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Groton Community Calendar

Thursday, Oct. 27

It's my wife's, Tina, birthday today. If you see her, wish her a Happy Birthday!

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, mixed vegetables, garlic toast, pears, sherbet.

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Spaghetti, corn..

Friday, Oct. 28

Senior Menu: Chicken alfredo, broccoli, spinach salad, mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits and jelly.

School Lunch: Cheese bread sticks with marinara.

Saturday, Oct. 29

UMC: Charge Conference in Groton, 6:30 p.m.

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

Sunday, Oct. 30

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

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 with communion, Milestones for JK and K, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

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

Monday, Oct. 31

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes with gravy, corn, chocolate cake, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Chicken legs, mashed potatoes.

Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm

United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm

Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

The Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

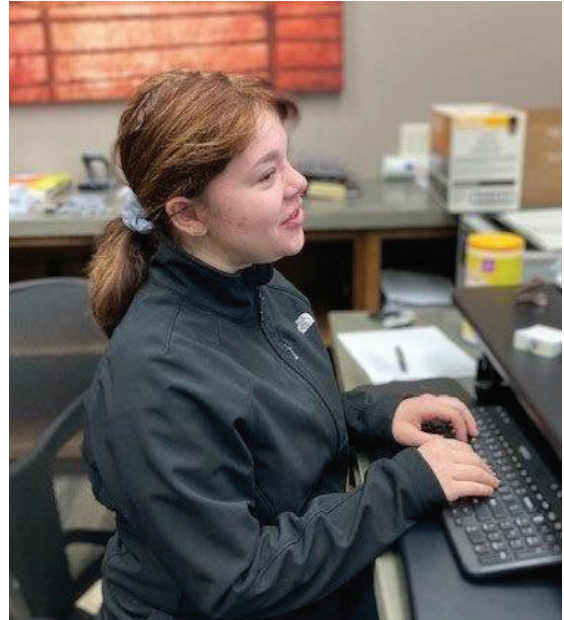
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

Groton Daily Independent
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Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

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Brooks interns for Sydney Kurtz

Fliehs interns at Groton Ag Partners



James Brooks, son of Stephanie Brooks and Steve Brooks, is working as an intern for Mrs. Sydney Kurtz. "So far I've done shredding of outdated documents and photocopying for Mrs. Kurtz," he said.

"I decided to work for someone here in the school to help me keep track of time," Brooks admitted. "When I get involved in something, I easily forget to watch the clock and am liable to be late for school every day!"

"That's why working here for Mrs. Kurtz is the best choice for me!" he smiled. "That way I'll be here in school on time!"

"The job that is the hardest for me is photocopying," Brooks stated. "It is time-consuming and often the copier doesn't work very well."

"In addition to making copies, I also help put up bulletin boards," he added. "There are lots of nice bulletin boards in this classroom. I also help other teachers here who might need some extra work done."

"I intend to join the robotics team again this year," Brooks explained. "I also work at the Millstone in Aberdeen."

"After graduating from high school, I plan to attend Mitchell Technical College to enroll in culinary classes," he said. "I plan to become a chef in a restaurant after I complete the Culinary Academy."

- Dorene Nelson

Kamryn Fliehs, daughter of Lance and JoAnn Fliehs, enjoys her internship at Groton Ag Partners.

"I chose to do my internship at Ag Partners since my dad does business here," she smiled. "I have become acquainted with the employees when I accompany him here."

"During harvest time, I mainly work with my grandma to help her prepare meals for the harvesters," Kamryn explained.

"I enjoy cooking and baking, especially when the apples on our trees are ripe," she smiled. "I love making and eating everything that has apples in it!"

"My job at Groton Ag Partners is mainly computer work," Kamryn said. "I do Excel work, fill in forms, and file completed paperwork."

"The hardest part of this job is searching for information on the computer," she admitted. "Some of the farms in this area are located in more than one county, making the search more difficult."

"The best part of this job is the congenial atmosphere and the great people I get to work with," Kamryn stated. "I enjoy the computer work too, even if some of it is challenging."

"I take piano lessons and play the base keyboard in the pit band for the show choir," Fliehs said.

"After high school, I plan to attend Northern State University to become a medical lab technician," she said. "I might also take some online courses to add a minor in agriculture."

- Dorene Nelson

Groton Robotic Kids Prepare For First Tournament

Before the school year even ended last year, Groton Robotic kids were tearing apart their old robots and brainstorming for the next new season as the new Vex game was released in April. The kids started working throughout the summer on their robots getting ready for their first tournament taking place at Douglas High School in Box Elder, SD on Saturday, October 29th. This year we have about 14 kids signed up and look forward to watching the kids learn!

Disk golf anyone? WITH a robot? The Vex Robotics game for the 2022-2023 year is called 'Spin-Up' and involves designing a robot that can shoot disks into goals. This involves precise aim, momentum and power as they have to shoot the disk from across the field! For more information and game details please visit <https://www.vexrobotics.com> AND be sure visit the Groton Robotics facebook page for links to livestream games and team updates!

Thank you to ALL who supported the Robotic kids at the Groton Family Fun night this summer, it was a GREAT success! They were also asked to show off their robots and skills at the Brown County Fair in August, we anticipate this being a yearly event to promote and encouraged more local schools to develop Vex Robotic teams! Stayed tuned for more Groton Robotics updates and fundraising events!



Gear Heads: Jackson Dinger and Ethan Clark. (Courtesy Photo)



G-Force: Logan Olson, Payton Schuring, Connor Kroll, Grant Cleveland and Lincoln Scepianiak. (Courtesy Photo)

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Gladiators: Garrett Schultz and De Eh Tha Say. (Courtesy Photo)



Galaxy: Kianna Sander, Corbin Weismantel, Axel Warrington and Logan Clocksene. (Courtesy Photo)

Volleyball Region Pairings

Class A - Region 1

Tuesday, Nov. 1

Thursday, Nov. 3

Tuesday, Nov. 8

#1 - Aberdeen Catholic Schools

	1 Aberdeen Ronc...	14-9	11/1 6:00 PM CT
	8 Waubay/Summit	4-19	

#2 -

	4 Webster Area	14-12	11/1 TBD
	5 Groton Area	12-14	

#3 - Redfield Jr-Sr High School

	2 Redfield	17-12	11/1 6:00 PM CT
	7 Sisseton	8-18	

#4 -

	3 Milbank	18-10	11/1 TBD
	6 Tiospa Zina	11-16	

#5 -

#1 WINNER	11/3 TBD
#2 WINNER	

SODAK 16 QUALIFIER



#6 -

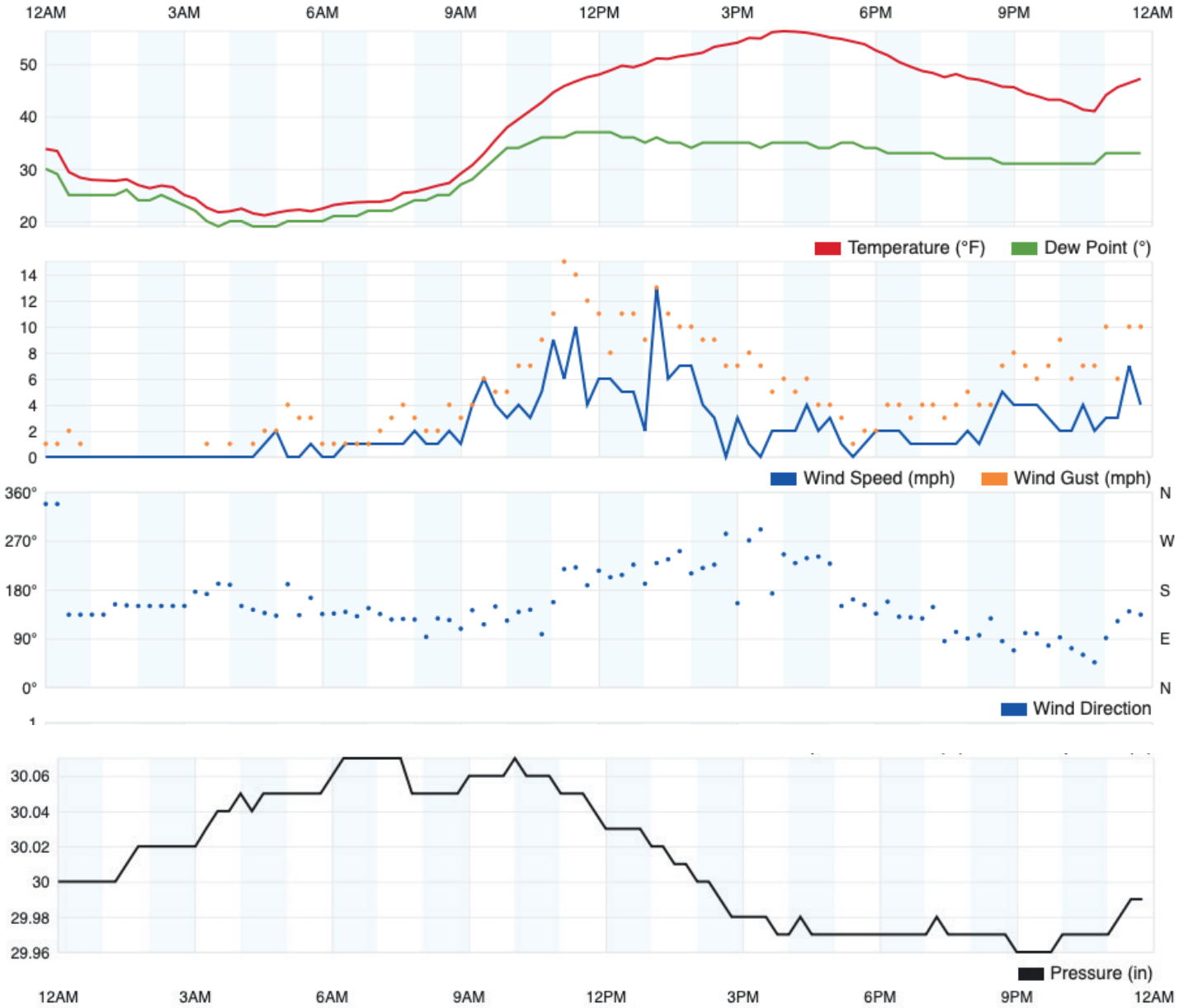
#3 WINNER	11/3 TBD
#4 WINNER	

SODAK 16 QUALIFIER

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs




Broton Daily Independent




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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
				
Chance Rain then Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 55 °F	Low: 34 °F	High: 63 °F	Low: 37 °F	High: 60 °F

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/abr



Chance Rain Then Warm

Today	Friday	Saturday
		
H: 49-58°F L: 30-38°F	H: 59-65°F L: 32-42°F	H: 60-65°F L: 33-39°F

Graphic Created 10/27/2022 2:59 AM

Eastern counties will have a chance for some rain this morning. As we get into the afternoon, clouds will start to clear off west of the James River Valley but stick around to the east. Tomorrow is expected to be a bit warmer than today and that warmth continues into the weekend.

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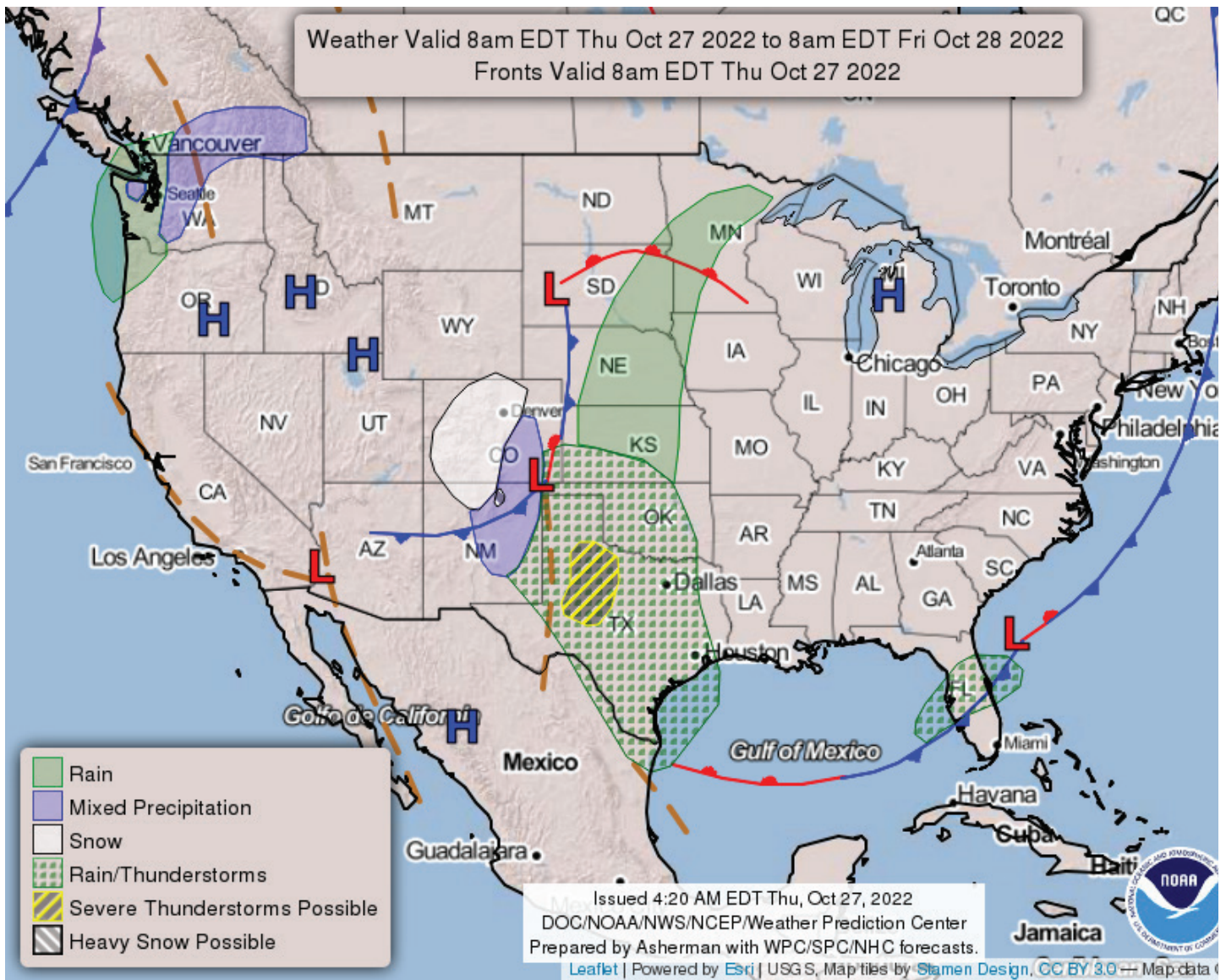
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 57 °F at 4:22 PM
Low Temp: 21 °F at 4:46 AM
Wind: 15 mph at 11:12 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 10 hours, 25 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 883 in 1983
Record Low: 1 in 2020
Average High: 53°F
Average Low: 28°F
Average Precip in Oct.: 1.94
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.45
Average Precip to date: 20.27
Precip Year to Date: 16.50
Sunset Tonight: 6:28:46 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:05:05 AM



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Today in Weather History

October 27, 1991: The first winter storm of the season moved across western and northern South Dakota. The storm produced widespread snow and freezing rain. Strong winds also produced blowing snow which caused blizzard conditions. Snow amounts ranged from 3 to 11 inches. Many schools and businesses in western South Dakota were closed. Snow drifts, as high as 6 feet, made many roads impassable. Travel across western South Dakota was extremely difficult, if not impossible. Forty traffic accidents occurred in the Black Hills while five accidents were reported in Pierre. Many major roads were closed due to the snow and visibility. Rapid City airport was closed. Freezing rain downed power and telephone lines in Mobridge, Gettysburg, Belvidere, Midland, and Mission. Ice also broke six power poles in Walworth County. Some rural areas were without electricity for 30 hours.

1764 - A "very remarkable storm of snow with high winds" produced 22 inches at Rutland in central Massachusetts. (David Ludlum)

1913: At least three people died, and more than a hundred people were injured when the Abercynon Tornado struck an area from Edwardsville to Cilfynydd in South Wales.

1929 - A snowstorm dumped 27 inches upon Ishpeming, MI, in 24 hours to establish a state record. (David Ludlum)

1962 - An early season winter storm over New England blanketed northern Maine with 7 to 16 inches of snow, and southeastern New England with up to 3 inches of snow. Worcester MA received a record 4.7 inches of snow. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Showers and thunderstorms produced locally heavy rain from Virginia to New York State. Fallen leaves made roads and sidewalks slick, and also clogged sewers. Rainfall totals of 1.55 inches at Newark NJ, 1.54 inches at Harrisburg PA, 1.27 inches at Scranton PA, and 1.22 inches at Atlantic City NJ, were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Low pressure brought snow and gale force winds to the Great Lakes Region, and snow and high winds to the north central U.S. Winds gusted to 47 mph at Lansing MI, and reached 55 mph at Pierre SD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Wintry weather invaded the northwestern U.S. A storm crossing the Central Rockies produced up to 23 inches of snow in the mountains east of Salt Lake City UT. "Indian Summer" continued in the Lower Ohio Valley and the Upper Great Lakes Region. Afternoon highs of 71 degrees at Marquette MI and 72 degrees at Sault Ste Marie MI were records for the date. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2006: An F1 tornado (waterspout) came ashore and caused significant damage on the west side of Apalachicola Florida.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

GENEROSITY MATTERS

Thinking "poor" is difficult for most of us. We have so much more than we need that it is difficult to understand what it is like to go without, be without, or do without. For most, the distance between a delicious meal and pangs of hunger is unimaginable. Many of us have never had to go without a meal much less gather morsels from a garbage can to survive.

I frequently hear stories of individuals who have invested some of their "things" in those who have represented themselves as poor only to find out that they had been "duped." Some say they will never give again because they were fooled. I find this attitude disturbing.

There are times when I find myself "guarded" when people come to my office with a need for some "thing." It might be for money to pay the utility bill, or milk to nourish a baby, or money for a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter. Often when I find myself questioning their motives I ask myself: "Who am I to be their judge?"

In Proverbs, there is a verse that says, "For God made both the rich and the poor." With that in mind, what should my response be to those in need? Is my response an indication of how I would respond to Jesus if He came to me with a need and I did not recognize Him?

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus said, "What you did to the least of these brothers of mine, you did it unto me." If we fail to respond with compassion to those in need how can we expect God to hear us when we have needs?

When we see someone in need, let us never forget that God brought that one into our lives to help them somehow. It's not an option. Rather, it's our obligation to do whatever we can.

Prayer: Lord, give us hearts that are sensitive to the needs of others. May we bless their lives as You have blest ours. May we do for others as You have done for us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Whoever mocks the poor shows contempt for their Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished. Proverbs 17:5



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

03-09-17-18-20

(three, nine, seventeen, eighteen, twenty)

Estimated jackpot: \$123,000

Lotto America

01-10-26-35-39, Star Ball: 6, ASB: 2

(one, ten, twenty-six, thirty-five, thirty-nine; Star Ball: six; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$29,380,000

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: 64,000,000

Powerball

19-36-37-46-56, Powerball: 24, Power Play: 2

(nineteen, thirty-six, thirty-seven, forty-six, fifty-six; Powerball: twenty-four; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$800,000,000

Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined

Yankton Press & Dakotan. October 25, 2022.

Editorial: South Dakota Economic Picture And A Balancing Act

South Dakota's budget situation appears rather bright heading into the final two months of 2022.

Members of the state's Council of Economic Advisors met Monday to go over the revenue situation, according to KELO. The meeting convened with the governor's annual budget address only about seven weeks away.

The council members heard a glowing report. A summary of the first quarter (July-September) of fiscal year 2023 found the state's revenue 13.3% above estimates. This comes after the state ended fiscal year 2022 on June 30 up 12.2%.

As with the municipalities that are also showing big revenue reports, inflation is no doubt helping to fuel some of this rise.

But it doesn't appear to be the only factor.

For instance, tourism enjoyed another banner year, said Jim Terwilliger, Gov. Kristi Noem's commissioner of finance, with overall numbers returning to pre-COVID pandemic levels. (If you recall, the Lewis & Clark Recreation Area actually thrived during the pandemic, as it provided a safe means of getting away from things. While those numbers dropped slightly this year, they remained strong.) Overall, tourism has proven itself to be the state's sturdiest industry, being able to produce in practically any situation.

Agriculture, the state's No. 1 industry, held its own despite the weather and fickle markets. KELO reported, "South Dakota farm income has been running at highs this year (at levels) not seen since at least 2013."

All this suggests that South Dakota's economy is in good shape as we head toward the next budgeting cycle.

But none of this would indicate that the state's checkbook (if that's even the right metaphor to use in this age of cashless digital transactions) is going to open up this winter when the Legislature is in session.

The inflationary issues impacting everybody everywhere remain a wild card. As we saw with the Yankton County Commission last week and the Yankton City Commission Monday, inflation generates higher revenue and, conversely, higher costs. As Terwilliger told KELO, "To be frank, it's been challenging to be

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a revenue estimator recently. And it's going to be challenging for the next year or two."

In short, nothing is ever guaranteed. What will be needed from lawmakers is the ability to balance the many needs and wish lists with the current economic uncertainties and realities of this post-COVID (mostly... we hope) phase. If state spending goes off on a tangent — which, given historical performance, would be mind-blowingly out of character — it could create painful vulnerabilities. But so, too, could a more likely possibility of pulling the reins too tight and choking off needed investment and growth, all for the sake of saving for a rainy day (which also feels like an ill-fitting metaphor these days).

No matter the economic outlook, the management skills and expectations are always the same. We'll see what December and legislative work next winter bring.

END

UN report: Climate pollution reductions 'highly inadequate'

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

The world, especially richer carbon polluting nations, remains "far behind" and is not doing nearly enough -- not even promising to do enough -- to reach any of the global goals limiting future warming, a United Nations report said.

That "highly inadequate" inaction means the window is closing, but not quite shut yet, on efforts to keep future warming to just a few more tenths of a degree from now, according to Thursday's Emissions Gap report from the United Nations Environment Programme.

"Global and national climate commitments are falling pitifully short," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Thursday. "We are headed for a global catastrophe."

The world is weaning itself from fossil fuels too slowly, the report and experts said.

"The report confirms the utterly glacial pace of climate action, despite the looming precipice of climate tipping points we're approaching," said climate scientist Bill Hare, head of Climate Analytics that also examines what countries are promising and doing about carbon emissions in its own analysis.

Instead of limiting warming to 1.5 or 2 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees or 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels, the global goals set by 2015 Paris agreement, the way the world is acting now, warming will hit 2.8 degrees (5 degrees Fahrenheit) by the year 2100, the UN report said. Countries concrete pledges would bring that down to 2.6 degrees (4.7 degrees Fahrenheit). It's already warmed 1.1 degrees (2 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times.

"In all likelihood we will pass by 1.5," UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen told The Associated Press in an interview. She didn't say when she thinks that would happen. "We can still do it, but that means 45% emissions reductions" by 2030.

"It's really about understanding that every little digit (tenth of a degree of warming) that we shave off is a lesser catastrophic outlook," Andersen said.

The emissions gap is the difference between the amount of carbon pollution being spewed between now and 2030 and the lower levels needed to keep warming to 1.5 or 2 degrees.

Guterres said "the emissions gap is a by-product of a commitments gap. A promises gap. An action gap."

Stanford University climate scientist Rob Jackson, who chairs the independent Global Carbon Project that tracks carbon dioxide emissions around the world but wasn't part of the UN report, said "another decade of fossil emissions at current rates and we'll zip past 1.5C.... The way things are going though we'll zip past 1.5C, past 2C and -- heaven help us -- even 2.5 or 3C."

"We're failing by winning too slowly," Jackson said in an email. "Renewables are booming and cheaper than ever. But COVID stimulus plans and the war in Ukraine have disrupted global energy markets and led some countries (to) revert to coal and other fuels. This can't continue in a safe climate."

In 10 days, yearly international climate negotiations will begin in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, and in the run up to the United Nations conference, several reports highlight different aspects of the world's battle to curb climate change. Wednesday, a different UN agency looked at countries' official emission reduction targets. Thursday's Emissions Gap report looks at what countries are actually doing as well as what they

promise to do in the future in various pledges.

The G20 nations, the richest countries, are responsible for 75% of the heat-trapping pollution, Andersen said, adding "clearly the more those G20s lean in, the better we will be."

The report said "G20 members are far behind in delivering" on their promises to reduce emissions. Taking out the special cases of Turkey and Russia, current policies by G20 nations fall 2.6 billion metric tons a year short of the 2030 goal, the report said. Both Turkey and Russia's targets for 2030 have higher pollution levels than current policies project and using their projections would make the G20 emissions gap artificially low, the report said.

"It's critical that China, as well as the U.S. and other G20 countries, actually lead," Andersen said. She hailed the newly passed \$375 billion American climate- and inflation-fighting law as an example of action instead of just promises.

The report said that by 2030 the U.S. law should prevent 1 billion metric tons of carbon emissions, which is much more than other nations efforts made this year.

"What we're calling for is an accelerated pace because there are good things happening out there in a number of countries, but it's just not fast enough and it's not consistent enough," Andersen said.

Election Day is Nov. 8, but legal challenges already begin

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Election Day is 12 days away. But in courtrooms across the country, efforts to sow doubt over the outcome have already begun.

More than 100 lawsuits have been filed this year around the upcoming midterm elections. The suits, largely by Republicans, target rules over mail-in voting, early voting, voter access, voting machines, voting registration, the counting of mismatched absentee ballots and access for partisan poll watchers.

It's the most litigation ever before an election and it's likely a preview of a potentially contentious post-election landscape. The strategy was born in part of the failure of allies of former President Donald Trump to successfully challenge and overturn the free and fair results of the 2020 presidential election.

But while the 2020 election effort was an ad hoc response fronted by a collection of increasingly ill-prepared lawyers that included Rudy Giuliani, today's effort is a more formalized, well-funded and well-organized campaign run by the Republican National Committee and other legal allies with strong bona fides. Party officials say they are actively preparing for recounts, contested elections and more litigation. And there are thousands of volunteers in place primed to challenge ballots and hunt down evidence of malfeasance.

"We're now at the point where charges of fraud and suppression are baked into the turnout models for each party. Republicans charge fraud. Democrats charge suppression. Each side amplifies its position with massive and costly amounts of litigation and messaging," said Benjamin Ginsberg, co-chair of the Election Official Legal Defense Network and former counsel to the George W. Bush campaign and other Republican candidates.

Democrats, too, have similar efforts underway. But their legal effort ahead of the election focuses on making voting easier and helping those denied a chance to vote, through legal hotlines and volunteers. A team led by attorney Marc Elias and his firm is litigating roughly 40 cases in 19 states, some in which they have intervened in Republican-led lawsuits.

Elias said he's bracing for a deluge of litigation challenging election results, particularly as some Republican candidates have already said they will not accept a loss or have planted doubt on the election process despite no evidence of fraud.

"The problem with the Republican Party right now is that conceding you lost an election is the only thing that will hurt you," Elias said. "Contesting an election that is clearly lost is now where all the incentive structure is, and that is incredibly corrosive for democracy."

Litigation around elections is nothing new; almost every election begets some legal challenge. But the bulk of this litigation generally occurs after the votes have been cast, not before Election Day.

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In 2020, pro-Trump attorneys filed roughly 60 lawsuits across the nation and asked judges to set aside votes. Those lawsuits were roundly rejected. Trump's own leadership found the election was fair, and state election officials nationwide saw no widespread evidence of fraud. Biden earned 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232, the same margin in Trump's 2016 victory over Hillary Clinton, which he repeatedly described as a "landslide."

At the time, the Republican establishment had not adopted Trump's lies about the election. Since then, though, the falsehoods have taken root within the party and become a major talking point for many of the candidates. Some have refused to commit to accepting the results after Nov. 8.

Ginsberg said that unsubstantiated charges that elections were fraudulent or rigged or unreliable have become the ante for a Republican candidate to win a contested 2022 primary in most states, and that's a problem.

"That can only harm public faith in elections, something for which Republicans will eventually pay a price."

This year, the focus is on offense. The RNC said it has built a multimillion-dollar "election integrity" team, hiring 37 lawyers in key states, holding more than 5,000 trainings to teach volunteers to look for voter fraud, which is rare, and filing 73 lawsuits in 20 states. Other Trump-allied legal teams are also ramping up and preparing for litigation, including America First Legal, run by former Trump adviser Stephen Miller.

"We built an unprecedented election integrity ground game to ensure that November's midterm elections are free, fair, and transparent," RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel said late last month.

For three decades, the RNC was under a consent decree that prohibited it from challenging voters' qualifications and targeting alleged fraud. The consent decree, which ended in 2019, arose from a Democratic National Committee lawsuit that argued Republicans sought to dissuade Black Americans from voting by posting armed, off-duty law enforcement officers at certain polling sites and sending targeted mailings warning about penalties for violating election laws.

In 2020, Republican poll watchers, who have no direct role in the elections and cannot interfere in the electoral process apart from watching and reporting issues, were the basis of many of the lawsuits filed by Trump allies. But when pressed by judges for evidence backing partisan claims of fishy behavior by election workers, litigation faltered.

Election workers have increasingly been subjected to abuse and threats of violence. In battleground states, voter intimidation cases are on the rise. There's growing concern among election officials and law enforcement about overly aggressive poll watchers or people pretending to be poll watchers intimidating voters.

Last week the RNC won a legal challenge against Michigan's secretary of state, Democrat Jocelyn Benson, who sought to tamp down rank partisanship by issuing rules around how poll challengers can operate.

"Jocelyn Benson not only disregarded Michigan election law in issuing this guidance, she also violated the rights of political parties and poll challengers to fully ensure transparency and promote confidence that Michigan elections are run fairly and lawfully," McDaniel said in a statement.

The RNC has won legal challenges in Nevada and Arizona over the appointment of poll workers and in Wisconsin on ballot curing and drop boxes. Other legal action includes litigation in Pennsylvania over absentee ballots dating and whether outside parties should be allowed examine voting machines.

Democrats are continuing to file litigation, too. Democratic-led groups have initiated roughly 35 lawsuits that focus largely on making voting easier. Just this week, litigation was filed on behalf of Voto Latino and the Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans to stop intimidation over using drop boxes in Arizona. The ACLU of Pennsylvania sent a letter to Allegheny County officials on mail-in ballot concerns.

Heading into 2020, the nation had been focused mostly on whether any foreign actors — Russia or perhaps China — would meddle in the election and wreak havoc on vote tabulations. That didn't come true; instead, the conspiracy was born and nurtured from Trump and his supporters.

U.S. officials are again sounding the alarm that Russia is working to amplify doubts over the integrity of the elections.

This week, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said, "No outside cyber activity has ever

prevented a registered voter from casting a ballot; compromised the integrity of any ballot cast; or affected the accuracy of voter registration information.”

And she promised the government would “monitor any threats to our elections if they arise and work as a cohesive, coherent interagency to get relevant information to the election officials and workers on the ground.”

Biden zeroes in on economic message as campaign winds down

By SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is zeroing in on a largely economic-focused message amid raging inflation and recession risks as he takes his closing argument for the November midterm elections to a hotly contested congressional battleground on Thursday and tries to reassure restive voters around the country.

Biden’s travels to Syracuse, New York, on Thursday and to Philadelphia on Friday are part of a strategic two-step crafted for a persistently unpopular president: Promote his administration’s accomplishments at official White House events while saving the overt campaigning for states where his political power can directly bolster Democratic candidates.

The White House of late has paid outsize attention to Pennsylvania, where Democrats are aggressively contesting a Republican-held Senate seat to help offset potential losses in other marquee Senate races.

Publicly, the White House and senior Democratic leaders express optimism that they’ll defy traditional midterm headwinds and retain control of Congress. But in private, there is angst that the House will be lost to Republicans and that control of the Senate is a coin flip.

It’s a position that Democrats point out is far more favorable than earlier in the election cycle — particularly before the Supreme Court’s decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* ended constitutional protections for abortion and upended the political landscape — yet many in the party are nonetheless bracing for the loss of at least one chamber.

“I will say, as the president has said, that we are quite confident that we’ll continue to have a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate as we move forward,” Jen O’Malley Dillon, a White House deputy chief of staff, told MSNBC on Tuesday night.

Biden has had a steady uptick in travel in recent weeks, although he has avoided states such as Nevada and Arizona in which Democratic candidates prefer not to be tagged with the national party brand. He has appeared with a smattering of vulnerable House Democrats at official White House events in California and New York and raised campaign cash for candidates in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Oregon, as well as millions of dollars for the Democratic National Committee at fundraisers in Washington and elsewhere. He held a trio of virtual fundraisers Wednesday night for congressional candidates in Iowa, Nevada and Pennsylvania.

A reception scheduled for Friday in Philadelphia with the state Democratic Party, which Vice President Kamala Harris will also attend, will mark Biden’s 15th visit to Pennsylvania during his presidency. Plans for a joint appearance in the state with former President Barack Obama are in the works for next week.

Also next week, Biden is scheduled to headline a political rally Tuesday in Florida. Democratic gubernatorial candidate Charlie Crist has been publicly encouraging the president to campaign with him in a state that has increasingly trended toward Republicans in recent election cycles.

In Syracuse on Thursday afternoon, Biden will showcase a significant investment by the U.S.-based company Micron, one of the largest microchip manufacturers in the world. The company has credited a new law boosting domestic production of semiconductors for its new, so-called megafab in the area that will create 50,000 new jobs, which will pay an average of \$100,000 a year.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., privately encouraged the White House to deploy Biden to Syracuse for a Micron-specific event, according to a person familiar with the conversations. Democrats believe that will help voters to draw a direct connection to the party’s achievements and job growth. The person insisted on anonymity to detail private conversations.

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White House officials said Biden would use the Micron event to hammer home a closing message aimed at framing the contrast between the two parties' economic agendas — an argument that the president began sketching out at a Democratic National Committee event earlier this week.

"Everybody wants to make it a referendum, but it's a choice between two vastly different visions for America," Biden said of the midterms. "Democrats are building a better America for everyone with an economy that grows from the bottom up and the middle out, where everyone does well. Republicans are doubling down on their mega MAGA trickle-down economics that benefits the very wealthy."

He continued: "It failed their country before and will fail it again if they win."

In recent weeks, Biden has used the presidential bully pulpit considerably to promote Democratic accomplishments, from boasting about his infrastructure law while standing next to a rebuilt bridge in Pittsburgh to reassuring seniors in Portland, Oregon, that they will soon see the costs of prescription drugs capped.

Still, there's some concern among Democrats that voters are not connecting economic growth in their communities often enough to what a Democratic-controlled government has completed during the first two years of Biden's presidency.

"I think we have to be far more aggressive," said Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif. "We're actually bringing jobs back, but we're not going out enough and acknowledging people's anger and fear and say, 'Here's what we're doing.'"

The Syracuse area is home to a House race for a seat being vacated by moderate Republican Rep. John Katko, a critical pickup opportunity for Democrats in a district that Biden won by more than 7 percentage points in 2020. Biden's visit could also give a boost to New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, whose reelection contest against Republican Lee Zeldin has tightened in recent weeks. Schumer, Hochul, Katko and Democratic Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand will all be at the event, according to a White House official.

Cabinet officials are fanning out nationwide to promote the administration's economic message. For instance, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen will travel to Cleveland on Thursday to talk about Biden's manufacturing agenda with Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio. The retirement of his Republican colleague, Sen. Rob Portman, has led to another critical Senate race, this one between Republican J.D. Vance and Democrat Tim Ryan.

Battle of the Alps? Water woes loom amid climate change

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

BRIG, Switzerland (AP) — A battle is brewing around Europe's rooftop over the planet's most precious resource.

Bountiful for centuries, the crystal-clear waters issuing from the Alps could become increasingly contested as climate change and glacier melt affect the lives of tens of millions in the coming years: Italy wants them for crop irrigation in the spring and summer. Swiss authorities want to hold up flows to ensure their hydroelectric plants can rev up when needed.

For the first time in four years, after a pandemic lull, government envoys from eight Alpine countries — big, small and tiny — are holding a two-day meeting in Brig, southern Switzerland, under a grouping known as the Alpine Convention, set up 30 years ago to help coordinate life, leisure and the limited resources from Europe's most celebrated peaks.

The countries, ranging from pint-sized principality Monaco and small Slovenia to powerhouses like France, Germany and Italy, focused attention Thursday on what's known as the "Simplon Alliance." Named after an Alpine pass between Italy and Switzerland, it aims to make transportation more eco-friendly, such as by favoring rail over roads, electric vehicles, and public transport over private cars in the mountains.

But with global warming causing a worrying shrinkage in Alpine glaciers this year, especially in Switzerland, the issue of water frozen up in the mountains, or showered and snowed on them, is growing in importance. Environmental advocates say jockeying for water isn't being addressed with enough urgency — and want the Alpine countries to do more to talk and act about the future of the resource.

Many parts of the world have grappled with water woes. But well-irrigated and relatively rich Europe

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has been largely above such troubles, reaping bountiful water resources for agriculture, hydropower, ski resorts, and human consumption.

Factors like global warming, geopolitics — like fallout from Russia's war in Ukraine on electricity and energy sectors — and economic demands, however, have made the issue more pressing.

Last month, Swiss authorities authorized a seven-month increase in the amount of water available for electricity generation from 45 of Switzerland's 1,500 hydraulic plants — hoping to churn out up to 150 gigawatts more power. Alluding to the possible knock-on effect, the Swiss said the move could temporarily affect fish migration, "which could make replenishing fish populations more difficult in 2023."

Meanwhile, sparse summer rainfall and a punishing heat wave in northern Italy — which melted snowfields and glaciers in the area — dried up the Po River, jeopardized drinking water and threatened irrigation in what's known as the Italian food valley.

The "9th report on the State of the Alps" — drafted by the Swiss hosts and set to be approved Thursday — notes that water supply is a "particularly pressing issue" because the Alps are a huge reservoir of water, which ultimately flows to the benefit of some 170 million people along some of Europe's most famous rivers, including the Danube, Po, Rhine and Rhone.

A draft of the report, obtained by The Associated Press, noted the need for "consistent availability of Alpine water" for industry, agriculture, hydropower and other uses, adding: "Climate change puts these functions under pressure, as glaciers are receding and precipitation regimes are constantly changing."

"Reduced quantities of water and limited reliability of water supply will be a major issue in the coming decades," it added.

Kaspar Schuler, director of CIPRA International, a commission devoted to protecting the Alps based in tiny Liechtenstein, said governments have done well to put water on the agenda but stopped short of steps to tackle the issue — by setting up working groups, expanding research, or coming up with ways that water can be better shared in the future.

"The description of the difficulties is well done by the Swiss, but they have still no courage to really address the elephant in the room," said Schuler added.

While Alpine resorts and villages rely on water, the major upstream users are Switzerland's hydropower plants, which want to hold onto the water until it's most needed to power turbines that provide some 60% of the country's electricity.

But the biggest consumers of the water are downstream — industrial areas like Grenoble and Annecy in France, Austria's capital Vienna, and areas around Bolzano in Italy's South Tyrol are likely to feel an impact.

The southern Alpine towns, especially in France and Italy with their drier climates, are more likely to undergo water shortages than the northern towns, the report said. "This is particularly true of inner-Alpine dry valleys such as the Aosta Valley in northwestern Italy, already affected by significant water stress."

State Secretary Bettina Hoffmann, who is representing Germany's Environment Ministry in Brig, said Germany wants to fuse issues of sustainable water in the broader context of the fight against the climate crisis — the centerpiece of the United Nations climate conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, starting Nov. 6.

She called for "in-depth exchanges on how to protect the water cycle in the Alps," and suggested countries in the region should share best practices and ideas. "We need to involve all stakeholders, from tourism to agriculture right through to the water supply sector."

CIPRA's Schuler suggested that many have become too complacent about the Alps' bountiful waters — and those days may be over soon.

"Until now, all the non-Alpine countries — the lowlands — were happy that the Alps have been providing so much: landscape for leisure and sports, ski resorts, and the water as much as everybody needs," he said. "So far, everybody was happy and the Alps delivered."

"In future it will be a battle ... about these resources because especially the lack of water can really harm a lot of people," he said.

EXPLAINER: Israeli election could yield familiar outcome

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By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel is holding its fifth national election in under four years, and once again the race is shaping up as a referendum on former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's fitness to rule.

Netanyahu has been campaigning while standing trial on corruption charges. As Israel's opposition leader, he has portrayed himself as the victim of a political witch hunt and promised to reform a legal system he sees as profoundly biased against him. His main opponent, caretaker Prime Minister Yair Lapid, is marketing himself as a voice of decency and national unity.

In Israel's fragmented political system, neither Netanyahu nor Lapid are expected to win outright majorities in the 120-seat Knesset, or parliament. That means each will have to turn to smaller allies in hopes of securing the 61 seats required to form a new government. Opinion polls say the race is too close to predict.

Here is a look at the potential outcomes of Tuesday's election:

NETANYAHU WINS. Netanyahu's Likud party and its allies, an extremist ultra-nationalist party and a pair of ultra-Orthodox religious parties, are projected in polls to come close to winning a parliamentary majority. If they can pull it off, Israel's next government will be a narrow, but cohesive and well-disciplined coalition poised to take a hard line against the Palestinians, including Israel's own Arab minority, cement Orthodox control over many aspects of daily life and attack the country's legal system.

A leader of one of Netanyahu's main partners, Religious Zionism, is Itamar Ben-Gvir, a lawmaker who has called for deporting Arab politicians and brandished a pistol during public run-ins with Palestinians. Another senior figure in the party once compared gays to wild animals. He later apologized, but has repeatedly made anti-gay comments and said he opposes "LGBT culture."

Netanyahu's allies have indicated they will try to take over the process of appointing judges and give parliament power to overturn Supreme Court rulings. That could pave the way to dismissing Netanyahu's corruption charges.

Justice Minister Gideon Saar, a former Netanyahu ally turned bitter rival, says a Likud victory will mean "regime change" for Israel. "They don't want evolution. They want a revolution that will destroy the independence of the courts and prosecution," he says.

LAPID WINS. Lapid, the founder and leader of the centrist Yesh Atid party, faces a harder task than Netanyahu. His party is projected to finish a distant second to Likud and with his current allies appears poised to fall short of a parliamentary majority. That would require some creative thinking.

Lapid was the mastermind of putting together the outgoing coalition -- a patchwork of small and midsize parties that banded together last year to oust the long-serving Likud leader. But members of that alliance, which included the first Arab party ever to sit in an Israeli government, had little in common. The coalition was torn apart by infighting after just a year in power.

Even if Lapid pulls off a miracle, he will once again have a difficult time finding common ground among members that include Arabs, secular and dovish Jewish parties that support peace negotiations with the Palestinians and hawkish hard-liners who oppose Palestinian independence.

GANTZ HAS A CHANCE. Since entering politics in 2018, former military chief Benny Gantz has seen his fortunes rise and fall. Initially seen as the great hope for ousting Netanyahu, Gantz later disappointed his followers by entering into a disastrous and short-lived power-sharing agreement with him. Gantz, currently defense minister, has now carved out a niche as the head of a midsized, middle-of-the-road party.

With one small Arab party unlikely to endorse either Netanyahu or Lapid, it is possible neither side secures a majority.

That is where Gantz could emerge as a power broker — and even an unlikely winner.

Gantz appears to be the lone candidate in the anti-Netanyahu bloc with some crossover appeal. He could potentially steal votes from Likud to prevent Netanyahu from securing a majority. And if that happens, he also could seek to lure ultra-Orthodox parties away from Netanyahu and into a coalition with Lapid.

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD. The parties have nearly three months to cobble together a new coalition. If they fail, Israel will return to the polls early next year and do it all over again. Beyond costing millions of shekels, the elections have exhausted Israelis and eroded their confidence in the country's democratic institutions.

Prince Harry's memoir, titled 'Spare,' to come out Jan. 10

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Prince Harry's memoir, an object of obsessive anticipation worldwide since first announced last year, is coming out Jan. 10.

The book will be called "Spare" and is being billed by Penguin Random House, as an account told with "raw, unflinching honesty" and filled with "insight, revelation, self-examination, and hard-won wisdom about the eternal power of love over grief."

In a statement released Thursday, Penguin Random House summoned memories of the stunning death in 1997 of Prince Harry's mother, Diana, and of Harry and his brother, William, "walking behind their mother's coffin as the world watched in sorrow — and horror."

"As Diana, Princess of Wales, was laid to rest, billions wondered what the princes must be thinking and feeling — and how their lives would play out from that point on," the statement reads in part.

"For Harry, this is his story at last."

The memoir's title is an apparent reference to Prince Harry's being a royal "spare," not the first in line to succession. William, Prince of Wales, is next in line.

The 416-page book will come out in 16 languages, from Dutch to Portuguese, and also will be released in an audio edition read by Prince Harry. Financial terms were not disclosed, but Harry, the Duke of Sussex, will be using proceeds from "Spare" to donate to British charities. He has already given \$1.5 million to Sentebale, an organization he co-founded with Prince Seeiso of Lesotho to help children and young people in Lesotho and Botswana affected by HIV/AIDS.

Penguin Random House identifies Prince Harry as "a husband, father, humanitarian, military veteran, mental wellness advocate, and environmentalist."

Royals watchers and the public at large have speculated endlessly since the book was first announced in July 2021, billed as "intimate and heartfelt" and tentatively scheduled for this year.

The Duke of Sussex had already revealed a news-making willingness to discuss his private life when he and his American-born wife, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, were interviewed for a March 2021 broadcast by their neighbor in Santa Barbara, California, Oprah Winfrey. The couple spoke of Meghan's deep unhappiness with her new life in England, the alleged racism within the royal family and Harry's fear that his wife's life might be endangered had they remained in his native country.

In 1992, Diana worked with author Andrew Morton on her explosive memoir "Diana: Her True Story," in which she described at length her unhappy marriage to the future King Charles, Harry's father.

Harry and Meghan stepped back from their royal duties in 2020 and moved to the U.S. Harry told Winfrey that his family cut him off financially and that he helped pay for his security with money left to him by his mother. They have launched numerous initiatives, including a Netflix production deal and the "impact-driven non-profit" Archewell Foundation.

The book's delay led to rumors that Harry was hesitating to say too much about his family, or was perhaps revising the narrative after his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, died in September. He has spoken of being estranged from his brother, William, although the siblings and their wives appeared in public together during the mourning period following the Queen's death.

"Penguin Random House is honored to be publishing Prince Harry's candid and emotionally powerful story for readers everywhere," the global CEO of Penguin Random House, Markus Dohle, said in a statement. "He shares a remarkably moving personal journey from trauma to healing, one that speaks to the power of love and will inspire and encourage millions of people around the world."

US economy likely returned to growth last quarter

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The problems have hardly gone away. Inflation, still near a 40-year high, is pun-

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ishing households. Rising interest rates have derailed the housing market and threaten to inflict broader damage. And the outlook for the world economy grows bleaker the longer that Russia's war against Ukraine drags on.

But for now anyway, the U.S. economy has likely returned to growth after having shrunk in each of the first two quarters of 2022.

At least that's what economists expect to see Thursday when the Commerce Department issues its first of three estimates of gross domestic product — the broadest measure of economic output — for the July-September period.

Economists surveyed by the data firm FactSet have predicted, on average, that GDP grew at a 2% annual rate in the third quarter. That would reverse annual declines of 1.6% from January through March and 0.6% from April through June.

Consecutive quarters of declining economic output are one informal definition of a recession. But most economists say they believe the economy has so far skirted a recession, noting the still-resilient job market and steady spending by consumers. Most of them have expressed concern, though, that a recession is likely next year as the Federal Reserve continues to steadily ratchet up interest rates to fight inflation.

Preston Caldwell, head of U.S. economics for the financial services firm Morningstar, notes that the economy's contraction in the first half of the year was caused largely by factors that don't reflect its underlying health and so "very likely did not constitute a genuine economic slowdown." He pointed, for example, to a drop in business inventories, a cyclical event that tends to reverse itself and generally doesn't reflect the state of the economy.

By contrast, consumer spending, fueled by a healthy job market, and stronger U.S. exports likely restored the world's biggest economy to growth last quarter.

Thursday's report from the government comes as Americans, worried about high prices and recession risks, are preparing to vote in midterm elections that will determine whether President Joe Biden's Democratic Party retains control of Congress. Inflation has become a signature issue for Republican attacks on the Democrats' stewardship of the economy.

The risk of an economic downturn next year remains elevated as the Fed keeps raising rates aggressively to try to tame stubbornly high consumer prices. The central bank has raised its benchmark short-term rate five times this year, and it's expected to announce further hikes next week and again in December. Chair Jerome Powell has warned bluntly that taming inflation will "bring some pain" — namely, higher unemployment and, possibly, a recession.

Higher borrowing costs have already hammered the home market. The average rate on a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage, just 3.09% a year ago, is approaching 7%. Sales of existing homes have fallen for eight straight months. Construction of new homes is down nearly 8% from a year ago.

Still, the economy retains pockets of strength. One is the vitally important job market. Employers have added an average of 420,000 jobs a month this year, putting 2022 on track to be the second-best year for job creation (behind 2021) in Labor Department records going back to 1940. The unemployment rate was 3.5% last month, matching a half-century low.

But hiring has been decelerating. In September, the economy added 263,000 jobs — solid but the lowest total since April 2021.

International events are causing further concerns. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has disrupted trade and raised prices of energy and food, creating a crisis for poor countries. The International Monetary Fund, citing the war, this month downgraded its outlook for the world economy in 2023.

USDA announces \$759M for high-speed internet in rural areas

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Department of Agriculture is making available \$759 million in grants and loans to enable rural communities to access high-speed internet, part of the broader \$65 billion push for high-speed connectivity from last year's infrastructure law.

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Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and White House senior adviser Mitch Landrieu are unveiling the grants in North Carolina on Thursday.

There are 49 recipients in 24 states. One is North Carolina's AccessOn Networks, which will receive \$17.5 million to provide broadband service to 100 businesses, 76 farms and 22 educational facilities in the state's Halifax and Warren counties. Both counties are rural and have predominantly Black populations.

The announcement and visit to North Carolina, a state with an open U.S. Senate seat, come as President Joe Biden and other top Democratic officials are trying to sell their achievements to voters before the Nov. 8 midterm elections. Landrieu, the infrastructure coordinator and former New Orleans mayor, told reporters on a Wednesday call that the Biden administration has already released \$180 billion for various infrastructure projects.

The administration is specifically targeting support for small towns and farm communities, places that generally favor Republicans over Democrats.

"Rural communities are the backbone of our nation, but for too long they've been left behind and they have been underrecognized," Landrieu said. "We all know how essential the internet is in order to access lifesaving telemedicine, to tap into economic opportunity, to connect with loved ones, to work on precision agriculture and so much more. That's just beyond unacceptable that that's not available to rural America."

Vilsack said he and Landrieu will "learn firsthand" from people in North Carolina about the opportunities internet access can create. They plan to meet with state and local officials including North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper at Wake Technical Community College, where they'll announce the grants. They will also hold a town hall in Elm City.

Neither candidate in North Carolina's U.S. Senate race — Democrat Cheri Beasley and Republican Ted Budd — is slated to appear at the events.

Vilsack said that past trips show how broadband connectivity is starting to make a difference. While in Nevada this summer, he heard from people in the town of Lovelock who plan to use the improved internet to enhance their emergency responder services and tourism opportunities as well as help high school students who are earning college credit online.

Inflation, gas prices looming over sports biz, concessions

By JAY COHEN AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Sitting on a bench in front of Soldier Field, about to watch his beloved Chicago Bears play in person, money wasn't exactly a big concern for Corey Metzger.

Or any concern, really.

"This trip has been a long time in the making, and I'm splurging whatever I got to spend to make it happen," said the 45-year-old Metzger, who works in law enforcement in Fargo, North Dakota.

Metzger's eager pilgrimage is a familiar one for sports fans, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic eased. But persistently high inflation and gas prices are looming over the monetary pipeline that resumed when fans returned.

U.S. inflation jumped 8.2% in September from a year ago, the government reported this month. That's not far from a four-decade high of 9.1% in June. Higher prices for housing, food and medical care were among the largest contributors to the rise.

Given the industry's reliance on disposable income, the inflation numbers are a troubling sign for sports business leaders.

"What's historically accurate for teams is that they tend to try to take less on the ticketing side because once somebody comes in they typically will make up for it once they are inside," said Ron Li, a senior vice president at Navigate, a consulting firm in sports and entertainment. "But with costs rising pretty much across the board after the turnstile, I think they have some decisions they need to make."

According to Team Marketing Report, the average cost for a family of four to attend a 2022 Major League Baseball game was \$256.41, an increase of \$3.04 from the previous season. The main engine behind the rise was the cost of tickets, with the average general ticket price increasing 3.6% to \$35.93.

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Despite the jump in prices, Americans have largely kept up their spending, particularly on entertainment and other services like travel that they missed out on during the pandemic. Still, there are signs the solid spending won't last: Credit card debt is rising and savings have declined as consumers, particularly low-income ones, have taken hits to their finances from the spike in inflation.

Casey Lynn, 43, a low-voltage technician from Minneapolis, and his wife, Lori, 44, a commercial lender, aren't big football fans, but they decided to check out the Bears on a trip to Chicago. While Casey Lynn said he is bothered by the ticket surcharges, the couple didn't want to pass on the opportunity to see the game.

"The gas is a necessity. Electric's a necessity. The sports isn't a necessity," he said. "But when in Rome, why not?"

Dan Coyne, 38, a life insurance wholesaler from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, makes an annual trip to Chicago to see the Bears with his brother, Dave, 47, of Valparaiso, Indiana, who has season tickets. But this time around was a little different.

"Flying out here, rental cars have like tripled in price, it definitely factored in," he said. "But this is a once-in-a-year thing."

The brothers got something to eat a couple hours before the game. Dave Coyne normally stays away from the concessions at Soldier Field, but "I only had to pay for myself tonight," he said. "I didn't have a kid or my wife with me."

Concessions typically have a higher profit margin for sports teams and providers, but increased costs for goods, transportation and labor have cut into those margins. The changes come after concessions companies were already profoundly impacted by the pandemic.

"The whole model has been kind of disrupted in a pretty big way as we're dealing with inflation of 10, 15, 20, 25, 30% when we have typically underwritten 2 or 3%," said Jamie Oblatz, president of Delaware North Sportservice. "And you can imagine the impact that that's had on us and what it's forced us to think about and do over the past six to 12 months, like a lot of companies."

Paul Pettas, a vice president with Sodexo Live!, estimated overall costs are up 10% to 15% over the past 12 to 24 months.

"In reality, costs are up across the board, but we certainly try to do as much as we can to keep that down and not have that affect the average fan or guest who comes to our events," he said.

Concessions companies also are experiencing lingering issues with their supply chains, which have improved recently but remain a factor. Oblatz recalled his company running out of peanuts midway through the 2021 World Series in Atlanta, so two workers drove a truck to another venue, loaded up and then drove through the night to get back to Truist Park.

"Things are not great," Oblatz said. "They're better than they were, it feels like, three to six months ago, and our hope is that it continues to improve."

The issues have forced concession companies to get creative in an effort to address the rising costs with minimal effect on consumers in terms of culinary options and price.

Chefs are redesigning menus to replace items that face significant cost increases and consolidating other options. They are using analytics to examine portion sizes — do consumers need six chicken fingers or will five work instead? — and taking a closer look at their vendors.

"There's dozens of things like this that we've tried to do and are doing as we speak, trying very desperately to offset those pricing increases that we're seeing," Oblatz said.

Alison Birdwell, the president and CEO of Aramark Sports + Entertainment, said the company is leaning on analytics and its data science team "more than ever" when it comes to menu strategies and new concessions items.

"With that guidance, we are working to give fans the items they're looking for while simultaneously being efficient with our product and mitigating significant increases in cost," Birdwell said in a statement to AP.

Ukraine: Evacuations intensify in Kherson; power sites hit

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Tens of thousands of residents have been evacuated from an area around the strategic city of Kherson as heavy fighting and attacks on power infrastructure continue, Moscow-appointed authorities in southern Ukraine said Thursday.

Kherson governor Vladimir Saldo said more than 70,000 residents from the area had been moved. Ukraine has pushed ahead with an offensive to reclaim Kherson that was captured by Russian forces during the first days of the conflict.

Members of the regional administration were included in the evacuation, deputy governor Kirill Stremousov said. Monuments were also removed along with the remains of Grigory Potemkin, the Russian general who founded Kherson in the 18th century that had been kept at the city's St. Catherine's Church.

Fighting has intensified around Kherson, where Ukrainian forces are attacking Russia's foothold on the west of the Dnieper River that divides the country, as well as in parts of the eastern Donetsk region, while Russian maintained attacks on energy infrastructure ahead of the winter.

A Russian drone attack early Thursday hit an energy facility, causing a fire, said Oleksiy Kuleba, governor of the Kyiv region.

"The Russians are using drones and missiles to destroy Ukraine's energy system ahead of the winter and terrorize civilians," Kuleba said in televised remarks.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy publicly thanked the country's power workers for maintaining the electricity supply as authorities have ordered rolling blackouts in many parts of the country and urged households to limit consumption.

"I thank all the workers in the energy sector: our rescuers, repair crews, officials from local government, and private companies who work diligently to maintain our energy system despite all the threats," Zelenskyy said in his nightly address late Wednesday.

In a likely response to the Russian attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure, the head of the port city of Sevastopol in the Russian-annexed region of Crimea said a power plant just outside the city had suffered minor damage in a drone attack.

Mikhail Razvozhayev said a drone hit a transformer and sparked a fire but did not affect its overall operation and did not interrupt the electricity supply.

Annexed by Russia in 2014, Crimea — a region slightly larger than Sicily — has faced drone attacks and explosions. In a major setback for Russia, on Oct. 8, a powerful truck bomb blew up a section of a strategic bridge linking Crimea to Russia's mainland.

The war in Ukraine and the resulting energy crisis is likely to cause global demand for fossil fuels to peak or flatten out, according to a report released Thursday by the Paris-based International Energy Agency, largely due to the fall in Russian exports.

"Today's energy crisis is delivering a shock of unprecedented breadth and complexity," the IEA said, releasing its annual report, the World Energy Outlook.

The shock to governments, the report said, was forcing advanced economies to accelerate structural changes toward renewable energy sources. ____

Follow AP's coverage of the war in Ukraine at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

Report: Global crises can speed up move to clean energy

By SIBI ARASU Associated Press

BENGALURU, India (AP) — Spiraling energy costs caused by various economic factors and the Ukraine war could be a turning point toward cleaner energy, the International Energy Agency said in a report Thursday. It found the global demand for fossil fuels, including coal, oil, and natural gas, is set to peak or plateau in the next few decades.

The report looked at scenarios based on current policies and said that coal use will fall back within the next few years, natural gas demand will reach a plateau by the end of the decade and rising sales of electric vehicles mean that the need for oil will level off in the mid-2030s before ebbing slightly by mid-

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century. Total emissions are currently going up each year, but slowly.

"Energy markets and policies have changed as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, not just for the time being, but for decades to come," said the IEA's executive director Fatih Birol. A surge in demand following COVID-19 pandemic restrictions lifting and bottlenecks in supply chains have also contributed to soaring energy prices.

"The energy world is shifting dramatically before our eyes. Government responses around the world promise to make this a historic and definitive turning point toward a cleaner, more affordable and more secure energy system," Birol said.

The role of natural gas as a "transition fuel" that will bridge the gap between a fossil-fuel based energy system to a renewable one has also taken a dent, the report said. Although it's a fossil fuel, natural gas is considered cleaner than coal and oil, as burning it produces less carbon dioxide.

But despite the largely positive outlook, the report adds that the share of fossil fuels in the global energy mix puts the world on track to a warming of 2.5 degrees Celsius (4.5 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century, a whole degree (1.8 Fahrenheit) more than the target set in the Paris climate deal.

That's in line with a U.N. report released Wednesday that said current climate pledges are "nowhere near" where they need to be to meet the ambitious target. Top climate scientists say that to keep warming in line with the 1.5 C goal, emissions need to be slashed by 45% by 2030.

Energy policy analysts say that while there are promising steps in the right direction, the move toward clean energy needs to be much faster.

"Clean energy investment is delivering. It is the reason why the world is on track to peak CO2 emissions. But that's only the first step. We need big emissions cuts, not a plateau," said Dave Jones, an energy analyst at London-based environmental think-tank, Ember.

The report estimated that clean energy investment will be above \$2 trillion by 2030 but added it would need to double to keep the transition in line with climate goals.

"The energy crisis has detracted from the climate crisis, but fortunately the answer is the same to both: a gigantic step up in clean energy investment," Jones said.

"This report makes a very strong economic case for renewable energy which is not only more cost-competitive and affordable than fossil fuel alternatives but also is proving to be much more resilient to economic and geopolitical shocks," said Maria Pastukhova a senior policy advisor at E3G, a climate change think-tank.

She added that leaders and negotiators at the U.N. climate conference in Egypt next month will need to "double down" on reducing the demand for energy and unlock finance for developing countries to help fund their transition to renewables which would speed up emissions cuts.

Italy's fascist past under scrutiny a century after putsch

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Never has Italy's failure to come to terms with its fascist past been more evident as it marks the 100th anniversary Friday of the March on Rome that brought totalitarian dictator Benito Mussolini to power, a date that has only gained more scrutiny as the first postwar government led by a far-right party with a neo-fascist past takes office.

The symbolism looks troubling: Giorgia Meloni's far-right Brothers of Italy party controversially retains the emblem of a flame used by the fascists; her party's co-founder, Ignazio La Russa, whose middle name is Benito and whose home office is awash in fascist memorabilia, is the elected speaker of Parliament's upper house.

Meloni has tried to distance Brothers of Italy from its neo-fascist roots. She made her clearest statement yet this week during a speech to Italy's lower house ahead of confidence votes confirming her government.

"I have never felt sympathy or closeness to undemocratic regimes, fascism included, as I have always considered the racial laws of 1938 the lowest point in Italian history, a shame that will mark our people forever," Meloni told the lower house of parliament Wednesday, decrying Mussolini's laws that persecuted

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Italy's Jewish community.

The question remains, however, whether the moderate voice she has recently adopted will persevere, and how that will be tolerated by the nostalgic wing in her party that represents a core 4% of her support.

Already, the National Association of Italian Partisans, or ANPI, which preserves the memory of the war-time resistance against fascism, has noted some signs of an emboldened far-right in regions governed by the Brothers of Italy. For example, the governor of the central Marche region has cut off funding to maintain brass-plated Stumbling Stones engraved with the names and dates of Holocaust victims outside their prewar homes, ANPI national president Gianfranco Pagliarulo said. He added that social media attacks against his organization have grown more virulent than ever.

"This is a disturbing signal," Pagliarulo said. "It is evident that the victory of the nationalist right will lead to a resurgence of neo-fascist provocative attitudes ... We are not worried because we will fight with political weapons, and if necessary, with legal weapons."

On Friday, ANPI will hold a demonstration in the northern town of Predappio, where Mussolini is buried, to mark the town's liberation from fascism on Oct. 28, 1944. The date was deliberately chosen by the partisan liberators to eclipse the memory of the March on Rome.

It conveniently also prevents fascist nostalgics from commemorating the March on Rome that day. Their event is scheduled for Sunday, the final day of Mussolini's historic March on Rome, and one of three commemorations held by neo-fascists in Predappio each year. The others mark the day of Mussolini's birth, July 29, 1883, in a house not far from the cemetery with his crypt, and April 28, 1944, the day he was killed by partisans in Milan.

"The March on Rome is the founding myth of fascist Italy, and for us it is a negative myth, as the origin of a disaster that led Italy into many wars, most catastrophically World War II," Pagliarulo said. "We must combat the positive myth of the March on Rome and sustain this day as the start of the darkest period in modern Italian history."

Italy never went through a process similar to Germany's de-Nazification, and a neo-fascist party, the Italian Social Movement, was part of Italy's first postwar government in 1946. The fascist legacy endures in architecture throughout the country, from school buildings in small towns to Milan's stately train station and massive courthouse and Rome's EUR district. Popular notions persist that Italy's two decades of fascism brought progress, exemplified by the era's timely train services, architectural boom and the draining of malaria-infested swamps.

It is still possible — though far from common — to spy a portrait of Mussolini hanging behind a bar or in a restaurant, in particular in Italy's productive northern regions, or to come across fascist memorabilia or souvenirs in otherwise ordinary shops. Though the partisan association views such displays as an apology for fascism, punishable by law, they are rarely, if ever, prosecuted.

"Historians rightly teach us that fascism ended in Italy in '45. But not the fascists," said historian Francesco Filippi, who has written a book analyzing popular misconceptions about fascism. "Millions of people who took part in that regime and continued to be part of the political life of the country, and even parties that directly referred to fascism, took part in the political life of the country from 1946, arriving to the present day very continuously."

Filippi said the moderate voters who boosted Meloni from 4% of the vote in 2018 to 26% in September's parliamentary elections indicated a fundamental expansion in the party's base beyond those "who recognized the Brothers of Italy as the historical heir of the Italian Social Movement, and therefore a certain type of fascist idea."

Many of the new voters, he said, hope Meloni will construct a conservative right-wing government, "a normal right-wing, that is anti-fascist, tied to democratic values."

The standard bearers of Italy's wartime partisan movement said they are withholding judgment on Meloni's government until it takes concrete actions.

"We hope that it becomes a right-wing conservative government, like in France or Britain," said Miro Gori, the ANPI president in the Emilia Romagna province where Predappio is located. "We will see what

happens.”

Europe’s energy crisis raises firewood prices, theft fears

By VANESSA GERA, DAVID McHUGH and AUREL OBREJA Associated Press

CHISINAU, Moldova (AP) — Tudor Popescu swings his ax down on a log, then feeds the split wood into a stove that heats his home in the capital of Moldova. As the nights turn chilly, the stack of firewood has been growing higher around him — his provisions for the coming winter.

In the past, Popescu relied on natural gas to keep warm in the mornings and firewood in the evenings. But gas is now in shorter supply, creating a crisis in his small Eastern European country.

“I won’t use gas anymore, so it’s going to only be wood,” Popescu said. “But what I have isn’t enough.”

Europe’s energy crisis, triggered by Russia slashing natural gas flows amid its war against Ukraine, has forced some people to turn to cheaper heating sources like firewood as the weather gets colder. But as more people stock up and burn wood, prices have skyrocketed, shortages and thefts have been reported, and scams are emerging. Foresters are putting GPS devices into logs to track the valuable stocks, and fears are rising about the environmental impact of increased air pollution and tree-cutting.

In the former Soviet republic of Moldova, leaders worry that this winter could be devastating for many of its people because of the high cost of electricity and heat, with European natural gas prices roughly triple what they were in early 2021 despite falling from August’s record highs. Europe’s poorest country, with pro-Western aspirations but part of its territory controlled by Russian troops, has seen Russian energy giant Gazprom slash natural gas supplies by 30% recently and threaten more cuts.

The clamor for firewood is not limited to poorer nations like Moldova but has surged across richer regions of Europe, too. Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic’s state-owned forests are seeing much stronger demand for the limited amounts of firewood they sell as part of their sustainable forest management.

Often it’s coming from people who have never ordered firewood before and seem unaware that it needs to be purchased two years ahead so it can dry out enough to be burned in wood stoves, according to the forest service in southwest Germany’s state of Hesse.

German forest rangers also are seeing more people gathering fallen wood in forests, often not knowing it’s illegal.

Czech state forests, which sell wood only for household consumption, have had to limit the amount of firewood sold to individuals to prevent speculative purchases.

In Poland, demand for small firewood from state forests grew 46% and larger firewood was up 42% through the end of August from a year earlier. This was even before fall, when demand for firewood is highest.

“There is, of course, an increased interest in firewood in forest districts because today it is the cheapest fuel available,” said Michal Gzowski, spokesman for Poland’s State Forests. “Small firewood is probably the cheapest heating material in the EU countries.”

He said theft of firewood, which has always existed to some extent, is rising.

To deter theft, the forestry department in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia is experimenting with hiding GPS tracking devices in logs, spokeswoman Nicole Fiegler said.

There hasn’t been a sudden rash of large-scale thefts, but the recent price increases have stirred fears from small forest plot holders, who could face major losses if a stack of logs gets swiped.

“It’s more a situation of anxiety and fears,” Fiegler said, noting the increased value of firewood.

Foresters in the neighboring Hesse region have been using GPS trackers since 2013 and say they have been able to solve several thefts that way.

Austrian police warned last week of a significant rise in fraudsters claiming to sell firewood and wood pellets online, while several companies across the country were raided on suspicion that they had engaged in price rigging.

The German Pellet Institute also is warning buyers to beware of fake sellers who demand payment in advance and then disappear.

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Germany's statistics agency says prices for firewood and wood pellets made from sawdust that can be used in central home heating rose over 85% in August from a year earlier.

Pellet prices per ton fell 2.6% in October but remain almost 200% higher than a year ago, the pellet institute says. Even so, heating with pellets is cheaper than natural gas for those equipped to burn them, it says. Gas costs 20.9 cents per kilowatt hour of heat, while pellets cost 14.88 cents.

In the United Kingdom, prices of firewood also are going up.

"We've seen a massive increase in demand" as energy costs rise, said Nic Snell, managing director of Certainly Wood, which bills itself as the biggest firewood supplier in the U.K. selling about 20,000 tons of wood a year.

Snell estimated that his company's kiln-dried hardwood is 15% to 20% more expensive than last year and "could become more as the weather gets colder."

He said demand for his domestically sourced firewood was boosted by pricier imported wood from countries like Latvia and Lithuania. Transport costs, mainly for fuel, have pushed up the price of imports, which used to be cheaper than British wood but are now more expensive.

In Denmark, the demand for wood-burning stoves is growing along with firewood itself. The Danish sales site DBA said searches for wood pellets have exploded by over 1,300% in the past year.

The government and environmentalists have warned Danes planning to burn firewood to consider the risks: fire can be a hazard to health, while smoke contributes to particle pollution.

There is also the damaging environmental impact of chopping down more trees.

Egzona Shala, head of an environmental organization in Kosovo, where electricity prices have spiked, says the cutting of forest trees there has significantly increased. Her group, EcoZ, has been monitoring forests in mountainous areas and has found people illegally cutting trees at 5 a.m. in some cases. The firewood is then sold around the capital.

Often those cut are young trees. The forests, she said, are being subjected to "vulgar deforestation without any criteria and control."

Russia may again block Antarctic marine protections

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Delegations from Russia and Ukraine are among those meeting in Australia this week to decide the future of Antarctica's pristine waters.

Conservationists say new marine protected areas and rules to prevent overfishing are desperately needed, but that Russia could use its veto-like powers to once again block progress.

Achieving the required consensus for action among this diverse group of 27, which also includes China, the United States and the European Union, has always been an immense challenge.

And when two of the members are at war — and relations between China and many Western nations have deteriorated — consensus looms as an even bigger obstacle. Just this month, Russian bombing in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, partially destroyed Ukraine's Antarctic research center.

Yet despite the enormous political hurdles, some remain hopeful that scientific arguments will win through. The U.S. is paying more attention to the region under President Joe Biden, and this year has sent a relatively high-level delegation led by Monica Medina, an assistant secretary in the State Department.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Medina said Antarctica was "a really fragile, crumbling part of the planet that needs all our help to withstand the challenges we face with climate change."

The meeting in Hobart in the Australian island state of Tasmania is the first in-person gathering of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resource in three years, after the COVID-19 pandemic kept meetings online.

It comes as New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern makes a rare visit by a world leader to Antarctica, to see firsthand the scientific research taking place and to mark the 65th anniversary of New Zealand's Scott Base.

The two-week meeting in Hobart began Monday with a mass walkout when the Russian delegates started

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speaking. Kostiantyn Demianenko, who is leading the Ukrainian delegation, said they were grateful for the international support and that Russia had no right to be at the table.

"A state that kills the civilian population, destroys the air and ground civilian infrastructure of another country and defiantly violates the basic provisions of international law should definitely be limited in its right to participate in the activities of international organizations such as CCAMLR," he wrote in an email.

Still, he acknowledged, Russia remained a member of the group.

He said that back home, Ukraine was trying to rebuild its National Antarctic Research Center in Kyiv, although ongoing drone attacks made that difficult.

"Cracks in the walls, broken windows, destroyed equipment led to the impossibility to use these facilities for work," he wrote.

Russia's delegation did not respond to a request for comment.

Medina said the U.S. backed the walkout because it condemns the war in Ukraine, but it remains hopeful for progress in Hobart.

"Right now, Russia is blocking consensus on adoption of three MPA (marine protected area) proposals, but China is as well," Medina said. "So we are here trying to work through the issues with both countries. Not one-on-one necessarily, although we will be trying with the People's Republic of China to work through the issues informally."

She said Russia had been using what amounts to its veto power to block progress not only in Hobart but at a number of international forums.

"It can block consensus. That is a huge impediment to our ability to move forward on some things here, but other things do go ahead in a sort of ordinary course of business," Medina said.

Some hope the group could make progress on other agenda items, including new rules on krill fishing and reaching agreement on fishing for valuable Antarctic toothfish, marketed as Chilean sea bass.

Andrea Kavanagh, who directs the Pew Bertarelli Ocean Legacy Project's Antarctic and Southern Ocean protection work, said the problem with krill fishing around Antarctica has been that it's almost all concentrated in one small area.

She said the depletion of the small, shrimp-like creatures affects predators including seabirds, penguins, seals and whales. She said the fishery doesn't necessarily need to be reduced, just spread out.

Kavanagh said Norway is the biggest fisher of krill, which is used for human health supplements and feed for aquariums and salmon farms.

"It's not a food security issue," Kavanagh said. "Krill is used for luxury products."

Russia last year used its veto-like powers to reject the toothfish catch limits proposed by the commission's scientists. That led to Britain taking its own action by issuing licenses without CCAMLR approval, putting it offside with many other members.

Medina said Britain had been trying to sell some of the toothfish in America but the U.S. had refused to buy it. But she said it was not up to the U.S. to tell Britain to stop its fishing.

She said Britain's fishing was "within the bounds of what had been permitted in the past, and should not in any way be controversial other than the fact that Russia has blocked it."

One bright spot of the meeting so far has been that discussions with China appeared to have been more positive than in previous years, said Kavanagh. It was also helpful to have high-level support from the U.S. and resume face-to-face discussions, she said.

She pointed out the group had managed before to get Russia on board, back in 2016 when it created a marine protected area twice the size of Texas in the Ross Sea.

Countries should not interpret consensus as a veto power, Kavanagh added, but rather should offer counterproposals so everyone works toward a compromise.

But in recent years, she said, "nobody's offering counterproposals that are legitimate. It's all just 'No.'"

Ye kicked out of Skechers' headquarters in California

MANHATTAN BEACH, Calif. (AP) — The rapper formerly known as Kanye West was escorted out of the California-based headquarters of athletic shoemaker Skechers after he showed up unannounced Wednesday, a day after Adidas ended its partnership with the artist following his antisemitic remarks.

The Grammy winner, who legally changed his name to Ye, "arrived unannounced and without invitation" at Skechers corporate headquarters in Manhattan Beach, southwest of Los Angeles, the company said.

"Considering Ye was engaged in unauthorized filming, two Skechers executives escorted him and his party from the building after a brief conversation," according to a company statement.

"Skechers is not considering and has no intention of working with West," the company said. "We condemn his recent divisive remarks and do not tolerate antisemitism or any other form of hate speech."

The rapper's Instagram account — which had been suspended over antisemitic comments — resumed posting Tuesday night. A new message showing a screen grab of a text message that appeared to be from a contact at a high-profile law firm spelled out when Ye could resume making apparel and new shoe designs.

Details of the message could not be verified; email messages sent to representatives for Ye weren't immediately returned.

For weeks, Ye has made antisemitic comments in interviews and social media, including a Twitter post earlier this month that he would soon go "death con 3 on JEWISH PEOPLE," an apparent reference to the U.S. defense readiness condition scale known as DEFCON. His posts led to his suspension from both Twitter and Instagram.

He apologized for the tweet on Monday.

On Tuesday, sportswear manufacturer Adidas announced that it was ending a partnership with Ye that helped make him a billionaire, saying it doesn't tolerate antisemitism and hate speech.

The German sneaker giant said it expected that the decision to immediately stop production of its Yeezy products would cause a hit to its net income of up to 250 million euros (\$246 million).

The company had stuck with Ye through other controversies after he suggested slavery was a choice and called the COVID-19 vaccine the "mark of the beast."

Other companies also have announced they were cutting ties with Ye, including Foot Locker, Gap, TJ Maxx, JPMorgan Chase bank and Vogue magazine. An MRC documentary about him was also scrapped.

Nevada officials begin unprecedented hand count of ballots

By GABE STERN Associated Press/Report for America

PAHRUMP, Nev. (AP) — Volunteers in a rural Nevada county where voting machine conspiracy theories led to an unprecedented hand-count of mail-in ballots came face-to-face with one messy reality of their plan Wednesday: It's more time-consuming than anticipated.

After a full day in the Nye County office building in Pahrump, 60 miles (96 kilometers) west of Las Vegas, some 60 volunteers had counted about 900 of the 1,950 mail-in ballots that the county has received so far.

It was the first day that counting could start under a state Supreme Court ruling that said officials must prevent the public release of early results. The court also blocked a plan to livestream the vote-counting, saying video could be released only after polls close on Nov. 8.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada unsuccessfully sought to block the counting on the grounds that it could allow election results to be made public before many voters had even weighed in.

The ACLU was preparing to ask the state high court to intervene again, spokesman Wesley Juhl said Wednesday night. The ACLU contends the county failed to comply with Friday's order.

"It's an embarrassing day for our democracy. A historic disaster is brewing in Nye County," ACLU Nevada executive director Athar Haseebullah said in a statement after watching the first several hours of ballot counting.

Juhl said an armed volunteer removed an ACLU observer from one room and attempted to take her notes.

Nye County, an old silver mining region between Las Vegas and Reno, is home to about 50,000 residents,

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including 33,000 registered voters. It's best known as the home of the nation's former nuclear weapons test site.

Nevada has one of the most closely watched U.S. Senate races in the country, as well as high-stakes contests for governor and the office that oversees elections.

Two groups of five that The Associated Press observed Wednesday spent about three hours each counting 50 ballots. Mismatched tallies led to recounts, and occasionally more recounts. Several noted how arduous the process was, with one volunteer lamenting: "I can't believe it's two hours to get through 25" ballots.

Nye County interim clerk Mark Kampf emphasized throughout the day to "take it nice and slow." In an interview, he declared the first day a success and said, "It was a process of learning here."

As one person announced candidate names aloud, a verifier looked over her shoulder and three talliers marked sheets of paper. A print-out instruction sheet on a wall across from a video camera above their table urged them to "FOCUS, FOCUS" on each name that was read.

One group observed by AP found during their first 30 minutes that they had mismatched numbers for eight candidates. A recount took nearly 40 minutes, and two of the recounts still had different outcomes.

"That's going to be my new name. Mismatch," said one of the talliers.

"It's our first day, don't feel bad," the verifier replied. "As long as we catch 'em."

"It will get better," Kampf later told the group.

The secretary of state's office said Nye County had to split teams into separate rooms so anyone observing the count of early in-person and mailed ballots would not know the "totality of returns." Participants were not identified for the media.

In a letter sent Tuesday to Nevada secretary of state election officials, though, the ACLU warned that the reading of candidate names aloud within earshot of public observers constituted "a release of election results in violation of Nevada law."

Nye County spokesman Arnold Knightly said officials could not respond to questions about the letter because the case was before the state Supreme Court.

Jennifer Russell, spokeswoman for Republican Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske, also did not have a response to the ACLU letter.

Observers were required to sign a form saying they won't release results they overhear. Anyone who does could be charged with a gross misdemeanor.

The AP was not not allowed to photograph the proceedings.

The concern over safeguarding the tallies is because the process is so unusual. Ballots cast early, either in-person or by mail, are typically counted by machine on Election Day, with results released only after polls close. In most places, hand counts are used after an election on a limited basis to ensure machine tallies are accurate.

Nye County commissioners voted to run a hand count of all its ballots after being bombarded with complaints by residents who have been subjected to nearly two years of conspiracy theories related to voting machines and false claims that the 2020 presidential election was stolen from former President Donald Trump.

Trump won 69% of the vote in Nye County even as President Joe Biden won Nevada by about 33,500 votes.

Nye County wanted to start counting its early ballots before Election Day rather than risk missing the state's Nov. 17 certification deadline.

Nye is the most prominent county in the U.S. to change its vote-counting process in reaction to the conspiracy theories — even though there has been no evidence of widespread fraud or manipulation of machines in the 2020 election, including in Nevada. The decision prompted the long-time county clerk to resign.

Kampf has described the county's Dominion tabulator machines as a "stop-gap" measure while it decides how to handle tallies for future elections. But the machines will remain the primary recording mechanism for this election, despite the hand counting.

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"If it's successful, and we can show that we can be effective and we learn by it, we can go to a full hand-count process," Kampf told reporters.

The Republican's nominee for secretary of state, Jim Marchant, said he wants to spread hand-counting to every county. In March, he said he would try to have the state's 15 rural counties adopt hand-counting, then "force Clark and Washoe" — home to Las Vegas and Reno — to do so.

Marchant has repeated unsubstantiated election claims and told audiences that elections are corrupt.

Nevada's least populous county, Esmeralda, used hand-counting to certify its primary results in June, when officials spent more than seven hours counting 317 ballots. The most populous county in the continental U.S. to rely exclusively on hand-counting is Owyhee County, Idaho, which has one-fifth of the registered voters as Nye County.

Jury discharged in Australian Parliament House rape trial

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — A judge on Thursday discharged a jury in the high-profile trial of a former government advisor charged with raping a colleague in the Australian Parliament House because a juror had brought a research paper on sexual assaults into the jury room.

Australian Capital Territory Chief Justice Lucy McCallum said a juror had undertaken research in relation to the case and brought it into the room where a panel of 12 had been deciding their verdict.

"I have received evidence that at least one juror has had access to research material that was not provided to the jury during the trial," McCallum said.

"It is beyond question the conduct of a juror is such to abort the trial," she added.

A court official had discovered the research paper in the room late Wednesday. The jury was supposed to reach its verdict solely on the evidence presented during the 12-day trial.

Former ministerial advisor Bruce Lehrmann, 27, had pleaded not guilty in the Australian Capital Territory Supreme Court to a charge of sexual intercourse without consent in a minister's office in March 2019 after a night of heavy drinking. He faced a potential 12-year prison sentence if convicted.

His alleged victim, then his 24-year-old junior colleague Brittany Higgins, reacted to the news of a mistrial with a searing attack on the justice system.

"I chose to speak up. Speak up against rape, speak up against injustice, to speak up and share my experiences with others. I told the truth no matter how uncomfortable or unflattering to the court," a tearful Higgins told reporters outside court.

"Today's outcome does not change that truth. But I did speak up, I never fully understood how asymmetrical (the) criminal justice system (is), but I do now," she added.

The Associated Press does not usually identify alleged victims of sexual assault, but Higgins has chosen to identify herself in the media.

She recounted how she was questioned for days in the witness box and forced to surrender her telephones, messages, photos and data to Lehrmann's lawyers. Lehrmann exercised his right not to give evidence. His lawyers argued there had been no sexual contact.

"My life has been publicly scrutinized, open for the world to see. His was not," Higgins added.

Lehrmann declined to speak to the media as he left the court. He has not been held in custody since he was charged and remains free on bail until Feb. 20 when a retrial could commence.

Prosecutors have yet to decide whether a retrial will go ahead.

Lehrmann's lawyer Steven Whybrow told reporters outside court: "We're disappointed by what's happened."

The jury had been deliberating its verdict since the trial ended on Wednesday last week.

The jurors sent a message to the judge on Tuesday saying they could not reach a unanimous verdict, but she told them to continue deliberating.

Higgins has become a household name in Australia since she went to the media last year with her accusations that the former government had treated her rape allegation as a political problem and failed to

adequately support her.

The case sparked nationwide protests as an example of a toxic work culture in Australian politics that is criticized as hostile toward women.

She quit her government job in January last year and then made a statement to police about the then-two-year-old incident.

Then-Prime Minister Scott Morrison responded in February last year by apologizing to Higgins in Parliament for the “terrible things” that she had endured in the building.

“The place that should have been a place of safety and contribution turned out to be a nightmare,” Morrison said.

McCallum revealed on Wednesday that defense lawyers had focused on this apology when they applied in March to have the prosecution postponed or discontinued on the grounds that Lehrmann could not receive a fair trial.

Morrison’s apology was “particularly egregious” and had elevated Higgins “to a status she should not have,” the lawyers argued, adding she “walks into court with an aura about her.”

McCallum rejected the application in March and on Wednesday published her reasons for that decision.

Meta fined \$24.7M for campaign finance disclosure violations

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — A Washington state judge on Wednesday fined Facebook parent company Meta nearly \$25 million for repeatedly and intentionally violating campaign finance disclosure law, in what is believed to be the largest campaign finance penalty in U.S. history.

The penalty issued by King County Superior Court Judge Douglass North was the maximum allowed for more than 800 violations of Washington’s Fair Campaign Practices Act, passed by voters in 1972 and later strengthened by the Legislature. Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson argued that the maximum was appropriate considering his office previously sued Facebook in 2018 for violating the same law.

Meta, based in Menlo Park, California, did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Washington’s transparency law requires ad sellers such as Meta to keep and make public the names and addresses of those who buy political ads, the target of such ads, how the ads were paid for and the total number of views of each ad. Ad sellers must provide the information to anyone who asks for it. Television stations and newspapers have complied with the law for decades.

But Meta has repeatedly objected to the requirements, arguing unsuccessfully in court that the law is unconstitutional because it “unduly burdens political speech” and is “virtually impossible to fully comply with.” While Facebook does keep an archive of political ads that run on the platform, the archive does not disclose all the information required under Washington’s law.

“I have one word for Facebook’s conduct in this case — arrogance,” Ferguson said in a news release. “It intentionally disregarded Washington’s election transparency laws. But that wasn’t enough. Facebook argued in court that those laws should be declared unconstitutional. That’s breathtaking. Where’s the corporate responsibility?”

In 2018, following Ferguson’s first lawsuit, Facebook agreed to pay \$238,000 and committed to transparency in campaign finance and political advertising. It subsequently said it would stop selling political ads in the state rather than comply with the requirements.

Nevertheless, the company continued selling political ads, and Ferguson sued again in 2020.

“Meta was aware that its announced ‘ban’ would not, and did not, stop all such advertising from continuing to be displayed on its platform,” North wrote last month in finding that Meta violation’s were intentional.

Each violation of the law is typically punishable by up to \$10,000, but penalties can be tripled if a judge finds them to be intentional. North fined Meta \$30,000 for each of its 822 violations — about \$24.7 million. Ferguson described the fine as the largest campaign finance-related penalty ever issued in the U.S.

Meta, one of the world’s richest companies, reported quarterly earnings Wednesday of \$4.4 billion, or \$1.64 per share, on revenue of nearly \$28 billion, in the three month period that ended Sept. 30.

Judge considers stopping Phoenix ballot drop box watchers

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A federal judge in Arizona said he hopes to decide by Friday whether to order members of a group to stop monitoring outdoor ballot drop boxes in the Phoenix area in an effort that has sparked allegations of voter intimidation.

The groups Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans and Voto Latino asked U.S. District Judge Michael Liburdi during a Wednesday hearing to prevent members of Clean Elections USA from gathering within sight of drop boxes in Maricopa County, the state's most populous, and from following voters and taking photos and videos of them and their cars.

The attorney for Clean Elections USA said that such a broad restraining order would be unconstitutional. Liburdi said he hoped to issue a decision by Friday but could continue to weigh the matter into the weekend.

The League of Women Voters filed a similar suit Tuesday in federal court in Arizona, alleging that Clean Elections USA is intimidating voters.

That suit also alleges that the groups Lions of Liberty and the Yavapai County Preparedness Team, which are associated with the far-right anti-government group Oath Keepers, have undertaken their own effort to watch ballot boxes and film voters in Arizona's Yavapai County.

Election deniers around the United States have embraced a film that has been discredited called "2000 Mules" that claims that people were paid to travel among drop boxes and stuff them with fraudulent ballots during the 2020 presidential vote.

There's no evidence for the notion that a network of Democrat-associated ballot "mules" has conspired to collect and deliver ballots to drop boxes, either two years ago or in the upcoming midterm elections.

Amid the complaints from voters who say they have been harassed, Maricopa County Sheriff Paul Penzone said this week his office has begun providing security around drop boxes. Sheriff's deputies responded when two masked people carrying guns and wearing bulletproof vests showed up at a drop box in the Phoenix suburb of Mesa.

The secretary of state this week said her office has received six cases of potential voter intimidation to the state attorney general and the U.S. Department of Justice, as well as a threatening email sent to the state elections director.

The U.S. attorney's office in Arizona said it is also keeping an eye on cases alleging voter intimidation and vowed to prosecute those who violate federal law.

Federal officials said local police officers would be the "front line in efforts to ensure that all qualified voters are able to exercise their right to vote free of intimidation or other election abuses."

"We will vigorously safeguard all Arizonans' rights to freely and lawfully cast their ballot during the election," the office said Wednesday. "As the several election threat-related cases pending federal felony charges from alleged criminal activity arising out of our State show, acts which cross the line will not go unaddressed."

Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich is calling on voters to report any intimidation immediately to police and file a complaint with his office.

"Regardless of intent, this type of misguided behavior is contrary to both the laws and values of our state," said Brnovich, a Republican.

Los Angeles council censures members amid racism scandal

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Los Angeles City Council formally rebuked two members and its former president Wednesday for their involvement in a racism scandal that has led to days of protests, police and state investigations and shaken public faith in City Hall.

The 12-0 vote to censure former council President Nury Martinez and Councilmen Gil Cedillo and Kevin

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de León represented the strongest step the council can take to publicly reprimand them for their participation in a secretly recorded 2021 meeting laced with crude, bigoted comments, in which the Latino Democrats schemed to protect their political clout in the redrawing of council districts at the expense of Blacks and renters.

The council cannot expel members — it can only suspend a member when criminal charges are pending. While a censure is largely symbolic, it adds new weight to the pressure coming from across the political spectrum for Cedillo and de León to resign.

Councilman Paul Koretz said he remained in shock from listening to the offensive remarks that he said had severely damaged trust in government. Like it or not, he lamented that the recording reflected on the entire council.

“It’s going to take us years to rebuild this trust,” Koretz said before the vote.

Councilman Curren Price called the censure a “crucial step in a long road to healing” and the harshest measure the council could take, lacking the ability to expel members.

Martinez resigned shortly after the release of the tape earlier this month, along with a powerful labor leader, Ron Herrera, who also attended the meeting.

However, Cedillo and de León have resisted widespread calls to step down, including from President Joe Biden, and have become political pariahs among their colleagues.

Anyone involved in the meeting “does not belong in elected office,” Koretz said.

Earlier, the council meeting was called into recess to allow police to clear chanting protesters. A small but noisy group crowded into the main aisle of an otherwise mostly empty chamber, banged water bottles on a lectern, whooped and shouted in what appeared to be an effort to shut down the meeting. They unrolled a large sign calling the council “illegitimate.”

“Justice now!” they bellowed. “Shut down!”

That led to a standoff in which about 20 protesters continued shouting as police officers watched over the group. Eventually, the room was cleared.

Council President Paul Krekorian warned the protesters they would not deter the council’s business. “We will continue to do the work of the people of Los Angeles,” he said.

It’s not known who made the tape, or why. It was released on the website Reddit just weeks before the November midterm elections.

In the course of the hourlong meeting, they also made offensive remarks about immigrants from the Mexican state of Oaxaca, Jews, Armenians and other groups.

Two investigations are underway stemming from the release of the tape.

The Los Angeles Police Department is investigating whether the recording was made illegally — under California law, all parties must consent to the recording of a private conversation or phone call.

Separately, the state is investigating how the council districts were drawn and whether the process was rigged. Attorney General Rob Bonta, a Democrat, has said his investigation could lead to civil liability or criminal charges, depending on what is found.

Bonta said Wednesday that his office notified the city of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, where the meeting took place, to preserve evidence, a routine step in an investigation.

Bonta would not speculate whether the union building was broadly wiretapped, or if the recording was an isolated event made by a single individual. He said he would largely defer to the police to investigate whether the recording was illegal.

The council appears headed into a long period of turmoil.

Cedillo and de León have not attended recent meetings.

Cedillo, whose term ends in December, has been out of public view. De León has two years left in his term and has appeared in a string of media interviews apologizing and saying he wants to continue his work on the council.

In an interview Tuesday with talk-show host Tavis Smiley on KBLA radio, de León reiterated that he was not resigning. “I’m not the person the folks have been painting me to be,” said de León, who previously has apologized.

Krekorian, the president, and other council members have said Cedillo and de León must resign. "There is no realistic possibility that you can effectively continue to serve," Krekorian recently told de León in a letter. "Every day you remain interferes with the council's ability to function, delays the city's healing process, hurts your constituents and reduces your chance of redeeming yourself."

Musk lugs sink into Twitter HQ as \$44B deal deadline looms

By TOM KRISHER and MATT O'BRIEN AP Business Writers

Elon Musk, the billionaire poised to acquire Twitter later this week, strolled into the company's headquarters Wednesday carrying a porcelain sink and tweeting "Entering Twitter HQ - let that sink in!"

Musk's \$44 billion deal to take Twitter private faces a Friday deadline, although the video he posted offered no evidence that the acquisition is complete. Twitter and Musk representatives had no comment on that question, although Twitter did confirm that Musk's video tweet was real. Musk also changed his Twitter profile to refer to himself as "Chief Twit" and his location to Twitter's San Francisco headquarters.

The splashy video — a vintage Musk production — also pulled the spotlight back to the world's richest man and his on-again, off-again pursuit of the social platform.

The Friday deadline to consummate the deal was ordered by the Delaware Chancery Court in early October. It is the latest step in an epic battle during which Musk signed a deal to acquire Twitter, then tried to back out of it, leading Twitter to sue the Tesla CEO to force him to conclude the deal. If the two sides don't meet the Friday deadline, the next step could be a November trial.

Robert Anderson, a law professor at Pepperdine University, said he fully expects the deal to close by Friday's deadline but didn't see much substance to Musk's video. "I don't see anything unusual about it, other than that he brought a sink," he said.

Musk had been expected to visit Twitter this week and is expected to return again Friday if the deal is finalized, according to an internal memo cited in a report by Bloomberg News.

His apparent enthusiasm about visiting Twitter headquarters stood in sharp contrast to one of his earlier suggestions that the building should be turned into a "homeless shelter" because, he said, so few employees actually worked there.

The Washington Post reported last week that Musk told prospective investors that he plans to cut three quarters of Twitter's 7,500 workers when he becomes owner of the company. The newspaper cited documents and unnamed sources familiar with the deliberation. Several hours after posting his sink video, Musk tweeted that he was meeting "a lot of cool people at Twitter today!" He gave no details.

One of Musk's biggest obstacles to closing the deal was keeping in place the financing pledged roughly six months ago.

A group of banks, including Morgan Stanley and Bank of America, signed on earlier this year to loan \$12.5 billion of the money Musk needed to buy Twitter and take it private. Solid contracts with Musk bound the banks to the financing, although changes in the economy and debt markets since April have likely made the terms less attractive. Musk even said his investment group would be buying Twitter for more than it's worth.

Less clear is what's happening with the billions of dollars pledged to Musk by investors who would get ownership stakes in Twitter. Musk's original slate of equity partners included an array of partners ranging from the billionaire's tech world friends with like-minded ideas about Twitter's future, such as Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison, to funds controlled by Middle Eastern royalty.

The more equity investors kick in for the deal, the less Musk has to pay on his own. Most of his wealth is tied up in shares of Tesla, the electric car company that he runs. Since April, he has sold more than \$15 billion worth of Tesla stock, presumably to pay his share. More sales could be coming.

Musk, 51, has shared few concrete details about his plans for the social media platform. While he's touted free speech and derided spam bots since agreeing to buy the company in April, what he actually wants to do about either remains a mystery.

Technology analysts have speculated that Musk wants to use Twitter to help create an "everything app" similar to China's WeChat service, which allows users to do video chats, message, stream video, scan bar

codes and make payments.

Musk's flirtation with buying Twitter appeared to begin in late March. That's when Twitter said he contacted members of its board — including co-founder Jack Dorsey — and told them he was buying up shares and was interested in either joining the board, taking Twitter private or starting a competitor.

Then, on April 4, he revealed in a regulatory filing that he had become the company's largest shareholder after acquiring a 9% stake worth about \$3 billion.

At first, Twitter offered Musk a seat on its board. But six days later, CEO Parag Agrawal tweeted that Musk would not be joining the board after all. His bid to buy the company quickly followed.

Inside Twitter, Musk's offer was met with confusion and falling morale, especially after Musk publicly criticized one of Twitter's top lawyers involved in content-moderation decisions.

In July, Musk abruptly reversed course, announcing that he was abandoning his bid to buy Twitter. His stated reason: Twitter hadn't been straightforward about its problem with fake accounts he dubbed "spam bots." Twitter sued, and two weeks before a 5-day trial was scheduled to begin, Musk changed his mind again, saying that he wanted to complete the deal after all.

French leader vows to raise retirement age to 65, up from 62

PARIS (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron vowed Wednesday to implement a pension reform that would eventually push up the retirement age by three years to 65, making younger generations work longer.

In an interview on France 2 television, Macron said the changes would start being applied next year.

"There's only one way to do it if we are lucid. Since we are living longer, it's to work longer," he said.

The minimum retirement age to get full a pension would be gradually increased from 62 now to 65 by 2031, he said.

Yet Macron said he is "open" to discuss the retirement age with unions and make potential amendments.

Such measures would apply to people who worked enough to qualify. Those who do not fulfill the conditions, like many women who interrupt their career to raise their children, must currently work until 67.

All French workers receive a state pension. Not implementing these changes would mean the government would need to decrease the size of pensions, Macron said.

Macron's comments come after his centrist alliance lost its parliamentary majority in June, making it much more difficult for his government to get laws passed in the lower house of parliament. Most opposition parties, as well as workers unions, are opposed to the pension changes.

Macron offered Wednesday to ally with lawmakers from the conservative The Republicans party to pass domestic reforms in parliament, including the pension changes.

Earlier this week, his government survived three no-confidence votes prompted by some opposition lawmakers from the left and the far-right to protest the use of a special constitutional power to force budget bills through the National Assembly.

A proposed pension overhaul had sparked nationwide strikes and protests at the end of the year 2019 during Macron's first term. The government had then decided to suspend the debate amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Macron has been reelected for a second term in April.

3 men convicted of supporting plot to kidnap Gov. Whitmer

By ED WHITE Associated Press

Three men accused of supporting terrorism in the plot to kidnap Michigan's governor were convicted of all charges Wednesday in a trial that focused on paramilitary drills and fierce contempt for government ahead of the 2020 election.

Joe Morrison, his father-in-law Pete Musico, and Paul Bellar were found guilty of supplying "material support" for a terrorist act as members of a group known as the Wolverine Watchmen.

They held gun training in rural Jackson County with a leader of the kidnapping scheme, Adam Fox, who

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was disgusted with Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and other officials and said he wanted to snatch her.

The trial in state court was an offshoot of the main case in federal court, which produced mixed results: Fox and an ally were convicted of conspiracy, two more men pleaded guilty but two others were acquitted.

Jurors in Jackson, Michigan, read and heard violent, anti-government screeds as well as support for the "boogaloo," a civil war that might be triggered by a shocking abduction. Prosecutors said COVID-19 restrictions ordered by Whitmer turned out to be fruit to recruit more people to the Watchmen.

"The facts drip out slowly," state Assistant Attorney General Bill Rollstin told the jury, "and you begin to see — wow — there were things that happened that people knew about. ... When you see how close Adam Fox got to the governor, you can see how a very bad event was thwarted."

Morrison, 28, Musico, 44, and Bellar, 24, were also convicted of a gun crime and membership in a gang. Prosecutors said the Wolverine Watchmen was a criminal enterprise.

Morrison, who recently tested positive for COVID-19, and Musico were emotional as they watched the verdicts by video away from the courtroom. Judge Thomas Wilson ordered all three to jail while they await sentencing on Dec. 15.

The verdicts "are further proof that violence and threats have no place in our politics," said Whitmer, who has not participated as a trial witness or spectator in the state or federal cases. "Those who seek to sow discord by pursuing violent plots will be held accountable under the law."

Attorney General Dana Nessel, a Democrat in a tight race for reelection, hailed the outcome and praised law enforcement. After hearing nine days of testimony, the jury deliberated Tuesday afternoon and for less than two hours Wednesday.

"Jackson County is not known to have, I guess I would say, liberal juries. They tend to be a conservative bunch," Nessel said. "But I think what they saw here was that this is not a political matter. ... These are individuals that didn't align themselves with any party at all. In fact, they were just anti-government all together."

Defense attorneys argued that Morrison, Musico and Bellar had broken ties with Fox before the Whitmer plot came into focus by late summer 2020; Bellar had left the state. They also didn't travel with Fox to scout the governor's vacation home or participate in a key weekend training session inside a makeshift "shoot house" in Luther, Michigan.

"In this country you are allowed to talk the talk, but you only get convicted if you walk the walk," Musico's attorney, Kareem Johnson, said in his closing remarks.

They couldn't argue entrapment. But defense lawyers attacked the tactics and motives of Dan Chappel, 36, an undercover informant. He took instructions from FBI agents, secretly recorded conversations and produced a deep cache of messages exchanged with the men.

Chappel, an Army veteran, said he joined the Watchmen because he wanted to hone his gun skills. But when talk turned to harming police, he went to the FBI and agreed to gather evidence for an investigation that eventually revealed a target on Whitmer.

Chappel told jurors it was "absolutely" risky.

"If I was ever compromised," he said, "it would not be a good day."

Whitmer, who is seeking reelection on Nov. 8, was never physically harmed. Undercover agents and informants were inside Fox's group for months. The scheme was broken up with 14 arrests in October 2020.

Fox and Barry Croft Jr. were convicted of a kidnapping conspiracy in federal court in August. Daniel Harris and Brandon Caserta were acquitted last spring. Ty Garbin and Kaleb Franks pleaded guilty.

Five of the 14 men are facing charges in state court in Antrim County, the site of Whitmer's second home. A judge there still must determine whether there is sufficient evidence to send them to trial.

In 2020, Whitmer blamed then-President Donald Trump for stoking mistrust and fomenting anger over coronavirus restrictions and refusing to condemn hate groups and extremists like those charged in Michigan. Protesters, including many displaying guns, filled the state Capitol that year and blocked traffic during a series of stormy demonstrations.

Whitmer extended the criticism to her election opponent, Tudor Dixon, telling The Associated Press hours

after the Jackson trial that the Republican candidate is “part of the problem.”

“She has made light of a plot to kidnap and assassinate me. She’s made light of other threats to me and my family,” Whitmer said Wednesday.

The governor was referring to Dixon’s remarks in September when she told supporters that Whitmer was “good at taking business hostage and holding it for ransom.”

Dixon’s reaction to the verdicts was more muted: She said she’s “glad justice has been served.”

Gunmen attack major Shiite holy site in Iran, killing 15

By The Associated Press undefined

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Gunmen attacked a major Shiite holy site in Iran on Wednesday, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens. The attack came as protesters elsewhere in Iran marked a symbolic 40 days since a woman’s death in custody ignited the biggest anti-government movement in over a decade.

State TV blamed the attack on “takfiris,” a term that refers to Sunni Muslim extremists who have targeted the country’s Shiite majority in the past. The attack appeared to be unrelated to the demonstrations.

The official website of the judiciary said two gunmen were arrested and a third is on the run after the attack on the Shah Cheragh mosque, the second holiest site in Iran. The state-run IRNA news agency reported the death toll and state TV said 40 people were wounded.

An Iranian news website considered to be close to the Supreme National Security Council reported that the attackers were foreign nationals, without elaborating.

The Islamic State group late Wednesday claimed responsibility for the attack on its Amaq news agency. It said an armed IS militant stormed the shrine and opened fire on its visitors. It claimed that some 20 people were killed and dozens more were wounded.

Such attacks are rare in Iran, but last April, an assailant stabbed two clerics to death at the Imam Reza shrine, the country’s most revered Shiite site, in the northeast city of Mashhad.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said that whoever led and planned the attack will “receive a regretful and decisive response,” without elaborating. IRNA quoted Raisi as saying, “This evil will definitely not go unanswered.”

Earlier on Wednesday, thousands of protesters had poured into the streets of a northwestern city to mark the watershed 40 days since the death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, whose tragedy sparked the protests.

Deaths are commemorated in Shiite Islam — as in many other traditions — again 40 days later, typically with an outpouring of grief. In Amini’s Kurdish hometown of Saez, the birthplace of the nationwide unrest now roiling Iran, crowds snaked through the local cemetery and thronged her grave.

“Death to the dictator!” protesters cried, according to video footage that corresponds with known features of the city and Aichi Cemetery. Women ripped off their headscarves, or hijabs, and waved them above their heads. Other videos showed a massive procession making its way along a highway and through a dusty field toward Amini’s grave. There were reports of road closures in the area.

State-linked media reported 10,000 protesters in the procession to her grave.

Hengaw, a Kurdish human rights group, said security forces fired tear gas to disperse demonstrators. The semiofficial ISNA news agency said security forces fired pellets at crowds of demonstrators on the outskirts of Saez and pushed back demonstrators who tried to attack the governor’s office. It said local internet access was cut off due to “security considerations.”

Earlier in the day, Kurdistan Gov. Esmail Zarei Koosha insisted that traffic was flowing as normal, calling the situation “completely stable.”

State-run media announced that schools and universities in Iran’s northwestern region would close, purportedly to curb “the spread of influenza.”

In downtown Tehran, the capital, major sections of the traditional grand bazaar closed in solidarity with the protests. Crowds clapped and shouted “Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!” through the labyrinthine

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marketplace.

"This year is a year of blood!" they also chanted. "(Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) will be toppled!"

Riot police on motorbikes were out in force. A large group of men and women marched through the streets, setting trash cans ablaze and shouting "Death to the dictator!" as cars honked their support. Police unleashed anti-riot bullets at protesters in the streets and sprayed pellets upward at journalists filming from windows and rooftops. Anti-government chants also echoed from the University of Tehran campus.

Amini, detained for allegedly violating the country's strict dress code for women, remains the potent symbol of protests that have posed one of the most serious challenges to the Islamic Republic.

With the slogan #WomanLifeFreedom, the demonstrations first focused on women's rights and the state-mandated hijab, or headscarf for women. But they quickly evolved into calls to oust the Shiite clerics that have ruled Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The protests have also galvanized university students, labor unions, prisoners and ethnic minorities like the Kurds along Iran's border with Iraq.

Since the protests erupted, security forces have fired live ammunition and tear gas to disperse demonstrations, killing over 200 people, according to rights groups.

Untold numbers have been arrested, with estimates in the thousands. Iranian judicial officials announced this week they would bring over 600 people to trial over their role in the protests, including 315 in Tehran, 201 in the neighboring Alborz province and 105 in the southwestern province of Khuzestan.

Tehran prosecutor Ali Salehi told the state-run IRNA news agency that four protesters were charged with "war against God," which is punishable by death in Iran.

Iranian officials have blamed the protests on foreign interference, without offering evidence.

Last week, Iran imposed sanctions on over a dozen European officials, companies and institutions, including foreign-based Farsi channels that have extensively covered the protests, accusing them of "supporting terrorism." The sanctions involve an entry and visa ban for the staffers in addition to the confiscation of their assets in Iran.

Deutsche Welle, the German public broadcaster whose Farsi team was blacklisted, condemned the move on Wednesday as "unacceptable."

"I expect politicians in Germany and Europe to increase the pressure on the regime," said DW Director General Peter Limbourg.

In a separate development, most of the remaining portion of a 10-story tower that collapsed earlier this year in the southwestern city of Abadan, killing at least 41 people, fell on Wednesday, state-run media reported. The state-run IRNA news agency reported that a woman in a car parked near the site was killed. Other parts of the building had collapsed last month.

The deadly collapse of the Metropal Building on May 23 became a lightning rod for protests in Abadan, some 660 kilometers (410 miles) southwest of the capital, Tehran. The disaster shined a spotlight on shoddy construction practices, government corruption and negligence in Iran.

Videos spread online of the remaining tower crashing into the street as massive clouds of dust billowed into the sky.

Man convicted of killing 6 with SUV in Christmas parade

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — A Wisconsin man was convicted Wednesday of killing six people and injuring dozens of others when he drove his SUV through a Christmas parade, wrapping up a trial in which he defended himself with bizarre legal theories and erratic outbursts.

It took the jury a little over three hours to find Darrell Brooks guilty of all 76 charges, including six counts of first-degree intentional homicide. He faces a mandatory life sentence on each homicide count.

Brooks, dressed in a suit and tie, silently rested his head on folded hands as the verdicts were read. His subdued demeanor was a stark departure from previous days of the trial, when his sometimes-outrageous

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behavior drew rebukes from the judge.

Judge Jennifer Dorow scheduled a hearing Monday to set a date for sentencing, when victims and their families will be able to make statements.

Tyler Pudleiner, who was performing with the Waukesha South High School band when he was hit by Brooks' SUV, told reporters Wednesday that the convictions will help all the victims heal.

"One of the things that I've said throughout this is we're stronger than (Brooks), and it's been proven today," Pudleiner said.

Brooks drove his Ford Escape into the Christmas parade in Waukesha in suburban Milwaukee on Nov. 21 moments after fleeing a domestic disturbance with his ex-girlfriend, prosecutors said.

Killed were 8-year-old Jackson Sparks, who was marching in the parade with his baseball team; Leanna Owen, Virginia Sorenson and Tamara Durand, members of the Dancing Grannies, a group of grandmothers that dances in parades; Wilhelm Hospel, husband to a surviving Dancing Grannies member; and Jane Kulich, described by her family as a die-hard Green Bay Packers fan. Scores of other people were hurt, some severely.

The incident left deep scars on the community of 70,000 people about 16 miles (25 kilometers) west of Milwaukee. Community members built memorials to the dead and held vigils.

The anger was still raw Wednesday; someone in the gallery yelled "burn in hell" as the verdicts were read. Vehicles passing the courthouse honked their horns in celebration, WITI-TV reported.

Brooks pleaded not guilty by reason of mental disease earlier this year but withdrew the plea before his trial began with no explanation.

Days before the trial started, he dismissed his public defenders, electing to represent himself despite overwhelming evidence against him. Police officers and parade-goers testified they saw Brooks behind the wheel of the SUV. District Attorney Susan Opper presented several photos of Brooks driving the vehicle to the jury.

Brooks' main defense theory appeared to be that he was a sovereign citizen, echoing a conspiracy theory that every person is a nation and isn't subject to government restrictions. He refused to recognize the court's jurisdiction over him, refused to answer to his own name, launched into meandering cross-examinations, and muttered under his breath that the trial wasn't fair.

He got into daily arguments with the judge that often devolved into shouting matches. At one point he glared at Dorow so intensely she took a recess because she said she was scared of him.

Multiple times, she moved him into another courtroom where he could watch the proceedings via video and she could mute his microphone when he became disruptive.

One day, after he was moved to the other room, he stripped off his shirt and sat bare-chested on his table with his back to the camera. On another day, he built a barricade out of his boxes of legal documents and hid behind it. On yet another, he held up a Bible so no one could see his face on camera and tossed his copy of the jury instructions into the garbage.

"We felt very, very offended by his behavior, his disrespect of the court, the decorum, the families, his insulting the judge, his challenging the judge," Opper said at a news conference.

"That's not the way our system is designed. That was intentional on his part. We truly believe that. He did everything he (could) except claim the dog ate his homework," Opper said. "He tried to turn this into his story. Let's talk about Mr. Brooks and his family. We just kept redirecting it back to the real focus here, our families, our victims, our community and his responsibility for this destruction."

With Americans feeling pinched, Biden targets 'junk fees'

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — With time running out before the election, President Joe Biden highlighted his administration's push to crack down on so-called junk fees that banks and other companies charge their customers. The announcement comes after months of high inflation have eaten away at Americans' savings and made the economy the top issue for voters.

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Biden was joined by Rohit Chopra, the director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the nation's financial watchdog agency created after the Great Recession. The bureau is targeting overdraft fees charged by banks as well as bad check fees, which are levied against a bank customer when a check isn't valid.

The bureau's guidance would make it illegal for banks to charge an overdraft fee on a transaction when a customer's account shows a positive balance at the time of a purchase, or when they withdraw money from their account.

Prior to the pandemic, banks collectively charged their customers roughly \$15 billion in overdraft and bounced check fees, according to a bureau estimate. The bureau estimates that its new enforcement push on junk fees will save Americans roughly \$3 billion in fees annually.

"These steps will immediately start saving Americans collectively billions of dollars in fees," Biden said.

Roughly two weeks away from the midterm elections, Biden is using public events to show how his administration is trying to reduce costs for families. That push comes as high inflation -- averaging 8.2% over the past year -- has been a drag on the president's approval rating and put Democrats at a disadvantage with voters.

Back in 2021 as the economy emerged from the pandemic, Biden tried to minimize the risks of lasting inflation. But continued pandemic shutdowns and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have pushed up prices globally, a challenge that the U.S. is primarily trying to address by having the Federal Reserve raise interest rates.

Banks have long been criticized for the high fees they charge customers when their accounts go temporarily negative. Relenting after years of public pressure, banks have reined in their overdraft fee practices. Most notably, Bank of America reduced its overdraft fee from \$35 to \$10. Other banks have instituted changes to their policies so customers cannot overdraft their accounts, or are given repeated warnings that they need to bring their accounts current before a fee is charged.

The banking industry responded that it was taking steps to reduce fees on customers before the White House stepped in.

"These changes were made without regulatory or legislative intervention," said Lindsey Johnson, president and CEO of the Consumer Bankers Association, the trade and lobby group for the nation's biggest retail banks like Wells Fargo and Bank of America.

The CFPB is also targeting bounced check fees, which occur less frequently nowadays because Americans have largely moved away from writing paper checks and largely use peer-to-peer payment platforms like Zelle, Venmo, PayPal and CashApp. These fees are typically between \$10 and \$19, according to the bureau, and are charged to the customer depositing the check.

"Charging a fee to the depositor penalizes the person who could not anticipate the check would bounce, while doing nothing to deter the originator from writing bad checks," the bureau said in a statement.

The bureau did not have an estimate of how much Americans pay in bad check fees, because banks do not publicly disclose those figures in regulatory filings.

Biden also highlighted a number of other fees the administration plans to go after, which include resort fees, processing fees for concert tickets, and various fees charged by airlines.

"We're just getting started," Biden said.

The White House's push is also a public display of support for the CFPB days after the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the way the bureau is funded is unconstitutional. The conservative-leaning court ruled that because the CFPB receives its funding from the Federal Reserve and not through Congressional appropriations, the way the bureau writes its rules and regulations is unconstitutional.

The court case, which could wind up in the Supreme Court, is the latest in a long list of conservative and Republican challenges to the bureau's structure. Within hours, Republicans attacked the bureau's announcement.

"It's no surprise that an out-of-control and unaccountable agency — which the Fifth Circuit recently ruled is unconstitutional — has chosen to sidestep the congressionally mandated rulemaking process to change the rules of the road," said Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pennsylvania and the top Republican on the Senate Banking Committee, in a statement.

No US-born Black players on expected World Series rosters

By BEN WALKER AP Baseball Writer

Looking around Memorial Stadium before Game 1 of the 1983 World Series, Philadelphia Phillies star Gary Matthews saw a lot of Black talent.

Joe Morgan. Eddie Murray. Garry Maddox. Ken Singleton. Al Bumbry. Disco Dan Ford. And plenty more that night in Baltimore.

"There were quite a few of us," Matthews recalled.

When fans watch the Houston Astros and Phillies line up this week to begin the Fall Classic, it will be a much different picture.

To be sure, Houston's Jose Altuve and Philadelphia's Jean Segura are among scores of Latin players helping keep big league rosters diverse.

But for the first time since 1950, shortly after Jackie Robinson broke the Major League Baseball color barrier, there project to be no U.S.-born Black players in this World Series.

Zero.

"That is eye opening," said Bob Kendrick, president of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. "It is somewhat startling that two cities that have high African American populations, there's not a single Black player."

"It lets us know there's obviously a lot of work to be done to create opportunities for Black kids to pursue their dream at the highest level," he said.

Robinson debuted in 1947 with the Brooklyn Dodgers and played in the World Series that year. Since then, the 1950 matchup between the New York Yankees and Phillies has been the only World Series without a Black player.

Houston and Philadelphia will announce their 26-man rosters several hours before Game 1 on Friday night at Minute Maid Park, where Dusty Baker, a Black outfielder for the 1981 champion Los Angeles Dodgers, manages the Astros.

Starting in 1954 when Willie Mays and the New York Giants played against Larry Doby and Cleveland, every single team to reach the World Series had at least one U.S.-born Black player until the 2005 Astros did not.

During that half-century, Black greats such as Hank Aaron, Barry Bonds, Lou Brock, Bob Gibson, Rickey Henderson and Frank Robinson commanded the October stage. In 1979 alone, Willie Stargell and Dave Parker were among 10 Black players on the "We Are Family" Pittsburgh Pirates champions.

For much of that time, baseball was clearly the dominant game in the United States, the national pastime. Over the years, as basketball and football increased in popularity, baseball became more expensive with an emphasis on travel teams and elite showcases.

"Kids started shifting to other sports," Matthews said.

One of Matthews' sons, Gary Jr., was an All-Star outfielder. Another son works in the commissioner's office with diversity programs.

By 2020, when the Dodgers beat Tampa Bay, Los Angeles star Mookie Betts was the only Black player in the World Series.

At the All-Star Game this summer at Dodger Stadium, Betts wore a T-shirt with the message: "We need more Black people at the stadium."

But on the field this weekend, despite encouraging indicators and multi-layered efforts by MLB, it will be a World Series shutout for the first time in over seven decades.

"It's the exclamation point," said Richard Lapchick, director of The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport at Central Florida.

"It's been a story that's been ongoing since the late 1980s, the decline of Black baseball players," he said.

Lapchick, lead author for his group's annual reports on diversity hiring practices in sports, said Black players made up 7.2% of opening day rosters this year. That dipped from 7.6% last year and marked the

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lowest since study data was first collected in 1991, when 18% of MLB players were Black.

The Phillies had no Black players on their opening roster this year for the first time since 1959. Roman Quinn, a Black backup outfielder, played 23 games before being released.

Philadelphia power-hitting rookie Darick Hall made his debut in late June and played 41 games — his mother is white and his father is Black and white, and he identifies as multiracial. Hall wasn't on the Phillies' roster for any of the first three rounds this postseason and isn't expected to be on the World Series roster.

Houston lost in the World Series last year with Michael Brantley, a Black outfielder, on the roster. Brantley is out for the season this year because of a shoulder injury. Relief pitcher Josh James is also Black and on the team's 40-man roster, but he had arm surgery in early October.

MLB had 38% players of color on opening day rosters, including Altuve, Yordan Alvarez, Jeremy Peña, Yuli Gurriel, Cristian Javier and Framber Valdez of the Astros and Segura, Ranger Suárez and Seranthony Domínguez of the Phillies.

Many Afro Latino players embrace Black identity, yet perhaps not for the same reasons that Black U.S. players do. Race and skin color hold a different currency in places like the Dominican Republic, Panama, Cuba and Belize.

Betts, San Diego's Josh Bell, Cleveland's Triston McKenzie, Atlanta's Michael Harris II and the New York Yankees' Aaron Hicks were among the Black players whose teams were eliminated earlier this month in the playoffs.

Kendrick and others see signs of more on the way.

"I am optimistic. I am," he said.

Last summer, for the first time in MLB draft history, four of the first five players selected were Black.

All four, along with more than 300 big leaguers including Harris, Cincinnati's Hunter Greene, Pittsburgh's Ke'Bryan Hayes and Milwaukee's Devin Williams, took part in MLB diversity-based initiatives such as the MLB Youth Academy, DREAM Series and the Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) program.

MLB also has pledged \$150 million in the next decade to the Players Alliance, an organization of current and former players working to increase Black involvement at all levels of the sport.

Chicago White Sox executive vice president Kenny Williams is the only Black leader of baseball operations for a major league team.

"I think surely but slowly, we're going to see a pendulum shift," Kendrick said.

"The problem is we're not patient. I don't like instant grits. I'm from Georgia — I like mine slow cooked," he said.

Trump aide Meadows ordered to testify in election probe

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A judge on Wednesday ordered former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows to testify before a special grand jury that's investigating whether President Donald Trump and his allies illegally tried to sway Georgia's results in the 2020 election.

Meadows, a former GOP congressman, is a key figure in the investigation. He traveled to Georgia, sat in on Trump's phone calls with state officials and coordinated and communicated with outside influencers who were either encouraging or discouraging the pressure campaign.

Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis opened the investigation last year into actions taken by Trump and others to overturn his loss to Democrat Joe Biden in the state. Meadows is just one of several associates and advisers of the Republican former president whose testimony Willis has sought.

Because Meadows doesn't live in Georgia, Willis, a Democrat, had to use a process that involved getting a judge where he lives in South Carolina to order him to appear. First, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney, who's overseeing the special grand jury, signed off on a petition certifying that Meadows was a "necessary and material witness."

Now, Circuit Court Judge Edward Miller in Pickens County, South Carolina, has honored McBurney's finding and ordered Meadows to testify, Willis spokesman Jeff DiSantis confirmed.

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Meadows attorney Jim Bannister told The Associated Press that his client was "weighing all options," including appeals.

"Nothing final until we see the order," he said.

Willis has been fighting similar battles — mostly with success — in courts around the country as she seeks to compel Trump allies to testify. But an appeals court in Texas has indicated it may not recognize the validity of the Georgia summonses, and U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina asked the U.S. Supreme Court to intervene after a federal appeals court last week ordered him to testify.

In the petition seeking Meadows' testimony, Willis wrote that he attended a Dec. 21, 2020, meeting at the White House with Trump and others "to discuss allegations of voter fraud and certification of Electoral College votes from Georgia and other states."

The next day, Willis wrote, Meadows made a "surprise visit" to Cobb County, just outside Atlanta, where an audit of signatures on absentee ballot envelopes was being conducted. He asked to observe the audit but wasn't allowed to because it wasn't open to the public, the petition says.

Meadows also sent emails to Justice Department officials after the election alleging voter fraud in Georgia and elsewhere and requesting investigations, Willis wrote. And he took part in a Jan. 2, 2021, phone call with Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, during which Trump suggested that Raffensperger, the state's top elections official and a Republican, could "find" enough votes to overturn the president's narrow loss in the state.

According to a transcript of the call with Raffensperger, Meadows said Trump's team believed that "not every vote or fair vote and legal vote was counted. And that's at odds with the representation from the secretary of state's office." He goes on to say he hopes they can agree on a way "to look at this a little bit more fully."

Raffensperger disputed the assertions, addressing Trump, "We don't agree that you have won."

After the election, Meadows was widely seen in the White House as a chief instigator of Trump's fixation on the election, passing along debunked conspiracies about fraud that other officials were forced to swat down. He pushed one theory that people in Italy had changed votes in the U.S. with satellite technology, a claim that former Justice Department official Richard Donoghue labeled "pure insanity."

On the legal front, in a court filing this week, Meadows' lawyer Bannister argued that executive privilege and other rights shield his client from testifying.

Bannister asserted in a filing that Meadows has been instructed by Trump "to preserve certain privileges and immunities attaching to his former office as White House Chief of Staff." And Willis' petition calls for him "to divulge the contents of executive privileged communications with the President," Bannister wrote.

Meadows previously invoked that privilege in a fight against subpoenas issued by the U.S. House committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Meadows has been fighting investigations into the violent 2021 insurrection since last year and has so far avoided having to testify about his role and his knowledge of the former president's actions. He turned over thousands of texts to the House Jan. 6 committee before eventually refusing to do an interview.

The House held Meadows in contempt of Congress for defying the subpoena, but the Justice Department declined to prosecute.

Special grand juries in Georgia cannot issue indictments. Instead, they can gather evidence and compel testimony and then can recommend further action, including criminal charges, in a final report. It is ultimately up to the district attorney to decide whether to seek an indictment from a regular grand jury.

Grand jury secrecy is "paramount" in South Carolina, Bannister wrote. Because the special grand jury is expected to ultimately issue a public report, ordering Meadows to testify would violate his state right to privacy, Bannister argued.

McBurney, the Fulton County Superior Court judge, has made clear in rulings on other attempts by potential witnesses to avoid or delay testimony that he considers the special grand jury's investigation to be a criminal proceeding. He has also stressed a need for secrecy for the panel's workings.

Low-wage workers bear financial brunt of denied abortions

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Business Writers

A Texas mother of a toddler, scraping by on her husband's income, was desperate to return to work but struggling to afford child care. A young Florida warehouse worker had barely left behind a turbulent past of homelessness and abuse only to be mired in debt.

When both women learned they were pregnant, they came to the agonizing conclusion they couldn't go through with it.

"When you try to discuss the alternatives, you find the problems. If we could do this, where is the baby going to stay?" said Alyssa Burns, the warehouse worker who makes \$16 an hour and was sharing a two-bedroom apartment with her boyfriend and another couple when she found out she was pregnant last year. "We both work full-time jobs. My mom works. We can't afford child care."

There are wide-ranging reasons why women may seek to terminate their pregnancies but for those struggling to make ends meet, finances are inevitably part of the calculation. Now many of them will be thrust into a circumstance they can't afford as abortion bans and restrictions take hold in half the country after the Supreme Court overturned the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling guaranteeing abortion rights.

Three-quarters of women who seek abortions were low-income, meaning they had a family income below or up to double the federal poverty level, according to a 2014 study by the Guttmacher Institute, a science-based research group that supports abortion rights. More than half already had children and many worked in physically demanding roles with fewer labor protections and less flexibility than higher-wage jobs.

"A salaried employee with benefits is the type of person who generally does find a way with or without their employer support," said Caitlin Myers, an economist at Middlebury College who studies reproduction and the economy. "We are talking about a really economically fragile group of workers, often hourly workers, often shift workers with very unpredictable schedules for whom this becomes really overwhelming."

Burns, 24, was able to swiftly end her just over six-week-old pregnancy in March 2021 because Florida had no law against it at the time and the state's current law bans most abortions after 15 weeks. But she said she is haunted by the idea that in a different state and a different time, she might have been forced to have the baby.

The Texas mother panicked at the same possibility. She learned she was pregnant in September of last year just as a Texas law banning all abortions after roughly six weeks of pregnancy took effect.

"I was so broken. I couldn't fathom that it was happening," said the 30-year-old hairstylist who, like Burns, shared her story through the women's advocacy group MomsRising but requested anonymity for fear of facing harassment in her conservative Corpus Christi community. "I can't afford this child. I am struggling with a child I already have."

In the end, she was able to have an abortion in New Mexico with financial help from Planned Parenthood. Even so, she and her husband incurred \$1,000 in expenses, including \$500 in car rental. Her husband had to take unpaid time from his job as a cell phone tower maintenance worker.

If it hadn't been for the Texas ban, she said she could have gone to a clinic 20 minutes away. Indeed, for many women living in states that would ban abortions, the average travel distance to the nearest clinic would rise from 35 miles to 272 miles, according to Myers' analysis of a national database of abortion facilities, revised monthly.

Many anti-abortion advocates say the answer is not to make it easier to terminate a pregnancy but to widen the safety net and make it easier to have children. They argue *Roe v. Wade* hurt working women by discouraging employers and the government from enacting more generous benefits for parents.

"Abortion has been the privileged response to female poverty and the plight of low-wage workers in this country," said Erika Bachiochi, an anti-abortion legal scholar who believes more pressure should be applied on conservative states to strengthen policies around parental leave and child care.

But research tells a different story. Carrying an unwanted pregnancy quadruples the odds that a woman and her child will live below the federal poverty line, according to The Turnaway Study, a University of California San Francisco research project that tracked women who got access to abortions versus those

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who'd been denied them over a 10-year period. It triples the chances of the woman being unemployed. Being denied an abortion often leads to increased rates of unpaid debt, poverty, evictions, and bankruptcies over the next five years, according to a recent study published by the National Bureau of Economic Research, which used the Turnaway study data to exam the credit history of women who couldn't get abortions.

Those were some of the risks facing Burns, who left home at 18 and finished high school while living homeless. Although she had found some stability by the time she got pregnant, she was still paying off more than \$7,000 in debt from breaking her rental lease a few years earlier when she left an abusive relationship.

Earlier this year, the Texas hairstylist moved in with her parents in Corpus Christi because life had become too expensive in Austin, where her monthly rent rose from \$1,400 to \$1,600 and putting her daughter in child care would have cost \$600 a week. Her husband, who earns \$50,000 a year with overtime, will join her once their lease term ends. With their parents able to watch her child, she was able to go back to work two days a week.

"We've been playing catch-up for the longest time," she said.

Catherine R. Pakaluk, an anti-abortion assistant professor of social research and economic thought at the Catholic University of America, acknowledges the unique difficulties for low-income women but does not believe abortion is the right answer.

"Having a baby is harder when you're poor. But I don't think the poor's interest or the elite's interest are served by eliminating a child conceived into difficult circumstances," Pakaluk said. "That's why the poor should be 100% the focus of any kind of policymaking."

In reality, however, states with some of the nation's strictest abortion laws are among the hardest places to raise children, especially for the poor, according to an analysis of federal data by The Associated Press. In Mississippi, for instance, access to pre- and post-natal care has dwindled since the Supreme Court ruling in June, making childbirth even more dangerous for poor women and children.

There is also a big disparity between the benefits that employers offer low-income workers versus high-income workers. Roughly 6% of private industry workers with an average wage in the lowest 10% had access to paid family leave, compared with 43% workers in the top 10%, according to the most recent survey by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, conducted last year. And only 38% of private industry workers with wages at the bottom 10% get paid sick leave, compared with 96% in the top 10%, according to a labor department study done in March.

Burns said she and her boyfriend dream of eventually having a family but they need stability first. She has been able to go to the dentist for the first time in her life, getting cavities filled, wisdom teeth removed and some crowns put in, accruing more debt that would have been difficult to handle with a baby.

"We have spent the last year and a half trying to get our financial stuff together and trying to get our health together, trying to get to the point where we could probably do it and not damage the child with our own problems," Burns said.

UN weather agency: Greenhouse gases reach new record in 2021

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The three main greenhouse gases hit record high levels in the atmosphere last year, the U.N. weather agency said Wednesday, calling it an "ominous" sign as war in Ukraine, rising costs of food and fuel, and other worries have elbowed in on longtime concerns about global warming in recent months.

"More bad news for the planet," the World Meteorological Organization said in a statement along with its latest annual Greenhouse Gas Bulletin. It's one of several reports released in recent days looking at several aspects of humanity's struggle with climate change in the run up to the U.N.'s latest climate conference, in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt.

Of the three main types of heat-trapping greenhouse gases — carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide — the biggest jump from 2020 to 2021 was in methane, whose concentrations in the air came in

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with the biggest year-on-year increase since regular measurements began four decades ago, WMO said. "The continuing rise in concentrations of the main heat-trapping gases, including the record acceleration in methane levels, shows that we are heading in the wrong direction," said WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas.

Methane is more potent at trapping heat than carbon dioxide, but doesn't stay in the atmosphere nearly as long as carbon dioxide and there's 200 times more carbon dioxide in the air than methane. Over a 20-year time-period, a molecule of methane traps about 81 times the heat as a molecule of carbon dioxide but over a century it goes down to trapping 28 times more heat per molecule than carbon dioxide, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Since pre-industrial times, which WMO sets at around the year 1750, CO2 concentrations in the air have increased by nearly 50% to 415.7 parts per million, with the U.S., China and Europe responsible for the bulk of emissions. Methane is up 162% to 1,908 parts per billion, and nitrous oxide — whose human-made sources are things like biomass burning, industrial processes and fertilizer use — is up about one-quarter to 334.5 parts per million.

Earlier on Wednesday the U.N.'s climate office said current pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions put the planet on course to blow past the limit for global warming countries agreed to in the 2015 Paris climate accord.

It said its latest estimate based on 193 national emissions targets would see temperatures rise to 2.5 degrees Celsius (4.5 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial averages by the end of the century, a full degree higher than the ambitious goal set in the Paris pact to limit warming by 1.5 C (2.7 F).

"We are still nowhere near the scale and pace of emission reductions required to put us on track toward a 1.5 degrees Celsius world," the head of the U.N. climate office, Simon Stiell, said in a statement. "To keep this goal alive, national governments need to strengthen their climate action plans now and implement them in the next eight years."

The report found that emissions will also increase by 10.6% by 2030 from 2010 levels, a slight decrease from the 13.7% estimates last year.

A report published Wednesday by Climate Action Tracker who track nations' pledges to reduce warming found that of 40 indicators for reducing emissions — like weaning off coal, ramping up electric vehicles or reducing deforestation — the world wasn't on track for any of them to match the levels of emissions reductions scientists say are needed to limit warming to 1.5C. Over half of the indicators showed the world is "well off track" to cutting emissions but added that promising progress has been made.

Climatologists and environmental advocates have been raising their voices for years about the impact of climate change, by pointing to vast changes in the weather in recent decades like forest fires in China and western United States, drought in the horn of Africa and unprecedented flooding in Pakistan — to name only a few.

CO2 remains the single most important greenhouse gas generated by human activity — mainly from burning of fossil fuels and cement production — amounting to about two-thirds of the warming effect on the climate, known as radiative forcing. Over the last decade, carbon dioxide has been responsible for about four-fifths of that warming effect.

Methane accounts for about more than one-sixth of the warming effect, said WMO. Three-fifths of methane reaches the atmosphere through the burps and farts of livestock, rice farming, use of fossil fuels, biomass burning and landfills; the rest comes from natural sources like wetlands and termites.

Rob Jackson, who heads the Global Carbon Project, suggested that the spikes in methane over the last two years were "mysterious" — either blips related to the coronavirus pandemic, which temporarily dented emissions, or a sign of "a dangerous acceleration in methane emissions from wetlands and other systems we've been worrying about for decades."

"Concentrations of methane and nitrous oxide are not just rising, they're rising faster than ever. While not losing our focus on carbon dioxide, we need to pay more attention to the 'other' greenhouse gases," he added. "Fortunately, methane is beginning to get the attention it deserves" through initiatives like the Global Methane Pledge, a capping effort supported by the U.S. and European Union, among others.

Nitrous oxide remains "mostly ignored," he added.

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Taalas, who has been repeating warnings about global warming for years, says the focus should remain on CO2.

"As the top and most urgent priority, we have to slash carbon dioxide emissions which are the main driver of climate change and associated extreme weather, and which will affect climate for thousands of years through polar ice loss, ocean warming and sea level rise," he said.

NASA announced that an instrument on the International Space Station designed to look at mineral dust turned out to be a useful tool to find "super emitters" of methane from orbit. NASA shared three images showing plumes several miles long that are spewing methane.

A group of a dozen leaks from pipeline and other gas infrastructure in Turkmenistan is leaking 55 tons of methane per hour, about the same as the infamous 2015 Aliso Canyon leak, drilling in New Mexico that's spewing 18 tons per hour and a landfill in Iran that's emitting 8 tons per hour.

"We're looking in places where no one is planning to look for methane," said NASA instrument scientist Robert Green. "If it's there we'll see it."

Superstorm Sandy legacy: Recovery far from equal on NY shore

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Even before Superstorm Sandy's floodwaters surged over New York City's Rockaway Peninsula, there was an air of decay in Edgemere, a far-flung seaside neighborhood long pockmarked with boarded-up homes and vacant lots with waist-high weeds.

When the water receded, even more of Edgemere's homes lay in ruin. But there was hope, too, that in the rebuilding effort the predominantly Black neighborhood would finally get the boost it needed to recover from decades of neglect. In the decade since Sandy swamped the coast, those hopes have been dashed.

There is little sign of the development promised along block after block of worn homes, some long unoccupied. Meanwhile, mostly white communities further west on the peninsula have flourished, with recovery funds bringing new housing, businesses, places to gather.

"They tell me that we're one peninsula — no, we're not. It's a tale of two peninsulas," said Edgemere resident Sonia Moise, whose home filled with seawater during Sandy, her car carried off by the tide.

"You go west, what do they have? They have a skatepark. They have a dog park. They have concession stands," Moise said. "What do we have? We have homeless shelters. We have hotels that house homeless people."

When Sandy hit the northeastern U.S. coastline on Oct. 29, 2012, the storm did not discriminate as it caused about \$65 billion in damage — much of it in New York and New Jersey. Luxurious vacation homes on the Jersey Shore were torn apart; small homes in working-class sections of Staten Island were submerged up to their eaves.

But the rebuilding effort has been anything but equal. The woes in Edgemere are a case study in disparities that play out across the U.S. after natural disasters: The billions of dollars in recovery money that pour in make their way last to, and have their weakest impact in, communities of color. In New Orleans, the remarkable post-Katrina recovery made for a whiter, more expensive city where poor Black neighborhoods still struggle. In Florida, there are already grumblings along rows of crumpled mobile homes that help has been swiftest in resort beach communities in the wake of Hurricane Ian.

Public spending after disasters has led to increased inequality, said Junia Howell, a sociologist at the University of Illinois in Chicago who researches race, housing and disasters.

"Communities that are whiter and wealthier actually are not only recovering from disaster, but in many cases, they're doing better," Howell said. "What you're doing is giving resources to those who already have the most resources and further leaving everyone else behind."

The contrast is perhaps sharpest just west of Edgemere, in Arverne by the Sea. Like most of the Rockaway Peninsula — an 11-mile long sliver of barrier beaches that is home to around 124,000 people — both communities were almost entirely underwater after Sandy hit. But Edgemere residents say they watched Arverne and predominantly white communities get more help, and sooner.

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Arverne already has a new grocery store and a Dunkin' Donuts in a new commercial strip. And next door in Rockaway Beach is a new skatepark, rebuilt after Sandy tore apart the old one. Construction of a community amphitheater is in progress.

Neighbors admit it's not a perfect comparison. Some Arverne investment was underway before Sandy. Six years prior, a \$1 billion development drew more white families to the neighborhood — which is still majority Black, though that number is dropping — and some of those 2,300 homes are being resold for as much as \$1.7 million. The development was mostly unscathed by winds and flooding, prompting grumbling by Edgemere residents that their homes weren't built to last.

What's clear, community board leader Moise and others say, is that Edgemere has never gotten its fair share.

"We have been fighting for years to get the same thing that the rest of our surrounding neighborhoods have gotten. We have been ignored," Moise said.

Unlike Arverne, Edgemere has no coffee shops or concession stands. Along Beach Channel Drive, the main thoroughfare, there's a bodega and a Chinese takeout restaurant. Next door, a smoke shop is moving in. Up the street is a massive public housing project.

There's little sign here of the Rockaways' history as a beach resort community. The peninsula's grand hotels didn't survive into the automobile age. The 1950s brought urban renewal; officials tore down thousands of bungalows that were home to Black and Puerto Rican families, replacing some of that lost housing stock with high-rise housing projects while leaving other razed blocks to nature.

Edgemere and other communities on the eastern end of the Rockaways became dumping grounds for the city's poorest residents, pushed out across a wide bay to the very end of the land, a 70-minute subway ride from Manhattan.

But just before Sandy, there was hope that things were getting better — even if neighboring communities were seeing faster progress. Edgemere was growing. People were moving in. City officials promised to build some 800 new homes to fill vacant lots.

Sandy brought those small signs of hope to a halt.

The city says it's working to bring change to Edgemere. Earlier this year, it finalized a development plan dubbed "Resilient Edgemere." Every member of the community board urged the City Council and mayor to reject it. But the community didn't have the political clout to stop it.

The plan includes vows of affordable housing near the beach, and high-rise apartments with 1,200 residential units above retail space. There's \$14 million earmarked to buttress the shoreline with an elevated berm to protect Edgemere against 30 inches (76 centimeters) of sea level rise, and \$2.3 million to upgrade sewage and drainage lines.

But residents worry the low-income units will add to the neighborhood's longtime burden of housing the poor. More than a quarter of Edgemere residents live in poverty, the highest among Rockaways communities, according to a recent state report that highlighted longstanding inequalities in the area.

Those who have money spend it elsewhere because the community has few amenities.

And while the plan's shoreline work might be welcome news, many say it's another case of being last in line. In other places along the peninsula, sand dunes were beefed up quickly to keep tides from intruding as they did during Sandy. Edgemere's beach restoration began only weeks ago.

Instead of the city's plan, community board members want more duplexes and townhomes to fit in with existing housing stock. They want a new school and grassy inland parks that could help absorb the next flood. They want amenities like the fully-stocked grocery stores found in neighboring, wealthier communities.

City officials insist they've made progress — they cite wetland restoration and the raising of 100-plus homes against flooding. Stretches of the wooden boardwalk have been replaced with a concrete promenade along the beach. Headquarters for a nature preserve is being built, but construction has limited community access to the boardwalk and beach.

Dexter Davis, a former NYC police officer whose Edgemere home was flooded with more than a yard (meter) of water during Sandy, says his community needs more than what's outlined so far.

"The things that they pump into the other communities around us are more positive. They give them more leisure things, better quality," Davis said. "Here, they do things — but it's not up to the same par."

Experts such as NYU sociologist Jacob Faber say it's not just natural disaster that has affected Edgemere and other poorer communities — it's the lingering impact of years of neglect.

"You have these geographically and socially and economically isolated communities that are in a position to just get hammered, over and over again," Farber said.

Afraid of needles? China using inhalable COVID-19 vaccine

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — The Chinese city of Shanghai started administering an inhalable COVID-19 vaccine on Wednesday in what appears to be a world first.

The vaccine, a mist that is sucked in through the mouth, is being offered for free as a booster dose for previously vaccinated people, according to an announcement on an official city social media account.

Scientists hope that such "needle-free" vaccines will make vaccination more accessible in countries with fragile health systems because they are easier to administer. They also may persuade people who don't like getting a shot in the arm to get inoculated.

China wants more people to get booster shots before it relaxes strict pandemic restrictions that are holding back the economy and are increasingly out of sync with the rest of the world. As of mid-October, 90% of Chinese were fully vaccinated and 57% had received a booster shot.

A video posted by an online Chinese state media outlet showed people at a community health center sticking the short nozzle of a translucent white cup into their mouths. The accompanying text said that after slowly inhaling, people hold their breath for five seconds, with the entire procedure completed in 20 seconds.

"It was like drinking a cup of milk tea," one Shanghai resident said in the video. "When I breathed it in, it tasted a bit sweet."

The effectiveness of non-needle vaccines has not been fully explored. Chinese regulators approved the inhalable one in September, but only as a booster shot after studies showed it triggered an immune system response in people who had previously received two shots of a different Chinese vaccine.

A vaccine taken as mist could fend off the virus before it reaches the rest of the respiratory system, though that would depend in part on the size of the droplets, one expert said.

Larger droplets would train defenses in parts of the mouth and throat, while smaller ones would travel further into the body, said Dr. Vineeta Bal, an immunologist in India.

The inhalable vaccine was developed by Chinese biopharmaceutical company CanSino Biologics Inc. as an aerosol version of the company's one-shot adenovirus vaccine, which uses a relatively harmless cold virus.

The traditional one-shot vaccine has been approved for use in more than 10 markets including China, Hungary, Pakistan, Malaysia, Argentina and Mexico. The inhaled version has received a go-ahead for clinical trials in Malaysia, a Malaysian media report said last month.

Regulators in India have approved a nasal vaccine, another needle-free approach, but it has yet to be rolled out. The vaccine, developed in the U.S. and licensed to Indian vaccine maker Bharat Biotech, is squirted in the nose.

About a dozen nasal vaccines are being tested globally, according to the World Health Organization.

China has relied on domestically developed vaccines, primarily two inactivated vaccines that have proven effective in preventing death and serious disease but less so than the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines at stopping the spread of the disease.

Chinese authorities also have not mandated vaccination — entering an office building or other public places requires a negative COVID-19 test, not proof of vaccination. And the country's strict "zero-COVID" approach means that only a small proportion of the population has been infected and built immunity that way, compared to other places.

As a result, it's unclear how widely COVID-19 would spread if restrictions were lifted. The ruling Com-

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unist Party has so far shown no sign of easing the "zero-COVID" policy, moving quickly to restrict travel and impose lockdowns when even just a few cases are discovered.

Authorities on Wednesday ordered the lockdown of 900,000 people in Wuhan, the city where the virus was first detected in late 2019, for at least five days. In remote Qinghai province, the urban districts of Xining city have been locked down since last Friday.

In Beijing, Universal Studios said it would close its hotels and attractions "to comply with pandemic prevention and control." The city of more than 21 million people reported 19 new cases in the latest 24-hour period.

Kremlin: Any talks about Griner swap must be confidential

MOSCOW (AP) — The Kremlin on Wednesday kept the door open for talks on a possible swap involving jailed U.S. basketball star Brittney Griner but reiterated that any such discussions must be kept strictly confidential.

A Russian court on Tuesday rejected Griner's appeal against her nine-year prison sentence for drug possession. The eight-time all-star center with the WNBA's Phoenix Mercury and a two-time Olympic gold medalist was convicted Aug. 4 after police said they found vape canisters containing cannabis oil in her luggage at Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport.

Asked if Griner could be freed as part of a prisoners swap with Washington, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in a conference call with reporters that "we always say that any contacts about possible exchanges can only be conducted in silence under a tight lid on any information."

Griner's arrest in February came at a time of heightened tensions between Moscow and Washington, just days before Russia sent troops into Ukraine. At the time, Griner was returning to play for a Russian team during the WNBA's offseason.

President Joe Biden told reporters that his administration is in "constant contact" with Russian authorities on Griner and other Americans who are detained there. While there has not been progress on bringing her back to the U.S., Biden said, "We're not stopping."

At her trial, Griner admitted to having the canisters in her luggage but testified she packed them inadvertently in her haste to make her flight and had no criminal intent. Her defense team presented written statements saying she had been prescribed cannabis to treat chronic pain.

Before her conviction, the U.S. State Department declared Griner to be "wrongfully detained" — a charge that Russia has sharply rejected.

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said in a statement that Biden "is willing to go to extraordinary lengths and make tough decisions to bring Americans home."

In July, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in an unusual step that Washington had made a "substantial proposal" to Moscow get Griner home, along with Paul Whelan, an American serving a 16-year sentence in Russia for espionage.

He didn't elaborate, but The Associated Press and other news organizations have reported that Washington has offered to exchange Griner and Whelan for Viktor Bout, a Russian arms dealer who is serving a 25-year sentence in the U.S. and once earned the nickname the "merchant of death."

Fetterman struggles in Senate debate against Oz after stroke

By MARC LEVY and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — More than five months after experiencing a stroke, Pennsylvania Democrat John Fetterman struggled at times to explain his positions and often spoke haltingly throughout a highly anticipated debate against Republican Dr. Mehmet Oz as they vie for a critical Senate seat.

In the opening minutes of the debate Tuesday, Fetterman addressed what he called the "elephant in the room."

"I had a stroke. He's never let me forget that," Fetterman said of Oz, who has persistently questioned his

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ability to serve in the Senate. "And I might miss some words during this debate, mush two words together, but it knocked me down and I'm going to keep coming back up."

When pressed to release his medical records later in the debate, he refused to commit.

Oz, a celebrity heart surgeon, ignored Fetterman's health challenges throughout the debate, instead focusing on his opponent's policies on immigration and crime and his support for President Joe Biden. Democrats seized on a comment Oz made about abortion that seemed to suggest that the decision should be left to women, doctors and local politicians.

The forum had many of the trappings of a traditional debate, complete with heated exchanges and interruptions. But the impact of the stroke was apparent as Fetterman used closed-captioning posted above the moderator to help him process the words he heard, leading to occasional awkward pauses.

Going forward, the biggest question is whether the debate will have a lasting impact with less than two weeks until the election and more than 600,000 ballots already cast. The stakes of the race to succeed retiring GOP Sen. Pat Toomey are huge: It represents Democrats' best chance to flip a Senate seat this year — and could determine party control of the chamber and the future of Biden's agenda.

But rather than watch the full hour as the candidates debated abortion, inflation and crime, many Pennsylvanians may only see clips of the event on social media. And both parties are preparing to flood the airwaves with television advertising in the final stretch, giving each campaign a final chance to reframe the terms of the race.

Independent experts consulted by The Associated Press said Fetterman appears to be recovering remarkably well.

"In my opinion, he did very well," said Dr. Sonia Sheth, of Northwestern Medicine Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital in suburban Chicago, who watched the debate. "He had his stroke less than one year ago and will continue to recover over the next year. He had some errors in his responses, but overall he was able to formulate fluent, thoughtful answers."

Brooke Hatfield, a Maryland speech pathologist who has worked with stroke patients and also watched the debate, described Fetterman's speech errors as "common for people when they have a stroke."

"We know that for many stroke survivors the first year can bring rapid improvement, but the brain will continue to rewire itself throughout someone's life," she said.

Oz, a longtime television personality, was more at home on the debate stage. He cast himself as a moderate Republican looking to unite a divided state, even as he committed to supporting former President Donald Trump should he run again in 2024.

"I'm a surgeon, I'm not a politician," Oz said. "We take big problems, we focus on them, and we fix them. We do it by uniting, by coming together, not dividing."

Fetterman similarly committed to supporting Biden should he run again in 2024.

The Democratic president campaigned with Fetterman in Pittsburgh during the Labor Day parade and just last week headlined a fundraiser for Fetterman in Philadelphia. There, Biden said the "rest of the world is looking" and suggested a Fetterman loss would imperil his agenda.

While backing Biden, Fetterman also said, "he needs to do more about supporting and fighting about inflation."

Abortion was a major dividing line during the debate.

Oz insists he supports three exceptions — for rape, for incest and to protect the life of the mother. When pressed Tuesday night, he suggested he opposes South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham's bill to impose a nationwide ban on abortion after 15 weeks because it would allow the federal government to dictate the law to states.

"I don't want the federal government involved with that at all," Oz said. "I want women, doctors, local political leaders letting the democracy that always allowed our nation to thrive, to put the best ideas forward so states can decide for themselves."

Fetterman delivered a blunt message to women: "If you believe that the choice for abortion belongs with you and your doctor, that's what I fight for."

Democratic strategist Paul Begala pointed to Oz's statement as helping to highlight the party's key issue

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this midterm season: abortion.

"Debates are more often lost than won, and Mehmet Oz lost this one with his line that abortion should be a decision between a woman, her doctor and local elected officials," Begala tweeted.

Fetterman is a star in progressive politics nationwide, having developed a loyal following thanks in part to his blunt working-class appeal, extraordinary height, tattoos and unapologetic progressive policies. On Tuesday, the 6-foot-9-inch Democrat swapped his trademark hoodie and shorts for a dark suit and tie.

But even before the debate, Democrats in Washington were concerned about Fetterman's campaign given the stakes.

For much of the year, it looked as if Fetterman was the clear favorite, especially as Republicans waged a nasty nomination battle that left the GOP divided and bitter. But as Election Day nears, the race has tightened. And now, just two weeks before the final votes are cast, even the White House is privately concerned that Fetterman's candidacy is at risk.

Fetterman's speech challenges were apparent throughout the night. He often struggled to complete sentences.

When pressed to explain his shifting position on fracking, a critical issue in a state where thousands of jobs are tied to natural gas production, his answer was particularly awkward.

"I do support fracking. And I don't, I don't. I support fracking, and I stand and I do support fracking," Fetterman said.

At another point, the moderator seemed to cut off Fetterman as he struggled to finish an answer defending Biden's student loan debt forgiveness program. He also stumbled before finishing a key attack line: "We need to make sure that Dr. Oz and Republicans believe in cutting Medicare and Social Security ..."

Oz had pushed for more than a half-dozen debates, suggesting Fetterman's unwillingness to agree to more than one was because the stroke had debilitated him. Fetterman insisted that one debate is typical — although two is more customary — and that Oz's focus on debates was a cynical ploy to lie about his health.

But Fetterman refused to commit to releasing his full health records when asked repeatedly Tuesday by the moderator. While it is customary for presidential candidates to release health records, there is no such custom in races for the U.S. Senate. Some senators have, in the past, released medical records when running for president.

"My doctor believes that I'm fit to be serving," Fetterman said. "And that's what I believe is where I'm standing."

Ohio elections chief: Precincts can't take absentee ballots

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ohio law does not permit voters to return absentee ballots at their precincts on Election Day, the state's elections chief is cautioning amid a misinformation campaign around the security of voting machines that's urging them to do so.

Republican Secretary of State Frank LaRose said those voters who heed advice from a prominent national group of Republican election deniers and hold onto their paper ballots until Nov. 8 must deliver them to their county board of elections office. Poll workers at precinct-level voting locations cannot accept them, he said.

"This is why it's dangerous for people who don't know what they're talking about to be dispensing bad elections-related advice to people," he said in an Associated Press interview Tuesday. "Because if someone is telling voters to take their absentee ballot to their polling location on Election Day, they're effectively instructing them how to disenfranchise themselves."

LaRose said that possibility has caused concern among county election officials.

The GOP activists — including MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell — echo lies that the 2020 election was stolen from former President Donald Trump and are urging GOP voters not to use the U.S. mail or a voting machine to cast their votes. Instead, they have encouraged them to fill out a paper absentee ballot and

return it in person at the last minute.

The plan is based on unfounded conspiracy theories that fraudsters will manipulate voting systems to rig results for Democrats once they have seen how many Republican votes have been returned early. There has been no evidence of any such widespread fraud, nor that the 2020 election was stolen.

LaRose encouraged Ohioans to seek reliable sources of information — such as his office's website, the website for their county board of elections and reports from reputable news organizations — as they make plans to vote.

He said simply mailing an absentee ballot is the easiest path for voters who have requested one. For those who have concerns about the U.S. Postal Service, his office has set up an online ballot tracking tool.

Secure ballot drop boxes, one located at each of Ohio's 88 county boards of elections, are another option, he said. Those offices also will accept absentee ballots in person until 7:30 p.m. on Election Night.

If a voter who has requested an absentee ballot changes their mind on Election Day and decides to vote in person at their precinct, they will be allowed to do so — but they will have to vote by provisional ballot, said LaRose spokesperson Rob Nichols.

LaRose is up for reelection Nov. 8. He faces Democrat Chelsea Clark, a small business owner and city council member in suburban Cincinnati, and Terpsehore "Tore" Maras, a conservative podcaster and election denier who is running as an independent.

Russia's chaotic draft leaves some out in cold, without gear

By The Associated Press undefined

The mobilized reservists that Russian President Vladimir Putin visited last week at a firing range southeast of Moscow looked picture-perfect.

Kremlin video of the young men headed for the war in Ukraine showed them in mint-condition uniforms, equipped with all the gear needed for combat: helmets, bulletproof vests and sleeping bags. When Putin asked if they had any problems, they shook their heads.

That stands in stark contrast to the complaints circulating widely on Russian news outlets and social media of equipment shortages, poor living conditions and scant training for the new recruits.

Since Putin announced the mobilization Sept. 21, independent media, human rights activists and those called up have painted a bleak picture of a haphazard, chaotic and ethnically biased effort to round up as many men as possible and push them quickly to the front lines, regardless of skill, training and equipment.

Videos on Russian social networks showed conscripted men complaining of cramped, filthy accommodations, toilets overflowing with trash and a lack of food and medicine. Some showed men displaying rusty weapons.

In one video, a group of draftees milled in a field, claiming they had been left there with no food or shelter. Other clips depicted men forced to sleep on bare benches or tightly packed on the floor.

"We didn't seek you out; you called us. Here, look at this! How long can this go on?" an exasperated voice says in a video.

Putin's decree on the partial mobilization didn't outline the criteria for draftees or say how many would be called up. Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has said it will affect only about 300,000 reservists with relevant combat or service experience.

Conscription protests have been harshly put down, and tens of thousands of men fled Russia to neighboring countries to avoid being pressed into service.

In the week after the decree, a young man opened fire on a recruitment officer in the Siberian city of Ust-Ilimsk, seriously wounding him. On Oct. 15, a shootout at a training camp in the southern Belgorod region killed 11 people and wounded 15 others. Enlistment offices and other administrative buildings also have been set on fire.

It's now clear that in a country where almost all men under 65 are registered as part of the reserve, the mobilization process wasn't carried out carefully. There has been a flood of reports of call-up summonses being served to those with no military experience. Police rounded up men in the streets of Moscow and

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other cities, or raided hostels to apprehend guests of fighting age. Enlistment offices often skipped required health checks.

The hasty call-up will hardly achieve anything other than "slowing down the advances" of Ukrainian troops in the 8-month-old war, military analyst Pavel Luzin said in an interview.

Moscow is simply "prolonging the agony" in Ukraine, said Luzin, a visiting scholar at The Fletcher School at Tufts University.

Activists also say ethnic minorities in some regions were drafted in disproportionate numbers. Videos circulated of protests in the Muslim majority region of Dagestan, with relatives complaining that the area was providing more recruits than elsewhere.

Vladimir Budaev of the Free Buryatia Foundation told AP that Indigenous people in Russia's Far North and along the Mongolian border were "rounded up in their villages" in the drive.

In remote regions of Sakha and Buryatia, enlistment officers scoured the taiga for potential draftees, and "handed out summonses to anyone they met," he said.

According to Yekaterina Morland, an ethnic Buryat volunteer at the Asians of Russia Foundation, Buryatia has seen mobilization rates up to six times higher than Russia's European regions.

In the first two weeks of the call-up, authorities in some regions reported sending home hundreds of men who were drafted despite not meeting the criteria.

"The task of a military enlistment office is to recruit — recruit whoever they can grab," says Elena Popova, the coordinator of the Movement of Conscientious Objectors.

Putin himself publicly acknowledged "mistakes" in the process and demanded its improvement.

But even when the summonses went to those who had served in the army, it didn't necessarily mean that they had battlefield skills. Some former conscripts often don't get proper military training when they serve and instead are engaged in menial labor.

A woman who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because she feared reprisals said her 31-year-old husband did his mandatory service six years ago and had "no training at a firing range, or any combat drills in the field," but authorities tried to draft him anyway.

In fact, he had only held a weapon once, when they were taught how to strip down and reassemble an automatic rifle, she said. Mostly, she added, "they were sweeping (the compound), cleaning the snow."

Relatives of conscripts reported having to spend their own money on gear and basic necessities. Online groups were formed to raise funds for equipment.

One campaign was run by Kremlin-backed lawmaker and state TV host Yevgeny Popov, who said reservists in the Taman artillery division got shoes and clothes, but had "an acute shortage of drones, walkie-talkies, smartphones with maps (for gunners), binoculars, headlamps (and) power banks," he said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Wednesday acknowledged persisting problems with equipment for the draftees, but "vigorous measures taken to rectify the situation are already yielding the first positive results."

He said regional authorities are involved in providing "the missing gear," and now Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov "is personally responsible for this" in a coordination council Putin has created.

Russian media reported multiple deaths of reservists in Ukraine, with their relatives telling news outlets that they had received very little training.

When asked by a reporter why several reservists had died in Ukraine only three weeks after being called up, Putin confirmed that training could last as few as 10 days and as many as 25.

Luzin, the military analyst, said Russia isn't able to train hundreds of thousands of men. "The army was not ready for mobilization. It never prepared for it," he said.

Putin has promised to finish the mobilization drive by November, when the regular fall draft is scheduled. Military experts and rights groups say enlistment offices and training camps can't process both at the same time, warning that the call-up may resume months later.

As of mid-October, 222,000 reservists have been recruited, Putin said. Whether it will be possible to enlist another 80,000 in the remaining two weeks is unclear.

To try to broaden the pool, the Russian parliament on Wednesday lifted a ban on mobilizing men who

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have been convicted of a grave criminal offense and who have been released from prison but whose convictions are still on the books.

Even though masses of Russian men are no longer fleeing the country and street protests have all but halted, there are still those resisting the effort.

Independent and opposition-leaning media have published instructions on how to avoid the call-up legally. Rights groups advise men not to sign the summons – which is required for it to be considered legally served – and not to go near enlistment offices.

Some men are seeking alternative civil service, a right that lawyers say is guaranteed by the constitution. Kirill Berezin, 27, responded to a call-up notice shoved under the door of his St. Petersburg apartment by going to an enlistment office to apply for the alternative civil service, but he was taken to a military unit anyway, according to his friend, Marina Tsyganova.

Berezin, who has since been sent to a training facility in southern Russia, submitted a document to his commanders that said he “can’t serve with weapons, can’t kill people and help people who do it” because it was “contrary to my conscience.”

Tsyganova told AP that she represented him in a St. Petersburg court, which last week rejected Berezin’s lawsuit, saying only regular conscripts under 27 are eligible for alternative civil service. His defense team plans to appeal, she said, and at the very least, she hoped he won’t be sent to Ukraine while the legal battle proceeds.

Once key, US newspaper editorial endorsements fade away

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Newspaper endorsements are fading away as prizes to be nabbed by political campaigns, the practice a victim of both the news industry’s troubles and the era’s bitter politics.

Earlier this month, newspapers controlled by Alden Global Capital said they would no longer endorse candidates for president, governor and the U.S. Senate. The newspapers in the hedge fund’s portfolio include dozens of dailies like the Chicago Tribune, New York Daily News, Boston Herald, Orlando Sentinel and San Jose Mercury News.

They’re not alone. The days when a prominent endorsement would quickly make it way into a campaign ad or voters would clip out an editorial to take into the voting booth seem destined for history.

“I do think you can make the argument in many cases that they’ve outlived their usefulness because of the increased polarization and the skepticism of media in general,” said Carol Hunter, executive editor of the Des Moines Register. “I don’t think that’s a healthy trend. But I think that’s reality.”

For all the effort that news organizations have made in crafting compelling endorsements, there have always been questions about whether those arguments have much influence, particularly in high-profile races.

At no time was that more evident than 2016, when 57 of the biggest newspapers endorsed Hillary Clinton and two picked Donald Trump, according to the American Presidency Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara. “None of the above,” with five, did better than the eventual president.

At a time when newspapers are scratching for readers, executives wonder whether they should bother. “Picking a candidate in this environment may alienate more readers than it persuades,” the New York Daily News wrote in announcing the new policy, which means the tabloid will sit out the governor’s race between Democrat Kathy Hochul and Republican Lee Zeldin.

Of the country’s 100 biggest newspapers by circulation, 92 endorsed a presidential candidate in 2008. By 2020, only 54 made a choice, according to UCSB. There’s no such reliable accounting in smaller races. But given that there are 2,500 fewer newspapers in the U.S. than there were in 2005, it stands to reason there are a lot fewer endorsements.

That absence “is yet another loss for grassroots democracy,” said Penelope Muse Abernathy, a Northwestern University professor who catalogs the decline in local news.

At a time of unpopularity for the press, many people don’t like being told what to do, said Poynter In-

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stitute media business analyst Rick Edmonds.

For the newspapers, "there's a little bit of 'don't rock the boat' there," Edmonds said. "There are ways to be respectful in a formal editorial. Make a point, but not in a condescending or dismissive way."

In an internal memo earlier this year, leaders of the Gannett newspaper chain noted that editorials were frequently cited as a reason people canceled subscriptions. Surveys said opinion pages were among their least-read content, and tied to problems in credibility and trust.

Some readers have difficulty distinguishing between news and opinion, or flat-out don't believe that a paper's editorial stance doesn't affect its news coverage, said Hunter, whose Iowa newspaper is owned by Gannett.

Gannett didn't ban political endorsements, but strongly advised its more than 220 newspapers to cut back on national opinion and focus on local issues. The Des Moines Register's opinion pages, for example, now run twice a week. The Register is being selective in its choices this fall, weighing in on the Iowa governor's race and a referendum on guns. But the state's top newspaper won't endorse in federal races, including U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley's bid for an eighth term.

The McClatchy newspaper chain also didn't ban presidential endorsements. But it said the newspapers would not make a choice in races where its editors could not interview candidates — effectively putting it out of the business of presidential endorsements.

One of its newspapers, the Charlotte Observer, said it would make endorsements in "competitive and notable" races where it could conduct extensive research and interviews, North Carolina Opinion Editor Peter St. Onge wrote in a column.

Many news organizations simply have fewer people to do the work. Sixty percent of journalists working at newspapers in the United States have lost jobs since 2005, Abernathy said.

Staffing is indeed an issue at the Register, Hunter said. The newspaper is unable to cover the state's federal delegation the way it used to, and wants to devote resources to local news, she said.

Many politicians view the dwindling state of endorsements with a collective shrug. News organizations were once seen as objective, but Republican consultant Alex Conant said many voters his candidates are trying to reach consider newspapers as partisan as politicians.

"Editorial boards used to be an important validator," Conant said. "But they're not that important any more."

When he was running Marco Rubio's presidential campaign in 2016, Conant encouraged his client to meet with the editorial board at the Register, the dominant newspaper in the crucial early caucus state of Iowa.

If Rubio were running for president now, Conant said, he wouldn't bother with it.

Hunter said it hasn't been decided whether the Register would endorse anyone running for president in the 2024 caucuses. A lot will depend on access to the candidates, she said.

In the book "News Hole," University of Virginia professor Jennifer Lawless and George Washington University's Daniel Hayes show how congressional candidates are getting much less news coverage than they used to.

That's also the case for many elections further down the ballot, for local judge or school board, where endorsements had been one of the few places to learn about candidates. In many cases, these races are now nationalized: Voters are left to evaluate candidates as extensions of national parties instead of as neighbors, Abernathy said.

Advertisements — often filled with disinformation — become the primary source of information, she said. By contrast, American Presidency Project co-director John Woolley said, newspaper endorsements "are a good thing in that they model how to think, and clarify to people what the big issues are."

"I still think that's the case," he said, "and I don't think we can get too much of that in our lives."

ESPN sells majority interest in iconic X Games brand

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

ESPN sold its majority stake in the X and Winter X Games on Wednesday, marking the end of a nearly three-decade chapter during which the network helped propel snowboarding, skateboarding and other

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action sports out of the fringe and into the mainstream.

Terms of the sale to MSP Sports Capital, a sports-focused private equity firm that also has stakes in McLaren Racing and a handful of European soccer teams, were not released. ESPN will remain a minority partner in the events and will continue to televise them.

This season's Winter X Games are scheduled for Jan. 27-29 in Aspen, Colorado.

Created during an era when ESPN still craved programming of all sorts (ESPN2 was originally designed specifically to appeal to a younger audience) the Winter X Games have long been a trendsetter in snowboarding. It carries a reputation for building the best halfpipes and slopestyle courses and finding new events (think, snowmobiling) and niches (think, Knuckle Huck) to keep action sports on the cutting edge.

Next to his three Olympic titles, Shaun White's 15 wins and 23 overall medals at the X and Winter X Games are his top sports achievement. Virtually all of the sport's biggest names — Chloe Kim, Jamie Anderson, Danny Davis, Marc McMorris and more — have won multiple titles in Aspen. Even in an era in which the Olympics overshadows most everything, hardly anyone argues that a great snowboarder's resume isn't complete without some kind of victory in Aspen.

The first X Games were held in 1995 — a summertime affair known as the "Extreme Games" that focused on skateboarding. Tony Hawk was among the gold medalists at the inaugural gathering. ESPN added a winter version in 1997 that eventually overshadowed its summer cousin in many ways, in large part thanks to snowboarding's inclusion in the Olympic program a year later.

Building courses, finding judges, dealing with athlete health and safety and scheduling concerts that, increasingly, became a major draw to the events takes a staff of more than 1,000. By selling the majority stake while remaining invested in the enterprise, ESPN will step away from that part of the endeavor but will still focus on its core mission — televising sports.

"We're proud of what we've created with our employees and the athletes over nearly 30 years of world-class X Games events and content," said Jimmy Pitaro, chairman of ESPN and Sports Content.

Stepping in will be MSP, which will take over the production of the contests, and is expected to reshape the digital offerings for an event that skews to a younger, content-craving audience.

"Our vision for the X Games tomorrow, next year and a decade from now is simple — we want to create a global action sports community of athletes and fans where we push the limits of competition and entertainment," said Steve Flisler, who becomes the new CEO of the X Games.

Flisler has been an executive at Twitch, a streaming service that is best known for its live streaming of video games, and also was in leadership positions at NBCUniversal.

He said the mission at the X Games is to create "a content engine that gives fans more ways to interact and get hooked to athlete stories."

"X Games athletes are competitors first but increasingly will become some of the most influential content creators across the globe," Flisler said.

Climate Questions: Who are the big emitters?

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Who made the global warming mess the world is now in? More than half of the world's heat-trapping gases comes from three places: The United States, China and Europe.

And it piles up quickly at more than 2.5 million pounds (1.1 million kilograms) per second.

Once heat trapping gases get into the atmosphere, the effects are global. Trapping the sun's energy doesn't stop at national borders. But scientists can track where the gases come from and thus who is responsible.

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.

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Even though carbon dioxide is light and invisible, the amount put in the air by the world's nations through the burning of coal, oil and gas and the making of cement adds up to massive numbers. Since 1959, the world has spewed 1.55 trillion tons (1.41 trillion metric tons) of carbon dioxide, according to Global Carbon Project, a group of scientists who track emissions and publish in peer review scientific journals.

In 2020, the last year for full national data, China spewed more than 11.7 billion tons of carbon dioxide (more than 10.6 billion metric tons), which is 30.6% of the globe's carbon dioxide emissions and more than twice as much carbon pollution as the United States which was the next highest emitter at 13.5%, scientists calculated. The European Union, when lumped together, comes in third at 7.5% followed by India's 7%.

But scientists say just looking at last year's emissions doesn't really show who caused the problem. That's because carbon dioxide stays in the atmosphere for as much as 200 years or longer. So historic emissions matter.

Looking at emissions from countries from 1959 through 2020, the furthest Global Carbon Project goes back and beyond which some data gets less reliable, the United States, not China, is the biggest carbon polluter and it isn't that close.

Since 1959, the United States has put more 334 billion tons (303 billion metric tons) of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, about 21.5% of the global total.

Those figures are based on how much carbon dioxide is spewed within national borders. But often people buy goods made in one country but consumed in another. When the Global Carbon Project looks at emissions based on where they are consumed they only go back as far as 1990 for historic emissions because of data limitations. The U.S. is still No. 1 in terms of emissions based on consumption with 19.2% of the historic pollution.

Countries with larger populations have more people so they often spew more carbon dioxide. So another way to look at emissions is to look at per capita emissions, although the air doesn't care how many people in a country when it comes to trapping heat. When carbon pollution per person is calculated new countries, mostly in the Middle East, jump to the top of the emissions list, which is based on 2019 figures by the World Bank.

This shows the "ethical dimensions of the problem," said University of Pennsylvania climate scientist Michael Mann. Poorer nations, such as those in Africa, and today's youth had the least to do with causing climate change but "are going to bear the brunt of this problem."

GOP eyes Indiana upset amid national push to diversify party

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

GARY, Ind. (AP) — After a lunchtime roundtable with Indiana Sen. Todd Young and Utah Rep. Burgess Owens, Republican congressional candidate Jennifer-Ruth Green suggested she appreciated "serving alongside my peers."

"Not my peers," she quickly corrected. "I misspoke."

Green isn't their congressional colleague yet, but her slip might not be all that premature.

Democrats have represented this industrial, union-friendly corner of northwest Indiana in Congress for nearly a century. But Democratic Rep. Frank Mrvan's reelection bid is in question as the party faces headwinds around the U.S. this year, buffeted by President Joe Biden's low approval ratings and high inflation.

The contours of this district, encompassing Gary, have been redrawn to be slightly more friendly to Republicans. Green, meanwhile, offers a compelling biography that includes 20-plus years of Air Force service. She's still active in the Indiana Air National Guard.

The GOP hopes Green will be at the forefront of a more diverse party in Washington. If elected, she would be the only Black Republican woman serving in the House — and just the second Black Republican woman in history elected to the chamber.

Republicans say they're breaking party records for diversity, with 80 women who are House incumbents or candidates on midterm ballots nationwide. The GOP also has 28 Black nominees, 33 Hispanic Americans, 13 Asian Americans and three American Indians running, according to the National Republican Campaign

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Committee, the party's House campaign arm.

And, of the 74 districts the committee is targeting for victory, 24 GOP candidates are military veterans. In all, 125 Republican House incumbents and challengers say they have military experience, compared to 61 Democrats, according to the Pew Research Center.

"I'm grateful that that's a demographic that, when you look at polling, everything works," Green, who was stationed in Iraq as a captain and identifies as both Black and Asian, said of her embodying backgrounds her party has prioritized.

But she added, "If I was who I was without any thoughtful leadership or character attached to it, I would not be effective in this role."

Minnesota Rep. Tom Emmer says that, when he became head of the National Republican Campaign Committee in 2018, he sought to empower members of Congress to recruit strong candidates in their states.

"The goal is not so much to diversify, as we wanted to identify candidates from communities (where) we want Republicans represented," Emmer said.

Even as the GOP attempts to diversify its field of candidates, the party's base is still overwhelmingly white. AP VoteCast, a survey of the national electorate, shows that 86% of Donald Trump's voters in the 2020 presidential election were white, compared to 63% of Joe Biden's voters. Nineteen percent of Biden voters were Black, while just 2% of Trump voters nationwide were.

In Indiana, the percentages of Black voter support for each were the same, 19% to 2% in favor of Biden.

This year's national slate for House Democrats is also far more diverse. Incumbents and challengers include 175 women, 97 Black nominees, 50 Hispanic nominees, 18 who are Asian or Pacific Islander and at least seven who are American Indian, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee says.

Democrats also accuse some prominent Republicans of promoting racism, including Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and others talking up the "great replacement theory."

Emmer balks at such criticism, saying Democrats want "to talk about anything but the issues that matter most."

He predicts victory for Jennifer-Ruth Green in Indiana, despite the district being Democratic since 1931. It elected Mrvan for the first time in 2020, and backed Biden by nearly 9 percentage points.

Though the new maps make the district slightly more Republican, a Green win would nonetheless be an early sign of a strong election night for the GOP.

Even Green supporters aren't sure that'll happen, however. While she was knocking on doors last weekend in Munster, near Indiana's border with Illinois, Susan and Bart Cashman spotted her and hurried over to chat. They're both Green supporters but cautioned that the area remains deeply blue.

"It's Lake County, so, we don't know," Susan Cashman said.

Their county includes Gary, where nearly 80% of residents are Black. The city, known as the hometown of Michael Jackson and his family, saw unemployment spike in the 1970s with the closing of many area steel mills. It has experienced rising violent crime more recently.

Green won a crowded Republican House primary as a Trump supporter and is a frequent Fox News guest. She said her campaign can keep the race with Mrvan tight by capturing 20% support from Black voters.

"We'll have the opportunity to tell people, 'Hey, this is where we are. Is it producing good opportunity for you?'" she said of her pitch to Black voters. "'Or do you want something different?'"

Former Utah Rep. Mia Love was elected in 2014 as the House's first Black Republican woman but lost four years later. The chamber now has just two Black Republican men, Florida Rep. Byron Donalds and Owens, who attended the Gary roundtable with Green.

"What Jennifer represents are American values," Owens said of the possibility of Green becoming the GOP's second Black female House member. "I think that actually really overcomes all the other stuff."

Darquia and Gordon Biffle co-own Big Daddy's barbeque in Gary and hosted the recent roundtable. They said inflation has increased the price of a case of fries from \$17 to as high as \$29.

"Even all the help we got, that all got flushed down the toilet as we tried to keep our workers," Gordon Biffle said of previous, Democrat-championed COVID-19 federal aid. "Whether it's Democrat or Republican, we've got to side with the people that's going to help us."

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Former Indiana state lawmaker Charlie Brown, a Democrat from Gary, noted that Green doesn't mention party affiliation on many of her campaign materials, which he said may "fool" some Black voters into supporting her without knowing she's a Republican.

Green's bumper stickers and yard signs feature military-looking star insignia and don't list party. Her fliers promise "battle-proven leadership," middle-class tax cuts and protections for Social Security and Medicare without mentioning the GOP.

Mrvan's yard signs are emblazoned with "Democrat," and he has been endorsed by area unions. During the United Steel Workers convention this summer, he pointed to outside conservative political groups spending big to oppose him in the district and said, "I'm under attack because I stand for working men and women."

"Any person can give a great speech for five minutes," Mrvan said. "It's in your deeds, it's in what you accomplish, is what matters."

Mrvan rallied Monday in Gary with House Majority Whip James Clyburn, the highest-ranking Black member of Congress. New York Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, chair of the House Democratic Caucus, has also visited the district.

Former state lawmaker Brown said the best way to prevent the seat from flipping is boosting Democratic turnout, but it's "pretty obvious that the Democratic machine even has some concerns for Mrvan" especially given "this factor involving an African-American female Republican."

"Usually, people yawn over that because they know this has been a Democratic stronghold for years and years," Brown said of the congressional election. "But, they've got to be aware, that this is somewhat different this time."

Today in History: October 27, Sadat and Begin win Nobel

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Oct. 27, the 300th day of 2022. There are 65 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 27, 2018, a gunman shot and killed 11 congregants and wounded six others at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue in the deadliest attack on Jews in U.S. history; authorities said the suspect, Robert Bowers, raged against Jews during and after the rampage. (Bowers, whose trial is now set for April 2023, has pleaded not guilty; prosecutors are seeking a death sentence.)

On this date:

In 1787, the first of the Federalist Papers, a series of essays calling for ratification of the United States Constitution, was published.

In 1904, the first rapid transit subway, the IRT, was inaugurated in New York City.

In 1914, author-poet Dylan Thomas was born in Swansea, Wales.

In 1941, the Chicago Daily Tribune dismissed the possibility of war with Japan, editorializing, "She cannot attack us. That is a military impossibility. Even our base at Hawaii is beyond the effective striking power of her fleet."

In 1954, U.S. Air Force Col. Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was promoted to brigadier general, the first Black officer to achieve that rank in the USAF.

In 1962, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, a U-2 reconnaissance aircraft was shot down while flying over Cuba, killing the pilot, U.S. Air Force Maj. Rudolf Anderson Jr.

In 1971, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was renamed the Republic of Zaire (but it went back to its previous name in 1997).

In 1978, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin (men-AH'-kem BAY'-gih) were named winners of the Nobel Peace Prize for their progress toward achieving a Middle East accord.

In 1995, a sniper killed one soldier and wounded 18 others at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. (Paratrooper William J. Kreutzer was convicted in the shootings, and condemned to death; the sentence was later com-

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muted to life in prison.)

In 1998, Hurricane Mitch cut through the western Caribbean, pummeling coastal Honduras and Belize; the storm caused several thousand deaths in Central America in the days that followed.

In 2004, the Boston Red Sox won their first World Series since 1918, sweeping the St. Louis Cardinals in Game 4, 3-0.

In 2020, Amy Coney Barrett was formally sworn as the Supreme Court's ninth justice, her oath administered in private by Chief Justice John Roberts.

Ten years ago: The eastern United States braced for high winds, torrential rains, power outages and even snow from Hurricane Sandy, which was headed north from the Caribbean toward a merger with two wintry weather systems.

Five years ago: Spain fired Catalonia's regional government and dissolved its parliament, after a Catalan declaration of independence that flouted the country's constitution. Golfer Tiger Woods pleaded guilty to reckless driving, resolving charges from an arrest in which he was found passed out in his car with prescription drugs and marijuana in his system. The White House said federal officials had played no role in selecting a tiny Montana company from Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's hometown for a \$300 million contract to help restore Puerto Rico's power grid.

One year ago: The Department of Homeland Security said U.S. immigration authorities would no longer make routine immigration arrests at schools, hospitals or a range of other "protected" areas. Investigators in New Mexico said there was "some complacency" in how weapons were handled on a movie set where Alec Baldwin accidentally shot and killed a cinematographer and wounded another person. The State Department said the United States had issued its first passport with an 'X' gender designation for a person who does not identify as male or female. Starbucks said it would raise its U.S. employees' pay and making other changes to improve working conditions in its stores; the company said all of its U.S. workers would earn at least \$15 __ and up to \$23 __ per hour by the following summer.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-comedian John Cleese is 83. Author Maxine Hong Kingston is 82. Country singer Lee Greenwood is 80. Rock musician Garry Tallent (Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band) is 73. Author Fran Lebowitz is 72. Rock musician K.K. Downing is 71. TV personality Jayne Kennedy is 71. Actor-director Roberto Benigni is 70. Actor Peter Firth is 69. Actor Robert Picardo is 69. World Golf Hall of Famer Patty Sheehan is 66. Singer Simon Le Bon is 64. Country musician Jerry Dale McFadden (The Mavericks) is 58. Internet news editor Matt Drudge is 56. Rock musician Jason Finn (Presidents of the United States of America) is 55. Actor Sean Holland is 54. Actor Channon Roe is 53. Author Anthony Doerr is 49. Actor Sheeri Rappaport is 45. Actor David Walton is 44. Violinist Vanessa-Mae is 44. Actor-singer Kelly Osbourne is 38. Actor Christine Evangelista is 36. Actor Bryan Craig is 31. Actor Troy Gentile is 29.