progress has been made in recent months in assessing the complaints regarding Magtymova and gathering relevant information.

"In view of the security situation, confidentiality and respect for due process do not allow us to comment further on the detailed allegations," WHO said. It gave no timeline for when the investigation was expected to be completed.

WHO's Syria office had a budget of about \$115 million last year to address health issues in a country riven by war -- one in which nearly 90% of the population lives in poverty and more than half desperately need humanitarian aid. For several months, investigators have been probing allegations that Syrians were badly served and WHO staffers were ill-treated:

— Financial documents show Magtymova once threw a party costing more than \$10,000 -- a gathering held mostly to honor her own achievements at WHO's expense, staffers say, at a time when the country was struggling to obtain coronavirus vaccines.

— In December 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, she tasked the more than 100 WHO personnel in the country with learning a flash mob dance, asking officials to film themselves performing the choreographed steps for a U.N. party, according to videos and messages seen by the AP.

— Six Syria-based WHO public health experts said Magtymova called staffers "cowards" and "retarded" on multiple occasions. Even more concerning, the officials told agency investigators that Magtymova "provided favors" to senior politicians in the Syrian regime and met surreptitiously with the Russian military, potential breaches of WHO's neutrality as a U.N. organization. The staffers asked not to be named for fear of retribution; three have left WHO.

In one complaint sent to WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in May, a Syria-based staffer wrote that Magtymova hired the incompetent relatives of government officials, including some accused of "countless human rights violations."

"Dr. Akjemal's aggressive and abusive actions are negatively impacting WHO's performance to support Syrian people," the staffer wrote, adding: "Vulnerable Syrian people are losing a lot due to favoritism, frauds and scandals instigated and supported by Dr. Akjemal, which is breaking all trust (and) pushing donors away."

Tedros did not respond to the staffer's complaint. In May, WHO's regional director in the Eastern Mediterranean appointed an acting representative in Syria to replace Magtymova after she was placed on leave. But she is still listed as the agency's Syria representative in its staff directory and continues to draw a director-level salary.

Magtymova, a Turkmenistan national, previously served in a number of roles, including as the agency's representative to Oman and as emergency coordinator in Yemen. She assumed her position in Syria in May 2020, just as COVID swept around the world.

"What we (at WHO) do is noble," she said in a statement upon her appointment. "We gain respect by competency, professionalism and the results we accomplish."

Numerous WHO staffers in Syria have told the agency's investigators that Magtymova failed to grasp the severity of the pandemic in Syria and jeopardized the lives of millions.

"During COVID-19, the situation in Syria was deplorable," one former WHO staffer said. "However, WHO was not providing adequate aid to Syrians." Medical supplies were "usually focused on Damascus only, and not covering other areas in Syria," where there was an acute shortage of medicines and equipment.

Syria's health care system has been devastated by more than a decade of war; for years, the country relied almost exclusively on international health assistance. WHO's presence in areas controlled by the government has often raised criticism that its aid is directed by Damascus, which is sanctioned by the US

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and the EU. Nearly 7 million people are displaced by the war inside Syria and most live in tented camps in areas beyond government control.

Staffers also questioned some of Magtymova's own behavior and directives to staff as coronavirus cases spiked worldwide -- and even as WHO's chief claimed that the entire organization was working "tirelessly" to stop COVID-19.

At least five WHO personnel complained to investigators that Magtymova violated WHO's own COVID-19 guidance. They said she did not encourage remote working, came to the office after catching COVID and held meetings unmasked. Four WHO staffers said she infected others.

In December 2020, deep in the first year of the pandemic, Magtymova instructed the Syria office to learn a flash mob dance popularized by a social media challenge for a year-end U.N. event. At the time, senior WHO officials in Geneva were advising countries to implement coronavirus measures including the suspension of any non-essential gatherings.

"Kindly note that we want you to listen to the song, train yourself for the steps and shoot you dancing over the music to be part of our global flash mob dance video," wrote WHO communications staffer Rafik Alhabbal in an email to all Syria staff. Magtymova separately sent a link to a YouTube website, which she described as "the best tutorial."

Multiple videos show staffers, some wearing WHO vests or jackets, performing "the Jerusalema challenge" dance in offices and warehouses stocked with medical supplies. Magtymova praised the "very good looking and beautiful people" in videos made in Aleppo and the port city of Latakia.

The following October, when the country was enduring one of its worst waves of COVID, Magtymova hired a choreographer and film company to produce a video of staffers performing another dance to mark U.N. Day. Photos and video show there was no social distancing during the party Magtymova held for dozens of unmasked people, which included a "cake-eating ceremony."

Magtymova posted one of the dance videos on WHO Syria's social media accounts, but it elicited so much criticism that her superiors ordered her to remove it. The video was "disgraceful," said Anas al-Abdah, a leading Syrian opposition politician: "The organization should have (instead) filmed the catastrophic condition of our people and demanded justice."

Magtymova, however, was unrepentant.

"My message here is to ask you not to be discouraged," she told staff. "We have an important job at hand to perform and a huge responsibility for people, we have done something really out of (the) box: we dared to shine."

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Internal documents, emails and messages also raise serious concerns about how WHO's taxpayer-provided funds were used under Magtymova, with staffers alleging she routinely misspent limited donor funds meant to help the more than 12 million Syrians in dire need of health aid.

Among the incidents being probed is a party Magtymova organized last May, when she received a leadership award from Tufts University, her alma mater. Held at the exclusive Four Seasons hotel in Damascus, the party included a guest list of about 50, at a time when fewer than 1% of the Syrian population had received a single dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

A hotel invoice shows the reception's menu included Singaporean-style beef satay, fried goat cheese with truffle oil croquettes and sriracha chicken sliders, alongside a selection of seasonal mocktails. A production company was hired to film the event and make a promotional video, according to an internal WHO summary.

The evening's agenda featured remarks by the Syrian minister of health, followed by a reception and nearly two hours of live music. WHO documents show while the event was called to celebrate WHO's designation of 2021 as the Year of Health and Care Worker, the evening was devoted to Magtymova, not health workers. The cost, according to a spreadsheet: more than \$11,000.

Like many other U.N. expatriate staff in Syria, Magtymova lived at Damascus' ornately decorated Four Seasons hotel. But unlike other staffers, she chose to stay in a spacious, multi-room suite with two washrooms and a panoramic view of the city. U.N. documents suggest she stayed in the suite from October

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2020 to this past May at a discounted cost of about \$450 per night, more than four times the price of rooms occupied by other U.N. staff. A hotel staffer said such suites normally cost about \$940 a night.

The hotel was sanctioned by the U.S. and U.K. because of its owner's role in financing the regime of Bashar Assad; the U.N. is estimated to have spent \$70 million there since 2014.

Other WHO officials were concerned with the agency's inability to track its support of health facilities in Syria. In correspondence from January, staffers wrote about a worrisome "spot check" made to a health project in northern Syria, noting discrepancies between what WHO paid for and what was found.

Among the issues identified: "the medicines quantities checked were not matching the invoices," the staff did not have medical training, there were missing items including wheelchairs, crutches and hearing devices, and most of the building rented to store such supplies was empty.

Dr. Ahmed Al-Mandari, WHO's regional director in the eastern Mediterranean and Magtymova's boss, also chastised her for the Syria office's failure to account for its spending.

In an email last October, he told her there were many unresolved audit and compliance issues. Al-Mandari said Magtymova had not completed several long overdue reports detailing how money was being spent in Syria that needed "urgent attention." Without those reports, donors had little evidence Syria and WHO were using their resources as intended.

Three WHO officials involved in procurement told investigators that Magtymova was involved in several questionable contracts, including a transportation deal that awarded several million dollars to a supplier with whom she had personal ties. Another staffer said to be close to Magtymova reportedly received \$20,000 in cash to buy medicines, despite the lack of any request from the Syrian government, which was normally required to trigger such a purchase.

At least five staffers also complained Magtymova used WHO funds to buy gifts for the Ministry of Health and others, including "very good servers and laptops," gold coins and expensive cars. The AP was not in a position to corroborate their allegations. Several WHO personnel said they were pressured to strike deals with senior members of the Syrian government for basic supplies like fuel at inflated prices, and were sidelined if they failed to do so.

The accusations regarding WHO's top representative in Syria come after multiple misconduct complaints at the U.N. health agency in recent years.

Last May, the AP reported that senior WHO management was informed of sex abuse during the 2018-2020 Ebola outbreak in Congo but did little to stop it; a panel later found more than 80 workers under WHO's direction sexually exploited women.

And in January, the AP reported that staffers at WHO's Western Pacific office said the region's director, Dr. Takeshi Kasai, used racist language to berate staff and improperly shared sensitive coronavirus vaccine information with his home country, Japan. In August, WHO removed Kasai from his post indefinitely after an initial investigation substantiated some of the claims.

Javier Guzman, director of global health at the Center for Global Development in Washington, said the latest charges regarding WHO's Magtymova were "extremely disturbing" and unlikely to be an exception.

"This is clearly a systemic problem," Guzman said. "These kinds of allegations are not just occurring in one of WHO's offices but in multiple regions."

He said though Tedros is seen by some as the world's moral conscience during COVID-19 -- he repeatedly decried vaccine inequity and called for countries to act in solidarity -- the agency's credibility was severely damaged by reports of misconduct. Guzman called for WHO to publicly release any investigation report into Magtymova and the Syria office.

WHO said investigation reports are "normally not public documents," but that "aggregated, anonymized data" are shared with its Executive Board and made publicly accessible.

## Drury, Padres rally to beat Nola, Phillies 8-5, tie NLCS 1-1

By BERNIE WILSON AP Sports Writer

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The scrappy San Diego Padres, largely rebuilt at the trade deadline, are finding their

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identity at just the right time.

In danger of heading to Philadelphia down 0-2 in the NL Championship Series, the Padres produced another huge rally in front of their rowdy fans to put some punch into the all-wild card matchup.

Brandon Drury hit a go-ahead, two-run single during a five-run outburst in the fifth inning and San Diego stunned Aaron Nola and the Phillies 8-5 on Wednesday to tie the NLCS at one game apiece.

"You go into their place, which is probably going to be as spirited as ours is, down 2-0 and that's an uphill battle," said veteran manager Bob Melvin, who has brought a calming presence in his first year as San Diego's skipper.

The Padres weren't rattled when they fell behind 4-0 in the second inning after getting just one hit during a 2-0 loss in the series opener Tuesday.

"We go into Philly for three and it's a big game," Drury said. "We've got to fight and we did. It's huge."

The fifth-inning surge started with Padres catcher Austin Nola hitting an RBI single off his younger brother that brought the sellout, towel-twirling crowd of 44,607 to life. Three innings earlier, the Phillies took a 4-0 lead with a rally that included bloop hits, a sun-aided double on a gorgeous, 92-degree afternoon and some shoddy Padres defense.

On Saturday night, spurred by the bottom of the order, the Padres broke loose for five runs in the seventh inning of a 5-3 win that eliminated the 111-win Los Angeles Dodgers.

Wednesday's rally was similar.

"We need to continue to build that confidence," said Austin Nola, the No. 9 batter. "That's what we talked about all year. That identity is never giving up, never giving in. Every inning we're putting pressure on the other team to score and it's paying off."

Drury and Josh Bell hit back-to-back homers for the Padres, and Manny Machado went deep late.

The series shifts to Philadelphia for three games beginning Friday night. The Phillies, trying to reach their first World Series since 2009, outscored Atlanta 17-4 in two home Division Series games last weekend to dispatch the defending World Series champion Braves.

Manager Rob Thomson said the Phillies need to approach this situation like they did the NLDS.

"We went into Atlanta, won the first one, lost the second one. Disappointing game. We had a day off and came back home in front of 46,000 raucous people and played really well. I expect to do the same thing," he said.

Blake Snell got the win and Josh Hader the save after striking out the side in the ninth to send the crowd into a frenzy. Aaron Nola, in the playoffs for the first time and off to a brilliant start before Wednesday, took the loss.

The Padres, playing in their first NLCS since 1998, appeared to be in deep trouble after Snell threw 37 pitches in the Phillies' four-run second.

San Diego began its comeback with homers on consecutive pitches by Drury and Bell to open the bottom of the inning. Drury lined a shot to left field and Bell lifted a fly ball deep to right that stayed just fair.

Bell and Juan Soto, who had an RBI double in the fifth, were obtained in a blockbuster trade with Washington on Aug. 2, the same day the Padres got Drury from Cincinnati. The day before, the Padres got Hader from Milwaukee.

When Austin Nola grounded out in the second inning, it was the first pitcher-batter matchup between siblings in postseason history.

Big brother came up again in the fifth with one out and Kim Ha-seong on first base. Aaron Nola threw over several times before Austin singled to right-center to bring in the speedy Kim, who was running on an 0-2 pitch. His helmet flew off between second and third before he scored with a headfirst slide.

"It's a typical plate appearance vs. my brother. I'm 0-2," Austin Nola said. "I might as well just walk up there and tell him to put two strikes on me because that's what it feels like. I just battle. I know the kind of pitcher he is. He's not going to give in. I'm just trying to hit something hard through the middle and good things happen."

Jurickson Profar singled, Soto hit an RBI double to tie the game at 4 and Machado struck out before

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Aaron Nola was pulled for former Padres closer Brad Hand.

Jake Cronenworth was hit by a pitch to load the bases. With fans on their feet and waving yellow rally towels, Drury singled to put the Padres ahead. Bell capped the rally with a single to right. The Padres sent 11 batters to the plate, collecting six hits, a walk and a hit batter.

Aaron Nola hadn't allowed an earned run in picking up a win in each of the first two playoff rounds.

After winning 2-0 Tuesday on Kyle Schwarber's jaw-dropping, 488-foot homer and another homer by Bryce Harper, the Phillies went ahead with small ball in the second inning Wednesday.

Snell needed only six pitches to get through a 1-2-3 first but wasn't as lucky in the second.

Harper and Nick Castellanos opened the inning with bloop singles before Alec Bohm hit a sharp single to right to bring in Harper. After Jean Segura struck out, Soto, the right fielder, lost Matt Vierling's fly ball in the sun and it dropped behind him for an RBI double.

Edmundo Sosa golfed an RBI single that landed just in front of Profar in left field. Schwarber hit a weak grounder to first that Drury bobbled before stepping on the bag as Vierling scored.

Snell allowed four runs and five hits in five innings. He struck out six and walked one.

Aaron Nola was tagged for six runs and seven hits in 4 2/3 innings. He struck out six and walked none.

As for the brotherly showdown, he said: "I want to beat him. I want to go to the next round and let him go home."

Machado homered leading off the seventh and Philly's Rhys Hoskins homered on the first pitch from Robert Suarez in the eighth, ending the reliever's scoreless streak of 19 1/3 innings.

UP NEXT

Padres RHP Joe Musgrove (10-7, 2.93 ERA regular season; 1-0, 1.38 postseason) and Phillies LHP Ranger Suarez (10-7, 3.65 ERA regular season; 0-0, 2.70 postseason) are scheduled to start Game 3 on Friday night in Philadelphia.

## New Zealand farmers hit streets to protest cow-burp tax plan

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Farmers across New Zealand took to the streets on their tractors Thursday to protest government plans to tax cow burps and other greenhouse gas emissions, although the rallies were smaller than many had expected.

Lobby group Groundswell New Zealand helped organize more than 50 protests in towns and cities across the country, the biggest involving a few dozen vehicles.

Last week, the government proposed a new farm levy as part of a plan to tackle climate change. The government said it would be a world first, and that farmers should be able to recoup the cost by charging more for climate-friendly products.

Because farming is so big in New Zealand — there are 10 million beef and dairy cattle and 26 million sheep, compared to just 5 million people — about half of all greenhouse gas emissions come from farms. Methane from burping cattle makes a particularly big contribution.

But some farmers argue the proposed tax would actually increase global greenhouse gas emissions by shifting farming to countries less efficient at making food.

At the protest in Wellington, farmer Dave McCurdy said he was disappointed in the small turnout, but said most farmers were working hard on their farms during a spell of good spring weather at a particularly busy time of year.

He said farmers were good environmental stewards.

"It's our life, our family's lives," he said. "We're not out there to wreck it, we wouldn't make any money. We love our farms. That's what annoys us. We're painted at these bad guys, but a lot of farmers have spent generations looking after that land."

He said the proposed tax didn't take proper account of all the trees and brush he and other farmers had planted, which helped trap carbon and offset emissions. He said if the proposed tax and herd reductions went ahead, it would be ruinous to many farmers.

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"I'm out," he said. "Waste of time."

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

McCurdy said farmers had almost singlehandedly kept the economy afloat during the COVID-19 lockdowns, and now that the threat had passed and a recession was looming, the government was coming after them.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has pledged the nation will become carbon neutral by 2050. Part of that plan includes reducing methane emissions from farm animals by 10% by 2030 and by up to 47% by 2050.

The government had worked with farmers and other groups to try to come up with an emissions plan they could all live with. But many farmers have been incensed by the government's final proposal, while environmentalists have said it doesn't go nearly far enough.

Farmer Matt Swansson said he'd "had a gutsful" of the government and would consider refusing to pay the new tax.

He said on beautiful evenings on his farm, he thinks he has the best job in the world.

"But when it's rain, drizzle, and you get home and listen to the news," Swansson said. "Why do you bother?"

## LA Councilman de Leon says he will not resign amid uproar

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Embattled Los Angeles Councilman Kevin de Leon said Wednesday he will not resign amid an uproar over a leaked tape that revealed him participating in a meeting in which Latino officials made crude, racist remarks and plotted to expand their political power.

The scandal already has led to the resignation of former City Council President Nury Martinez and calls from President Joe Biden for those involved to step down.

De Leon told the Univision Spanish-language station that he is "so sorry," and wants to continue working on homelessness and other problems in his district.

The councilman also told KCBS-TV in Los Angeles that he would refuse to resign. "I failed in my leadership," he said.

His statement was immediately criticized by other Council members pushing for his resignation.

"Apologies will not be nearly enough to undo the damage that this city has suffered," said Council President Paul Krekorian, who replaced Martinez in the leadership post. "The only way we can begin to heal as a city is for Mr. de Leon to take responsibility for his actions, accept the consequences and step down."

The Council cannot expel members — it can only suspend a member when criminal charges are pending.

The racist comments came in a nearly year-old meeting, which also provided an unvarnished look into the city's racial rivalries. Those involved in the private meeting — all Democrats — spent much of the time discussing how to safeguard Latino political power during the redrawing of council district boundaries.

The California Legislative Black Caucus said the recording "reveals an appalling effort to decentralize Black voices during the critical redistricting process."

Martinez stepped down last week, but de Leon and Councilmember Gil Cedillo have so far resisted widespread calls for their resignations.

The Los Angeles City Council installed a new president Tuesday — Krekorian — after a chanting crowd of protesters called for halting the vote until de Leon and Cedillo resigned for their part in the 2021 meeting.

A powerful labor leader who also attended the 2021 private meeting, Ron Herrera, also resigned.

In the heavily Latino Boyle Heights section of de Leon's district, some voters said they'd had enough. Carlos Loera, 52, said he previously voted for the councilman but now thinks it's time for him to go.

"We don't want him here because he's racist," said Loera, a salesman reviewing items at a local household goods shop with a view of downtown Los Angeles.

"The trust is not there anymore," Loera said in an interview before de Leon announced his decision to remain on the Council.

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It's not known who made the recording, or why it was released in the run-up to next month's midterm elections.

"I will not resign because there is a lot of work ahead," de Leon said in the interview, referring to unemployment, fallout from the continuing pandemic and the threat of evictions for renters in a city with soaring housing prices.

"I feel very bad, I feel very sorry for the damage, for the wounds that exist today in our communities," he said.

The remarks were his first since the White House called for him to resign. He has not appeared at recent meetings, and the Council stripped him and Cedillo of much of their power as they seek to increase pressure on them to resign.

The interview Wednesday was conducted by Leon Krauze, an anchor for Univision Noticias national network.

"I ask for forgiveness from all my people, my community for the damage that those painful words caused on that day," he said.

De Leon called the comments in the private meeting "horrible," but said the responsibility for the offensive language rested with Martinez, who has resigned.

"I failed for not raising my voice," he said.

When asked about a joke he made on the recording about Councilman Mike Bonin carrying around his son like Martinez carries around her Louis Vuitton bag, de Leon called it a "bad joke and I apologize."

In a statement on Twitter, Bonin called de Leon's comments "gaslighting of the highest order."

"His comments on that tape make clear he is unfit for office," Bonin added.

Los Angeles City Council members are among the highest paid in the country with annual salaries of nearly \$229,000, and de Leon's announcement also keeps his city paychecks coming.

While staying in office, de Leon and Cedillo have continued to earn their biweekly salary of \$8,779.20, which increased this past July. As long as they remain on payroll, they also continue to receive medical and pension benefits.

In a letter Wednesday to Krekorian, de Leon asked to be excused from Council meetings "in coming weeks" to attempt to "rebuild the relationships I've broken." He also said he would seek "professional sensitivity training."

"Until this moment in my life, I couldn't have imagined being part of the problem instead of the solution," de Leon wrote.

## Races to oversee elections draw an avalanche of spending

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

In 2018, Democrat Katie Hobbs spent \$1 million in campaign funds running to become Arizona's secretary of state, narrowly besting Republican Steve Gaynor, who spent \$3.2 million in what was the most expensive race in state history for the post that oversees elections.

The record stood for less than four years. This year's candidates for the state's top election position have already matched that total and will certainly eclipse it by Election Day on Nov. 8.

Arizona is hardly an exception. It's just a dramatic example of how races for secretary of state, once sleepy affairs that attracted relatively little attention or campaign money, have become high-priced, partisan battles.

In most states, the secretary of state is the official who oversees voting — an increasingly critical position after former President Donald Trump and his backers began spreading election falsehoods and targeting the offices by encouraging sympathetic candidates to run.

GOP candidates running for secretary of state in Arizona, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico and Nevada have reported raising a total of at least \$3.3 million. The Democrats who oppose them have reported raising more — in excess of \$10 million — and are being bolstered by additional millions in outside spending by allied groups.

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Nationwide, spending on secretary of state races has set a historical record, said Michael Beckel, research director of Issue One, which is tracking races in which people who embrace Trump's election lies are trying to gain control of the state offices that oversee elections.

"Clearly, people across the political spectrum are taking a new interest in secretary of state races in light of what happened in 2020, and both sides see these positions as critical," Beckel said.

In Arizona, with Hobbs now running for governor, Democrat Adrian Fontes has reported raising more than \$2.4 million so far for the election to replace her as secretary of state. Records show his Republican opponent, state Rep. Mark Finchem, has raised more than \$1.8 million.

The Arizona tally doesn't include millions in outside spending, mainly by Democrats. They are warning that Finchem was present at the Jan. 6, 2021, rally outside the U.S. Capitol, has repeated Trump's lies about the 2020 election being stolen and said he wouldn't have certified President Joe Biden's victory in the state.

To some, the escalating interest in these posts highlights risks to the United States' unique election system, which is overseen by politicians elected in partisan races.

"The increasing polarization has intensified the vulnerability of the system," said Kevin Johnson of the Election Reformers Network, which advocates for less partisan elections. "You used to be able to rely on a structure that didn't require high ethics from officials, but managed to produce that anyway."

Now, Johnson warned, Trump supporters believe there are few explicit restraints on secretaries of state. He said that's in contrast to most other democratic countries, where nonpartisan institutions such as appointed panels rather than elected politicians oversee voting.

"No other democracy elects its election leaders," Johnson said.

Nonpartisan administration of elections has become an applause line for underdog candidates in two Democratic-leaning states.

In Colorado, former county clerk Pam Anderson, a Republican, argues that her opponent, Democratic Secretary of State Jena Griswold, has acted in a way that is too partisan. In Washington state, Julie Anderson, an independent, is running against Democratic Secretary of State Steve Hobbs, arguing the position should be explicitly nonpartisan.

In contrast, in Wisconsin, many Republicans angry at Biden's 2020 win in the state seek to dissolve the state's bipartisan elections commission and vest election management in one or more partisan officials.

The nonpartisan stance also has been embraced by some Democratic secretaries of state, who are careful to draw a line between their party and their job. Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson said in an interview this summer that she has avoided involvement with the Democratic Association of Secretaries of State, a group chaired by Griswold that is spending to support the party's statewide election officials.

"As I have seen my colleagues become more partisan, it's something -- that for me -- I feel just goes beyond what is appropriate for a secretary of state to do," Benson said.

Still, she has received at least \$2.6 million from the Democratic group as she battles Republican Kristina Karamo, a community college instructor who spread false information about purported election fraud in November 2020 and beyond. Benson herself has reported raising more than \$4 million for her re-election campaign, compared to more than \$900,000 by Karamo.

Democrats say they don't need to apologize for spending big, arguing that they're defending the nation's foundational principles by trying to keep candidates who spread false claims about elections from overseeing voting.

"We can't take any risks when it comes to our democracy, and frankly our volunteers and donors have met the moment," said Kim Rogers, executive director of the Democratic Association of Secretaries of State, which has pledged to spend at least \$25 million on races this fall.

There's no parallel Republican Party effort. The GOP's group involved in secretary of state races, the Republican State Leadership Committee, said it's spending little this year other than to support the reelection effort of Brad Raffensperger, the Georgia secretary of state who defied Trump's demands that he be declared the winner of that swing state in 2020.

Andrew Romeo, a spokeswoman for the leadership committee, which also supports GOP state legislative



candidates, contended in a statement that Democrats are the ones polarizing voting issues.

"Democrats – fueled by their liberal billionaire donors -- are dumping unprecedented money into secretary of state races this year because they have given up on American democracy and an election system that has worked for 200 years and want to stack these offices with their far-left allies," Romeo said.

Still, Democrats note that Republicans have spent heavily on non-campaign election infrastructure in the midterms. Conservative donors have funded operations to recruit and train poll watchers and to enlist activists to work at polling places in November.

Funders, whose identifies do not have to be disclosed, also have paid for slick documentaries promulgating election lies like the often-debunked "2000 Mules." Patrick Byrne, the founder of Overstock.com, told The Associated Press in August that he's spent \$20 million investigating the 2020 election.

Byrne's spending includes funding an organization called The America Project, which has donated \$218,000 to a group called Conservatives for Election Integrity. That group was founded by Jim Marchant, the Republican nominee for secretary of state in Nevada. The organization is intended to support a coalition of secretary of state candidates like Marchant who question the result of the 2020 presidential election. The America Project's spending accounts for roughly half the \$429,000 the group has reported raising.

Byrne also has donated \$10,000 to Marchant and \$2,900 to Karamo in Michigan, according to the report from Issue One on the funding of election deniers' campaigns. Other prominent funders include Trump's own political group, Save America PAC, which donated \$5,000 to Karamo and \$5,000 to Finchem in Arizona. Also, Lewis Topper, who runs a network of fast-food restaurant franchises, donated more than \$17,000 total to Finchem, Karamo and Marchant, according to the report.

Still, that's small compared to the funding on the Democratic side. The Democratic group iVote, for example, announced on Monday \$5 million in new spending against Finchem in Arizona, part of \$11 million in spending against election denier secretary of state nominees.

Ellen Kurz, a veteran Democratic operative who runs iVote, said there is no comparison between her group and those that are funding election deniers.

"They are telling you that if their chosen candidate doesn't win, they will disregard the will of the people," she said. Democrats, she said, have "a nonpartisan idea — every registered voter, if they're Democrat, Republican or Independent, should be able to cast a vote."

## Trump deposed in defamation suit filed by E. Jean Carroll

By DAVID B. CARUSO and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump answered questions under oath Wednesday in a lawsuit filed by E. Jean Carroll, a magazine columnist who says he raped her in the mid-1990s in a department store dressing room.

The deposition gave Carroll's lawyers a chance to interrogate Trump about the assault allegations, as well as statements he made in 2019 when she told her story publicly for the first time.

Details on how the deposition went weren't immediately disclosed.

"We're pleased that on behalf of our client, E. Jean Carroll, we were able to take Donald Trump's deposition today. We are not able to comment further," the law firm representing her, Kaplan Hecker & Fink, said in a statement.

Trump has said Carroll's rape allegation is "a hoax and a lie."

His legal team worked for years to delay his deposition in the lawsuit, which was filed when the Republican was still president. A federal judge last week rejected Trump's request for another delay, saying he couldn't "run the clock out on plaintiff's attempt to gain a remedy for what allegedly was a serious wrong."

Alina Habba, an attorney representing Trump, said Wednesday, "My client was pleased to set the record straight today. This case is nothing more than a political ploy like many others in the long list of witch hunts against Donald Trump."

Carroll was to have been questioned by Trump's lawyers last Friday. Neither her attorneys nor Trump's have responded to questions about how that deposition went.

The lawyers also haven't disclosed whether Trump's deposition was done in person or remotely, over video. Trump was in Florida on Wednesday. The lawsuit is being handled in a court in New York City.

Anything Trump said during his deposition could potentially be used as evidence in an upcoming civil trial. He hasn't faced any criminal charges related to Carroll's allegations, and any prosecution is unlikely. The deadline for criminal charges over alleged sexual assaults that occurred in the 1990s has long expired.

Similar legal deadlines also applied to civil lawsuits claiming sexual assault. As a result, Carroll chose to sue Trump for defamation over comments he made in 2019 when he denied any wrongdoing. She maintains that her reputation was damaged by his denials and attacks on her credibility and character.

However, New York lawmakers recently gave people a one-year window to take old sexual assault claims to civil courts. Carroll's lawyer has told the court she intends to file such a suit against Trump after that window opens in late November.

According to Carroll's account, she bumped into Trump as the two were shopping at the Bergdorf Goodman store across Fifth Avenue from Trump Tower. At the time, Carroll was on television as the host of an advice program, "Ask E. Jean."

She said the two engaged in friendly banter as she tried to help him pick out a gift. But when they were briefly alone in a dressing room, she said he pulled down her tights and raped her.

In a recent statement, Trump called that story "a complete con job."

"I don't know this woman, have no idea who she is, other than it seems she got a picture of me many years ago, with her husband, shaking my hand on a reception line at a celebrity charity event," Trump said.

## 3 murder verdicts vacated in case investigated by killer cop

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Three men imprisoned since the 1990s for a fatal New Orleans drive-by shooting were ordered freed on Wednesday, their convictions vacated by a judge after prosecutors cited the involvement of two notoriously corrupt police officers in their case.

Kunta Gable and Leroy Nelson were 17 when they were arrested shortly after the Aug. 22, 1994, shooting death of Rondell Santinac at the Desire housing development in the south Louisiana city. Also arrested with them was Bernell Juluke, then 18.

The men were ordered released on Wednesday by a state judge who vacated their convictions, acting upon a joint motion by defense lawyers and District Attorney Jason Williams' Civil Rights Division.

The motion described numerous problems with the original case. Among them, it said, the state failed to disclose evidence undermining the case against the men.

The motion also said the jury didn't know that officers Len Davis and Sammie Williams — the first officers on the scene — were known to cover up the identity of perpetrators and manipulate evidence at murder scenes at the housing project to cover up for drug dealers they protected.

Davis was later convicted for arranging the death of a woman who filed a complaint against him in an unrelated matter and is facing a federal death sentence.

The motion also said the only witness to the shooting, Samuel Raiford, did not initially describe three suspects, adding, "the first time three perpetrators were mentioned by anyone is by Len Davis after the three defendants were pulled over."

The teens were arrested a short time after the shooting but there were no signs of guns or shell casings in their car, according to the 24-page motion.

The prosecutor Williams said in a statement released Wednesday afternoon that there was extensive documented evidence of Davis' illegal misconduct while operating "under color of law."

"He engaged in illegal drug trafficking, framed individuals who got in his way, and even went so far as to order the murder of a private citizen who dared to report his systematic abuses," Williams added.

Juluke's attorney, Michael Admirand, said in an emailed statement after the release that they were grateful to the court, the prosecutor and others for their work "in correcting this grave injustice."

"I am relieved that he has finally been vindicated, if disheartened that it took so long," Admirand said

of his client's newfound freedom.

The attorney added that Juluke had maintained his innocence from the moment of his wrongful arrest.

## **Judge: Trump knew vote fraud claims in legal docs were false**

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Donald Trump signed legal documents challenging the results of the 2020 election that included voter fraud claims he knew to be false, a federal judge said in a ruling Wednesday.

U.S. District Court Judge David Carter in an 18-page opinion ordered the release of those emails between Trump and attorney John Eastman to the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol. He said those communications cannot be withheld because they include evidence of potential crimes.

"The emails show that President Trump knew that the specific numbers of voter fraud were wrong but continued to tout those numbers, both in court and to the public," Carter wrote.

Though the judge's conclusion has no practical bearing on a separate Justice Department investigation into efforts to overturn the election, any evidence that Trump signed documents he knew to be false could at minimum be a notable data point for criminal prosecutors trying to sort out culpability for far-ranging efforts to undo the results.

The judge specifically cited claims from Trump's attorneys that Fulton County in Georgia had improperly counted more than 10,000 votes of dead people, felons and unregistered voters. Those false allegations were part of a filing that Trump's legal team made in Georgia state court on Dec. 4, 2021.

Later that month, Eastman warned in a message that Trump had been made aware that "some of the allegations (and evidence proffered by the experts)" in that Georgia filing "has been inaccurate."

Yet even after the message from Eastman, Trump and his team filed another legal complaint that had "the same inaccurate numbers," the judge wrote. Trump under oath verified the complaint was true to the best of his knowledge.

Carter wrote that the emails are "sufficiently related to and in furtherance of a conspiracy to defraud the United States."

Representatives for Trump and Eastman did not immediately respond to requests for comment. A spokesperson for the Jan. 6 committee declined to comment on the ongoing litigation.

The ruling is the latest development in a months-long legal battle between Eastman — a conservative lawyer and lead architect of Trump's last-ditch efforts to stay in office — and congressional investigators.

Eastman has been trying to withhold documents from the committee on the basis of attorney-client privilege claims. The committee has argued that there is a legal exception allowing the disclosure of communications regarding ongoing or future crimes. And Carter has mostly agreed, ordering the release of hundreds of emails to the House committee since the spring.

In a stunning ruling in March, the judge had asserted that it is "more likely than not" that Trump committed crimes in his attempt to stop the certification of the 2020 election.

Carter in his ruling Wednesday said the messages he has reviewed from Eastman and other attorneys show that the "primary goal" for some of their litigation was to stop the certification of President Joe Biden's election win.

The totality of the evidence makes clear that "Trump filed certain lawsuits not to obtain legal relief, but to disrupt or delay the January 6 congressional proceedings through the courts," the judge wrote.

The emails from Eastman are part of the House committee's investigation into a multi-part plan by Trump and his allies to overturn the 2020 election and the ensuing violence at the Capitol. The release of the emails could be critical for the committee as it enters the last few months of its probe when lawmakers will have to decide whether to send a criminal referral against Trump and his allies to the Justice Department.

The judge ordered Eastman to give the documents to the committee by the afternoon of Oct. 28.

## **Arizona refuses US demand to remove containers along border**

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By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Arizona has refused the federal government's demand to take down double-stacked shipping containers it placed to fill gaps in the wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, saying it won't do so until the U.S. moves to construct a permanent barrier instead.

The Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs dug in its heels in an Oct. 18 letter to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, saying "the containers will remain in place until specific details regarding construction are provided." It was signed by Allen Clark, the department's director.

A regional spokeswoman for the Bureau of Reclamation did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Arizona's refusal in the most recent flap between the Biden administration and Republican-led border states over immigration policies.

The federal agency told Arizona officials in a letter last week that the containers were unauthorized and violated U.S. law. The bureau also demanded that no new containers be placed, saying it wanted to prevent conflicts with two federal contracts already awarded and two more still pending to fill border wall gaps near the Morelos Dam in the Yuma, Arizona, area.

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey ordered installation of more than 100 double-stacked containers that were placed over the summer, saying he couldn't wait for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection to award the contracts it had announced for the work.

Migrants have continued to avoid the recently erected barriers by going around them, including through the Cocopah Indian Reservation. The Cocopah Indian Tribe has complained that Arizona acted against its wishes by placing 42 of the double stacks on its land.

The border wall promoted by former President Donald Trump continues to be a potent issue for Republican politicians hoping to show their support for border security.

President Joe Biden halted wall construction his first day in office, leaving billions of dollars of work unfinished but still under contract. The Biden administration has made a few exceptions for small projects at areas deemed unsafe for people to cross, including the gaps near Yuma.

The Center for Biological Diversity raised a different objection to the shipping containers on Wednesday, filing a notice of intent to sue Ducey's administration over what the environmental group said are plans to erect more shipping containers along the border. The group said the move will obstruct a critical jaguar and ocelot migration corridor.

Ducey's office said it could not comment because it had not received an official notice from the center.

## Review: 'Descendant' powerfully telescopes past and present

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

One of the best films of the year, Margaret Brown's "Descendant" is, strictly speaking, about the discovery of the Clotilda, the last known slave ship.

After it was used to illegally kidnap and enslave more than 100 Africans, the 90-foot-long schooner was sunk near Mobile, Alabama, around 1860, decades after the international slave trade was outlawed. Until recently, it laid unfound somewhere in the muddy waters of the Mobile River, a lost, 160-year-old crime scene.

But "Descendant," a prize-winner at the Sundance Film Festival, is exponentially more than an account of finding the Clotilda in 2019. Brown roves across the land, crowding her film with a wide spectrum of voices — community leaders, direct descendants from the Clotilda, passed-down accounts — for a living oral history that reckons with the long shadow of slavery. "I could care less about the ship," says Joycelyn Davis, one of the film's many vibrant, thoughtful subjects and a resident of Africatown, the Mobile hamlet founded by the Clotilda's West Africans.

Modern-day Africatown is, itself, evidence of how systematic racism can operate. With the city's highest industrial zoning regulations, Africatown has long been surrounded by factories and refineries, leading to pollution and high local cancer rates. For "Descendant," it's a powerful illustration of how past and present perpetually intermingle in America.

"Descendant," which Friday opens in select theaters and debuts on Netflix, is in many ways about sto-

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rytelling as a form of resistance. Those that came on the Clotilda were warned not to tell anyone of their trafficking. The story went undocumented in history books. Instead, it was passed by word of mouth as local lore kept alive by descendants. Emmett Lewis, a particularly soulful descendant of Africatown founder Cudjo Lewis, describes it as "a ghost story" told to him by his father, and one he tells his young daughters.

For many, any clarity about the Clotilda is a way of adding definition to a severed heritage. One woman compares it to an adopted child searching for a parent. Among those who have learned that they're a Clotilda descendant is Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, an executive producer on the film.

At the same time, the ship's finding raises other questions of justice and of reparations. For many of the descendants, it's not a theoretical question. The slave-trafficking financier of the Clotilda, Timothy Meaher, may have died more than a century ago, but his family is still a wealthy landowner in the area. The Meaher name adorns a local park.

There are few certain answers supplied by "Descendant," a film that carries the banner of Barack and Michelle Obama's production company, Higher Ground. But there is a searching, ruminative dialogue running throughout the film. Brown and editors Michael Bloch and Geoffrey Richman beautifully weave together disparate voices into a meditative chorus.

It's not just the living, either. Kern Jackson, a kindly folklorist and a central figure in the effort, plays a VHS tape of Mable Dennison, a descendant who wrote a biographical memoir of her grandfather, James Dennison, instructing others about their heritage. Brown also has many of the descendants read from Zora Neale Hurston's "Barracoon," a book based on her interviews in 1927 with Cudjo Lewis. It was surfaced only in 2018 by the author Alice Walker.

"The only fear," Emmett Lewis says in the film's final words, "is for my people's story not to be told."

"Descendant," a Netflix release, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association of America for thematic material, brief language and smoking images. Running time: 109 minutes. Four stars out of four.

## First Native American woman in space awed by Mother Earth

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — The first Native American woman in space said Wednesday she is overwhelmed by the beauty and delicacy of Mother Earth, and is channeling "positive energy" as her five-month mission gets underway.

NASA astronaut Nicole Mann said from the International Space Station that she's received lots of prayers and blessings from her family and tribal community. She is a member of the Wailacki of the Round Valley Indian Tribes in Northern California.

Mann showed off the dream catcher she took up with her, a childhood gift from her mother that she's always held dear. The small traditional webbed hoop with feathers is used to offer protection, and she said it's given her strength during challenging times. Years before joining NASA in 2013, she flew combat in Iraq for the Marines.

"It's the strength to know that I have the support of my family and community back home and that when things are difficult or things are getting hard or I'm getting burned-out or frustrated, that strength is something that I will draw on to continue toward a successful mission," Mann told The Associated Press, which gathered questions from members and tribal news outlets across the country.

Mann said she's always heeded her mother's advice on the importance of positive energy, especially on launch day.

"It's difficult for some people maybe to understand because it's not really tangible," she said. "But that positive energy is so important, and you can control that energy, and it helps to control your attitude."

Mann, 45, a Marine colonel and test pilot who was born in Petaluma, California, said it's important to recognize there are all types of people aboard the space station. It's currently home to three Americans, three Russians and one Japanese astronaut.

"What that does is it just highlights our diversity and how incredible it is when we come together as a human species, the wonderful things that we can do and that we can accomplish," she said.

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While fascinated with stars and space as a child, Mann said she did not understand who became astronauts or even what they did. "Unfortunately, in my mind at that time, it was not in the realm of possibilities," she said.

That changed later in her career. Now, she's taking in the sweeping vistas of Earth from 260 miles (420 kilometers) up and hoping to see the constellations, as she encourages youngsters to follow their dreams.

As for describing Earth from space, "the emotions are absolutely overwhelming," she said. "It is an incredible scene of color, of clouds and land, and it's difficult not to stay in the cupola (lookout) all day and just see our planet Earth and how beautiful she is, and how delicate and fragile she is against the blackest of black that I've ever seen — space — in the background."

Mann rocketed into orbit with SpaceX on Oct. 5. She'll be up there until March. She and her husband, a retired Navy fighter pilot, have a 10-year-old son back home in Houston.

The first Native American in space, in 2002, was now-retired astronaut John Herrington of the Chickasaw Nation.

## In a #MeToo moment, Hollywood figures face season of trials

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The #MeToo movement is having another moment in the spotlight as high-profile sexual assault trials play out in courtrooms from coast to coast.

Five years after allegations against movie mogul Harvey Weinstein triggered a wave of sexual misconduct claims in Hollywood and beyond, he and "That '70s Show" actor Danny Masterson are fighting criminal rape charges at trials down the hall from each other in Los Angeles.

In New York, trials are underway in sexual assault lawsuits against actor Kevin Spacey and screenwriter-director Paul Haggis, both Oscar winners. Spacey's defense rested Wednesday while lawyers for Haggis and his accuser gave opening statements in an adjacent courthouse. All of the men deny the allegations.

A forcible touching case against another Academy Award winner, actor Cuba Gooding Jr., wrapped up in New York last week with a guilty plea to a non-criminal harassment violation and no jail time, to the dismay of at least some of his accusers.

The confluence is a coincidence, but a striking one, amid a cultural movement that has demanded visibility and accountability.

"We're still very early on in this time of reckoning," said Debra Katz, a Washington-based lawyer who has represented many sexual assault accusers. She isn't involved in the Haggis, Masterson, Spacey or Weinstein trials.

Besides their #MeToo reverberations, both Haggis' case and Masterson's have become forums for scrutinizing the Church of Scientology, though from different perspectives.

In the case against Haggis, publicist Haleigh Breest claims that the "Crash" and "Million Dollar Baby" screenwriter forced her to perform oral sex and raped her after she reluctantly agreed to a drink in his Manhattan apartment after a 2013 movie premiere. She's seeking unspecified damages.

She didn't go public until after the allegations against Weinstein burst into view in 2017 and Haggis condemned him.

"The hypocrisy of it made her blood boil," lawyer Zoe Salzman said in her opening statement.

Jurors will also hear from four other women who told Breest's lawyers that Haggis sexually assaulted them, or attempted to do so, in separate encounters. One of them testified Wednesday, via videotaped questioning, that Haggis raped her during an after-hours meeting in her office in 1996, when both worked on a Canadian TV show.

The jury won't hear, however, that Italian authorities this summer investigated a sexual assault allegation against Haggis, which he denied.

Haggis maintains that his encounter with Breest was consensual, and defense attorney Priya Chaudhry noted that the other women who are set to testify never took legal action of their own against him.

"Paul Haggis is relieved that he finally gets his day in court," Chaudhry told jurors.

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Both sides pointed to what Breest texted to a friend the day after the alleged attack.

Her lawyer emphasized that Breest wrote that "he was so rough and aggressive. Never, ever again ... And I kept saying no." Haggis' attorney, meanwhile, said Breest added "lol" — common texting shorthand for laughter — when she mentioned performing oral sex, and that she told the friend she wanted to be alone with Haggis again to "see what happens."

Chaudhry argued that Breest falsely claimed rape to angle for a payout. But the attorney also suggested another explanation for the allegations.

Promising "circumstantial evidence," she suggested that Scientologists ginned up Breest's lawsuit to discredit him after he became a prominent detractor.

The church denies any involvement, and Breest's lawyers have called the notion a baseless conspiracy theory.

"Scientology has nothing to do with this case" or with any of Haggis' accusers, she told jurors. The church has said the same.

Scientology is a system of beliefs, teachings and rituals focused on spiritual betterment. Science fiction and fantasy author L. Ron Hubbard's 1950 book "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health" is a foundational text.

The religion has gained a following among such celebrities as Tom Cruise, John Travolta and Kirstie Alley. But some high-profile members have broken with it, including Haggis, singer Lisa Marie Presley and actor Leah Remini. In a memoir and documentary series, Remini said the church uses manipulative and abusive tactics to indoctrinate followers into putting its goals above all else, and she maintained that it worked to discredit critics who spoke out.

The church has vociferously disputed the claims.

Haggis says he was a Scientologist for three decades before leaving the church in 2009. He slammed it as "a cult" in a 2011 New Yorker article that later informed a book and an HBO documentary, and he foreshadowed that retribution would come in the form of "a scandal that looks like it has nothing to do with the church."

The church, which didn't respond to a request for comment this week, has repeatedly said Haggis lied about its practices to get attention for himself and his career.

Masterson's lawyer, meanwhile, is asking jurors to disregard the actor's affiliation with Scientology, though prosecutors say the church discouraged two of his three accusers from going to authorities. All three are former members.

Closing arguments are scheduled for Thursday in a \$40 million lawsuit brought by actor Anthony Rapp who says Spacey made a sexual pass at him in 1986, when Rapp was 14 and Spacey was 26. Spacey denies the encounter ever happened.

Weinstein is facing his second criminal trial, this time set in L.A. and involving five women and multiple rape and sexual assault charges. He is already serving a 23-year prison sentence on a rape and sex assault conviction involving two women in New York.

The Associated Press does not usually name people alleging sexual assault unless they come forward publicly, as Breest and Rapp have done.

## UK PM Truss vows to stay, but is on brink as minister quits

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Liz Truss described herself as "a fighter and not a quitter" Wednesday as she faced a hostile opposition and fury from her own Conservative Party over her botched economic plan. Within hours of the defiant statement, her government was teetering on the verge of collapse.

A senior member of the government left her post with a fusillade of criticism at Truss, and a House of Commons vote descended into acrimony and accusations of bullying,

Home Secretary Suella Braverman said she resigned after breaching rules by sending an official document from her personal email account. She used her resignation letter to lambaste Truss, saying she had

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"concerns about the direction of this government."

"The business of government relies upon people accepting responsibility for their mistakes," she said. "Pretending we haven't made mistakes, carrying on as if everyone can't see that we have made them and hoping that things will magically come right is not serious politics."

Braverman is a popular figure on the Conservative Party's right wing and a champion of more restrictive immigration policies who ran unsuccessfully for party leader this summer, a contest won by Truss.

Braverman was replaced as home secretary, the minister responsible for immigration and law and order, by former Cabinet minister Grant Shapps. He's a high-profile supporter of Rishi Sunak, the former Treasury chief defeated by Truss in the final round of the Conservative leadership race.

Truss faced more turmoil in Parliament Wednesday evening on a vote over fracking for shale gas — a practice that Truss wants to resume despite opposition from many Conservatives.

With a large Conservative majority in Parliament, an opposition call for a fracking ban was easily defeated by 326 votes to 230, but some lawmakers were furious that Conservative Party whips said the vote would be treated as confidence motion, meaning the government would fall if the motion passed.

There were angry scenes in the House of Commons during and after the vote, with party whips accused of using heavy-handed tactics to gain votes. Labour lawmaker Chris Bryant said he "saw members being physically manhandled ... and being bullied."

Some lawmakers reported that that Conservative Chief Whip Wendy Morton, who is responsible for party discipline, and her deputy had resigned. But Truss' office later said both remained in their jobs.

Conservative officials denied there had been manhandling, but in the chaos Truss herself failed to vote, according to the official record. Many Tory lawmakers were left despondent by the state of their party.

Conservative lawmaker Charles Walker said it was "a shambles and a disgrace."

"I hope that all those people that put Liz Truss in (office), I hope it was worth it," he told the BBC. "I hope it was worth it to sit around the Cabinet table, because the damage they have done to our party is extraordinary."

The dramatic developments came days after Truss fired her Treasury chief, Kwasi Kwarteng, on Friday after the economic package the pair unveiled Sept. 23 spooked financial markets and triggered an economic and political crisis.

The plan's 45 billion pounds (\$50 billion) in unfunded tax cuts sparked turmoil on financial markets, hammering the value of the pound and increasing the cost of U.K. government borrowing. The Bank of England was forced to intervene to prevent the crisis from spreading to the wider economy and putting pension funds at risk.

On Monday Kwarteng's replacement, Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt, scrapped almost all of Truss' tax cuts, along with her flagship energy policy and her promise of no public spending cuts. He said the government will need to save billions of pounds and there are "many difficult decisions" to be made before he sets out a medium-term fiscal plan on Oct. 31.

Speaking to lawmakers for the first time since the U-turn, Truss apologized Wednesday and admitted she had made mistakes during her six weeks in office, but insisted that by changing course she had "taken responsibility and made the right decisions in the interest of the country's economic stability."

Opposition lawmakers shouted "Resign!" as she spoke in the House of Commons.

Asked by opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer, "Why is she still here?" Truss retorted: "I am a fighter and not a quitter. I have acted in the national interest to make sure that we have economic stability."

Official figures released Wednesday showed U.K. inflation rose to 10.1% in September, returning to a 40-year high first hit in July, as the soaring cost of food squeezed household budgets. While inflation is high around the world — driven up by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its effect on energy supplies — polls show most Britons blame the government for the country's economic pain.

With opinion polls giving the Labour Party a large and growing lead, many Conservatives now believe their only hope of avoiding electoral oblivion is to replace Truss. But she insists she is not stepping down, and legislators are divided about how to get rid of her.



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A national election does not have to be held until 2024. Truss appeared to rule out calling an early election, saying Wednesday that “what is important is we work together ... to get through this winter and protect the economy.”

Under Conservative Party rules, Truss technically is safe from a leadership challenge for a year, but the rules can be changed if enough lawmakers want it. There is fevered speculation about how many lawmakers have already submitted letters calling for a no-confidence vote, and tensions rose further on Wednesday evening.

As yet, there is no front-runner to succeed her. Sunak, House of Commons leader Penny Mordaunt and popular Defense Secretary Ben Wallace all have supporters, as does Hunt, whom many see as the de facto prime minister already.

Some even favor the return of Boris Johnson, who was ousted in the summer after becoming enmeshed in ethics scandals.

## Putin adds martial law in Ukraine regions, limits in Russia

By HANNA ARHIROVA, YURAS KARMANAU and SABRA AYRES Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin doubled down Wednesday on his faltering invasion of Ukraine with a declaration of martial law in four illegally annexed regions and preparations within Russia for draconian new restrictions and crackdowns.

Putin’s drastic efforts to tighten his grip on Ukrainians and Russians follow a series of embarrassing setbacks: stinging battlefield defeats, sabotage and troubles with his troop mobilization.

The martial law order belies the Kremlin’s attempts to portray life in the annexed regions as returning to normal. The reality is that a military administration has replaced civilian leaders in the southern city of Kherson and a mass evacuation from the city is underway as a Ukrainian counteroffensive grinds on.

The battle for Kherson, a city of more than 250,000 people with key industries and a major port, is a pivotal moment for Ukraine and Russia heading into winter, when front lines could largely freeze for months. It’s the largest city Russia has held during the war, which began Feb. 24.

A trickle of evacuations from the city in recent days has become a flood. Local officials said Wednesday that 5,000 had left out of an expected 60,000. Russian state television showed residents crowding on the banks of the Dnieper River, many with small children, to cross by boats to the east — and, from there, deeper into Russian-controlled territory.

In announcing martial law effective Thursday, Putin told his Security Council, “We are working to solve very difficult large-scale tasks to ensure Russia’s security and safe future.”

Putin’s army is under growing pressure from a Ukrainian counteroffensive that has clawed back territory. The Russian leader is also faltering after the sabotage of a strategically important bridge linking Russia with Crimea, assassinations of Kremlin-installed officials in Kherson and mistakes he himself has admitted in his partial troop mobilization.

Putin’s martial law declaration authorized the creation of civil defense forces; the potential imposition of curfews; restrictions on travel and public gatherings; tighter censorship; and broader law enforcement powers in Kherson and the other annexed regions of Donetsk, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia.

In an ominous move, Putin opened the door for restrictive measures to be extended across Russia, too. That may lead to a tougher crackdown on dissent than the current dispersal of antiwar protests and jailing of people making statements or providing information about the fighting that differs from the official line.

The severity of new restrictions inside Russia depends on proximity to Ukraine.

Putin put areas nearest Ukraine on medium alert, including annexed Crimea, Krasnodar, Belgorod, Bryansk, Kursk, Rostov. Local leaders are authorized to organize territorial defense, ensure public order and safety, safeguard transportation, communication and energy facilities, and use these resources to help meet the Russian military’s needs.

Leaders in these border areas can also carry out resettlements of residents and restrict freedom of movement. Leaders in other areas have been granted similar powers, depending on their alert level.

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In the Kherson region, Ukrainian forces have pushed back Russian positions on the west bank of the Dnieper River. By pulling civilians out and fortifying positions in the region's main city, which backs onto the river, Russian forces appear to be hoping that the wide, deep waters will serve as a natural barrier against the Ukrainian advance.

Russia has said the movement of Ukrainians to Russia or Russian-controlled territory is voluntary, but in many cases, they have no other routes out, and no other choice.

Under martial law, authorities can force evacuations. Ukraine's national security chief, Oleksiy Danilov, said on Twitter that Putin's declaration is "preparation for the mass deportation of the Ukrainian population to the depressed regions of Russia to change the ethnic composition of the occupied territory."

For months, reports have circulated of forced deportations, and an Associated Press investigation found that Russian officials deported thousands of Ukrainian children to be raised as Russian.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry said Putin's decree is illegal, calling it part of his effort "to deprive the inhabitants of the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine of even basic human rights."

Russian authorities played up fears of an attack on Kherson, seemingly to persuade residents to leave. Text messages warned residents to expect shelling, Russian state media reported.

One resident reached by phone described military vehicles leaving the city, Moscow-installed authorities scrambling to load documents onto trucks, and thousands of people lining up for ferries and buses.

"It looks more like a panic rather than an organized evacuation. People are buying the last remaining groceries in grocery shops and are running to the Kherson river port, where thousands of people are already waiting," the resident, Konstantin, said. The AP is withholding his family name, as he requested, for his safety.

"People are scared by talk of explosions, missiles and a possible blockade of the city," he added.

Leaflets told evacuees they could take two large suitcases, medicine and food for a few days.

Andriy Yermak, head of the Ukrainian presidential office, called the evacuation "a propaganda show" and said Russia's claims that Kyiv's forces might shell Kherson "a rather primitive tactic, given that the armed forces do not fire at Ukrainian cities."

Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov said the operation could presage intense fighting and "the harshest" tactics from Russia's new commander for Ukraine, Gen. Sergei Surovikin.

"They are prepared to wipe the city from the face of the Earth but not give it back to the Ukrainians," Zhdanov said in an interview.

In a rare acknowledgement of the pressure that Kyiv's troops are exerting, Surovikin described the Kherson situation as "very difficult." Russian bloggers interpreted the comments as a warning of a possible Kremlin pullback. Surovikin claimed that Ukrainian forces were planning to destroy a hydroelectric facility, which local officials said would flood part of Kherson.

Incapable of holding all the territory it has seized and struggling with manpower and equipment losses, Russia has stepped up air bombardments, with a scorched-earth campaign targeting Ukrainian power plants and other key infrastructure. Russia has also increased its use of weaponized Iranian drones to hit apartment buildings and other civilian targets.

Russia launched numerous missiles over Ukraine on Wednesday. Ukrainian authorities said they shot down four cruise missiles and 10 Iranian drones. Energy facilities were hit in the Vinnytsia and Ivano-Frankivsk regions.

Air raid sirens blared in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, sending many people into metro stations for shelter. Mayor Vitali Klitschko announced the city would start seasonal centralized heating on Thursday at lower temperatures than normal to conserve energy.

A Ukrainian energy official, Oleksandr Kharchenko reported Wednesday that 40% of the country's electric system had been severely damaged. Authorities warned all residents to cut consumption and said power supply would be reduced Thursday to prevent blackouts. One area where power and water were reported knocked out due to overnight shelling was Enerhodar. The southern city is next to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is one of the war's most worrisome flashpoints.

Missiles severely damaged an energy facility near Zelenskyy's hometown, Kryvyi Rih, a city in south-

central Ukraine, cutting power to villages, towns and to one city district, the regional governor reported.

## Trump claim of 'Crime of Century' fizzles in 3-year probe

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Donald Trump once predicted that a special prosecutor appointed during his administration would uncover “the crime of the century” — a conspiracy to sink his 2016 campaign.

Yet here are the results of the three-year probe by prosecutor John Durham: two trial acquittals — the latest on Tuesday — and a former FBI attorney sentenced to probation.

That has fallen far short of Trump supporters' expectations that Durham would reveal a “deep state” plot behind the U.S. government's investigation into ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

The outcome has led to scrutiny over the purpose of Durham's appointment by former Attorney General William Barr, who tasked him with sussing out misconduct in the Trump-Russia probe. It also has raised questions about whether or when the current attorney general, Merrick Garland, might move to rein in Durham's work or hasten its completion.

“You really measure the success of an investigation by what it uncovers in terms of pernicious activity, and he's uncovered nothing,” said Stephen Saltzburg, a George Washington University law professor and former senior Justice Department official.

There are no signs Durham plans to charge anyone else in his investigation. He is expected to produce a report at some point, but it's unclear whether he will identify any significant misconduct or errors beyond those already reported by the Justice Department's watchdog.

Barr gave Durham a broad mandate in 2019 to hunt for wrongdoing by the FBI or other agencies in the early days of their investigation into potential coordination between the Trump campaign and Russia. At the time, Durham was the U.S. attorney in Connecticut with decades of Justice Department experience, including investigating CIA interrogations of terror suspects.

Trump supporters cheered the appointment, and not just because of Durham's bona fides.

The appointment was made shortly after the conclusion of an investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller, which found substantial contacts between Russians and Trump associates but did not allege a criminal conspiracy between them. In December 2019, a Justice Department inspector general report concluded that the Russia investigation was opened for a legitimate reason but identified numerous errors in how it was conducted — giving Trump and his supporters an avenue of attack and optimism over Durham.

But by the end of 2020, there were signs Durham's investigation was losing momentum.

One of his top prosecutors resigned without explanation from the Justice Department. Months later, Barr told The Wall Street Journal that he did not believe there had been improper activity during the Russia investigation by the CIA, even though suspicions about the intelligence community had helped prompt Durham's appointment in the first place.

The year ended with just one criminal case — a guilty plea by an FBI lawyer who admitted doctoring an internal email related to the surveillance of a former Trump campaign adviser. Kevin Clinesmith was sentenced to probation, rather than prison. Notably, the case involved conduct uncovered in an earlier investigation by the inspector general, rather than by Durham's team.

Two other criminal cases, also narrow in nature, faltered. After deliberating for just a few hours, a jury in May acquitted Michael Sussmann, a lawyer for Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign. He had been accused of lying to the FBI during a meeting in which he presented the bureau's top lawyer with information about Trump he thought should be investigated.

On Tuesday, a jury acquitted Igor Danchenko, a Russian analyst at a U.S. think tank who'd been accused of lying to the FBI about his role in the creation of a largely discredited dossier — a compendium of unproven assertions that sought to tie Trump to Russia and whose creation was funded by Democrats. During the trial, he attacked the credibility of FBI agents who were his own witnesses.

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Despite the lack of convictions, Durham has still managed to cast an unflattering light on aspects of the Russia investigation. The Danchenko trial, for instance, centered on the origins of the dossier, which helped form the basis of secret surveillance applications the FBI filed to monitor the communications of ex-Trump campaign aide Carter Page.

Even so, Page was one of numerous threads investigated by the FBI, and the dossier did not initiate the Russia probe. The allegations from Durham's probe have also not erased the core finding of the Mueller probe — that Russia wanted Trump elected and that Trump's team welcomed the help — nor have they swayed jurors.

"While Durham essentially tried to put the FBI itself on trial through these prosecutions by pointing to missteps and errors in the early Trump-Russia probe, the cases painted the FBI as more victim than perpetrator and evidence of any orchestrated scheme by FBI agents to steer the investigation for political purposes never materialized," Robert Mintz, a New Jersey lawyer and former federal prosecutor, wrote in an email.

The Justice Department declined to comment about Durham's future, including how much longer his team might continue or when he might produce a report. Weeks before he resigned, Barr designated Durham as a special counsel to ensure his investigation would continue in the Biden administration.

A spokesman for Durham declined to comment on criticism of the work.

Garland and senior Justice Department leaders, perhaps careful to avoid the perception of meddling in such a politically charged investigation, have taken a hands-off approach to Durham's work.

Before Sussmann was indicted, his attorneys appealed to senior department officials in hopes of preventing a charge, according to a person familiar with the matter who insisted on anonymity to discuss private conversations. But the Justice Department rebuffed the protest, allowing the case to proceed.

Now, though, there is rising pressure not only on Durham to wrap up but on Garland, as attorney general, to urge him along.

"I think he was very wise to let this run its course," Saltzburg said of Garland. "I believe the course has been run. It's over. I believe what Merrick Garland should say to Durham is, it's time to submit your report and go home."

## Parents of accused North Carolina shooter express sorrow

By JONATHAN DREW and ALLEN G. BREED Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The parents of a 15-year-old boy accused of killing five people in a North Carolina shooting rampage released a statement saying they are "overcome with grief" and saw no warning signs before the killings.

The statement Tuesday by Alan and Elise Thompson also confirmed that one of Austin Thompson's five victims on Thursday night was his own 16-year-old brother, James. Witnesses said in 911 calls that the shooter opened fire with what appeared to be a shotgun in a neighborhood northeast of downtown Raleigh and along an adjacent walking trail.

"Our son Austin inflicted immeasurable pain on the Raleigh community, and we are overcome with grief for the innocent lives lost," the parents said.

They also said in their statement that they will fully cooperate with law enforcement to help investigators understand what happened, but that they have questions themselves. Authorities have not discussed a motive for the shootings.

"There were never any indications or warning signs that Austin was capable of doing anything like this," the statement said.

Austin Thompson was hospitalized in critical condition following his arrest last Thursday night, hours after the shooting began. Elise Thompson said in a text message Wednesday that his condition had improved but that he remained in a pediatric ICU unit. She declined to comment further.

The Associated Press generally does not name people under 18 who are accused of crimes, but is identifying Austin Thompson because of the severity and publicity of the shootings and because his parents have voluntarily named him in their public statement.

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The Wake County prosecutor has said she will pursue adult charges against the suspect. Authorities had previously identified the shooter as a 15-year-old boy but had not publicly released his name.

Investigators have not disclosed where Austin Thompson obtained the gun or guns used in the shooting. A lawyer for the parents didn't immediately respond to an email Wednesday asking if the parents knew how he got the weaponry he used.

Callers who dialed 911 during the shooting rampage described encountering bodies on the streets or front yards of their neighborhood and along a trail popular with runners and bikers, according to recordings released by authorities. Witnesses said shooter was wearing camouflage and using a shotgun in the attacks that began shortly after 5 p.m.

The shooting drew officers from numerous agencies to the neighborhood as the suspect eluded capture for several hours. The victims, ranging in age from 16 to their late 50s and were felled going about their daily routines, police and loved ones said. Among those killed was an off-duty police officer. In addition to those killed, two others were wounded.

Several people acquainted with Austin Thompson before the shooting – including a neighbor, a classmate and a victim's husband who lived nearby — told The AP that he was quiet but seemed friendly.

Tracey Howard, whose wife of five years Nicole Connors was among those killed, said that Austin Thompson and his brother lived two doors down. He said that he would talk college football with their father and that he would exchange waves with the two boys.

"I'd see them coming from school. 'How you doing?'" he said on Friday, raising his arm to demonstrate. "They'd wave back. Sometimes they didn't. But we never had any beef or problems with them."

Another neighbor, Jennifer Magnuson, said that her three teenage children attended high school with the boys and rode the bus with them. She said her children described Austin and his brother as keeping to themselves.

"They said that they were just very quiet, very shy. Didn't talk very much on the bus. And they were a little weird. Like, they just wouldn't socialize, except with each other."

She said her 16-year-old son tried to socialize with Austin and his brother, but the boys didn't seem interested.

"My 16-year-old, he talked to them a couple of times, just to kind of see, to get a feel for them. But they, the boys just seemed like they just were not willing to be friends or just didn't want to talk or anything like that," she said. "So, my son's like, 'All right. Well, I tried.' And just, yeah, went on."

Omer Rosas, a sophomore at Knightdale High School who was in classes with Austin Thompson, said they talked frequently in class and described him as personable. He said he was shocked to find out Friday morning that his classmate had been arrested in connection with the shooting. He said that Austin Thompson liked to run and was considering joining the track team.

"I did not expect it to be him," Rosas said in an interview outside the school Friday. "He was very calm. He wasn't like a mean person. He was open to be nice to everyone."

## FANTASY PLAYS: Players to start and sit for NFL Week 7

By BRANDON GDULA numberFire

Another season of fantasy football, another group of start-or-sit scenarios to answer.

It's not just enough to draft the right team and make the right moves off the waiver wire. We all know that. We also have to make sure that we are starting the right players each week.

Of course, we have our studs, anchors, and the players we're starting virtually no matter what. We don't need anyone to tell us to start Travis Kelce.

But, the further down the lineup we go, the more those questions trickle in.

Then again, no player is a "must-sit" in every scenario, and perhaps the WR3 you've been plugging in each week may have a better alternative.

To answer the question, "Should I sit Player X," depends on the answer to the question, "Who can you start instead?"

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That's why I like to switch up the typical start-or-sit column format. I'm going to be listing out all relevant fantasy football players each week and bucketing them into tiers.

Take some of the guesswork out of setting our lineups weekly, I'll be leveraging thousands of slate simulations that are based on numberFire's player projections with dynamic measures for variance, such as quarterback rushing, running back receiving, and receiver target depth.

The results will boil down to three tiers: players we should be confident about starting, players we can consider starting whenever we don't have better alternatives but who aren't must-plays, and players we should try to bench whenever we do have better alternatives (i.e. players listed above them on the list).

These players are listed in order of frequency of hitting the stated threshold (i.e. QB12, RB24, WR24, and TE12 performances), and higher on the list means more able to start.

The groupings reflect a 12-team, single-quarterback league with the following hypothetical in mind: if I had other viable options on my bench or the waiver wire, should I start this player this week?

Players not listed should be presumed sit-worthy in a shallow or standard-sized league, and all fantasy points references and rankings reflect half-PPR scoring.

## QUARTERBACKS

Start with confidence:

- Justin Herbert vs. SEA (75%)
- Lamar Jackson vs. CLE (72%)
- Patrick Mahomes at SF (69%)
- Joe Burrow vs. ATL (66%)
- Dak Prescott vs. DET (56%)
- Geno Smith at LAC (56%)
- Kyler Murray vs. NO (55%)
- Derek Carr vs. HOU (53%)
- Tom Brady at CAR (51%)
- Tua Tagovailoa vs. PIT (51%)

Consider if needed:

- Aaron Rodgers at WSH (49%)
- Russell Wilson vs. NYJ (45% at full; 9% at half)
- Marcus Mariota at CIN (43%)
- Daniel Jones at JAC (43%)
- Mac Jones vs. CHI (41%)
- Matt Ryan at TEN (38%)
- Ryan Tannehill vs. IND (37%)
- Trevor Lawrence vs. NYG (37%)
- Jimmy Garoppolo vs. KC (36%)
- Jared Goff at DAL (35%)

Bench if possible:

Jameis Winston at ARI (33%); Jacoby Brissett at BAL (32%); Justin Fields at NE (32%); Taylor Heinicke vs. GB (30%); Davis Mills at LV (30%); Zach Wilson at DEN (30%); - Mitch Trubisky at MIA (7%); Kenny Pickett at MIA (6%).

Russell Wilson has an initial partial projection because of a hamstring injury. If he is projected as a full-go, then he is rating out as 45% likely for a top-12 week.

If Mac Jones does not play, Bailey Zappe is rating as a 29% play.

Even at a full projection, Jameis Winston is a preferred sit candidate; the same would apply to Andy Dalton.

Kenny Pickett and Mitch Trubisky are initially projected for a workload split. They're not QB1 options in shallow leagues either way.

The bye week quarterbacks — Josh Allen, Jalen Hurts, Matthew Stafford, and Kirk Cousins — are particularly impactful for Week 7. That's two stars and two quality starters. There are still a handful of surefire options even without them, but that does leave Tier 2 looking pretty long — and a bit shaky. That said, we

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still have nearly a dozen quarterbacks in the confident start tier, so you likely have one of them rostered and can avoid the drop-off.

The model still likes Aaron Rodgers well enough. He has had a tough schedule so far, and according to our Passing Net Expected Points (NEP) metric, which is numberFire's expected points model, Rodgers has played just below expectation once accounting for opponents faced. Only one of the defenses he's squared off with thus far has ranked outside the top 20 in adjusted pass defense (per our numbers). The Washington Commanders, his Week 7 opponent, are 23rd. In the lone game with a comparable matchup to this one, Rodgers still had only 195 yards and no touchdowns against the Minnesota Vikings. Consider looking elsewhere if you have the option to do so this week, but don't go too far down the list to avoid Rodgers.

Although Trevor Lawrence hasn't been consistently fantasy-friendly, he is shaping up as a potential streamer for needy teams. He faces a New York Giants defense that ranks 18th in adjusted pass defense, a tier in which Lawrence's opponents have lived in 2022.

Excluding a single matchup against a top-five defense, Lawrence has played five games against teams ranked 16th through 23rd in adjusted pass defense. In them, he's averaged 18.7 fantasy points while putting up a 52.5% passing success rate and 0.17 Passing NEP per drop-back. The NFL average this season is only 0.06, so there are still reasons to be interested in Lawrence as a high-end QB2 in fantasy formats.

Jared Goff returns from a bye to face a stingy Dallas Cowboys defense. The Cowboys rank top five in aggregate fantasy stats allowed to opposing quarterbacks. Goff, in two games against top-12 pass defenses, has averaged just 12.8 fantasy points with a per-game stat line of 222.0 yards, 1.0 touchdowns, 1.0 interceptions, and -0.19 Passing NEP per drop-back.

We might be eager to want to rush back to this offense, but take a look at some other names above him if possible.

## RUNNING BACKS

Start with confidence:

- Derrick Henry vs. IND (83%)
- Christian McCaffrey vs. TB (82%)
- Jonathan Taylor at TEN (80% if full; 40% at half)
- Josh Jacobs vs. HOU (78%)
- Austin Ekeler vs. SEA (77%)
- Saquon Barkley at JAC (76%)
- Leonard Fournette at CAR (75%)
- Joe Mixon vs. ATL (74%)
- Alvin Kamara at ARI (68%)
- Ezekiel Elliott vs. DET (66%)
- Nick Chubb at BAL (66%)
- Rhamondre Stevenson vs. CHI (64%)
- Aaron Jones at WSH (64%)
- Breece Hall at DEN (63%)
- Dameon Pierce at LV (62%)
- David Montgomery at NE (62%)
- Kenneth Walker III at LAC (60%)
- D'Andre Swift at DAL (60% at full; 23% at half)

Consider if needed:

- Raheem Mostert vs. PIT (59%)
- Najee Harris at MIA (52%)
- Jamaal Williams at DAL (51% without Swift; 26% with Swift)
- Jeff Wilson vs. KC (51%)
- A.J. Dillon at WSH (50%)
- Travis Etienne vs. NYG (49%)

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- Eno Benjamin vs. NO (44%)
- Clyde Edwards-Helaire at SF (43%)
- Tony Pollard vs. DET (42%)
- Brian Robinson vs. GB (42%)
- Caleb Huntley at CIN (41%)
- James Robinson vs. NYG (40%)

Bench if possible:

Melvin Gordon vs. NYJ (39%); Tyler Allgeier at CIN (38%); J.K. Dobbins vs. CLE (38%); Kareem Hunt at BAL (38%); Antonio Gibson vs. GB (32%); Nyheim Hines at TEN (30%); Mike Boone vs. NYJ (29%); Rex Burkhead at LV (29%); Michael Carter at DEN (26%); J.D. McKissic vs. GB (21%); Rachaad White at CAR (21%); Latavius Murray vs. NYJ (20%).

Jonathan Taylor was limited in practice on Thursday and Friday for Week 6, but was ruled out before last Sunday. At a half workload, he is projected for a 40% top-24 rate. At a full workload, he is at 80%.

With the Detroit Lions on a bye in Week 6, we didn't learn much about the status of D'Andre Swift. He is initially projected at half of his usual workload, but bumps up to 60% if projected fully.

The snap rate for Raheem Mostert scaled back to 62.5% last week, but he was on the injury report last week, so that might have had something to do with it. We'll see how he progresses this week. Still, we're not in a position to scoff at a majority snap rate from any running back, and Mostert has played on at least half of the Miami Dolphins' snaps in five straight games and on at least 60.0% in three consecutive. In that three-game stretch as a more involved piece in the Miami offense, Mostert is averaging 15.7 carries, 2.7 targets, and 83.7 yards from scrimmage for 11.0 half-PPR points.

We should be cautious with Jeff Wilson if possible. In Week 5, Wilson had 132 scrimmage yards on 22 carries and two targets while playing 57.4% of the San Francisco 49ers' offensive snaps. In Week 6, the Niners trailed, and his role scaled back to a 50.9% snap rate, a workload that yielded seven carries and one target for just 25 total yards. This week, the rushing matchup against the Kansas City Chiefs is enviable (they're 24th in rushing success rate allowed to opposing backs). However, the likelihood of playing from behind means that we could see more of a Week 6 role for Wilson than what he had in Week 5. Just think before locking him in.

Can we finally start Tony Pollard? Maybe. It depends on the expectations. Pollard feels very involved in the Dallas Cowboys' offense, and that offense should be getting Dak Prescott back under center this week.

Pollard is yet to play on more than 54.7% of the team's snaps, and his high-water mark since Week 2 is just 42.6% while Ezekiel Elliott maintains a majority-back role. On a positive note, Pollard's snaps are more productive than most: he gets a carry or target on 45.8% of his snaps (compared to 45.1% for Elliott and 38.8% as a position-wide average). The matchup with the Detroit Lions is very promising as well. They're allowing 0.99 rushing yards over expectation to opposing backs as well as a 51.3% rushing success rate, each of those ranking 29th in the NFL. Both Elliott and Pollard are flex-worthy plays in this spot, and the model loves Elliott even more than that.

## WIDE RECEIVERS

Start with confidence:

- Deebo Samuel vs. KC (87%)
- Davante Adams vs. HOU (82%)
- Ja'Marr Chase vs. ATL (72%)
- CeeDee Lamb vs. DET (65%)
- Tyreek Hill vs. PIT (64%)
- Mike Williams vs. SEA (62%)
- Tyler Lockett at LAC (59%)
- D.K. Metcalf at LAC (57%)
- Amon-Ra St. Brown at DAL (57%)
- Courtland Sutton vs. NYJ (55%)
- Jaylen Waddle vs. PIT (55%)



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- Mike Evans at CAR (54%)
- DeAndre Hopkins vs. NO (54%)
- Amari Cooper at BAL (53%)
- Chris Olave at ARI (53%)
- Brandin Cooks at LV (53%)

Consider if needed:

- Keenan Allen vs. SEA (49% at full; 10% at half)
- Michael Pittman Jr. at TEN (49%)
- Christian Kirk vs. NYG (49%)
- Chris Godwin at CAR (49%)
- Tee Higgins vs. ATL (48%)
- Diontae Johnson at MIA (46%)
- Jerry Jeudy vs. NYJ (43%)
- Drake London at CIN (43%)
- Allen Lazard at WSH (43%)
- Jakobi Meyers vs. CHI (41%)
- Robert Woods vs. IND (40%)
- JuJu Smith-Schuster at SF (37%)
- Marquez Valdes-Scantling at SF (34%)
- Brandon Aiyuk vs. KC (33%)
- George Pickens at MIA (33%)
- D.J. Moore vs. TB (32%)
- Devin Duvernay vs. CLE (32%)
- Donovan Peoples-Jones at BAL (31%)
- Garrett Wilson at DEN (30%)
- Michael Gallup vs. DET (30%)

Bench if possible:

Chase Claypool at MIA (29%); Terry McLaurin vs. GB (28%); Marvin Jones vs. NYG (28%); Tyler Boyd vs. ATL (27%); Alec Pierce at TEN (26%); Zay Jones vs. NYG (26%); Romeo Doubs at WSH (25%); Darnell Mooney at NE (25%); Nico Collins at LV (24%); Marquez Callaway at ARI (22%); Corey Davis at DEN (21%); Curtis Samuel vs. GB (20%); Hunter Renfrow vs. HOU (20%).

Keenan Allen is projected at a half workload. With a full return, his top-24 odds are 49%.

Brandon Aiyuk and the rest of the 49ers had some increased passing volume their way in a negative game script in Week 6. Aiyuk handled 11 targets for 83 yards and two touchdowns against the Atlanta Falcons. The 49ers are underdogs this week against the Chiefs, and that should lead to more volume for the pass-catchers again. San Francisco has a 53.1% pass rate so far this season, ranking them 25th in the league. When trailing by seven or fewer (and excluding two-minute drill possessions), their pass rate is up to 65.6%, and their pass rate over expectation is +3.3%. It may not be point-chasing to go after Aiyuk again this week.

On the other side of that game, we have a few options with the Chiefs' pass-catchers who are borderline plays once again. Last week saw JuJu Smith-Schuster rack up 113 yards and a touchdown on his five targets. He did that by having a perfect catch rate and accruing 81 yards after the catch. He entered last week with only 136 yards after the catch (27.2 per game) on the year.

Marquez Valdes-Scantling, meanwhile, didn't catch any of his three targets a week after setting season highs in catches (six), targets (eight), and yards (90).

Collectively, their matchup isn't ideal, as the 49ers are 10th in adjusted fantasy points per target allowed to receivers. However, they are allowing a catch rate over expectation of +2.0% and may have had some early touchdown luck. Don't rule them out just because of a tough on-paper matchup.

I'm still seeing the Washington Commanders' pass-catchers ranked well most places, but the simulations are noticeably lower on them. Terry McLaurin and Curtis Samuel will see downgraded efficiency with Taylor

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Heinicke under center in Week 7 and beyond.

Heinicke's 2021 season featured more than 500 drop-backs, but just 0.01 Passing NEP per drop-back and a 45.0% passing success rate, marks that were 0.09 and 2.1 points below the position average, respectively.

In 2021, Washington ranked 25th in pass rate, as well. They've been a bit pass-heavier to start 2022 with Carson Wentz, but we could see that volume change again now that Heinicke is back under center. Even a matchup against the Green Bay Packers (31st in adjusted fantasy points per target allowed to receivers) isn't enough to make them priority starts over a lot of their peers.

TIGHT END

Start with confidence:

- Mark Andrews vs. CLE (82%)
- Travis Kelce at SF (82%)
- Gerald Everett vs. SEA (57%)
- Kyle Pitts at CIN (56%)
- George Kittle vs. KC (55%)
- Darren Waller vs. HOU (53% at full; 26% at half)

Consider if needed:

- Zach Ertz vs. NO (42%)
- David Njoku at BAL (42%)
- Pat Freiermuth at MIA (42%)
- T.J. Hockenson at DAL (40%)
- Dalton Schultz vs. DET (40%)
- Hayden Hurst vs. ATL (39%)
- Robert Tonyan at WSH (38%)
- Noah Fant at LAC (33%)
- Evan Engram vs. NYG (31%)
- Daniel Bellinger at JAC (30%)

Bench if possible:

Tyler Conklin at DEN (28%); Hunter Henry vs. CHI (27%); Isaiah Likely vs. CLE (25%); Logan Thomas vs. GB (25%); Cole Kmet at NE (24%); Brevin Jordan at LV (24%); Mike Gesicki vs. PIT (22%); Will Dissly at LAC (21%); Adam Trautman at ARI (20%); Taysom Hill at ARI (20%); Cade Otton at CAR (19% assuming Cameron Brate is out).

Darren Waller was limited in Week 5 with a hamstring injury; there has been no update since then given the Las Vegas Raiders' bye.

Pat Freiermuth could to be cleared for Sunday.

Despite a full practice on Friday entering Week 6, Dalton Schultz did not play on Sunday night.

A larger role existed for Robert Tonyan in Week 6 after Randall Cobb's injury. Tonyan finished Week 6 with 12 targets for 90 yards. That equated to a 27.3% target share. We can't simply extrapolate that rate out for the rest of the way, but the context around it is elite: it would rank him behind just Mark Andrews (33.1%) on the season among the position.

The Seattle Seahawks' receivers were limited in Week 6, and that funneled targets to the rest of the team, but Noah Fant has had an uptick in market share for the past two games (20.8% and 23.3%). In that span, he's averaging 6.0 targets and 47.0 yards. On paper, the Los Angeles Chargers pose a difficult matchup (they're tops in adjusted fantasy points per target allowed to tight ends), but have also allowed a catch rate over expectation of +6.0% to the position.

Since a role increase in Week 3, Daniel Bellinger has been a viable fantasy football tight end. Week 3 was the first time he reached a 40.0% route rate, and it's climbed in each game since: 40.5%, 41.2%, 50.0%, and 80.6%. Since Week 3, Bellinger ranks 12th among the position in target share (16.3%) and sixth in red zone target share (30.0%).

## Iranian rock climber who competed without hijab returns home

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iranian climber Elnaz Rekabi returned to Tehran early Wednesday after competing in South Korea without wearing a headscarf, an act widely seen as support for anti-government demonstrators amid weeks of protests over the Islamic Republic's mandatory hijab.

After landing, Rekabi gave a careful, emotionless interview to Iran's hard-line state television, saying that going without a hijab had been an "unintentional" act on her part. However, hundreds gathered outside Imam Khomeini International Airport — including women not wearing the hijab — and cheered for "Elnaz the Champion," casting Rekabi as an inspiration for their continued protests.

The future Rekabi faces after returning home remains unclear. Supporters and Farsi-language media outside of Iran have worried about Rekabi's safety after her return, especially as activists say the demonstrations have seen security forces arrest thousands so far.

The differing reception for Rekabi shows the growing fissures in Iranian society as nationwide protests sparked by the Sept. 16 death of a 22-year-old woman are in their fifth week. Mahsa Amini was detained by the country's morality police over her clothing — and her death has prompted women to remove their hijabs in public.

The demonstrations, drawing school-age children, oil workers and others to the streets in over 100 cities, represent the most-serious challenge to Iran's theocracy since the mass protests surrounding its disputed 2009 presidential election.

That Rekabi, 33, competed without her hijab in Seoul during the finals of the International Federation of Sport Climbing's Asia Championship prompted her immediate embrace by those supporting the demonstrations that increasingly include calls for the overthrow of the country's theocracy.

But sports in Iran, from soccer leagues to Rekabi's competitive climbing, broadly operate under a series of semi-governmental organizations. Women athletes competing at home or abroad, whether playing volleyball or running track, are expected to keep their hair covered as a sign of piety. Iran, as well as Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, make such head coverings mandatory for women.

That made Rekabi's public appearance on Sunday without one a lightning-rod moment. On landing at Imam Khomeini International Airport early Wednesday, she wore a black baseball cap and a black hoodie covering her hair. A man handed her flowers.

At first, Rekabi repeated an explanation posted earlier to an Instagram account in her name, saying her not wearing the hijab was "unintentional." The Iranian government routinely pressures activists at home and abroad, often airing what rights group describe as coerced confessions on state television — the same cameras she addressed on her arrival back home.

Rekabi said she was in a women-only waiting area prior to her climb.

"Because I was busy putting on my shoes and my gear, it caused me to forget to put on my hijab and then I went to compete," she said.

She added: "I came back to Iran with peace of mind although I had a lot of tension and stress. But so far, thank God, nothing has happened."

The somber scene then gave way to one of a jubilant crowd outside the terminal. Videos online, corresponding to known features of the airport, show those gathered chanting Rekabi's name and calling her a hero. Footage showed her waving from inside a van.

The semiofficial ISNA news agency later reported that she met with Sports Minister Hamid Sajjadi, saying he encouraged her to continue competing.

Rekabi left Seoul on a Tuesday morning flight. The BBC's Persian service, which has extensive contacts within Iran despite being banned from operating there, quoted an unnamed "informed source" as saying Iranian officials seized both Rekabi's mobile phone and passport. BBC Persian also said she initially had been scheduled to return on Wednesday, but her flight apparently had been moved up unexpectedly.

IranWire, another website focusing on the country founded by Iranian-Canadian journalist Maziar Bahari who once was detained by Iran, suggested that Rekabi could immediately be taken to Tehran's notorious

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Evin Prison, where dissidents are held. A massive fire there over the weekend killed at least eight prisoners.

Later on Wednesday, the International Olympic Committee said it held a joint meeting with the International Federation of Sport Climbing and Iranian officials. The IOC said it received "clear assurances that Ms Rekabi will not suffer any consequences and will continue to train and compete." However, other athletes have faced harassment amid the demonstrations.

The IOC described Rekabi as being with her family and said she joined a call with officials.

The Iranian Embassy in Seoul had denied "all the fake, false news and disinformation" regarding Rekabi's departure. But instead of posting a photo of her from the Seoul competition, it posted an image of her wearing a headscarf at a previous competition in Moscow, where she took a bronze medal.

Rekabi wore a hijab during her initial appearances at the one-week climbing event in Seoul. She wore just a black headband when competing Sunday, her dark hair pulled back in a ponytail; she had a white jersey with Iran's flag as a logo on it.

Footage of the competition showed Rekabi relaxed as she approached the climbing and after she competed.

On Wednesday, a small group of protesters demonstrated in front of Iran's Embassy in Seoul, with some women cutting off locks of their hair, like others have in demonstrations worldwide since Amini's death.

So far, human rights groups estimate that over 200 people have been killed in the weeklong protests and the violent security force crackdown that followed. Iran has not offered a death toll in weeks. Demonstrations have been seen in over 100 cities, according to the group Human Rights Activists in Iran. Thousands are believed to have been arrested.

Gathering information about the demonstrations remains difficult, however. Internet access has been disrupted for weeks by the Iranian government. Meanwhile, authorities have detained at least 40 journalists, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Iranian officials, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, have repeatedly alleged the country's foreign enemies are behind the ongoing demonstrations, rather than Iranians angered by Amini's death and the country's other woes.

Iranians have seen their life savings evaporate; the country's currency, the rial, plummeted and Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers has been reduced to tatters.

## Newsom's campaign for California governor looks to future

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Gavin Newsom will almost certainly win reelection as governor of California in November, with a little-known Republican state senator the only thing between him and a second term leading the nation's most populous state.

That's why Newsom's campaign is more about his political future and overhauling the Democratic Party ahead of the 2024 presidential election — the success of which is much harder to predict.

It's been just two years since Democrats retook the White House by lining up behind Joe Biden, an old-school elected official who came of age before social media amplified the worst parts of politics and changed what it takes to win.

Now, many in the Democratic Party worry whether Biden can win in 2024, especially in a rematch with former President Donald Trump who, despite his legal troubles, could still be a formidable opponent. If Biden doesn't run, Newsom has been floated as a potential replacement for him on the ballot.

Newsom's actions of late have done nothing but reinforce that idea. His campaign has paid for ads in Florida and Texas, home to Ron DeSantis and Greg Abbott, the country's two most outspoken Republican governors and potential 2024 GOP candidates for president.

He has moved quickly to build support among the party's base of liberal voters and donors, ordering state regulators to phase out the sale of gas-powered cars and signing more than a dozen laws to make California a sanctuary for women in other states seeking abortions now that the U.S. Supreme Court has overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

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"He doesn't want to talk about his race in California, he wants to talk about him running for president. Because, again, it's all about him," said Brian Dahle, the Republican state senator challenging Newsom on the ballot this fall.

Newsom insists he isn't running for president, saying he supports Biden and, if Biden doesn't run, Vice President Kamala Harris — who came up in politics at the same time and place as Newsom, with the pair even sharing political advisers.

While Newsom's focus on national Republicans infuriates the California GOP, it's the best strategy for him right now, said Eric Schickler, a political science professor at the University of California-Berkeley.

"Yes, he could attack California Republicans," Schickler said. "But it seems probably more California Democrats know who Ron DeSantis is than Brian Dahle."

Instead, Newsom says he is tackling perhaps an even bigger project: a complete overhaul of Democratic Party messaging ahead of the 2024 presidential election.

Democrats, in Newsom's view, are too soft. He says Democrats are always defending and never attacking, a strategy that lets Republicans control the political narrative on cable news and social media.

He's careful to praise the party's leaders, including Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. But in a recent interview, Newsom made it clear the party's strategy of trying to bridge the gap between the country's left and right wings won't work.

"I think the president's learned it the hard way," Newsom told MSNBC during a campaign trip to Texas. "I mean, he's hardwired for a different world, and that's gone."

Instead of appealing to a broad base of voters, Newsom's TV ads in Florida told residents that "freedom is under attack in your state" and urged them to move to California. In Texas, Newsom took out a full page newspaper ad featuring a quote from Abbott about children losing their lives to abortion, editing it to say "gun violence" instead.

And in seven conservative states that have banned or severely restricted abortion, Newsom has paid for billboards urging women there to come to California for the procedure — including a link to a website that will show them how California taxpayers will help pay for their travel expenses.

"I'm optimistic about (Democrats') ability to turn this around — if we go on the offensive," Newsom, who declined an interview request with The Associated Press, told MSNBC. "That's why I'm doing the billboards. That's why I'm doing these ads."

Newsom's aggressive critique of the Democratic Party is "rubbing some people the wrong way," said Steven Maviglio, a Democratic political operative in California who has clashed with Newsom on a statewide ballot initiative that would raise taxes on the wealthy.

If Newsom really wanted to help the party, Maviglio said, he would be spending his time and resources to help California Democrats win and retain their U.S. House seats, which could determine which political party controls Congress for the final two years of Biden's term.

"Here's a popular governor who should be paying attention to tight races not only in his home state but across the country instead of this vanity campaign," Maviglio said. "Every national Democrat would agree that it's more helpful to raise money and campaign for candidates in tight races than it is promoting yourself two months before the midterm."

Newsom campaign spokesperson Nathan Click said the governor is supporting all of California's congressional Democratic candidates by either hosting fundraisers for them or raising money on their behalf through email.

"He has one of the best email lists in the country — we often raise more (with) a single email than a traditional event," Click said.

Click also said Newsom is raising money for Democrats running for governor of other states, including Katie Hobbs in Arizona, Charlie Crist in Florida, Josh Shapiro in Pennsylvania, Stacey Abrams in Georgia, Chris Jones in Arkansas and Beto O'Rourke in Texas.

Newsom's campaign says he is also the second-largest financial contributor backing Proposition 1, a ballot measure that would enshrine the right to an abortion in the California Constitution. Last month,

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Newsom's campaign donated more than \$876,000 to the campaign.

"He's helping the entire party elevate their national message in ways that people who are in competitive races and in smaller states maybe can't do," said Matt Barreto, a UCLA political science professor and a senior adviser to Building Back Better, a nonprofit that launched to support the Biden administration's agenda. "I don't see him as taking any spotlight away from anyone."

Newsom is overshadowing Dahle, his Republican opponent. Dahle is a farmer from the far northeast corner of the state and is little known outside his district. He doesn't have enough money to run statewide TV ads, so he's been traveling a lot and promoting himself on social media.

Dahle's one chance against Newsom will be during a debate on Sunday, broadcast live on the radio on a Sunday afternoon during the NFL season.

"I've been an underdog my whole life," Dahle said. "I believe I can win."

## Energy agency: CO2 emissions rise in 2022, but more slowly

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The International Energy Agency said Wednesday that it expects carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels to rise again this year, but by much less than in 2021 due to the growth in renewable power and electric cars.

Last year saw a strong rebound in carbon dioxide emissions — the main greenhouse gas responsible for global warming — after the global economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

The Paris-based IEA said CO2 emissions from fossil fuels are on course to rise by almost 1% in 2022 compared to the previous year. That's nearly 300 million metric tons of CO2 more than in 2021, when the burning of gas, oil and coal released about 33.5 billion tons of CO2.

"This year's increase is driven by power generation and by the aviation sector, as air travel rebounds from pandemic lows," the agency said.

While coal emissions grew 2% as countries that previously imported natural gas from Russia scrambled for other energy sources, this didn't outweigh the expansion of solar and wind power, which saw a record rise in 2022.

Oil use also increased as pandemic-related restrictions eased, resulting in more people commuting to work and a rise in air travel.

"The rise in global CO2 emissions this year would be much larger — more than tripling to reach close to 1 billion tonnes — were it not for the major deployments of renewable energy technologies and electric vehicles around the world," it said.

Emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases need to decline drastically in the coming decades to keep global temperatures from rising beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit), the ambitious threshold agreed in the 2015 Paris climate pact. Scientists say there is little room left for maneuver because temperatures have already risen by about 1.2 Celsius (2.2 Fahrenheit) compared to pre-industrial times.

A report published Wednesday by the environmental think tank World Resources Institute found countries' current plans for cutting emissions would see them decline just 7% by 2030 from 2019 levels. The group said emissions would need to drop by 43% over that period to meet the Paris goal.

Stepping up global efforts to reduce emissions will be one of the topics at next month's United Nations climate meeting in Egypt.

## McDonagh, Farrell, Gleeson get 'Bruges' band back together

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "Time be flyin'," it's said in Martin McDonagh's "The Banshees of Inisherin." It's a sentiment shared by McDonagh and his two stars, Colin Farrell and Brendan Gleeson, who have reteamed 14 years after McDonagh's pitch-black feature debut, "In Bruges."

"It feels like not two days of passing," McDonagh said, shaking his head, on a recent fall day in New York

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while Farrell and Gleeson, sitting beside him, eagerly agree.

"It feels like we just went back in the room and said, 'It's going to be a good one, isn't it?'" says Gleeson.

The 2008 "In Bruges," which began the celebrated British-Irish playwright's transition from stage to screen, was a memorable dark comedy of two hitmen holed up in the medieval Belgian city. For Farrell's character, who has just accidentally shot a boy on his first job, Bruges is a purgatory. "The Banshees of Inisherin" is likewise set in a specific locale: the Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland. And a sense of existential doom is again palpable.

But the feud this time requires no guns and the rural 1920s backdrop is even more picturesque. After years of friendship and regular trips to the pub together, Colm Doherty (Gleeson) has decided that he just doesn't like Pádraic Súilleabháin (Farrell) anymore. This confounds Pádraic, who persistently tries to reingratiate himself to Colm. Eventually, Colm decides to make his demand for peace gruesomely clear.

"People go, 'You can't just make a film about a guy who doesn't want to be friends with another guy,'" says Farrell. "Well, that's how."

"The Banshees of Inisherin," which opens in select theaters Friday before expanding nationwide, is a story of friends falling out made by a trio with abiding affection for one another. McDonagh wrote it with Gleeson and Farrell in mind. He first sent the two actors a draft seven years ago. ("That was crap," says McDonagh. "I loved it," says Farrell.) He later returned to it, preserving only the first five pages and digging deeper into the pair's relationship.

McDonagh, Gleeson and Farrell's pleasure in each other's company was easy to see when they convened at a hotel on the Upper West Side shortly after Gleeson's skateboard-shredding "Saturday Night Live" hosting stint. The three had just stepped away from individual interviews over Zoom. "Together again!" they exclaimed.

"From the start, there was a deep sense of kinship and an understanding of each other," Farrell says. "In a strange way, I understand myself more through Martin and his mind and his heart and his work. And I understand myself more through my interactions with Brendan."

"I think we all, basically, are romantics," adds Gleeson. "We're not blind, either. We know the other side of the coin."

"In Bruges" was well-received at the time and launched McDonagh as a filmmaker. ( Roger Ebert wrote: "Every once in a while you find a film like this, that seems to happen as it goes along, driven by the peculiarities of the characters.") But it also has only grown in stature over the years, and it remains a touchstone for all three. Farrell, who was then adjusting to the onset of fame, credits the film with reorienting his career.

"It meant a lot to me. I had genuinely lost sight of the fun and exploration and the journey of discovery that what we do for a living can be and should be. I was just going through the motions. It was at a stage of my life where there was a lot of change personally, and as a result of that professionally," says Farrell. "The pilot light got ignited by 'In Bruges.'"

"Banshees" preserves some of the "Bruges" dynamic between Farrell and Gleeson. Gleeson again plays the more erudite of the two. Farrell is sweeter, less intelligent. There are other connections, too. It's a throwaway line but Farrell begs Gleeson to go down to the pub in "In Bruges." Gleeson's response: "No."

From the start, their banter together had a natural rhythm. "An instantaneous mainlining into headquarters," says Gleeson.

"I think part of it is – Martin has the line – that we're an odd-looking couple," adds Farrell. "What people see here are two people that look like they're very different, sound like they're very different and maybe even feel very different, and yet somehow that's never articulated, we find out that they're not so different, at all."

In "Banshees," Colm's abrupt plea for solitude stems from his being tired of "aimless chatting." Feeling time slipping away, he wants to devote himself to writing music. (The song he's writing is titled "The Banshees of Inisherin.") Their discord has symbolism; the Irish Civil War is raging on the mainland. But it most reflects the struggle of an artist, perhaps a self-serious one, to balance work with the demands of

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social convention.

"Aimless chatting," of course, is no small part of movie promotion – especially for a critically acclaimed film like "The Banshees of Inisherin" forecast to play a major role through awards season. McDonagh's previous film, the Oscar-winning "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri," took that path, and, this time, Farrell's performance has already been especially singled out. The trio pledged that this chat, at least, wasn't aimless but, as Farrell said, "good, normal chatting."

Still, it's clear that the conflict in "Banshees" is one McDonagh feels, himself.

"Time slips away with irrelevant nonsense all the time," McDonagh says. "A long time ago I said: I have to write one thing a year. If it takes two weeks, the rest of the year is free for anything. But you have to stick to that."

Reading, he grants, has gotten harder to make time for because of the Internet and phones. "A curse!" chimes Farrell. But the pandemic and the yearslong process to bring his last play, "Hangmen," to Broadway, has led McDonagh to turn his focus entirely to films.

"That I can't show you how good we got 'Lieutenant of Inishmore' 20 years ago is unfair," he says. "It's a question I haven't come to a concrete conclusion about. But there's also a lack of democracy about theater. It's too expensive and not enough people can see it. Unless you live in New York or London, you probably won't see my stuff. Whereas a movie, not only is it going to last 20 years, 100 years if it's a good one, you can get it anywhere. You can get it in Kansas City. You can get it in Ulaanbaatar. That's democratic."

"Actually, I don't think we open in Kansas City," Farrell adds, grinning.

But the 52-year-old McDonagh, like Gleeson's Colm, is increasingly — "always, daily," he says — focused on what he's going to leave behind, what work of his might endure.

"If there's, like, 25, 30 years left of one's life, I think maybe 20 good films," McDonagh says hopefully. "I'm not swearing off plays. I'm pretty sure I will do at least one or two more. But I think in the next bunch of years it's going to be films. I think COVID has solidified that idea. I can go back and watch 'In Bruges' now and be overjoyed at what we captured. That's why I'm leaning toward movies."

With that kind of long-term plan, a trilogy for Farrell and Gleeson could be natural. Where next? Venice? Iceland?

"I've got no idea what it will be when we get together again. But I think you're right, that I'll find a place, I'll see the town and that will tell us the story," says McDonagh, musing on the geographical possibilities. "Maybe it's the American West."

"The Geezers of Reykjavik!" exclaims Farrell.

"I'm in. I'm in. I'm in," says Gleeson, cackling. "Which geezer do I play?"

## Ancient DNA gives rare snapshot of Neanderthal family ties

By MADDIE BURAKOFF AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A new study suggests Neanderthals formed small, tightknit communities where females may have traveled to move in with their mates.

The research used genetic sleuthing to offer a rare snapshot of Neanderthal family dynamics — including a father and his teenage daughter who lived together in Siberia more than 50,000 years ago.

Researchers were able to pull DNA out of tiny bone fragments found in two Russian caves. In their study, published Wednesday in the journal Nature, they used the genetic data to map out relationships between 13 different Neanderthals and get clues to how they lived.

"When I work on a bone or two, it's very easy to forget that these are actually people with their own lives and stories," said study author Bence Viola, an anthropologist at the University of Toronto. "Figuring out how they're related to each other really makes them much more human."

Our ancient cousins, the Neanderthals, lived across Europe and Asia for hundreds of thousands of years. They died out around 40,000 years ago, shortly after our species, the Homo sapiens, arrived in Europe from Africa.

Scientists have only recently been able to dig around in these early humans' DNA. New Nobel laureate



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Svante Paabo — who is an author on this latest study — published the first draft of a Neanderthal genome a little over a decade ago.

Since then, scientists have sequenced 18 Neanderthal genomes, said lead author Laurits Skov, a geneticist at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. But it's rare to find bones from multiple Neanderthals from the same time and place, he said — which is why these cave discoveries were so special.

"If there was ever a chance to find a Neanderthal community, this would be it," Skov said.

The caves, located in remote foothills above a river valley, have been a rich source of materials from stone tools to fossil fragments, Viola said. With their prime view of migrating herds in the valley below, researchers think the caves might have served as a short-term hunting stop for Neanderthals.

Archaeologists excavating the caves have found remains from at least a dozen different Neanderthals, Viola said. These remains usually come in small bits and pieces — "a finger bone here, a tooth there" — but they're enough for scientists to extract valuable DNA details.

The researchers were able to identify a couple of relatives among the group. Along with the father and daughter, there was a pair of other relatives — maybe a boy and his aunt, or a couple of cousins.

Overall, the analysis found that everyone in the group had a lot of DNA in common. That suggests that at least in this area, Neanderthals lived in very small communities of 10 to 20 individuals, the authors concluded.

But not everyone in these groups stayed put, according to the study.

Researchers looked at other genetic clues from mitochondrial DNA, which is passed down on the mother's side, and the Y chromosome, which is passed down on the father's side.

The female side showed more genetic differences than the male side — which means females may have moved around more, Skov said. It's possible that when a female Neanderthal found a mate, she would leave home to live with his family.

University of Wisconsin anthropologist John Hawks, who was not involved in the study, said the research was an exciting application of ancient DNA evidence, even as many questions remain about Neanderthal social structures and lifestyles.

Figuring out how early humans lived is like "putting together a puzzle where we have many, many missing pieces," Hawks said. But this study means "somebody's dumped a bunch more pieces on the table."

## Poor, less white US neighborhoods get worst internet deals

By LEON YIN and AARON SANKIN/The Markup The Markup

A couple of years into the pandemic, Shirley Neville had finally had enough of her shoddy internet service. "It was just a headache," said Neville, who lives in a middle-class neighborhood in New Orleans whose residents are almost all Black or Latino. "When I was getting ready to use my tablet for a meeting, it was cutting off and not coming on."

Neville said she was willing to pay more to be able to Zoom without interruption, so she called AT&T to upgrade her connection. She said she was told there was nothing the company could do.

In her area, AT&T only offers download speeds of 1 megabit per second or less, trapping her in a digital Stone Age. Her internet is so slow that it doesn't meet Zoom's recommended minimum for group video calls; doesn't come close to the Federal Communications Commission's definition of broadband, currently 25 Mbps; and is worlds below median home internet speeds in the U.S., which average 167 Mbps.

"In my neighborhood, it's terrible," Neville said.

But that's not the case in other parts of New Orleans. AT&T offers residents of the mostly white, upper-income neighborhood of Lakeview internet speeds almost 400 times faster than Neville's—for the same price: \$55 a month.

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This story was reported by The Markup, and the story and data were distributed by The Associated Press.

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The Markup gathered and analyzed more than 800,000 internet service offers from AT&T, Verizon, Earth-

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link, and CenturyLink in 38 cities across America and found that all four routinely offered fast base speeds at or above 200 Mbps in some neighborhoods for the same price as connections below 25 Mbps in others.

The neighborhoods offered the worst deals had lower median incomes in nine out of 10 cities in the analysis. In two-thirds of the cities where The Markup had enough data to compare, the providers gave the worst offers to the least white neighborhoods.

These providers also disproportionately gave the worst offers to formerly redlined areas in every one of the 22 cities examined where digitized historical maps were available. These are areas a since-disbanded agency created by the federal government in the 1930s had deemed "hazardous" for financial institutions to invest in, often because the residents were Black or poor. Redlining was outlawed in 1968.

By failing to price according to service speed, these companies are demanding some customers pay dramatically higher unit prices for advertised download speed than others. CenturyLink, which showed the most extreme disparities, offered some customers service of 200 Mbps, amounting to as little as \$0.25 per Mbps, but offered others living in the same city only 0.5 Mbps for the same price—a unit price of \$100 per Mbps, or 400 times as much.

Residents of neighborhoods offered the worst deals aren't just being ripped off; they're denied the ability to participate in remote learning, well-paying remote jobs, and even family connection and recreation—ubiquitous elements of modern life.

"It isn't just about the provision of a better service. It's about access to the tools people need to fully participate in our democratic system," said Chad Marlow, senior policy counsel at the ACLU. "That is a far bigger deal and that's what really worries me about what you're finding."

Christopher Lewis, president and CEO of the nonprofit Public Knowledge, which works to expand internet access, said The Markup's analysis shows how far behind the federal government is when it comes to holding internet providers to account. "Nowhere have we seen either the FCC nor the Congress, who ultimately has authority as well, study competition in the marketplace and pricing to see if consumers are being price gouged or if those service offerings make sense."

None of the providers denied charging the same fee for vastly different internet speeds to different neighborhoods in the same cities. But they said their intentions were not to discriminate against communities of color and that there were other factors to consider.

The industry group USTelecom, speaking on behalf of Verizon, said the cost of maintaining the antiquated equipment used for slow speed service plays a role in its price.

"Fiber can be hundreds of times faster than legacy broadband—but that doesn't mean that legacy networks cost hundreds of times less," USTelecom senior vice president Marie Johnson said in an email. "Operating and maintaining legacy technologies can be more expensive, especially as legacy network components are discontinued by equipment manufacturers."

AT&T spokesperson Jim Greer said in an emailed statement that The Markup's analysis is "fundamentally flawed" because it "clearly ignored our participation in the federal Affordable Connectivity Program and our low-cost Access by AT&T service offerings." The Affordable Connectivity Program was launched in 2021 and pays up to \$30 a month for internet for low-income residents, or \$75 on tribal lands.

"Any suggestion that we discriminate in providing internet access is blatantly wrong," he said, adding that AT&T plans on spending \$48 billion on service upgrades over the next two years.

Recent research looking at 30 major cities found only about a third of eligible households had signed up for the federal subsidy, however, and the majority use it to help cover cellphone bills, which also qualify, rather than home internet costs. Connectivity advocates told The Markup that it's hard to get people to jump through the bureaucratic hoops needed to sign up for the program when service is slow.

Greer declined to say how many or what percentage of AT&T's internet customers are signed up for either the ACP or the company's own low-cost program for low-income residents.

In a letter to the FCC, AT&T insisted its high-speed internet deployments are driven by "household density, not median incomes." But when The Markup ran a statistical test controlling for density, it still found AT&T disproportionately offered slower speeds to lower-income areas in three out of four of the 20 cities where it investigated their service.

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"We do not engage in discriminatory practices like redlining and find the accusation offensive," Mark Molzen, a spokesperson for CenturyLink's parent company, Lumen, wrote in an email." He said that The Markup's analysis is "deeply flawed" without specifying how. He did not respond to requests for clarification.

EarthLink, which doesn't own internet infrastructure in the examined cities but rather rents capacity from other providers, did not provide an official comment despite repeated requests.

Internet prices are not regulated by the federal government because unlike telephone service, internet service is not considered a utility. As a result, providers can make their own decisions about where they provide service and how much to charge. The FCC declined a request to comment on the findings.

The investigation is based on service offers collected from the companies' own websites, which contain service lookup tools that list all available plans for specific addresses, using a method pioneered by researchers at Princeton University. The Markup analyzed price and speed for nearly 850,000 offers for addresses in the largest city in 38 states where these providers operate.

Las Vegas is one city where large swaths of CenturyLink's offers were for slow service. Almost half didn't meet the current federal definition of broadband. These fell disproportionately on Las Vegas's lower-income and least white areas.

Las Vegas councilwoman Olivia Diaz said that in the summer of 2020, she approached families where children had stopped showing up to virtual lessons the previous school year to find out what went wrong.

City schools were preparing to begin their second school year marked by COVID-19 lockdowns.

"We kept hearing there were multiple children trying to connect in the household, but they weren't able to," said Diaz, who represents a district that's predominantly Latino and on the lower end of the city's income spectrum.

More than 80% of CenturyLink's internet offers in her district were for service slower than 25 Mbps. Education advocacy group Common Sense Media recommends at least 200 Mbps download speeds for a household to reliably conduct multiple, simultaneous video conferencing sessions.

"I think it's unfair knowing that it is slow service that we're paying for that is not commensurate with the faster speeds that they have in the other parts of the city that are paying the same price," Diaz said. "It just breaks my heart to know we're not getting the best bang for our buck."

Diaz said city officials have asked CenturyLink to expand high-speed service in her district, but the company declined, citing the prohibitive cost of deploying new infrastructure in the area. CenturyLink did not respond to emails asking about this request.

Some officials told The Markup they've been yelling for years about bad service for high prices.

"If I was paying \$6 a month," Joshua Edmonds, Detroit's director of digital inclusion, "well you get what you're paying for." But he objects to people being asked to pay premium rates for bad service. "What I pay versus what I get doesn't really make sense."

In a 2018 report, Bill Callahan, who runs the online accessibility organization Connect Your Community, coined the term "tier flattening" to describe charging internet customers the same rate for differing levels of service. He said The Markup's findings show how much of America's internet market is based on the "basic unfairness" of internet service providers deciding to deprioritize investing in new, high-speed infrastructure in marginalized areas.

"They've made a decision that those neighborhoods are going to be treated differently," said Callahan. "The core reason for that is they think they don't have enough money in those neighborhoods to sustain the kind of market they want."

The FCC is currently drafting rules under a provision of the 2021 infrastructure bill aimed at "preventing digital discrimination of access based on income level, race, ethnicity, color, religion, or national origin."

A coalition of 39 groups led by the Electronic Frontier Foundation and Center for Accessible Technology urged the FCC to take aggressive action rectifying broadband inequality by examining the socioeconomics of the neighborhoods getting the slowest speeds and the prices they pay—regardless of whether the companies intended to discriminate.

AT&T insisted in filings with the agency that the standard for discrimination should be explicit, deliber-

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ate efforts to avoid building infrastructure in areas that are populated by people of color or lower-income residents.

It also asked for subsidies to build high-speed internet in lower-income neighborhoods because, as AT&T asserted in its letter to the FCC, "most or all deficiencies in broadband access appear to result not from invidious discrimination, but from ordinary business-case challenges in the absence of subsidy programs."

Advocates say that's just not true. "There are very few places in the country where it is not economically feasible to deploy broadband," said Brian Thorn, who served as a senior researcher for the Communication Workers of America, a union representing telecom employees, which has been vocal on the issue and filed its own comment to the FCC. (The CWA is the parent union of The NewsGuild-CWA, which represents employees at The Markup and The Associated Press.) He said members are tired of seeing their employers make inequitable infrastructure deployment decisions.

"We would hear from members all the time that they're out laying lines on one side of the neighborhood and not on the other," he said.

In a letter to the FCC, the coalition asserted that "broadband users are experiencing discriminatory impacts of deployment that are no different than the impacts of past redlining policies in housing, banking, and other venues of economic activity."

The term "redlining" derives from efforts by the federal government to stem the tide of foreclosures during the Great Depression by drawing up maps, with the help of real estate agents, to identify areas that were safe for mortgage lending. Predominantly white neighborhoods were consistently rated better than less-white neighborhoods, which were shaded in red. Echoes of these maps still reverberate today in things like rates of home ownership and prenatal mortality.

Notes on the historical map explaining why one part of Kansas City, Missouri, was redlined cited "Negro encroachment from the north." In that same area, AT&T offered only slow service to every single address The Markup examined.

Across Kansas City, AT&T offered the worst deals to 68% of addresses in redlined areas, compared to just 12% of addresses in areas that had been rated "best" or "desirable."

Redlining maps frequently tracked neatly with the disparities The Markup found.

Addresses in redlined areas of 15 cities from Portland to Atlanta were offered the worst deals at least twice as often as areas rated "best" or "desirable." Minneapolis, which is served by CenturyLink, displayed one of the most striking disparities: Formerly redlined addresses were offered the worst deals almost eight times as often as formerly better-rated areas.

Pamela Jackson-Walters, a 68-year-old longtime resident of Detroit's Hope Village, said she needs the internet to work on her dissertation in organizational leadership at University of Phoenix online and to virtually attend church services. The slow speeds AT&T offered were a constant annoyance.

"They still haven't installed the high-speed internet over here," she said. "How do we get it? Are we too poor of a neighborhood to have the better service?"

Hope Village has a per capita income of just over \$11,000 and is almost entirely Black.

To add insult to injury, last fall, AT&T internet service across Hope Village went down for 45 days before being restored. This summer, Jackson-Walters's internet went down again, this time for four weeks, she said.

Jeff Jones, another longtime Hope Village resident, noted a bitter irony amid all the service problems. "To add to the insult, I can look out my bedroom window literally, maybe 150 yards, is the AT&T service facility," he said with a weary laugh. "I'm like, please help me! You're right there! How can you ignore this problem that is just right in front of your face?"

Until The Markup told Hope Village residents its findings about AT&T's pricing practices in Detroit, they didn't know that lower-income areas were more often asked to pay the same price for slower internet.

"That's the big piece," said Angela Siefer, the executive director of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, which advocates for broadband access. "Folks don't know that they're being screwed."

**EXPLAINER: What is Louisiana's 'jungle primary'?**

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By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

On Nov. 8, Louisiana voters go to the polls, just like in states across the country — only they'll technically be voting in a primary election that includes candidates from all corners. Their votes may determine which candidates will occupy offices at all levels of the state's government, or which candidates go on to a runoff.

Here's a look at Louisiana's unique system, unofficially called a "jungle primary," and discussions around changing it:

WHAT IS A 'JUNGLE PRIMARY'?

In what's thought of as a traditional primary, political candidates only compete against other contenders within their own parties for nominations, to then advance to the general election. States hold their primaries on a variety of dates, with winners competing with one another on the November ballot.

But in a "jungle primary" or "majority vote primary," all candidates regardless of party run against each other on the same ballot. If no one candidate tops 50% in that primary, the top two vote-getters advance to a head-to-head runoff, which can end up pitting two Republicans or two Democrats against each other.

Even though it's called a primary, this happens on general Election Day.

HAS LOUISIANA ALWAYS DONE THIS?

For state, parish and municipal elections, Louisiana has used an open primary system since 1975. It was designed by then-Gov. Edwin Edwards, who had faced two tough Democratic primary rounds in the 1971 election before his general election run against a Republican opponent who hadn't had the same primary challenges.

Open primaries were first used for Louisiana's federal elections in 1978, when state lawmakers changed rules for U.S. House and Senate. It's not used for Louisiana's presidential primary.

HAVE THERE BEEN PROBLEMS?

Louisiana didn't use open primaries from 2008 to 2010 because of legal challenges.

Initially, state lawmakers set up Louisiana's open primaries in late September or early October, with general election dates conforming with November's federal election date. Candidates who exceeded the 50% primary threshold were declared "elected," rendering the November general election date unnecessary for those contests.

That timeline yielded a lawsuit by a group of Louisiana voters, who challenged the open primary calendar based on the argument that federal law requires U.S. House and Senate members to be elected on the centralized November election date.

In 1997, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the system violated federal law, since "over 80% of the contested congressional elections in Louisiana have ended as a matter of law with the open primary." Subsequent to that decision, Louisiana moved the congressional primary date to November's federal election day, pushing any needed runoffs to December.

There have been a few tweaks. Primary day was briefly moved to October in 2005. A year later, Gov. Kathleen Blanco signed a law that closed Louisiana's 2008 congressional primaries, but state lawmakers voted two years later to bring back nonpartisan federal primaries.

The system can lead to immensely crowded primary ballots, like one for an open U.S. Senate seat in 2016 that boasted 24 candidates.

HAVE THERE BEEN RECENT EFFORTS TO CHANGE THIS?

Last year, Louisiana lawmakers considered reinstating closed primaries; that idea was ultimately scrapped.

Republican Sen. Sharon Hewitt of Slidell said she brought up the notion in part because of concerns that Louisiana's open primary often has the state electing members of Congress later than the rest of the country.

In competitive congressional races, particularly for open seats without an incumbent, races often are pushed into a December runoff — a month after nearly every other state has settled its seats. Some Louisiana Republicans including U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise argued that that system puts Louisiana's newest congressional delegation members at a disadvantage in seniority, committee assignments and orientation sessions.

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Other Republicans, including Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser, actively lobbied against the bill — limited to congressional elections but seen as a possible stepping stone to wider closed primaries for other types of elections — arguing that changing the system would shrink voter participation, confuse and frustrate voters and lead to more partisanship.

The feud raised questions about whether the bill could pass, and Hewitt said she would continue studying the issue.

## DO OTHER STATES DO ANYTHING SIMILAR?

Two states, California and Washington, use a “top two” primary format, using a common ballot listing all candidates. California candidates list party affiliations, whereas Washington candidates list party “preferences,” according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

In both states, the top two vote-getters in each race advance to the general election. But unlike in Louisiana, no one can win the job outright in the primary even if they get more than half the vote.

Nebraska legislators are elected on a nonpartisan basis, running without party designation and on the same primary ballot, a system not dissimilar to local nonpartisan elections across the country, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

For the first time this year, Alaska elections were being held under a unique new system that scraps party primaries and instead holds an open primary in which all candidates for a given race appear on ballots, regardless of party affiliation, followed by ranked voting in the general election.

This system, in place for both state and federal elections, was narrowly approved by voters in 2020 and upheld by the state Supreme Court earlier this year.

## Genetic twist: Medieval plague may have molded our immunity

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

Our Medieval ancestors left us with a biological legacy: Genes that may have helped them survive the Black Death make us more susceptible to certain diseases today.

It’s a prime example of the way germs shape us over time, scientists say in a new study published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*.

“Our genome today is a reflection of our whole evolutionary history” as we adapt to different germs, said Luis Barreiro, a senior author of the research. Some, like those behind the bubonic plague, have had a big impact on our immune systems.

The Black Death in the 14th century was the single deadliest event in recorded history, spreading throughout Europe, the Middle East and northern Africa and wiping out up to 30% to 50% of the population.

Barreiro and his colleagues at the University of Chicago, McMaster University in Ontario and the Pasteur Institute in Paris examined ancient DNA samples from the bones of more than 200 people from London and Denmark who died over about 100 years that stretched before, during, and after the Black Death swept through that region.

They identified four genes that, depending on the variant, either protected against or increased susceptibility to the bacteria that causes bubonic plague, which is most often transmitted by the bite of an infected flea.

They found that what helped people in Medieval times led to problems generations later — raising the frequency of mutations detrimental in modern times. Some of the same genetic variants identified as protective against the plague are associated with certain autoimmune disorders, such as Crohn’s disease, rheumatoid arthritis and lupus. In these sorts of diseases, the immune system that defends the body against disease and infection attacks the body’s own healthy tissues.

“A hyperactive immune system may have been great in the past but in the environment today it might not be as helpful,” said Hendrik Poinar, an anthropology professor at McMaster and another senior author.

Past research has also sought to examine how the Black Death affected the human genome. But Barreiro said he believes theirs is the first demonstration that the Black Death was important to the evolution of the human immune system. One unique aspect of the study, he said, was to focus on a narrow time

window around the event.

Monica H. Green, an author and historian of medicine who has studied the Black Death extensively, called the research "tremendously impressive," bringing together a wide range of experts.

"It's extremely sophisticated" and addresses important issues, such as how the same version of a gene can protect people from a horrific infection and also put modern people — and generations of their descendants — at risk for other illnesses, said Green, who was not involved in the study.

All of this begs the question: Will the COVID-19 pandemic have a big impact on human evolution? Barreiro said he doesn't think so because the death rate is so much lower and the majority of people who have died had already had children.

In the future, however, he said more deadly pandemics may well continue to shape us at the most basic level.

"It's not going to stop. It's going to keep going for sure."

## **Migrant survivors of West Texas shooting detained by ICE**

By ACACIA CORONADO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — One migrant is dead, another is wounded and at least seven others are languishing in detention three weeks after twin brothers allegedly opened fire on them in the Texas desert, claiming they mistook them for wild hogs during a hunting trip.

Yet, the accused shooters, 60-year-old brothers Michael and Mark Sheppard, who both worked in local law enforcement, were initially released on half a million dollars bail after being jailed briefly on manslaughter charges.

The case has caused outrage among advocates for the victims and survivors, who say their detention violates a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement directive that calls for giving strong consideration to the fact that they were crime victims who cooperated with authorities in determining whether they should be released.

"This is a hate crime that occurred immediately after they were crossing into the United States," said Zoe Bowman, the supervising attorney at Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, who is representing the seven detained survivors.

Michael Sheppard, who was a warden at the troubled West Texas Detention Facility where he was accused of abuse, and his brother, Mark, who worked for the Hudspeth County sheriff's office, were recently again taken into custody and charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon in connection with the Sept. 27 shooting.

The sheriff's office did not say where they were being held or why they were initially released on bond. The case is being investigated by the Texas Rangers, an arm of the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border are often victims of crimes, including human trafficking, but most happen south of the border. A clear cut case like this one, in which migrants are the victims of a widely publicized crime on U.S. soil in which charges have been brought against identified suspects, can provide a rare paper trail to protection under a visa for migrants who are crime victims in the U.S., Bowman said.

But despite the August 2021 ICE directive that strongly encourages the release of crime victims while the lengthy visa process is underway, these migrants remain in detention, Bowman said.

Six of the surviving migrants are being held at the El Paso Processing Center — an ICE detention facility — while a seventh is in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service and is expected to be transferred to the West Texas Detention Facility, the embattled lockup where Michael Sheppard was a warden.

"It certainly seems like they are not putting the needs of these people first by choosing to hold onto them," Bowman said.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials did not respond to phone and email requests for comment on the migrants' detention.

The migrants told authorities they were drinking water from a reservoir on county land in Sierra Blanca, south of El Paso in the hot, dry Chihuahuan Desert, when two men — identified in court documents as

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the Sheppard brothers — pulled over in a truck. The migrants said they ran to hide.

Mark Sheppard told investigators he and his brother were out hunting and thought they had spotted a javelina, a kind of wild hog, when they opened fire. "Mark Sheppard told us he used binoculars and saw a 'black butt' thinking it was a javelina," court documents said.

But the migrants told authorities the men in the truck yelled and cursed at them in Spanish, taunting at them to come out, and revved their engine as they backed up. When the group emerged from hiding, the driver exited the vehicle and fired two shots at them.

Jesús Iván Sepúlveda was shot and killed. Brenda Berenice Casias Carrillo was struck in the stomach and seriously wounded.

Silvia Carrillo, the wounded woman's aunt, told The Associated Press that she heard from her niece via WhatsApp on Sept. 25 that the group was beginning the precarious desert journey from Mexico into Texas and was turning off their phones. When she next made contact with Casias two days later, her niece told her the group had been shot at and she lay wounded, fearing she would die.

Carrillo encouraged her niece to call 911 for help. Also in the group of 13 migrants were Carrillo's two sons, another niece and a son-in-law. Casias told her they were all okay but another man who was with them — 22-year-old Sepulveda of Durango, Mexico, — was dead.

"I felt like I was going to die, I was desperate and imagined the worst," Carrillo said.

When authorities arrived in response to her 911 call, Casias was taken to a hospital and the other survivors were questioned by federal and immigration officials. Their testimonies led to the arrest of the Sheppard brothers, after which the witnesses were placed in ICE custody.

On Oct. 7, Carrillo said she spoke to Casias again, this time from the hospital. Casias sounded weak, but said she was slowly getting better and had one more surgery to go.

Casias remains stable and improving and has some legal protection, her attorney, Marysol Castro, managing attorney for Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services in El Paso, said Tuesday. She declined to provide specifics because she said her client is afraid for her safety since learning of the Sheppard brothers' initial release.

Bowman said she is seeking visas intended for migrants who are crime victims for her clients, but even though the case has been widely publicized it could take months to produce the necessary court documents.

In the meantime she has petitioned, without success so far, for them to be released to sponsors in the U.S. — a decision that is solely at the discretion of ICE authorities.

John Sandweg, an attorney who served as ICE director during the Obama administration, said other factors like the survivors' role as witnesses could mean that authorities choose to keep them in detention so they are nearby to testify in the case.

Still, on the face of it, he said, "there is not a good reason" why these migrants remain detained.

"The bottom line is that study after study after study and ICE's own data has demonstrated the effectiveness of alternatives to detention," Sandweg said, adding that the system "is in critical need of reform."

Meanwhile, Carrillo said she and relatives of the other survivors await answers on the fate of their loved ones in the country they journeyed to for a better life, and are calling for the shooters to be brought to justice.

"I just want them to do justice for my niece and for Jesus, the man who died," Carrillo said.

## Many remain critical of state of US democracy: AP-NORC poll

By GARY FIELDS and CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Many Americans remain pessimistic about the state of U.S. democracy and the way elected officials are chosen -- nearly two years after a divisive presidential election spurred false claims of widespread fraud and a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Only about half of Americans have high confidence that votes in the upcoming midterm elections will be counted accurately, according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, though that's an improvement from about 4 in 10 saying that just before the 2020 presidential



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election. Just 9% of U.S. adults think democracy is working "extremely" or "very well," while 52% say it's not working well.

In a reversal from two years ago, Republicans are now more likely than Democrats to say democracy is not working well. This year, 68% of Republicans feel this way compared with 32% two years ago. The share of Democrats with a sour outlook on how democracy is functioning in the U.S. dropped from 63% to 40%.

Ronald McGraw Sr., 67, of Indianapolis, is a retired construction worker who recently registered to vote and intends to cast a ballot for the first time this year.

"I thought I'd let everybody else put their vote in and just go with the flow, but this whole thing is at stake now," he said, referring to democracy, the economy, "everything, how the whole country runs."

McGraw, who is Black and considers himself a moderate, said a big concern is the political turmoil in the country and the fact that he sees too many self-serving politicians concerned with power, especially those who work against the interest of minorities. He said he registered as a Republican but did not give any thought to party platforms or stances at the time.

"I am paying attention now," he said.

After every presidential election, members of the losing candidate's party can experience a letdown. The fallout from the 2020 election has been deeper, fueled by the lies from former President Donald Trump and his allies that Democrats stole the election.

There is no evidence of widespread fraud or manipulation of voting machines. Exhaustive reviews in key states upheld Democrat Joe Biden's win, while judges — including some appointed by Trump — dismissed numerous lawsuits challenging the outcome. Trump's own attorney general, William Barr, called the claims bogus.

The general despair over democracy comes after decades of increasing polarization nationwide, from the presidential and congressional races down to local contests such as races for school boards.

Overall, just a quarter of U.S. adults — including similar percentages of Republicans and Democrats — say they are optimistic about the way leaders are chosen, while 43% say they are pessimistic. An additional 31% feel neither.

Adam Coykendall, a 31-year-old social studies teacher from Ashland, Wisconsin, said he sees party loyalties driving lawmakers more than the good of the country.

"I feel like everything is becoming a little more divisive, a little more polarized, more focused on party loyalty ... rather than working for your constituency, having things that work for people rather than working for the party," said Coykendall, who described himself as an independent who leans toward the Democratic Party.

The AP-NORC poll also found a large segment of Republicans, 58%, still believe Biden's election wasn't legitimate. That's down slightly from 66% in July 2021.

Gary Phelps, a 70-year-old retired truck driver in Clearwater, Minnesota, accepts Biden is president but doesn't think he was legitimately elected. Phelps said he was concerned about voter fraud, mail ballots being received and counted after Election Day, and irregularities with some voting machines, although he acknowledged it's based on his feeling rather than evidence.

Phelps remains concerned about the voting process and whether the tallies will be accurate. "I would hope so, but I don't think so," the Republican-leaning independent said.

The poll shows 47% of Americans say they have "a great deal" or "quite a bit" of confidence that the votes in the 2022 midterm elections will be counted accurately. Confidence is highest among Democrats, 74% of whom say they're highly confident. On the Republican side, confidence in elections is decidedly mixed: 25% have high confidence, 30% have moderate confidence and 45% have little to no confidence.

That erosion of trust comes after two years of Trump and his allies promoting lies about the 2020 presidential election and peddling conspiracy theories about voting machines.

Narratives about mailed ballots mysteriously changing vote totals have been one persistent source of misinformation. To be clear, results announced on election night are unofficial and often incomplete. It's normal for counting to continue several days after Election Day, as mailed ballots received by their deadline

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are processed and added to the tally.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a surge of mailed balloting as voters opted to avoid crowded polling stations. A large number of those ballots slowed down the results as local election offices worked through the steps to verify the ballots and ensure they matched registered voters.

Julie Duggan, a 31-year-old police officer from Chicago, is among the Republicans who does not believe Biden's win was legitimate. She said watching his gaffes and missteps, it was impossible to believe he garnered enough support to win.

She is concerned about the country's direction, citing inflation, illegal immigration, crime rates and a lack of respect for law enforcement.

"If we don't get the right people in, we will be at the point of no return," she said, adding she hopes elections will be run fairly but has her doubts. "My confidence has definitely been shaken."

## Sparkling fish, murky methods: the global aquarium trade

By VICTORIA MILKO, FIRDIA LISNAWATI and KATHY YOUNG Associated Press

LES, Indonesia (AP) — After diving into the warm sea off the coast of northern Bali, Indonesia, Made Partiana hovers above a bed of coral, holding his breath and scanning for flashes of color and movement. Hours later, exhausted, he returns to a rocky beach, towing plastic bags filled with his darting, exquisite quarry: tropical fish of all shades and shapes.

Millions of saltwater fish like these are caught in Indonesia and other countries every year to fill ever more elaborate aquariums in living rooms, waiting rooms and restaurants around the world with vivid, otherworldly life.

"It's just so much fun to just watch the antics between different varieties of fish," said Jack Siravo, a Rhode Island fish enthusiast who began building aquariums after an accident paralyzed him and now has four saltwater tanks. He calls the fish "an endless source of fascination."

But the long journey from places like Bali to places like Rhode Island is perilous for the fish and for the reefs they come from. Some are captured using squirts of cyanide to stun them. Many die along the way.

And even when they are captured carefully, by people like Partiana, experts say the global demand for these fish is contributing to the degradation of delicate coral ecosystems, especially in major export countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

There have been efforts to reduce some of the most destructive practices, such as cyanide fishing. But the trade is extraordinarily difficult to regulate and track as it stretches from small-scale fishermen in tropical seaside villages through local middlemen, export warehouses, international trade hubs and finally to pet stores in the U.S., China, Europe and elsewhere.

"There's no enforcement, no management, no data collection," said Gayatri Reksodihardjo-Lilley, founder of LINI, a Bali-based nonprofit for the conservation and management of coastal marine resources.

That leaves enthusiasts like Siravo in the dark.

"Consumers often don't know where their fish are coming from, and they don't know how they are collected," said Andrew Rhyne, a marine biology professor at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island.

### STUNNED BY CYANIDE

Most ornamental saltwater fish species are caught in the wild because breeding them in captivity can be expensive, difficult and often impossible. The conditions they need to reproduce are extremely particular and poorly understood, even by scientists and expert breeders who have been trying for years.

Small-scale collection and export of saltwater aquarium fish began in Sri Lanka in the 1930s and the trade has grown steadily since. Nearly 3 million homes in the U.S. keep saltwater fish as pets, according to a 2021-2022 American Pet Products Association survey. (Freshwater aquariums are far more common because freshwater fish are generally cheaper and easier to breed and care for.) About 7.6 million saltwater fish are imported into the U.S. every year.

For decades, a common fishing technique has involved cyanide, with dire consequences for fish and marine ecosystems.

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Fishermen crush the blue or white pellets into a bottle filled with water. The diluted cyanide forms a poisonous mixture fishermen squirt onto coral reefs, where fish usually hide in crevices. The fish become temporarily stunned, allowing fishermen to easily pick or scoop them from the coral.

Many die in transit, weakened by the cyanide – which means even more fish need to be captured to meet demand. The chemicals damage the living coral and make it more difficult for new coral to grow.

## LAX ENFORCEMENT

Cyanide fishing has been banned in countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines but enforcement of the law remains difficult, and experts say the practice continues.

Part of the problem is geography, Reksodihardjo-Lilley explains. In the vast archipelago of Indonesia, there are about 34,000 miles (54,720 kilometers) of coastline across some 17,500 islands. That makes monitoring the first step of the tropical fish supply chain a task so gargantuan it is all but ignored.

“We have been working at the national level, trying to push national government to give attention to ornamental fish in Indonesia, but it’s fallen on deaf ears,” she said.

Indonesian officials counter that laws do exist that require exporters to meet quality, sustainability, traceability and animal welfare conditions. “We will arrest anyone who implements destructive fishing. There are punishments for it,” said Machmud, an official at Indonesia’s marine affairs and fisheries ministry, who uses only one name.

## “NO REAL RECORD-KEEPING”

Another obstacle to monitoring and regulating of the trade is the quick pace that the fish can move from one location to another, making it difficult to trace their origins.

At a fish export warehouse in Denpasar, thousands of fish a day can be delivered to the big industrial-style facility located off a main road in Bali’s largest city. Trucks and motorbikes arrive with white Styrofoam coolers crammed with plastic bags of fish from around the archipelago. The fish are swiftly unpacked, sorted into tanks or new plastic bags and given fresh sea water. Carcasses of ones that died in transit are tossed into a basket or onto the pavement, then later thrown in the trash.

Some fish will remain in small rectangular tanks in the warehouse for weeks, while others are shipped out quickly in plastic bags in cardboard boxes, fulfilling orders from the U.S., Europe and elsewhere. According to data provided to The Associated Press by Indonesian government officials, the U.S. was the largest importer of saltwater aquarium fish from the country.

Once the fish make the plane ride halfway around the world from Indonesia to the U.S., they’re checked by the Fish and Wildlife Service, which cross-references the shipment with customs declaration forms.

But that’s designed to ensure no protected fish, such as the endangered Banggai Cardinal, are being imported. The process cannot determine if the fish were caught legally.

A U.S. law known as the Lacey Act bans trafficking in fish, wildlife, or plants that were illegally taken, possessed, transported, or sold – according to the laws in the country of origin or sale. That means that any fish caught using cyanide in a country where it’s prohibited would be illegal to import or sell in the U.S.

But that helps little when it’s impossible to tell how the fish was caught. For example, no test exists to provide accurate results on whether a fish has been caught with cyanide, said Rhyne, the Roger Williams marine biology expert.

“The reality is that the Lacey Act isn’t used often because generally there’s no real record-keeping or way to enforce it,” said Rhyne.

## LOCAL RESPONSE

In the absence of rigorous national enforcement, conservation groups and local fishermen have long been working to reduce cyanide fishing in places like Les, a well-known saltwater aquarium fishing town tucked between the mountains and ocean in northern Bali.

Partiana started catching fish – using cyanide -- shortly after elementary school, when his parents could no longer afford to pay for his education. Every catch would help provide a few dollars of income for his family.

But over the years Partiana began to notice the reef was changing. “I saw the reef dying, turning black,”

he said. "You could see there were less fish."

He became part of a group of local fishermen who were taught by a local conservation organization how to use nets, care for the reef and patrol the area to guard against cyanide use. He later became a lead trainer for the organization, and has trained more than 200 fellow aquarium fishermen across Indonesia in use of less harmful techniques.

Reksodihardjo-Lilley says it this type of local education and training that should be expanded to reduce harmful fishing. "People can see that they're directly benefitting from the reefs being in good health."

For Partiana, now the father of two children, it's not just for his benefit. "I hope that (healthier) coral reefs will make it possible for the next generation of children and grandchildren under me," He wants them to be able to "see what coral looks like and that there can be ornamental fish in the sea."

A world away in Rhode Island, Siravo, the fish enthusiast, shares Partiana's hopes for a less destructive saltwater aquarium industry.

"I don't want fish that are not collected sustainably," he says. "Because I won't be able to get fish tomorrow if I buy (unsustainably caught fish) today."

## Florida sees rise in flesh-eating bacteria amid Ian concerns

FORT MYERS, Fla. (AP) — Florida has seen an increase in cases of flesh-eating bacteria this year driven largely by a surge in the county hit hardest by Hurricane Ian.

The state Department of Health reports that as of Friday there have been 65 cases of vibrio vulnificus infections and 11 deaths in Florida this year. That compares with 34 cases and 10 deaths reported during all of 2021.

In Lee County, where Ian stormed ashore last month, the health department reports 29 cases this year and four deaths.

Health officials didn't give a breakdown of how many of the cases were before or after Ian struck.

Lee County health officials earlier this month warned people that the post-hurricane environment — including warm, standing water — could pose a danger from the potentially deadly bacteria.

"Flood waters and standing waters following a hurricane pose many risks, including infectious diseases such as vibrio vulnificus," the county health department said in a news release Oct. 3 that urged the public to take precautions.

The advisory said that people with open wounds, cuts, or scratches can be exposed to the bacteria through contact with sea water or brackish water. People with open wounds should avoid such water and seek medical care immediately if an infection is apparent.

## Russia's Iranian drones complicate Israel's balancing act

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Iranian-made drones that Russia sent slamming into central Kyiv this week have complicated Israel's balancing act between Russia and the West.

Israel has stayed largely on the sidelines since Russia's invasion of Ukraine last February so as not to damage its strategic relationship with the Kremlin. Although Israel has sent humanitarian aid to Ukraine, it has refused Kyiv's frequent requests to send air defense systems and other military equipment and refrained from enforcing strict economic sanctions on Russia and the many Russian-Jewish oligarchs who have second homes in Israel.

But with news of Moscow's deepening ties with Tehran, Israel's sworn foe, pressure is growing on Israel to back Ukraine in the grinding war. Israel has long fought a shadowy war with Iran across the Middle East by land, sea and air.

Lt. Col. Richard Hecht, a military spokesman, said the suicide drone attack in Ukraine had raised new concerns in Israel.

"We're looking at it closely and thinking about how these can be used by the Iranians toward Israeli

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population centers," he said.

The debate burst into the open on Monday, as an Israeli Cabinet minister called on the government to take Ukraine's side. Iran and its proxies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen have threatened Israel with the same delta-shaped, low-flying Shahed drones now exploding in Kyiv.

The Iranian government has denied providing Moscow with the drones, but American officials say it has been doing so since August.

"There is no longer any doubt where Israel should stand in this bloody conflict," Nachman Shai, Israel's minister of diaspora affairs, wrote on Twitter. "The time has come for Ukraine to receive military aid as well, just as the USA and NATO countries provide."

His comments set off a storm in Russia. Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said on Telegram that providing military aid to Ukraine would be "a very reckless move" by Israel.

"It will destroy all interstate relations between our countries," he wrote.

But Shai doubled down on Tuesday, while stressing his view did not reflect the government's official stance.

"We in Israel have a lot of experience in protecting our civilian population over 30 years. We've been attacked by missiles from Iraq and rockets from Lebanon and Gaza," Shai, a former military spokesman, told The Associated Press. "I'm speaking about defense equipment to protect Ukraine's civilian population."

The Israeli prime minister's office declined to comment, but Defense Minister Benny Gantz on Wednesday confirmed Israel's position.

"The policy towards Ukraine will not change. We will continue to support it and stand by the West. We will not supply weapons," he said in Tel Aviv, during a meeting with the ambassadors of the European Union.

For years, Russia and Israel have enjoyed good working relations and closely coordinated to avoid run-ins in the skies over Syria, Israel's northeastern neighbor, where Russian air power has propped up embattled President Bashar Assad. Russia has let Israeli jets bomb Iran-linked targets said to be weapons caches destined for Israel's enemies.

Israel has also been keen to stay neutral in the war over concern for the safety of the large Jewish community in Russia. Israel frets about renewed antisemitic attacks in the country, with its long history of anti-Jewish pogroms under Russian czars and purges in the Soviet era. Over 1 million of Israel's 9.2 million citizens have roots in the former Soviet Union.

Israel's former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett maintained strict neutrality after the invasion, refraining from condemning Russia's actions and even trying to position himself as a mediator in the conflict. As the U.S. and European Union piled sanctions on Russia, Bennett became the only Western leader to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

But in recent months, Israel's cautious stance has grown more fraught.

Prime Minister Yair Lapid, who took over as caretaker leader over the summer, has been more vocal than his predecessor. As foreign minister, he described reports of atrocities in Bucha, Ukraine as possible war crimes. After Russia bombarded Kyiv last week, he "strongly" condemned the attacks and sent "heartfelt condolences to the victims' families and the Ukrainian people," sparking backlash from Moscow.

Tensions rose further when a Russian court in July ordered that the Jewish Agency, a major nonprofit that promotes Jewish immigration to Israel, close its offices in the country. Israel was rattled. A hearing to decide the future of the agency's operations in Russia is set for Wednesday. "Anything could happen," said Yigal Palmor, the agency's spokesman.

Now, Israeli alarm about the Iranian drones buzzing over Kyiv has heightened the debate.

"I think Israel can help even more," said Amos Yadlin, a former chief of Israeli military intelligence. He described Israel's "knowledge on how to handle aerial attacks," its "intelligence about Iranian weapons" and "ability to jam them" as potentially crucial to Ukraine.

Iran is battle testing weapons that could be used against Israel's northern and southern borders, argued Geoffrey Corn, a professor and director of the Center for Military Law and Policy at Texas Tech University.

Iran backs Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group and Hamas in the Gaza Strip — both of which have fought lengthy wars against Israel.

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If the drones prove effective in Ukraine, Iran will “double down on their development,” Corn said. If they are shot down, Iran will have an “opportunity to figure out how to bypass those countermeasures.”

Israel’s air defense system, the Iron Dome, has boasted a 90% interception rate against incoming rocket fire from Gaza. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has hit out at Israel for not providing Kyiv with the anti-rocket system.

Former Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky, a onetime Soviet dissident, criticized his country’s reluctance to help Ukraine in an interview with the Haaretz daily on Tuesday, deriding Israel as “the last country in the free world which is still afraid to irritate Putin.”

Still, some insist that Israel must not enter the fray precisely because it differs from its Western allies. “We are not Germany or France,” said Uzi Rubin, a former head of Israel’s missile defense program. “We are a country at war.”

## Rare toad fight similar to landmark endangered species case

By SCOTT SONNER Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — The unusual circumstances that led to the U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark ruling on the Endangered Species Act in 1978 have not surfaced much since then.

But the stage is being set in Nevada for another potentially significant test of the nation’s premier wildlife protection law in a legal battle over a geothermal power plant with similarities to the precedent-setting fight over the snail darter and a dam in Tennessee nearly a half century ago.

Even smaller than that tiny species of perch, the endangered critter in Nevada is a quarter-sized toad found only in high-desert wetlands fed by underground springs on federal land.

Citing the potential threat posed by the water-pumping power plant, the Fish and Wildlife Service declared the Dixie Valley toad endangered on a temporary, emergency basis in April — only the second time in 20 years it’s taken such action.

And while the geothermal plant would generate electricity by spinning turbines with steam tapped from hot water beneath the earth instead of hydropower harnessed from rivers, both projects were born with the promise of producing some of the cleanest, renewable energy of their time.

Decades ago, Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger seemed to anticipate the significance of the 1978 ruling and controversy that would follow when he authored the 6-3 majority opinion on the snail darter just five years after President Richard Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act into law.

“It may seem curious to some,” Burger said, “that the survival of a relatively small number of three-inch fish among all the countless millions of species extant would require the permanent halting of a virtually completed dam for which Congress has expended more than \$100 million.”

“We conclude, however, that the explicit provisions of the Endangered Species Act require precisely that result,” he wrote in the case pitting the fish against the Tennessee Valley Authority.

More than four decades later, a similar scenario is unfolding 100 miles (160 kilometers) east of Reno where environmentalists and tribal leaders are trying to block the geothermal plant Ormat Technologies agreed to temporarily stop building in August — four months before it was scheduled to start producing power.

The Bureau of Land Management rushed to approve the Nevada project during the final days of former President Donald Trump’s administration. But President Joe Biden’s administration continues to defend it as part of its own agenda to replace fossil fuels with renewables.

Environmental groups insist they share the president’s goals to combat climate change. But they say the bureau ignored repeated warnings from state and federal wildlife biologists, the U.S. Navy and even its own experts about potential harm to the Dixie Valley toad.

“The expert agency, FWS, has determined that Ormat’s project is likely to cause extinction of the species — the very catastrophe the Endangered Species is intended to prevent,” the Center for Biological Diversity’s lawyers wrote in recent filings in federal court in Reno.

The case already has made one trip to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals and seems likely to return in the months ahead.

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On Aug. 1, the appellate court refused to reinstate a previous injunction temporarily blocking construction, concluding further delay would make it "all but certain" Ormat would be unable to meet a Dec. 31 contract deadline.

Ormat, which already had invested \$68 million, argued failure to meet the deadline would cost it another \$30 million over 20 years and could jeopardize the project altogether. But later that day, Ormat agreed to suspend all work pending consultation between the Bureau of Land Management and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Like the snail darter, the conflict differs from most battles over endangered species. They typically target broad government management plans for things like hunting grizzly bears, energy exploration near sage grouse habitat, logging around northern spotted owls and dam operations on Pacific salmon rivers. Less common are disputes over specific projects like TVA's dam or Ormat's geothermal plant.

Now, with the full force of the Endangered Species Act at play, Ormat's opponents are zeroing in on the section of the law the Supreme Court cited in prohibiting construction of the Tellico Dam in 1978.

"The case is analogous to (that case), where it was discovered late into the construction of a \$100 million federal dam project that completing and operating the dam would eradicate a rare species of minnow," environmental lawyers wrote Sept. 16.

They said Congress specifically mandated that federal agencies secure Fish and Wildlife Service approval before taking any action that could jeopardize a species to "prevent a situation like the one presented in TVA" and "avoid an outcome in which the only choices left to an agency are to violate the Endangered Species Act or scrap a virtually completed project."

Last week, a judge granted a request from the Bureau of Land Management and Ormat to extend the deadline for their responses until Oct. 28.

Central to the Nevada dispute is uncertainty about effects groundwater pumping will have on surface water levels and temperatures.

Ormat insists water it would pump and return to the ground will come from a different aquifer than feeds the wetlands. But environmentalists say the bureau ignored every caution flag raised en route to the project's approval.

"BLM disregarded repeated warnings and objections from scientific experts and nearly every other federal and state agency involved in the project's development, all of whom warned the project would likely dry up, or at the very least degrade, the hot springs that the Dixie Valley toad depends on for its survival, and cautioned that the project's monitoring and mitigation plan would be ineffective."

They cite internal documents that show:

— The Navy, whose Fallon Naval Air Station borders the site, characterized the plan as "inadequate and incomplete."

— UFWS said it was "a plan describing the development of a plan."

— BLM staff acknowledged the estimates were "rough guesses."

In May, the BLM said informal consultation had started and produced a draft biological assessment concluding the project "is likely to adversely affect" the toad. But the FWS said the BLM's assessment was "inadequate to initiate formal consultation ... missing major elements and lacking necessary analysis."

The toad is in the spotlight, but similar disputes are brewing at other Nevada green energy projects.

The Center for Biological Diversity petitioned the FWS in August to list a rare butterfly where Ormat plans another geothermal project near the Oregon line.

Last October, the agency formally proposed listing a desert wildflower as endangered where Ioneer USA wants to dig a lithium mine halfway between Reno and Las Vegas for the mineral essential for electric car batteries.

And a U.S. judge has scheduled a hearing Jan. 5 in Reno for another lawsuit brought by conservationists, tribes and a rancher challenging a bigger mine Lithium Nevada plans near the Oregon line.

That case has focused primarily on threats to groundwater and cultural resources near a site where tribes say their ancestors were massacred by U.S. troops in 1865. But last month, Western Watersheds Project petitioned for endangered species listing of a tiny snail that lives nearby.

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In the original 1978 snail darter case, the Supreme Court found “an irreconcilable conflict” between operation of the dam and compliance with the act.

After it ruled, Congress exempted the dam from the Endangered Species Act altogether. But the court’s precedent remains, and it’s now front and center in Nevada.

“It is clear from the Act’s legislative history,” the 1978 ruling said, “that Congress intended to halt and reverse the trend toward species extinction — whatever the cost.”

## Climate Questions: Why do small degrees of warming matter?

By SETH BORENSTEIN and DANA BELTAJI Associated Press

On a thermometer, a tenth of a degree seems tiny, barely noticeable. But small changes in average temperature can reverberate in a global climate to turn into big disasters as weather gets wilder and more extreme in a warmer world.

In 2015, countries around the world agreed to cut greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming to “well below” 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) and pursue a goal of curbing warming to 1.5 Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) as part of the Paris Agreement.

Two degrees of difference might not be noticeable if you’re gauging the weather outside, but for global average temperatures, these small numbers make a big difference.

“Every tenth of a degree matters,” is a phrase that climate scientists around the world keep repeating.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** This story is part of an ongoing series answering some of the most fundamental questions around climate change, the science behind it, the effects of a warming planet and how the world is addressing it.

The Earth has already warmed at least 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times, giving the world around 0.4 degrees Celsius (0.7 Fahrenheit) of more heating before passing the goal and suffering even more catastrophic climate change events, scientists have said.

These tenths of a degree are a big deal because the temperatures represent a global average of warming. Some parts of the world, especially land mass and northern latitudes like the Arctic have already warmed more than the 1.1 Celsius average and have far surpassed 1.5 Celsius, according to estimates.

It’s helpful to look at temperatures like a bell curve, rather than just the average which doesn’t reveal “hidden extremes,” said Princeton University climate scientist Gabe Vecchi.

“On the far end where the bell shape is very narrow, that is telling you the odds of very extreme events,” he said. “If you have a slight shift of the average of the peak of that bell to the warming direction, what that results in is a substantial decrease in the odds of extremely cold temperatures and a substantial increase in the odds of extremely warm temperatures.”

It’s a similar picture with sea level rise, where the average obscures how some places are seeing much higher sea level increases than others, he said.

Most nations — including the world’s two largest emitters, the U.S. and China — aren’t on track to limit warming to 1.5 Celsius or even 2 Celsius, according to scientists and experts who track global action on climate change, despite promises to cut their emissions to “net zero”.

If temperatures increase by about 2 more degrees Celsius by the end of the century, the world will experience five times the floods, storms, drought and heat waves, according to estimates by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

“All bets are off” when it comes to how climate systems will respond to more warming, warned Brown University climate scientist Kim Cobb. The threat of some irreversible changes and feedback loops that amplify warming, such as the thawing of permafrost that traps massive amounts of greenhouse gas, could trigger even more heating.

“It’s just staggering to think about how many people will be under immediate threat of climate-related extremes in a two degree world,” Cobb said.



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## Today in History: October 20, the "Saturday Night Massacre"

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Oct. 20, the 293rd day of 2022. There are 72 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 20, 2011, Moammar Gadhafi, 69, Libya's dictator for 42 years, was killed as revolutionary fighters overwhelmed his hometown of Sirte (SURT) and captured the last major bastion of resistance two months after his regime fell.

On this date:

In 1803, the U.S. Senate ratified the Louisiana Purchase.

In 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee opened hearings into alleged Communist influence and infiltration in the U.S. motion picture industry.

In 1967, a jury in Meridian, Mississippi, convicted seven men of violating the civil rights of slain civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner; the seven received prison terms ranging from 3 to 10 years.

In 1973, in the so-called "Saturday Night Massacre," special Watergate prosecutor Archibald Cox was dismissed and Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson and Deputy Attorney General William B. Ruckelshaus resigned.

In 1976, 78 people were killed when the Norwegian tanker Frosta rammed the commuter ferry George Prince on the Mississippi River near New Orleans.

In 1977, three members of the rock group Lynyrd Skynyrd, including lead singer Ronnie Van Zant, were killed along with three others in the crash of a chartered plane near McComb, Mississippi.

In 1979, the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum was dedicated in Boston.

In 1990, three members of the rap group 2 Live Crew were acquitted by a jury in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., of violating obscenity laws with an adults-only concert in nearby Hollywood the previous June.

In 2001, officials announced that anthrax had been discovered in a House postal facility on Capitol Hill.

In 2004, a U.S. Army staff sergeant, Ivan "Chip" Frederick, pleaded guilty to abusing Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib prison. (Frederick was sentenced to eight years in prison; he was paroled in 2007.)

In 2018, Saudi Arabia announced that U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi (jah-MAHL' khahr-SHOHK'-jee) had been killed in Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul; there was immediate international skepticism over the Saudi account that Khashoggi had died during a "fistfight." (A U.S. intelligence report later concluded that Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman had likely approved Khashoggi's killing by a team of Saudi security and intelligence officials.)

In 2020, two weeks before Election Day, President Donald Trump called on Attorney General William Barr to immediately launch an investigation into unverified claims about Democrat Joe Biden and his son Hunter, effectively demanding that the Justice Department abandon its historic resistance to getting involved in elections.

Ten years ago: Heading into the campaign's final weeks, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney upped his criticism of President Barack Obama's plans for a second term, accusing the Democrat of failing to tell Americans what he would do with four more years; the Obama campaign aggressively disputed the notion, claiming it was Romney who hadn't provided specific details to voters.

Five years ago: The U.S. government said 24 of its workers had now been confirmed to be victims of invisible attacks in Cuba. Suicide bombers struck two mosques in Afghanistan during Friday prayers, killing more than 60 people.

One year ago: Nikolas Cruz pleaded guilty to murdering 17 people during a February, 2018, rampage at his former high school in Parkland, Florida. (A jury would spare Cruz from the death penalty, instead sending him to prison for life.) Nine months after being expelled from social media for his role in inciting the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection, former President Donald Trump said he was launching a new media company with its

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own social media platform. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said the city would require its entire municipal workforce to be vaccinated against COVID-19 or be placed on unpaid leave. Netflix employees staged a walkout from the company's office-studio complex in Los Angeles in protest of a Netflix special in which comedian Dave Chappelle made anti-transgender comments. A federal court filing revealed that the NFL and lawyers for thousands of retired players had reached an agreement to end race-based adjustments in dementia testing in a \$1 billion settlement of concussion claims.

Today's Birthdays: Japan's Empress Michiko is 88. Rockabilly singer Wanda Jackson is 85. Former actor Rev. Mother Dolores Hart is 84. Actor William "Rusty" Russ is 72. Actor Melanie Mayron is 70. Retired MLB All-Star Keith Hernandez is 69. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., is 67. Movie director Danny Boyle is 66. Former Labor Secretary Hilda Solis is 65. Actor Viggo Mortensen is 64. Vice President Kamala Harris is 58. Rock musician Jim Sonefeld (Hootie & The Blowfish) is 58. Rock musician Doug Eldridge (Oleander) is 55. Journalist Sunny Hostin (TV: "The View") is 54. Political commentator and blogger Michelle Malkin is 52. Actor Kenneth Choi is 51. Rapper Snoop Dogg is 51. Singer Dannii Minogue is 51. Singer Jimi Westbrook (country group Little Big Town) is 51. Actor/comedian Dan Fogler is 46. Rock musician Jon Natchez (The War on Drugs) is 46. Actor Sam Witwer is 45. Actor John Krasinski is 43. Rock musician Daniel Tichenor (Cage the Elephant) is 43. Actor Katie Featherston is 40. Actor Jennifer Nicole Freeman is 37.