

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 1 of 86

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Groton band is superior](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- SearchLight: State spends \\$11.6 million to update equipment for South Dakota ambulance services](#)
- [4- SearchLight: Legislature protects us from dangers we didn't know existed](#)
- [5- SearchLight: Bernie Sanders confronts former Starbucks CEO over union-busting allegations](#)
- [7- SearchLight: U.S. Senate clears measure to undo Biden WOTUS rule on wetlands](#)
- [9- SearchLight: U.S. Senate in bipartisan vote repeals decades-old Iraq war authorizations](#)
- [11- SearchLight: Alabama senator blocking military promotions over abortion policy says he'll 'work it out'](#)
- [13- SearchLight: Postpartum Medicaid expansion is the first step to maternal health equity, experts say](#)
- [15- SearchLight: Here's where renewable power is increasing \(and where it's not\)](#)
- [17- Weather Pages](#)
- [23- Daily Devotional](#)
- [24- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [25- Subscription Form](#)
- [26- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [27- News from the Associated Press](#)



## Groton Community Calendar

### Thursday, March 30

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, green beans, grape juice, apple crisp, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.  
School Lunch: Goulash, corn.

### Friday, March 31

Senior Menu: Ham and bean soup, egg salad sandwich, fruit, cookie.  
School Breakfast: Biscuits and gravy.  
School Lunch: Fish fry spudsters.

### Saturday, April 1

Easter Egg Hunt at the Groton Area Elementary School, 10 a.m. (alternate date is April 8)  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: Questioning Confirmands, 5 p.m.  
Dueling Duo at Groton Legion, 6 p.m.  
State DI Tournament in Pierre

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

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

© 2023 Groton Daily Independent



## Groton Area Band is Superior

The Groton Area Band received a superior rating from all three judges at the large group music contest held yesterday in Aberdeen. The band is under the direction of Desiree Yeigh.

(Courtesy Photo)

## The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

### World in Brief

has been arrested in Russia on suspicion of espionage, according to Russian security authorities.

- At least 28 people have been killed after a passenger ferry caught fire in the Philippines last night, with at least 230 people rescued from the vessel.

- A group of conservatives handpicked by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis to oversee how Walt Disney operates have lashed out after discovering their predecessors signed an agreement that strips them of most of their powers.

- Credit Suisse violated a 2014 plea deal with U.S. Justice Department by continuing to help wealthy Americans evade taxes, the Senate Finance Committee has found.

- Twitter has suspended Marjorie Taylor Greene's congressional account for seven days after the Georgia Republican posted an image of a poster about a rally called "Trans Day of Vengeance" in the wake of the Nashville school shooting.

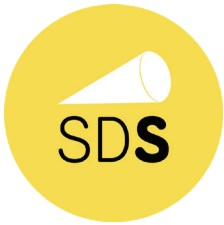
- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia will likely face hurdles in its reported plans to recruit as many as 400,000 troops this year to replenish its ranks as part of a major recruitment campaign, the British Ministry of Defense said.

- Several people are feared dead after two HH60 Blackhawk military helicopters crashed during a routine training mission at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

- Pope Francis is spending several days in a hospital in Rome, having been admitted for a respiratory infection after experiencing breathing difficulties.

- Turkey's Parliament is expected to ratify Finland's bid to join NATO, lifting the final hurdle for the Nordic nation to join the bloc.

- Senior Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### State spends \$11.6 million to update equipment for South Dakota ambulance services

**Statewide assessment, expected to finish by 2024, will seek solutions for EMS sustainability**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MARCH 29, 2023 4:23 PM**

Dozens of ambulance services in rural South Dakota have been operating for years with outdated or broken patient care tools because the agencies don't have enough money to purchase new equipment, but that's beginning to change thanks to an infusion of funding.

Gov. Kristi Noem and state lawmakers approved three initiatives in 2022 that allocated up to \$20 million for emergency medical services, hoping to bolster ambulance services in the state. The largest portion of the funds — \$11.6 million worth of LIFEPAK 15 patient monitors and defibrillators, along with training, distribution, and installation fees as well as eight years of support service and data integration — are starting to be distributed to ambulance services across the state, according to the state Department of Health.

That "means everything" to the EMS workers and volunteers of South Dakota, said Keith Sharisky, training section chief at Aberdeen Fire & Rescue and president of the South Dakota Emergency Medical Services Association.

"These are the people who are willing to risk everything to save your life," Sharisky said. "They're the ones who will come along at 2 a.m. and work to save your life. They deserve the proper equipment and training to do that."

The LIFEPAK tools, which are outdated or unusable in a significant number of districts, evaluate a patient's heart and vitals and are important for treating patients suffering cardiac arrest or a stroke before they arrive at the hospital.

Sharisky estimates the monitors come along on a call 90% of the time for Aberdeen Fire & Rescue and are actually used on 70% of the calls.

"By the time the ambulance gets the patient to the hospital, there's already a treatment plan in place because of these," Sharisky said. "The only thing that has to be truly verified is the name, date of birth, allergies, bloodwork and, boom, they go to work. Ten years ago, everything I just said would have taken a half hour to an hour at the hospital."

As of March 24, the state had received 75 devices. The state expects to receive the full order of 345 devices by the end of May, said Department of Health spokesperson Kieran Tate.

All 122 licensed ambulance services are eligible for the tools, but ambulance services that had malfunctioning devices, models that no longer transmit information, or outdated devices were eligible for the earliest round of distribution.

Day County Ambulance was one of the first services to receive the new monitors. The ambulance service, which was under a private company before the county took over the operation last December, owns five ambulances with a staff of 30 volunteers, said Chad Madsen, EMS director of the Day County Ambulance.

The service only had three devices at the start of the year: two "very old" LIFEPAK 15s and one LIFEPAK 12, which has been discontinued and is no longer serviceable by the manufacturer. All devices had limitations, and Madsen is hopeful the new equipment from the state will help with volunteer retention.

"There is a standard of care that needs to be given to patients, and it's hard to do that when you don't have the right equipment," Madsen said. "Unfortunately, with the cost to upgrade, it's hard to do that."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 4 of 86

Sharisky estimates that new LIFEPAKs cost \$44,000 per device, which is out of reach for many volunteer organizations that are simply trying to “justify keeping their ambulance able to start.”

Two other initiatives by the state include a \$1.7 million telemedicine program announced in November 2022 and a statewide assessment of ambulance services.

The “Telemedicine in Motion” program connects EMTs to nurses and health care professionals in hospitals to provide care to patients faster. The assessment will cost the state about \$186,500, according to Open SD, and is expected to provide a report by the end of 2023.

Madsen said the assessment is “a long time coming.”

The assessment will involve several listening sessions throughout the state with EMS district members and then a report identifying “strategic placement of EMS agencies” for response times within 30 minutes, best practices for sustainability and how to improve workforce staffing, recruitment and retention.

Up to 15 \$500,000 planning grants for services will be available after the assessment is completed.

“If we can just have an overall idea of what’s needed in South Dakota rather than a hundred opinions of what’s needed, that’ll make a big difference for citizens,” Sharisky said.

*Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She’s spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.*

## **COMMENTARY**

### **Legislature protects us from dangers we didn’t know existed**

**DANA HESS**

It’s amazing the amount of effort that the South Dakota Legislature puts into protecting citizens from things they didn’t even know were a threat. Lucky us.

Consider ranked choice voting. That’s all you’ll be able to do — consider it. You’ll never vote that way because the Legislature just outlawed it. Held up as one of many bills in the recent session designed to enhance “election integrity,” it seems that ranked choice voting had to be prohibited to preserve the sanctity of the state’s elections.

If you’re unfamiliar with ranked choice voting, it’s a method of selecting candidates that allows voters to rank their choices. In a three-candidate race, the voter would make a first choice, then a second, then a third. If no candidate receives 50% of the vote, the votes from the bottom candidate are split between the top two. It’s a method designed to avoid runoff elections. Sounds interesting, but, according to the Legislature, it had to be banned before anyone here could try it.

With the Democratic Party basically missing in action when it comes to finding enough candidates to fill out a ballot, the only place in South Dakota elections with multiple candidates is likely to be a Republican primary. It’s easy to wonder if there’s something about ranked choice voting that makes Republicans squeamish since they’re the ones who rammed it through the Legislature.

Lawmakers tried to protect us from transgender people by prohibiting certain medical and surgical procedures for minor patients. This bill prohibits sex change operations for minors and outlaws certain medications called puberty blockers. Legislators inserted themselves into the doctor’s exam room even though, during testimony on the bill, opponents were adamant that those kinds of surgeries don’t take place in South Dakota. Opponents also asked for more leeway to use puberty blockers, since they have other medical uses rather than just paving the way for a sex change.

On the topic of transgender youth, the Legislature has long taken on the role of school yard bully. Instead of lunch money, it wants to extort freedom from a small group that has a hard time defending itself. Don’t we all feel safer now?

There are times when the Legislature wants to protect us, but that pesky First Amendment gets in the way. That was the case with House Bill 1116, which would have prohibited the use of state resources to host lewd and lascivious acts. This bill was inspired by a drag show at South Dakota State University that was advertised as “kid friendly.”

Certainly, the exhibition at SDSU could have done with some better marketing. However, that's hardly an excuse to run out and make a new law. After various hearings and votes, that was the conclusion that lawmakers came to as well.

The bill cleared the House on a 60-10 vote but failed in the Senate Education Committee. An attempted smoke-out to bring the bill to the Senate floor failed, too.

It was ultimately hard to tell what lawmakers were protecting us from when they summarily killed Senate Bill 125. The bill would have prohibited schools from adding more immunizations to the list of shots that students are supposed to get in order to attend public school. The bill's sponsor, Sen. Julie Frye-Mueller, explained that the list of school immunizations could be expanded to include COVID shots.

You'll recall that Frye-Mueller's enthusiastic approach to her anti-vaccine beliefs led to her being censured by her Senate colleagues. After a lengthy hearing, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee killed the bill on a 7-0 vote. Instead of protecting us from rogue school districts that would force students to get COVID vaccinations, maybe the committee chose to protect us all from Sen. Frye-Mueller.

*Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.*

## Bernie Sanders confronts former Starbucks CEO over union-busting allegations

**BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MARCH 29, 2023 6:57 PM**

WASHINGTON — Democratic senators at a hearing on Wednesday grilled the former CEO of Starbucks over allegations that the giant coffee company intimidated, harassed and fired workers who tried to form unions.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, the Vermont independent and former presidential candidate who chairs the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, focused on Starbucks' pattern of anti-union actions, such as failing to negotiate in good faith union contracts for hundreds of stores.

Nearly 300 Starbucks stores have unionized since 2021 and been certified by the National Labor Relations Board, but the company has not ratified a contract with those unions.

Sanders accused Starbucks of stalling.

"What is outrageous to me is not only Starbucks' anti-union activities and their willingness to break the law, it is their calculated and intentional efforts to stall, stall and stall. They understand that the turnover rate at Starbucks is high," Sanders said in his opening statement.

"They understand that if workers do not see success in getting a contract and improved wages, they may get discouraged."

He pressed Starbucks founder and billionaire former CEO Howard Schultz about delays in ratifying union contracts, and asked him if he could commit that within two weeks, Starbucks would bargain and ratify its first union contract.

Schultz did not commit, but said he would continue to engage in good faith talks.

The National Labor Relations Board, an independent federal agency, has filed more than 80 complaints against Starbucks for violating federal labor law. Starbucks has about 9,300 company-operated stores.

Schultz agreed to appear before the committee after Sanders threatened to subpoena him. Schultz stepped down as the company's CEO in early March, but remains as a board member.

Schultz repeated to Democratic senators that Starbucks has not broken any laws, regardless of the finding from the NLRB and rulings from federal judges. He said that employees have the right to unionize, and he and Starbucks have the right to also have a preference, which "is to maintain a direct contact" with employees.

"These are allegations, and Starbucks has not broken the law," Schultz said. "We are confident that those (NLRB) allegations will be proven false."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 6 of 86

## **GOP defends Starbucks**

Republicans on the panel took issue with Sanders attacking a business, arguing that Starbucks has created thousands of jobs. They questioned whether the NLRB was truly non-partisan.

The top Republican on the committee, Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, said the hearing was a smear campaign against Schultz, and assumes that Starbucks is guilty.

"This is not a fair and impartial hearing," Cassidy said.

Sen. Mitt Romney, a Utah Republican, said the hearing was a conflict of interest, as Democrats tend to get campaign contributions from union groups.

Sen. Rand Paul, a Kentucky Republican, did not ask Schultz any questions but said he refused to partake in a "witch hunt that vilifies any American business, so count me out."

Schultz was the lone witness for the first panel, and two Starbucks employees and labor law experts comprised the second panel.

Ahead of the hearing, the Democratic committee staff released a report outlining instances of Starbucks refusing to bargain with unionized employees, and engaging in an "aggressive and illegal union-busting campaign."

Schultz said that unions have played an important role in American businesses, but in his opinion those unions were for companies that engaged in "nefarious" practices and "I can only say in my own company, based on the track record, we don't believe we are that company."

"Starbucks doesn't need a union," Schultz said.

In early March, NLRB administrative law Judge Michael Rosas found Starbucks guilty of retaliation against employees for unionizing, conducting illegal surveillance of workers who tried to unionize, reassigning union employees to other stores and over staffing stores ahead of votes to unionize, among other things.

The judge also ordered Starbucks to reinstate seven employees who were wrongfully terminated.

That case involves 32 unfair labor charges against Starbucks from August 2021 to July 2022 at 21 stores around Buffalo, New York, including the first Starbucks store to unionize.

Democrats relay constituent complaints

Sen. John Hickenlooper, a Colorado Democrat, said that he's spoken to Starbucks workers in his state who are disappointed with the company's reaction to employees who want to unionize.

Schultz said that he and the company "maintain a level of respect for everyone who wears the green apron."

Schultz pushed back against many Democrats who said they have heard from their constituents who work for Starbucks that the company is cutting work hours for employees who are supportive of unions, or not allowing employees to receive tips from credit cards.

Democratic Sens. Patty Murray of Washington state, Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico and Tina Smith of Minnesota said they have heard of anti-union activities from unionized Starbucks employees in their states.

Murray said that she's heard from several Starbucks workers in her state who say they have been denied abortion travel benefits.

"I do take offense," Schultz said to Murray, "when you bring up things that you've heard that are not true."

Smith said that Starbucks workers in her state have said that bargaining meetings have not lasted more than six minutes.

"That seems to me a failure to negotiate in good faith," Smith said.

Schultz said that Starbucks is against virtual or online bargaining meetings and only agrees to in-person bargaining meetings. He said those meetings are ongoing.

Bloomberg reported that NLRB lawyers found that Starbucks illegally refused to bargain on Zoom.

Lujan said that workers have had their hours cut so much that they've lost their health care benefits that Starbucks provides. In order for an employee to qualify for health care, Starbucks requires those employees to work roughly 20 hours a week.

Sen. Bob Casey, Democrat of Pennsylvania, took issue with Starbucks hiring the firm Littler Mendelson, which is the largest global employment and labor law firm that predominantly represents management.

"(It's) one of the largest and most notoriously union busting firms in the country," Casey said.

Casey said that under current federal law, Starbucks can write off those costs as a business expense. "Taxpayers are subsidizing union busting," Casey said.

Schultz said that Starbucks is following the tax law that Congress set up.

"I take offense with you categorizing me or Starbucks as a union buster, which is not true," Schultz said.

Schultz said that all Starbucks has done is defend itself and state that the company prefers to have a direct relationship with employees, rather than unions.

Sen. Tammy Baldwin, Democrat of Wisconsin, said that Starbucks employs more than 200,000 workers.

"You can't possibly have a direct relationship with all of them," she said.

Baldwin said that if Starbucks wanted a direct relationship with employees, a union could provide that.

Sen. Mike Braun, an Indiana Republican, said that unions are something that larger companies are going to grapple with and said one of the best ways to avoid unions is to make sure workers are compensated well and have good benefits. He asked Schultz what Starbucks employees make.

Schultz said that on average, workers make \$17 an hour, and a manager salary is about \$80,000.

"Even \$17 an hour, that's not a living wage," Braun said. "Any large corporation shouldn't necessarily be bragging about \$15 to \$20 wages. When you look at the typical structure of a large company, that should probably be \$20-plus."

## Starbucks employees testify

Sanders asked two of the witnesses who worked for Starbucks if the company had engaged in union-busting activities.

Maggie Carter, who is a Starbucks barista in Knoxville, Tennessee, said that workers had to sit through meetings from management from local branches in meetings that did not encourage unions.

She said one of the managers who came to the store to conduct a meeting "gave multiple partners COVID in this meeting, and we had to shut down for five days."

Jaysin Saxton of Augusta, Georgia, said he was fired for his involvement in organizing a union at his store.

He said that a management team arrived while they were unionizing to make their store more efficient.

"That making our store more efficient resulted in us constantly coming into work with everything moved around," he said. "So every single day, we had to relearn where everything was."

Sanders asked Saxton what he thought about Schultz denying anti-union tactics.

"They have definitely engaged in anti-union activities," Saxton said.

*Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.*

## U.S. Senate clears measure to undo Biden WOTUS rule on wetlands

### Thune and Rounds vote for repeal of regulatory expansion

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - MARCH 29, 2023 4:39 PM

WASHINGTON — Both Republican and Democratic members of the U.S. Senate voted Wednesday to repeal the Biden administration's intensely contested expansion of what qualifies as wetlands that the federal government can regulate.

The Senate approved a resolution, sponsored by West Virginia Republican Shelley Moore Capito, that would revoke the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's definition of Waters of the United States, or WOTUS, for the purposes of federal regulation under the Clean Water Act.

The Senate's 53-43 vote, with Democrats Joe Manchin III of West Virginia, Jon Tester of Montana and Catherine Cortez Masto and Jacky Rosen of Nevada, as well as independent Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, joining all Republicans voting to overturn the rule, sends the resolution to the desk of President Joe Biden. He has pledged to veto the measure.

The resolution required only a simple majority for adoption, rather than the Senate's usual 60-vote threshold, because Republicans forced a vote under the Congressional Review Act that allows for Congress to challenge recent executive branch decisions.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 8 of 86

The EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers proposed the updated WOTUS definition in late 2021 and the final rule went into effect March 20.

Senate Republicans attacked the rule Wednesday as an example of regulatory overreach that would cause confusion for farmers and other private landowners.

"The Biden Administration's latest version of the Waters of the United States is not some commonsense conservation measure," Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky said in a statement. "It's a radical power grab that would give federal bureaucrats sweeping control over nearly every piece of land that touches a pothole, ditch, or puddle."

Farmers' uncertainty about whether wetlands on their properties are subject to federal regulation would lead them simply to not farm, Capito, the ranking Republican on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said.

Environment and Public Works Chairman Tom Carper, a Delaware Democrat, disagreed, saying the Biden rule is clearer than prior attempts at defining WOTUS under the Obama and Trump administrations. The rule is also fairer to farmers, he said, exempting 53 million acres of farmland from regulation.

"After multiple administrations' failed attempts to create a lasting WOTUS definition, the 2023 Biden rule represents what I believe is a fair balance," Carper said. "The rule protects the nation's waters and wetlands and provides flexibility for those who need it. The Biden rule makes agricultural exemptions clearer and more consistent."

Rosen, one of the Democrats who supported a repeal, said the matter should be covered by state regulations and regional governance — with Southwestern states having unique concerns.

"We have strong water regulations, and we think it's a matter for regional governance," Rosen told States Newsroom after the vote. "With our arid and our drought conditions, some of these things just are different for us."

## Biden to veto

The U.S. House voted earlier this month to repeal the rule, but margins in both chambers would be insufficient to override Biden's expected veto.

Nine House Democrats joined Republicans in that chamber's March 10 vote. That group included Georgia Democrats David Scott and Sanford Bishop, who are the top Democrats on key agriculture committees, Capito noted on the Senate floor Wednesday.

If Biden did sign the resolution, it would reset the WOTUS regulation to before President Barack Obama's administration issued a rule in 2015. Federal agencies would be blocked from enacting a similarly broad definition in the future, but could propose a narrower one, Capito, the ranking Republican on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, said.

But in a March 6 statement of administrative policy, the White House said revoking the Biden definition would only add to the uncertainty around the issue.

"The increased uncertainty would threaten economic growth, including for agriculture, local economies, and downstream communities," the White House said. "Compared to the kind of uncertain, fragmented, and watered-down regulatory system that H.J. Res. 27 might compel, the final rule will secure substantial and valuable benefits each year."

## Another chapter

Federal water regulation, and the definition of WOTUS, has been a politically fraught issue for years. Responding to longstanding confusion over what qualified as a water of the United States, the EPA under Obama in 2015 issued a regulation that any water that eventually drained into a navigable waterway or drinking water supply could be regulated by federal authorities.

Under President Donald Trump in 2020, the EPA significantly narrowed that definition, issuing the "navigable waters" standard.

Biden reopened the issue and claimed, as environmental advocates hoped, a broader definition that allowed for more robust enforcement.

The rule is unpopular with farmers and others who say that construction and maintenance on private



property is much more difficult and time-consuming when permission from the federal government must be granted.

The Obama-era rule is being challenged by an Idaho couple at the U.S. Supreme Court, which is expected to rule on the case before the court adjourns in June.

*Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.*

## U.S. Senate in bipartisan vote repeals decades-old Iraq war authorizations

**Thune and Rounds both vote to keep authorizations in place**

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MARCH 29, 2023 2:06 PM**

WASHINGTON — U.S. senators revoked their approval for the Gulf and Iraq wars on Wednesday, taking a broadly bipartisan vote to repeal the Authorizations for Use of Military Force that have stayed on the books years after the two wars ended.

The 66-30 vote sends the measure to the U.S. House, where Speaker Kevin McCarthy remains lukewarm on the repeal effort, though he's indicated a similar bill could move through the Foreign Affairs Committee and to the floor. Eighteen Republicans joined Democrats and independents in the Senate vote.

South Dakota's Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds, both Republicans, voted against the repeal of the authorizations.

President Joe Biden backs efforts to repeal the 1991 authorization for the use of military force in the Gulf War and the 2002 authorization against Iraq, and would likely sign the legislation if lawmakers reach a final bipartisan agreement.

The Senate vote to sunset the two Iraq War military authorizations doesn't repeal a third and separate 2001 AUMF that Congress passed following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. That military authorization, originally used for the war in Afghanistan, has since been used by several presidents to justify counterterrorism military operations around the world.

McCarthy, a California Republican, said last week he supports repealing the Iraq War AUMF and expects a bill to do just that will move through the House Committee on Foreign Affairs before heading to the floor in that chamber.

"I was not here to vote on either of the creation of those, but you're 20 years into this now. I think it's very healthy that we take this up and look at this," McCarthy said from the House Republican retreat in Florida.

McCarthy said he supports keeping the 2001 authorization for the global war on terror in place.

"I support keeping the worldwide AUMF, so there's action that can be taken if there's a terrorist anywhere in the world. But Iraq, we're 20 years into it, I don't have a problem repealing that," McCarthy said.

That's a change from June 2021 when McCarthy voted against a bill that would have repealed the 2002 Iraq war AUMF. The House, then controlled by Democrats, passed the measure following a 268-161 vote, but the Senate never took up the bill.

### McConnell opposed

The Republican-controlled House advancing the measure could be politically tricky with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, vehemently opposed to Congress repealing the Iraq military authorizations over concerns about Iran and Middle East foreign policy.

"While the Senate's been engaged in this abstract, theoretical debate about rolling back American power, Iran has continued its deadly attacks on us. Just last week a suspected Iranian attack killed one American and wounded six more in Syria," McConnell said in a written statement. "Some in America may think our war against terrorism is sunset, but clearly the terrorists do not agree."

Despite McConnell's objections, Senate debate on the measure this week was broadly bipartisan.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 10 of 86

Republican Sen. Todd Young of Indiana, an original co-sponsor, said during floor debate Wednesday that Iraq is no longer the enemy it was 20 years ago, but "a strategic partner, an ally in advancing stability across the Middle East."

"A lot has changed in the last 20 years and yet according to our laws today we are still at war with Iraq," Young said. "This isn't just the result of an oversight, it's an intentional abdication of this body of its constitutional role in America's national security."

Allowing the military authorizations to stay in place, Young contended, would be a "strategic mistake," in part because Iran is trying to establish a path to the Mediterranean Sea that would run through Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

"Iraq cannot follow this path," Young said. "It cannot become a satellite of Iran. And Iran cannot be permitted unrestricted access across the region."

Virginia Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine, who sponsored the bill, noted during debate that 4,500 Americans died during the Iraq war and more than 31,000 troops were wounded. He also noted that hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians were killed.

Kaine said that motivations for the war — specifically that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction — proved not to be true.

Kaine argued that Congress rushed into authorizing military action in Iraq, noting the 2002 AUMF moved through the House in a week and was pending before the Senate for three days before it was approved.

"The Senate voted to go to war, a war that has had massive consequences, with a total of three days of analysis," Kaine said, later noting he believes that many of the challenges the United States faced during the war began with that rush.

"I am very dedicated to the proposition — and I have been since I came here — that the United States and the Article 1 branch of Congress, we should never be pushed into a war and we should never be rushed into a war," Kaine said.

## **GOP senators in support**

Republican Sens. Mike Braun of Indiana, Ted Budd of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, Susan Collins of Maine, Kevin Cramer of North Dakota, Steve Daines of Montana, Chuck Grassley of Iowa, Josh Hawley of Missouri, John Hoeven of North Dakota, Mike Lee of Utah, Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming, Roger Marshall and Jerry Moran of Kansas, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Rand Paul of Kentucky, Eric Schmitt of Missouri, J.D. Vance of Ohio and Young of Indiana voted to pass the measure along with Democrats.

Senators rejected 11 amendments over the last week.

Senators voted 9-86 to reject an amendment from Kentucky Republican Sen. Rand Paul that would have repealed the 2001 AUMF that Congress passed following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

The Senate voted 36-60 to reject an amendment from South Carolina GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham that would have tweaked the 2002 Iraq military authorization to apply it to "Iranian-backed militias operating in Iraq."

Senators voted 19-76 to reject an amendment from Utah Republican Sen. Mike Lee that would have ended future military force authorizations after two years.

Florida Republican Sen. Marco Rubio's amendment was rejected following a 32-63 vote. It would have delayed repeal until 30 days after Biden certifies that "Iran has stopped providing financial, technical, and material support to terrorist organizations and other violent groups in Iraq and Syria."

Senators voted 41-52 to reject Idaho Republican Sen. Jim Risch's amendment that would have delayed repeal until 30 days after the U.S. secretary of defense certifies that ending the military authorization would not weaken the United States' legal authority to detain terrorists and litigate. Kaine said the amendment was unnecessary because "there are no military activities, including a single detention, where we are using the 2002 AUMF as justification."

Senators rejected an amendment from Wisconsin Republican Sen. Ron Johnson that would have required any pandemic preparedness plan from the World Health Organization be subject to two-thirds approval of the U.S. Senate. The vote was 47-49.

Nebraska Republican Sen. Pete Ricketts' amendment was rejected following a 31-65 vote. The proposal would have delayed the repeal until 30 days after the president certifies that "Iraq, Israel, and other United States partners and allies in the region have been meaningfully consulted on the ramifications of repeal."

Senators voted 41-55 to reject Texas GOP Sen. Ted Cruz's amendment that would have established the 2002 Iraq AUMF isn't required for the president to use military force to counter Iran, including taking "actions for the purpose of ending Iran's escalation of attacks on, and threats to, United States interests."

Alaska Republican Sen. Dan Sullivan's amendment was rejected following a 38-57 vote. It would have delayed repeal until 30 days after the director of national intelligence certifies that repeal won't "degrade the effectiveness of United States-led deterrence against Iranian aggression" and added language that nothing in the bill would "restrict the ability of the United States to respond rapidly and decisively to threats by the Government of Iran or its proxy forces."

Senators voted 33-62 to reject an amendment from Florida GOP Sen. Rick Scott that would have created a 12-member Joint Select Committee on Afghanistan, with each of the congressional leaders nominating three lawmakers to the panel. The committee would have been tasked with issuing a report on the 2021 withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan following two decades of war.

The Senate voted 26-68 to reject Missouri Republican Sen. Josh Hawley's amendment, which would have established a special Inspector General for Ukraine assistance.

The Senate passed a key procedural hurdle earlier this month when lawmakers voted 68-27 to advance the bill toward final passage, though behind-the-scenes debate about amendment debate slowed passage until Wednesday.

*Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.*

## Alabama senator blocking military promotions over abortion policy says he'll 'work it out'

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MARCH 29, 2023 11:23 AM**

WASHINGTON — Sen. Tommy Tuberville insisted he will smooth things over with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin after the top Pentagon official said Tuesday that the Alabama senator's continued hold on 160 defense nominees will affect U.S. military readiness.

"We're gonna work it out," Tuberville told States Newsroom on his way to the Senate floor Tuesday afternoon, following a hearing with Austin.

The first-term Republican has been blocking the military promotions as a protest against the Defense Department's policy, announced in February, that grants service members leave and travel allowances for "non-covered reproductive health care," including abortion procedures.

"I'm holding DoD nominations because the secretary of Defense is trying to push through a massive expansion of taxpayer-subsidized abortions — without going through this body. Without going through Congress," Tuberville said on the Senate floor on March 8.

"Three months ago, I informed Secretary Austin that if he tried to turn the DoD into an abortion travel agency, I would place a hold on all civilian, flag, and general officer nominees."

Tuberville argues that annually passed restrictions by Congress prohibiting federal funding for abortion procedures, except in cases of rape, incest and life-threatening pregnancies, prevent the Defense Department from giving leave or travel allowances for members seeking the procedure.

On Tuesday, Austin testified during a budget hearing before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, on which Tuberville sits. The two exchanged comments about the stalled nominations.

Chair Jack Reed, a Rhode Island Democrat, asked about the implications of delayed nominations, which include high ranking positions in the Army, Marine Corps and Navy, and dozens of three- and four-star promotions.

"The effects are absolutely critical in terms of the impact on the force," Austin replied. "This is one of

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 12 of 86

the busiest and most complex times we've seen lately. We see a war, the largest conflict in Europe since World War II. We see an aggressive China operating in the Indo-Pacific. We see Iranian-backed elements going after our troops. And there are a number of things happening globally that indicate we could be in a contest on any given day."

"Not approving the recommendation for promotions actually creates a ripple effect through the force that makes us far less ready than we need to be."

Austin described the effects as "cumulative," creating uncertainty for families regarding which duty station they'll report to and where children will enroll in school.

"I have never in my almost three decades here seen so many key military positions coming up for replacement," Reed said.

Military promotions are generally a routine exercise for the Senate, which often approves them in large groups.

"If we cannot resolve this situation, we will be in many respects leaderless in a time of great conflict. I would hope we would expedite and move quickly on this front," Reed continued.

## Democrats blast Tuberville

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York and other Democratic senators have criticized Tuberville's blanket hold on the nominations.

A hold can be used by a senator to seek more information or object to certain matters, usually in the form of a letter outlining the lawmaker's policy views or scheduling concerns. Ultimately Senate leadership decides when and how long to honor a hold.

Colorado's Sen. Michael Bennet argued in an op-ed published by CNN Tuesday that the U.S. Supreme Court's June 2022 *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision negatively affects military women who don't get to choose where to live.

*Dobbs* overturned *Roe v. Wade*, which granted federal protections for abortions. In the absence of that federal right, some states rushed to ban or tightly restrict the practice following the SCOTUS decision.

Roughly 80,000 female service members are stationed in locations without or severely restricted access to non-covered reproductive health care, like elective abortions, according to a September 2022 report published by the think tank RAND.

"The number of women enlisting in the military has grown significantly over time. They now represent roughly a fifth of the total force and over a third of our civilian workforce. But when women volunteer for active duty, they, like any other service member, don't choose where to serve. The Pentagon decides that," Bennet argued in the op-ed.

"Before *Dobbs*, our troops had some assurance that, wherever the Pentagon sent them, they would at least have minimal access to reproductive care as a protected constitutional right. Not anymore. The Supreme Court stripped away that right, without grappling in its written opinion with the harm it would inflict on service women in states with little or no access to reproductive care," wrote Bennet, who sits on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the Committee on Rules and Administration, among other assignments.

Tuberville told States Newsroom on Tuesday that he felt he "had a good conversation today in the hearing" with Austin.

"I put out my two cents worth, and he put his two cents worth in. Well, we'll start communicating. I talked to him on the phone a couple days ago, so it's good to have conversations. Couldn't get anybody to visit with me, so you can't work out problems," Tuberville said.

When asked if he would pursue further conversations, Tuberville replied "Oh, yeah. No, we're gonna work this out."

Tuberville declined to provide details about his plans for solving the situation. When asked if he would negotiate or move on his position, he replied "not yet."

"We're still gonna work it out," he repeated.

*Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*

## Postpartum Medicaid expansion is the first step to maternal health equity, experts say

BY: ELISHA BROWN - MARCH 29, 2023 11:14 AM

Arkansas has the highest maternal mortality rate in the United States: 43.5 deaths from 2018 to 2021 for every 100,000 live births, according to the latest federal data. But the state only extends postpartum Medicaid to 60 days after childbirth.

A bill by Arkansas Rep. Aaron Pilkington, R-Knoxville, aims to change that and would seek to continue Medicaid coverage postpartum for a full year. The House Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee heard the measure Tuesday, but Pilkington told States Newsroom he is optimistic the bill will become law.

Extending health care benefits for low-income people with infants could reduce maternal mortality rates in the U.S., several reproductive health experts told States Newsroom. But researchers also said it's too soon to determine if those extensions will lessen maternal deaths in a nation where 13 states ban abortions with few exceptions, and the laws are so vaguely written in some cases that medical professionals are wary of providing life-saving health care.

What's clear is that U.S. maternal mortality rates keep growing, an anomaly compared to other economically similar countries. In 2021, the nation's rate was 32.9 deaths per 100,000 live births, up from 23.8 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2019, according to data released this month from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics. In other words, 1,205 women died of maternal causes in the U.S. during the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, up from 861 maternal deaths in 2020 and 754 maternal deaths in 2019. The CDC categorizes a death as maternal if it occurs during pregnancy, childbirth or up to 42 days postpartum.

The CDC data also illuminates racial disparities: The maternal mortality rate for Black women was 69.9 per 100,000 live births, 2.6 times the rate for non-Hispanic white women, which was 26.6 in 2021. The maternal mortality rate for Hispanic women that year was 28.

"These are sad and unfortunate, but not surprising," said Dr. Maeve Wallace, a reproductive epidemiologist at Tulane University's Mary Amelia Center for Women's Health Equity Research in Louisiana.

"From what we know about the coronavirus pandemic, we probably could've seen that maternal health would've been impacted negatively, both directly by the virus and indirectly by all of the social and economic disruptions that it caused, and especially how uneven the economic impact was across the population, really exacerbating what already was long-standing and entrenched racial inequities in maternal health," Wallace said.

### Some states weigh expansion

Under the federal coronavirus pandemic emergency plan that President Joe Biden signed into law in March 2021, states were allowed to apply for 12-month postpartum Medicaid coverage. As of March 23, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has approved expansions for 30 states and Washington, D.C.

Nine states are waiting on approval from the federal agency: Arizona, Delaware, Mississippi, New York, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Utah and Wyoming.

Mississippi is the latest state to expand Medicaid from the federally mandated 60 days to 12 months postpartum, according to Mississippi Today. Republican Gov. Tate Reeves signed a bill into law this month after overcoming his own skepticism of the proposal. For years, the state Senate has supported postpartum Medicaid expansion, only for the initiative to stall in the state House, as Mississippi Today has chronicled.

Of the 11 states that have yet to expand Medicaid coverage — Alaska, Arkansas, Idaho, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, Texas and Wisconsin — to a year for new mothers, eight have pending legislation that would extend coverage from 60 days to 12 months, according to a States Newsroom analysis.

The Missouri Senate cleared postpartum Medicaid expansion earlier this month. In Montana, the House recently voted to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage from 60 days to a year as an amendment tucked in the state budget bill; the proposal is pending in the upper chamber. Three states that have relatively

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 14 of 86

wide abortion access, Alaska, Nevada and New Hampshire, have also introduced related bills this year.

In Texas, Democratic Rep. Toni Rose has sponsored a bill to extend postpartum coverage to a year, the Texas Tribune reports. The House Health Care Reform Select Committee heard the bill this month. In February, House Speaker Dade Phelan, a Republican, indicated support for the extension, along with repealing taxes on diapers and menstrual products. (The Texas House approved the latter proposal Tuesday.)

As of mid-March, new mothers in Wisconsin would be eligible for Medicaid for three months postpartum upon federal approval; a 12-month expansion bill is pending in the Legislature. The states with near-total abortion bans typically have higher maternal mortality rates, but Wisconsin is an outlier: In 2021, its rate was 11.6 maternal deaths, one of the lowest rates in the country, according to CDC data. But the 2021 data predates the bans enacted after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to an abortion last year.

Expansion bills in Idaho, Iowa and Nebraska have either faltered or appear unlikely to pass.

## **Why postpartum Medicaid matters post-Dobbs**

People in states with abortion bans are up to three times more likely to die during pregnancy, childbirth or postpartum, according to a Gender Equity Policy Institute report released in January.

Postpartum Medicaid expansion for new mothers is a first step to maternal health equity, not a catch-all solution, said Maggie Clark, program director at the Georgetown University Center for Women and Families in Washington, D.C.

"While promising, a longer coverage period does not itself lead to improved outcomes," Clark wrote in a brief released last week. "States should take a closer look at the benefit and payment levers available in Medicaid to ensure that the longer coverage period translates to better access to needed care for mothers and infants in the postpartum year."

Maternal health care needs an overhaul, Clark said in an interview. Childbirth can lead to myriad health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, substance abuse and mental health issues: think depression, anxiety or psychosis, Clark said. Short-term Medicaid coverage can exacerbate health problems for new mothers, she said.

"When someone loses their health coverage when they're dealing with all of that, that means they lose access to prescriptions, they lose access to the doctor that's supporting them through that time," Clark said.

Lawmakers in Congress have taken steps to address the maternal death crisis. North Carolina Rep. Alma Adams and Illinois Rep. Lauren Underwood, both Democrats, will reintroduce the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act this session, according to Sam Spencer, a spokesperson for Adams.

"Demographics should not determine your destiny, but it's going to take addressing social determinants of health – from poverty to education to transportation and environmental factors – to save lives," Adams said in a statement to States Newsroom. She added that the bill is nonpartisan.

The collection of bills aim to overhaul the perinatal workforce, improve data collection related to maternal health and provide funding to reproductive health community-based organizations, among other proposals. In 2021, President Joe Biden signed a "momnibus" bill into law that gave \$15 million to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs to support maternal health, The 19th reported.

U.S. Sens. Tim Kaine, D-Va., and Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, reintroduced the Mothers and Newborns Success Act, a related bill that aims to increase data collection of maternal and infant health issues, last week.

Reproductive health experts across the country, especially those in the South, a region with high maternal mortality rates and the most abortion bans, agreed that the full spectrum of maternal health care needs improvement.

"Increasing the number of perinatal health care workers who can look like the people they're serving is definitely a solution so that they can improve maternal health outcomes because they can improve culturally congruent care," said Laneceya Russ, the Louisiana-based executive director of March for Moms, a national maternal health advocacy group.

For Wallace, the Tulane epidemiologist, "it's been disturbing to watch the closure of birthing centers and other maternity care opportunities in rural places across the country." Repealing collaborative practice

agreements between physicians and assisting health care providers, such as nurse practitioners, could help expand midwifery care and address staff shortages in maternity care, Wallace said.

Dr. Natalie Hernandez, executive director of the Morehouse School for Medicine's Center for Maternal Health Equity in Georgia, recently examined the effects of COVID-19 on maternal health outcomes. Like Russ, she agreed diversifying the perinatal workforce, along with increasing doula care in communities of color – for example, some states are moving to create doula Medicaid reimbursement programs – could also help improve birth outcomes.

"A lot of solutions have been focused on the clinical aspects, but we need to ensure we're adjusting those nonclinical causes – the majority of what contributes to our health status is not just access to care, but it's really the social determinants of health," she said. "Then we'll get better care."

*Kelcie Moseley-Morris contributed reporting.*

*Elisha Brown is the Reproductive Rights Today newsletter author at States Newsroom. She is based in Durham, North Carolina, where she previously worked as a reporter covering reproductive rights, policy, and inequality for Facing South. Her work has appeared in The New York Times, The Daily Beast, The Atlantic, and Vox. She attended American University in Washington, D.C. and was raised in South Carolina.*

## Here's where renewable power is increasing (and where it's not)

**BY: ROBERT ZULLO - MARCH 29, 2023 7:00 AM**

Despite supply-chain problems amid the lingering effects of the pandemic, 2022 saw major increases in solar and wind power in the United States, though that growth varied by state, according to a report released last month by a nonprofit focused on climate change.

Nationally, electricity generated from solar and wind grew 16% from 2021, with wind accounting for about 74% of that, per Climate Central's "WeatherPower Year in Review: 2022" report.

The New Jersey-based group analyzed data from its WeatherPower tool, which combines data on installed solar and wind facilities with observed and forecast weather information to create predictions of daily wind and solar generation by state, county, media market or congressional district in the lower 48 states. Alaska and Hawaii were not included because of data limitations, the report says. (However, Yale's Climate Connections broke down 2021 numbers on where electricity generated in all 50 states comes from).

President Joe Biden's administration has set a goal of a 100% clean electric grid by 2035 and net zero carbon emissions for the entire U.S. economy by 2050. As of November, 36 states and the District of Columbia have established a renewable energy goal or a renewable portfolio standard, which generally requires electric suppliers to provide customers a minimum share of electricity from renewable sources.

"We wanted to help people understand how much renewable energy is being used, how it has grown and how much more it needs to grow in order to help meet climate goals," said Jen Brady, manager of analysis and production for Climate Central. "In particular we discussed the climate goal of reaching net-zero emissions in the U.S."

If historic trends continue, Brady said, the U.S. will fall short of those goals, though taking into account data from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on approved renewable projects, "we are seeing an increase in renewables that could lead us to satisfying net-zero goals."

The electric power sector accounts for about a third of U.S. carbon emissions, which makes decarbonizing power production key to mitigating the effects of climate change. Though U.S. energy-related carbon emissions increased in 2021 by about 6% over 2020, that followed "a rise in economic activity and energy consumption once the initial economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic began to subside," according to the U.S. EIA. Despite the increase, 2021 emissions were still lower than 2019 by about 5%, and 19% lower than the 2007 historical peak, the EIA said.

Solar and wind are expected to together account for 16% of total U.S. electric power generation in 2023, up from 14% in 2022, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. All told, the Climate Central report says, the 683,130 gigawatt hours generated across the country from wind and solar were enough to power 64 million average American households, defined as a residential customer who uses

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 16 of 86

about 886 kilowatt hours per month.

But there can be big differences as far as what's being built in individual states. And to understand the Climate Central findings, it's crucial to know two different electric industry terms: capacity and generation. Capacity, measured in megawatts, is a measure of the maximum output of a given electric generation plant under optimal conditions, like strong winds or full sun. Generation, measured in megawatt hours, is how much electricity is actually produced.

Texas led the nation in both wind capacity (nearly 37,400 megawatts) as well as actual generation (nearly 130 million megawatt hours). California led the nation in installed solar capacity (about 28,500 megawatts) and solar generation (nearly 59 million megawatt hours). Texas was also second place in both categories in solar, though Florida, North Carolina and Arizona were also in the top five for solar generation. In wind capacity and generation, Iowa and Oklahoma followed Texas.

In a different analysis, the American Clean Power Association, an industry group, said 18 states installed more wind, solar or battery storage in 2022 than in 2021. Six states that installed no new capacity in 2021 — Delaware, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Hampshire and Tennessee — installed new capacity in 2022, the group said, noting that Mississippi, Washington and Hawaii saw the highest growth in annual installations from 2021 to 2022. The association said the top states for renewable projects in development are, from biggest to smallest, Texas, California, New York, Indiana, Virginia, Arizona, Illinois, Nevada, Ohio and New Jersey.

"Certain locations are more suitable to certain types of renewable energy," said Brady. "With the exception of offshore wind, which may increase wind power in smaller states along the East Coast, it is reasonable to expect places with more open land (and more wind) to install more wind turbines. Solar is a bit more universal, but locations still may weigh its suitability versus using more wind power, for example."

To achieve 100% clean energy by 2035, solar and wind need to provide 60% to 80% of U.S. electric generation, according to a least-cost scenario modeled by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. Big transmission upgrades are also required, mostly to bring electricity from wind-rich but sparsely populated areas to big urban and suburban areas with large electric demand.

"To achieve those levels would require rapid and sustained growth in installations of solar and wind generation capacity," the report says.

In 2022, wind provided a little more than 10% of U.S. electricity, while solar supplied 3.4%, per the EIA.

## Top 10 states for wind and solar capacity in 2022

\*Does not include Alaska or Hawaii

### Solar

California 28,493 megawatts  
Texas 12,702 megawatts  
Florida 7,170 megawatts  
North Carolina 6,242 megawatts  
Arizona 4,841 megawatts  
Nevada 4,210 megawatts  
Georgia 3,323 megawatts  
Virginia 3,260 megawatts  
New Jersey 2,954 megawatts  
Massachusetts 2,731 megawatts

### Wind

Texas 37,365 megawatts  
Iowa 12,259 megawatts  
Oklahoma 11,715 megawatts  
Kansas 8,261 megawatts  
Illinois 7,057 megawatts  
California 6,269 megawatts  
Colorado 5,177 megawatts  
Minnesota 4,710 megawatts  
New Mexico 4,410 megawatts  
North Dakota 4,333 megawatts

— Source: Climate Central, "WeatherPower Year in Review: 2022"

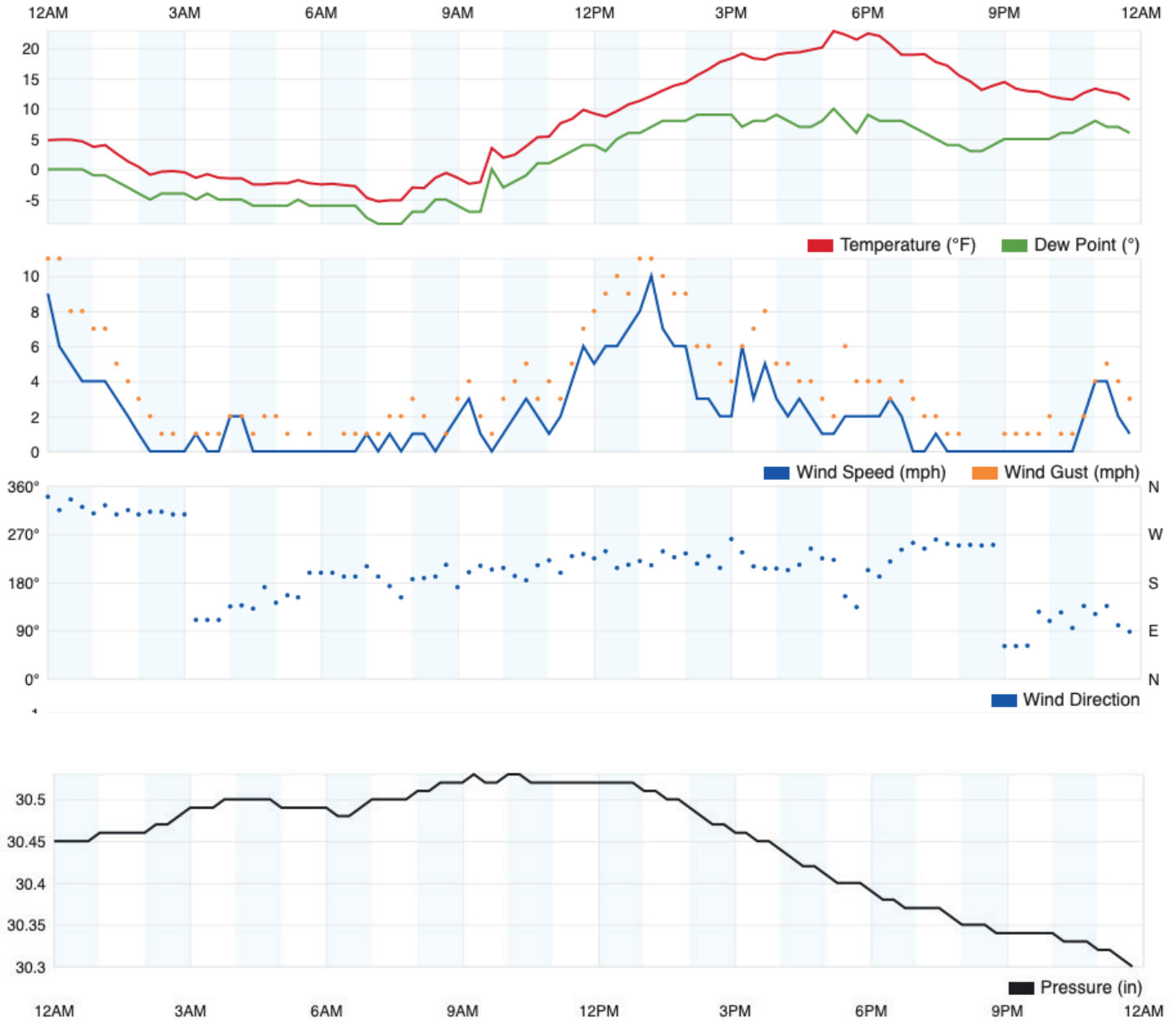
*Robert Zullo is a national energy reporter based in southern Illinois focusing on renewable power and the electric grid. Robert joined States Newsroom in 2018 as the founding editor of the Virginia Mercury. Before that, he spent 13 years as a reporter and editor at newspapers in Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Louisiana. He has a bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. He grew up in Miami, Fla., and central New Jersey.*



# Groton Daily Independent








Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 17 of 86

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 18 of 86

Today	Tonight	Friday		Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
							
20%	40% 40%	100% 100%	60% → 20%				
Mostly Cloudy then Slight Chance Drizzle/Freezing Drizzle	Chance Freezing Drizzle then Chance Wintry Mix and Blustery	Wintry Mix and Blowing Snow	Heavy Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow	Sunny	Partly Cloudy and Breezy	Mostly Sunny	
High: 32 °F	Low: 29 °F	High: 29 °F	Low: 3 °F	High: 30 °F	Low: 19 °F	High: 37 °F	

## Significant Winter Storm Friday

March 30, 2023 4:43 AM

Drizzle initially this evening changing to Blizzard conditions Friday

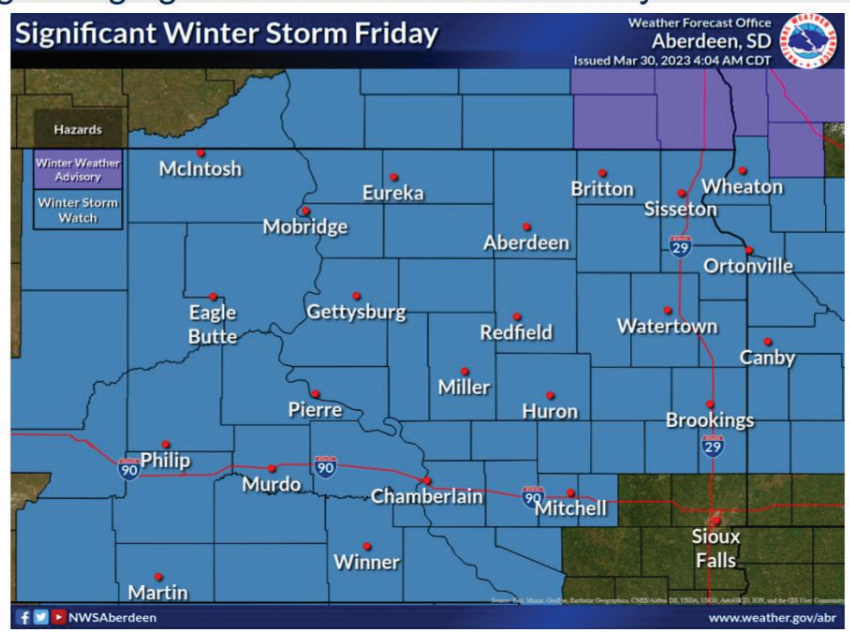
### Key Messages

- **This afternoon & evening:** Initial development of drizzle/freezing drizzle
- **Friday Morning:** Freezing drizzle possible. Could be a weak thunderstorm or two in eastern SD/western MN
- **Friday Mid-Day into Evening:** Freezing drizzle becomes heavy snow with blizzard conditions

### Forecast Changes

- New: Winter Storm Watch for Blizzard conditions expanded to include north central SD

Next update Thursday afternoon



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

A Winter Storm Watch for Blizzard conditions remains in effect for much of the area tonight into Friday night. The storm will start as drizzle and freezing drizzle but shift to snow Friday morning with winds on the increase resulting in widespread blizzard conditions through the afternoon and evening. Slow improvement is expected late Friday into early Saturday morning.

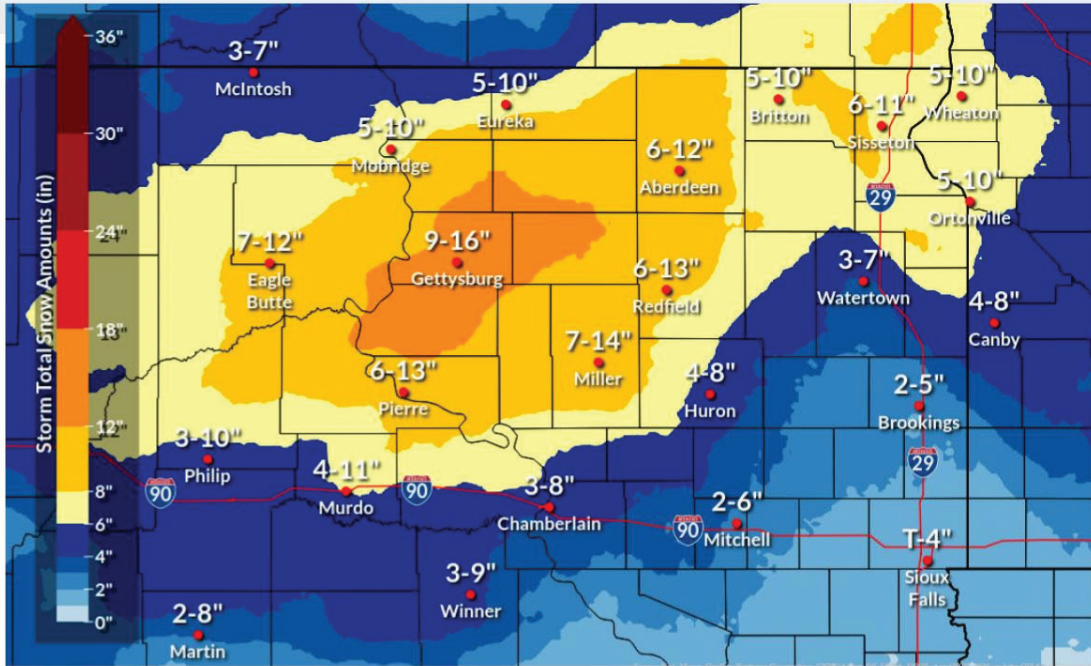
# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 19 of 86



## Snow Accumulation tonight through Friday night

March 30, 2023  
4:48 AM



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD



## Precipitation Type - Intensity - Timing

March 30, 2023  
4:49 AM

	Weather Forecast																
	3/30 Thu				3/31 Fri									4/1 Sat			
	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am
Aberdeen				25%	35%	30%	45%	75%	95%	100%	100%	60%	25%	25%			
Britton		20%	35%	40%	45%	35%	45%	70%	90%	95%	95%	65%	30%	30%			
Eagle Butte					25%	45%	60%	85%	95%	85%	75%	35%					
Eureka				25%	35%	40%	50%	75%	95%	95%	85%	40%					
Gettysburg						35%	50%	100%	100%	100%	100%	55%					
Kennebec						35%	50%	90%	95%	90%	95%	60%	20%	20%			
McIntosh						55%	55%	55%	55%	55%	20%	20%					
Milbank		25%	30%	40%	40%	40%	25%	75%	75%	85%	85%	85%	50%	50%			
Miller						25%	45%	95%	95%	95%	100%	70%	35%	35%			
Mobridge					25%	45%	55%	80%	95%	90%	80%	35%					
Murdo						55%	60%	85%	85%	85%	65%	65%					
Pierre						40%	50%	85%	85%	85%	70%	70%					
Redfield							30%	85%	85%	85%	85%	35%	35%				
Sisseton		25%	25%	40%	35%	35%	20%	70%	70%	80%	80%	80%	35%	35%			
Watertown				30%	40%	30%	40%	80%	90%	100%	100%	75%	60%	60%			
Webster				30%	35%	30%	40%	70%	95%	100%	100%	70%	45%	45%			
Wheaton		25%	40%	45%	45%	30%	30%	65%	80%	90%	100%	70%	45%	45%			

- Fz Rain + - Wintry Mix + - Snow +



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 20 of 86



## Expected Wind Gusts

March 30, 2023  
4:50 AM

Heavy snow & icing will likely cause travel impacts Friday

### Maximum Wind Gust Forecast

	3/30 Thu								3/31 Fri								4/1 Sat			
	2am	5am	8am	11am	2pm	5pm	8pm	11pm	2am	5am	8am	11am	2pm	5pm	8pm	11pm	2am	5am	8am	11am
<b>Aberdeen</b>	6	10	12	21	24	25	26	31	35	39	47	48	51	55	55	44	28	16	9	18
<b>Britton</b>	12	13	17	24	28	28	29	29	36	43	46	48	51	51	52	43	26	14	8	16
<b>Eagle Butte</b>	18	28	30	26	23	24	21	23	26	29	33	39	40	40	36	23	15	13	17	20
<b>Eureka</b>	16	22	26	30	31	30	29	32	41	46	43	46	47	44	40	26	14	8	13	22
<b>Gettysburg</b>	16	24	31	30	26	26	26	28	28	32	35	40	44	43	43	31	17	10	15	22
<b>Kennebec</b>	15	25	29	23	21	18	21	18	22	25	30	38	40	43	43	38	24	13	12	18
<b>McIntosh</b>	13	28	29	25	23	22	20	25	29	30	32	33	32	24	14	10	12	14	18	22
<b>Milbank</b>	13	14	17	24	24	20	14	17	22	26	32	40	44	48	48	45	36	22	17	12
<b>Miller</b>	24	21	24	25	22	20	17	22	28	31	33	39	45	45	45	36	25	17	9	16
<b>Mobridge</b>	15	20	23	25	24	23	24	26	23	29	33	40	40	39	33	20	10	7	14	22
<b>Murdo</b>	24	32	35	24	20	17	21	18	24	25	31	36	38	38	31	16	9	9	12	16
<b>Pierre</b>	18	25	29	24	18	18	22	20	22	23	28	32	38	38	31	14	5	6	8	15
<b>Redfield</b>	14	22	25	29	25	18	18	24	31	33	38	43	46	49	45	32	18	12	10	13
<b>Sisseton</b>	10	15	17	22	24	21	16	18	23	30	35	40	41	47	48	43	28	15	13	10
<b>Watertown</b>	14	20	24	25	26	26	28	29	35	39	44	45	47	52	53	46	37	23	13	12
<b>Webster</b>	10	22	29	32	32	32	31	31	35	43	47	48	53	56	58	52	37	21	10	13
<b>Wheaton</b>	10	18	20	21	25	24	22	22	26	31	33	37	39	43	45	39	31	22	14	10



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

# Winter Storm Watch

**URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE**

**National Weather Service Aberdeen SD**

**256 AM CDT Thu Mar 30 2023**

Traverse-Big Stone-McPherson-Brown-Marshall-Roberts-Walworth-Edmunds-Day-Potter-Faulk-Spink-Clark-Codington-Grant-Hamlin-Deuel-Stanley-Sully-Hughes-Hyde-Hand-Jones-Lyman-Buffalo-

Including the cities of Wheaton, Ortonville, Eureka, Aberdeen, Britton, Sisseton, Mobridge, Ipswich, Webster, Gettysburg, Faulkton, Redfield, Clark, Watertown, Milbank, Hayti, Clear Lake, Fort Pierre, Onida, Pierre, Highmore, Miller, Murdo, Kennebec, and Fort Thompson

...WINTER STORM WATCH REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM LATE TONIGHT THROUGH, LATE FRIDAY NIGHT...

\* WHAT...Blizzard conditions possible. Total snow accumulations of 4 to 13 inches and ice accumulations of up to one tenth of an inch possible. Winds could gust as high as 55 mph.

\* WHERE...Portions of west central Minnesota and central, north central and northeast South Dakota.

\* WHEN...From late tonight through late Friday night.

\* IMPACTS...Travel could be very difficult to impossible. Patchy blowing snow could significantly reduce visibility. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning or evening commute. Strong winds could cause extensive damage to trees and power lines.

\* ADDITIONAL DETAILS...Freezing drizzle is possible at the start of this storm, with winds and blizzard conditions developing through the course of the day Friday.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Prepare for possible blizzard conditions. Continue to monitor the latest forecasts for updates on this situation.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 21 of 86

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 23 °F at 5:16 PM

Low Temp: -6 °F at 7:40 AM

Wind: 12 mph at 1:16 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 12 hours, 47 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 81 in 1943

Record Low: -14 in 1969

Average High: 49

Average Low: 25

Average Precip in March.: 0.85

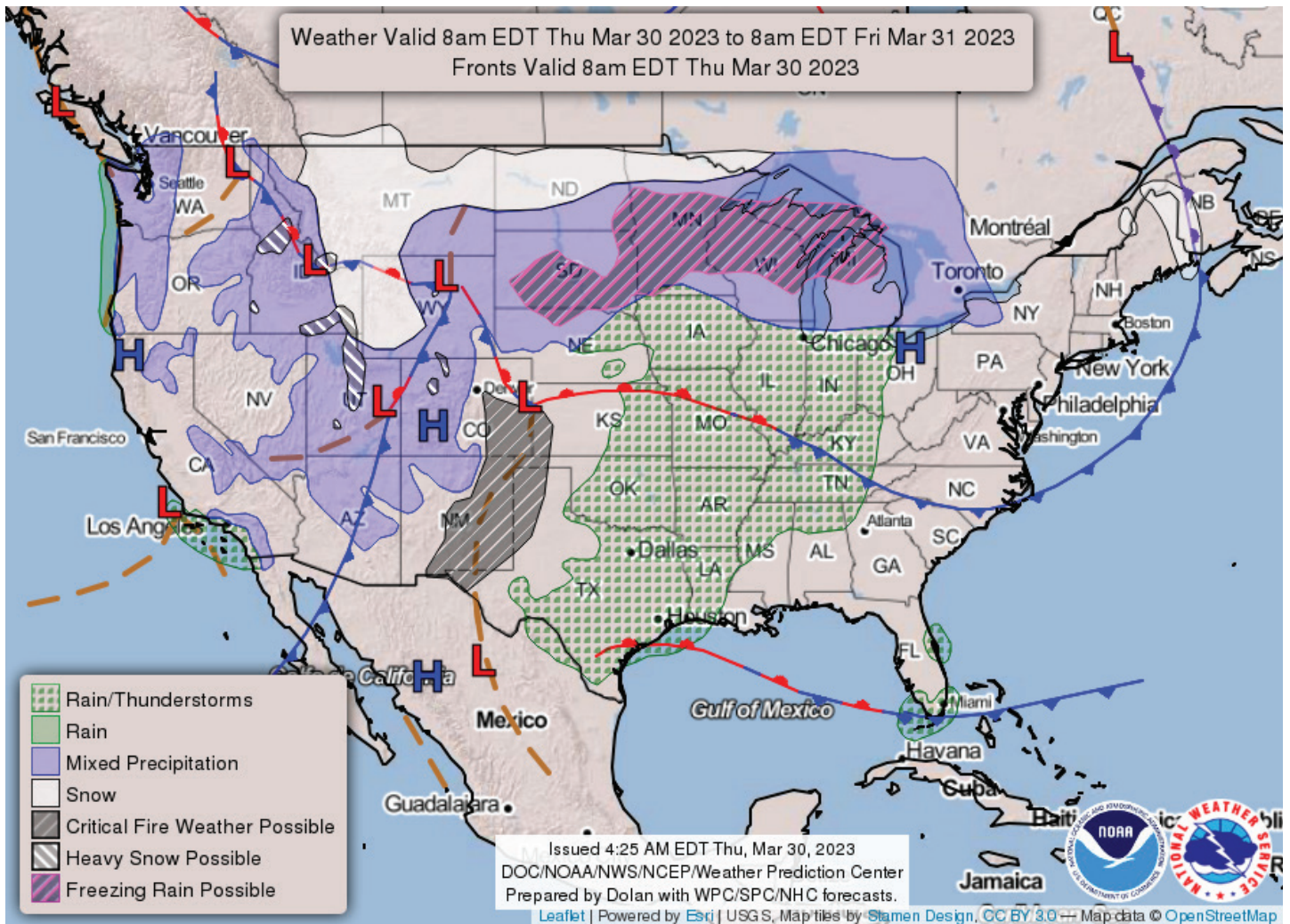
Precip to date in March.: 1.60

Average Precip to date: 2.02

Precip Year to Date: 3.18

Sunset Tonight: 7:58:58 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:12:50 AM



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 22 of 86

## Today in Weather History

March 30, 1967: Prolonged strong southerly winds of 20 to 30 mph, with gusts to 55 mph, caused areas of blowing dust in eastern South Dakota, reducing visibilities to near zero. A metal roof on lumber shed in Vermillion was blown off. The strong winds also piled ice along the shore of Lake Poinsett to heights of 20ft, causing damage to some cabins along the lakeshore.

March 30, 2009: A major winter storm moved across the Northern Rockies and into the Northern Plains producing from 2 to 22 inches of snowfall along with widespread blizzard conditions. Most area schools and events were canceled. Travel was challenging and not advised. Interstate 29 from Watertown to the North Dakota line and Interstate 90 across Jones and Lyman counties were both closed during the storm. There were several vehicle accidents with no serious injuries reported. However, this storm took a toll on area ranchers as the calving season was underway. Storm total snowfall amounts included; 6 inches in Blunt, Timber Lake, Gettysburg, and Wilmot; 7 inches in Doland and Pierre; 8 inches in Clark, Clear Lake, Leola, Hosmer, Gettysburg, southeast of McIntosh, and Kennebec; 9 inches south of Bristol, Waubay, and near Chelsea; 10 inches in Eagle Butte and Mobridge; 11 inches in Pollock and Turton. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included; 12 inches in Aberdeen, Britton, Andover, Sisseton, and Faulkton; 13 inches at Lake Sharpe, Roy Lake, and eight miles southwest of Keldron; 14 inches in Miller, Redfield, and Webster; 15 inches near Highmore and near Columbia; 16 inches southwest of Stratford; 17 inches 14 miles northeast of Isabel; 20 inches in McLaughlin, Ree Heights, and 4 miles northeast of Victor with almost 22 inches northwest of Stephan.

March 30, 2010: Scattered light rain showers falling into a very dry air mass were responsible for several heat bursts that occurred across central South Dakota from Pierre to Onida during the evening hours of March 30th. Between 853 pm and 1053 pm CDT, observations from the Pierre airport (KPIR) showed a marked increase in temperature (+10F), a decrease in dew point temperature (-4F), the pressure falls, and gusty surface winds (a peak wind gust of 48 mph). On a farm outside of Pierre, winds were estimated up to 70 mph as some shingles were blown off the roof along with damage to several outbuildings. The Onida airport recorded a peak wind gust of 66 mph in the early evening.

1805: New York's City's Battery Park was strewn with 24-inch snow rollers, from a ferocious storm between the March 26th and March 28th. Snow rollers are natural snowballs that are formed when winds blow over a snow-covered surface.

1823 - A great Northeast storm with hurricane force winds raged from Pennsylvania to Maine. The storm was most severe over New Jersey with high tides, uprooted trees, and heavy snow inland. (David Ludlum)

1848: On six reported occasions, the water flow over the American Falls has been entirely blocked by ice and ceased to fall. But only once has this happened on the much larger Horseshoe Falls.

1899 - A storm which buried Ruby, CO, under 141 inches of snow came to an end. Ruby was an old abandoned mining town on the Elk Mountain Range in the Crested Butte area. (The Weather Channel)

1977 - Hartford, CT, hit 87 degrees to establish a record for the month of March. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm spread heavy snow across the Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes Region. Cleveland OH received sixteen inches of snow in 24 hours, their second highest total of record. Winds gusting to 50 mph created 8 to 12 foot waves on Lake Huron. The storm also ushered unseasonably cold air into the south central and southeastern U.S., with nearly one hundred record lows reported in three days. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A winter-like storm developed in the Central Rockies. Snowfall totals in Utah ranged up to 15 inches at the Brian Head Ski Resort, and winds in Arizona gusted to 59 mph at Show Low. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing along and ahead of a slow moving cold front produced large hail and damaging winds at more than fifty locations across the southeast quarter of the nation, and spawned a tornado which injured eleven persons at Northhampton NC. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Low pressure produced heavy snow in central Maine and northern New Hampshire, with up to eight inches reported in Maine. A slow moving Pacific storm system produced 18 to 36 inches of snow in the southwestern mountains of Colorado in three days. Heavier snowfall totals included 31 inches at Wolf Creek Pass and 27 inches at the Monarch Ski Area. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 23 of 86

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### **GOD'S OUT TO GET YOU!**

In one of their cartoons, Hobbes and Calvin were having a serious discussion. Said Hobbes, "Is there a God?"

"Well," answered Calvin, "I'm not sure. But someone's out there trying to get me!"

He was absolutely right. God is out there, and He is trying to "get" everyone!

Jesus said, "I came to seek and to save the lost!" He initially made this statement in His meeting with Zacchaeus. And, if you recall, as a tax collector, he was in one of the most unpopular professions of his day. But, it didn't matter to Jesus: He was always searching out seeking to save the lost. This was His message and His mission. Zacchaeus was just as valuable to God as anyone and everyone else. In fact, Jesus was out to "get him."

No matter who we are or what we have done or are doing, Jesus wants us for His own. It is not what we know or who we know that will save us. Remember - Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham, the religious elite. But, that could not save him. Only his faith in the Savior, the Son of God, could. And, only one's personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can save us from our sin.

We must never forget that God is "out to get" everyone to know, love, and accept His Son as their Savior. How can He do this? By abiding in us, being with us, and working through us.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank You for providing our salvation and the opportunity to work with You to reach others. May what You have done for us, help us to "get others." In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost. Luke 19:10



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

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 24 of 86

## 2023 Community Events

- 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)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 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)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Golf Tournament
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 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)
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 25 of 86

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent

[www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com)

### Subscription Form

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

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

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

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

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

[paypal.me/paperpaul](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 26 of 86



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.28.23

2 3 18 32 68 24

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$355,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 34  
DRAW: Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.29.23

19 24 38 45 46 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$40,030,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 34  
DRAW: Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.29.23

17 22 29 30 47 15

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 4 Mins 23  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.29.23

2 15 16 19 21

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 34  
DRAW: Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.29.23

1 20 39 47 49 23

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 33  
DRAW: Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
03.29.23

4 9 24 46 66 7

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$147,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 33  
DRAW: Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Casualties reported after Army helicopters crash in Kentucky

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Two Army helicopters crashed in southwestern Kentucky during a routine training mission, causing several casualties, military officials said.

The two HH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, part of the 101st Airborne Division, crashed around 10 p.m. Wednesday in Trigg County, Kentucky, according to a statement from Fort Campbell.

The 101st Airborne confirmed the crash, saying on Twitter it resulted in “several casualties” but did not specify whether those were injuries or deaths.

“Right now our focus is on the Soldiers and their families who were involved,” it added.

Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear had said earlier that fatalities were expected, adding that police and emergency officials were responding.

The crash is under investigation.

“The crash occurred in a field, some wooded area,” Kentucky State Police Trooper Sarah Burgess said at a news briefing. “At this time, there are no reports of residence damage.”

Fort Campbell is about 60 miles (97 kilometers) northwest of Nashville.

Last month, two Tennessee National Guard pilots were killed when their Black Hawk helicopter crashed along an Alabama highway during a training exercise.

### Vatican: Pope improving since hospitalization with infection

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis rested well overnight and was “progressively improving” Thursday after being hospitalized with a respiratory infection, the Vatican said.

The 86-year-old pontiff, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, ate breakfast, read the newspapers and was working from his hospital room at Rome’s Gemelli hospital, according to a statement from Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni.

“Before lunch he went to the little chapel in the private apartment, where he gathered in prayer and received the Eucharist,” the statement said.

Francis was hospitalized Wednesday after having suffered breathing problems in recent days and was diagnosed with a respiratory infection, though not COVID-19. The Vatican said he would remain for a few days of treatment. His audiences were canceled through Friday.

Francis is scheduled to celebrate Palm Sunday this weekend, and it wasn’t clear how his medical condition would affect the Vatican’s Holy Week observances, which include Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil and finally Easter Sunday on April 9.

His hospitalization was the first since Francis had 33 centimeters (13 inches) of his colon removed and spent 10 days at the Gemelli hospital in July 2021.

He said soon after the surgery that he had recovered fully and could eat normally. But in a Jan. 24 interview with The Associated Press, Francis said his diverticulosis, or bulges in the intestinal wall, had “returned.”

Before he was admitted to the hospital Wednesday, the pope had appeared in relatively good form during his regularly scheduled general audience, though he grimaced strongly while getting in and out of the “popemobile.”

Francis has used a wheelchair for over a year due to strained ligaments in his right knee and a small knee fracture, though he had been walking more with a cane of late.

Francis has said he resisted having surgery for the knee problems because he didn’t respond well to general anesthesia during the 2021 intestinal surgery.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 28 of 86

## Russia arrests Wall Street Journal reporter on spying charge

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia's top security agency arrested an American reporter for the Wall Street Journal on espionage charges, the first time a U.S. correspondent was put behind bars on spying accusations since the Cold War. The newspaper denied the allegations against Evan Gershkovich.

The Federal Security Service said Thursday that Gershkovich was detained in the Ural Mountains city of Yekaterinburg while allegedly trying to obtain classified information.

The FSB, which is the top successor agency to the Soviet-era KGB, alleged that Gershkovich "was acting on the U.S. orders to collect information about the activities of one of the enterprises of the Russian military industrial complex that constitutes a state secret."

The Wall Street Journal said it "vehemently denies the allegations" and is seeking Gershkovich's immediate release. "We stand in solidarity with Evan and his family," the paper said.

The arrest comes amid bitter tensions between the West and Moscow over its war in Ukraine.

Gershkovich is the first American reporter to be arrested on espionage charges in Russia since September 1986, when Nicholas Daniloff, a Moscow correspondent for U.S. News and World Report, was arrested by the KGB. He was released without charges 20 days later in a swap for an employee of the Soviet Union's United Nations mission who was arrested by the FBI.

The FSB didn't say when the arrest took place. Gershkovich, who covers Russia, Ukraine and other ex-Soviet nations as a correspondent in the Wall Street Journal's Moscow bureau, could face up to 20 years in prison if convicted of espionage.

The FSB noted that he had accreditation from the Russian Foreign Ministry to work as a journalist, but ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Gershkovich was using his journalistic credentials as a cover for "activities that have nothing to do with journalism."

His last report from Moscow, published earlier this week, focused on the Russian economy's slowdown amid Western sanctions imposed when Russian troops invaded Ukraine last year.

Gershkovich's arrest follows a swap in December, in which WNBA star Brittney Griner was freed after 10 months behind bars in exchange for Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout.

Another American, Paul Whelan, a Michigan corporate security executive, has been imprisoned in Russia since December 2018 on espionage charges that his family and the U.S. government have said are baseless.

## Tears, anger as Indonesian soccer fears FIFA sanctions

By NINIEK KARMINI and GRAHAM DUNBAR Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesian soccer players and fans reacted with tears and outrage after the country was stripped of hosting rights for the Under-20 World Cup only eight weeks before the start of the tournament amid political turmoil over Israel's participation, leaving Indonesian soccer at risk of further sanctions.

The youth soccer event was expected to be a rare turn on the global soccer stage for a country that hasn't been to the World Cup since winning independence. But it was officially canceled Wednesday after two regional governors said they would not allow an Israeli team to play in their territories.

FIFA said Indonesia was removed from staging the 24-team tournament scheduled to start on May 20 "due to the current circumstances," without specifying details.

In an emotional meeting with Indonesian youth players and their coach in Jakarta on Thursday, Zainudin Amali, deputy chair of the national soccer association, apologized. Some players were seen shedding tears while others looked down sadly.

"It's a heartbreaking decision that ruined our dreams, and now we are confused about our future as players if FIFA imposes sanctions," said Hokky Caraka, a striker in Indonesia's U-20 national team, "It's the players who suffer the most," he said.

Shin Tae-yong, a South Korean former professional footballer and manager who is coaching the Indonesia national football team, said Indonesia's failure to host the U-20 World Cup is a big loss.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 29 of 86

"I am hurt!" he said, "I can feel the sadness and mental breakdown of the players. They have prepared tirelessly alongside me in the last three and a half years."

Popular social media were flooded with outraged comments from disappointed fans. Many blamed politics, a year ahead of a presidential election. Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation and does not have formal diplomatic relations with Israel.

"Indonesia's name in international sports is tarnished, this is a bitter event in our soccer history," said Andieka Rabbani, a university student in the capital, Jakarta.

He added that Israeli delegations have been to Indonesia for sporting and diplomatic events before, including four Israelis who competed in the World Cycling Championship last month in Jakarta.

A number of members of the Israeli Parliament also attended the Interparliamentary Union conference in Bali last year were also warmly welcomed by Indonesia's house speaker Puan Maharani, the granddaughter of Indonesia's first president Sukarno, and the Bali Governor Wayan Koster, who was the first to reject the Israeli youth soccer team.

An Israeli delegation also attended the COP-13 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bali in 2007 without any rejection.

"Our stance on the U-20 World Cup is too politicized, because a presidential election is coming," Rabbani said.

Arya Sinulingga, a national soccer association executive committee member, was concerned about further repercussions.

"This is a sign that we are not able to carry out what has been asked (by FIFA) ... among other things that there should be no discrimination," Sinulingga said in an interview with local television, "What we are most worried about right now is that we will be ostracized from international events, especially from world soccer activities."

The Indonesian soccer federation could be further disciplined by FIFA. A suspension could remove Indonesia from Asian qualifying for the 2026 World Cup. The continental qualifiers start in October.

The decision followed a meeting in Doha, Qatar between Indonesian soccer federation president Erick Thohir and Gianni Infantino, the president of FIFA, soccer's world governing body.

Thohir, the former president of Italian club Inter Milan and a former co-owner of the Philadelphia 76ers, said as a member of FIFA, Indonesia had little choice but to accept the decision.

"I have tried my best," he said in a statement. "After delivering a letter from President Joko Widodo and discussing it at length with the President of FIFA, Gianni Infantino, we must accept FIFA's decision to cancel this event that we were both looking forward to."

He said although he'd conveyed all the concerns and hopes of Indonesia's president, soccer lovers as well as the players from the Under-20 Indonesian national team, "FIFA considered that the current situation cannot be continued."

Soccer and public authorities in Indonesia agreed to FIFA's hosting rules, which require hosts to accept all qualifying teams, in 2019 before being selected to stage the 2021 edition of the Under-20 World Cup. The coronavirus pandemic forced the tournament to be postponed for two years.

Indonesia has long had an uneasy relationship with FIFA, which rejected a long-shot bid to host the 2022 World Cup early in the campaign in 2010 because mandatory paperwork was not filed. FIFA also removed Indonesia from the 2018 World Cup qualification program over government interference in the domestic league.

Thohir's appointment this year to run Indonesian soccer was intended to bring more stability.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo said Tuesday evening that his administration objected to Israel's participation, but urged citizens to keep sports and politics apart. He told citizens that the country agreed to host before knowing Israel would qualify.

Israel qualified in June of last year for its first Under-20 World Cup by reaching the semifinals of the Under-19 European Championship. The team went on to lose to England in that final.

Israel has played in Europe since the 1970s, after leaving the Asian Football Confederation for political

and security reasons.

Dunbar reported from Zurich. Associated Press writer Edna Tarigan in Jakarta, Indonesia, contributed to this report.

## Responding to Indigenous, Vatican rejects Discovery Doctrine

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican on Thursday responded to Indigenous demands and formally repudiated the “Doctrine of Discovery,” the theories backed by 15th-century “papal bulls” that legitimized the colonial-era seizure of Native lands and form the basis of some property law today.

A Vatican statement said the 15th-century papal bulls, or decrees, “did not adequately reflect the equal dignity and rights of indigenous peoples” and have never been considered expressions of the Catholic faith.

It said the documents had been “manipulated” for political purposes by colonial powers “to justify immoral acts against Indigenous peoples that were carried out, at times, without opposition from ecclesial authorities.”

The statement, from the Vatican’s development and education offices, said it was right to “recognize these errors,” acknowledge the terrible effects of colonial-era assimilation policies on Indigenous peoples and ask for their forgiveness.

The statement was a response to decades of Indigenous demands for the Vatican to formally rescind the papal bulls that provided the Portuguese and Spanish kingdoms the religious backing to expand their territories in Africa and the Americas for the sake of spreading Christianity.

Those decrees underpin the “Doctrine of Discovery,” a legal concept coined in a 1823 U.S. Supreme Court decision that has come to be understood as meaning that ownership and sovereignty over land passed to Europeans because they “discovered” it.

It was cited as recently as a 2005 Supreme Court decision involving the Oneida Indian Nation written by the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

During Pope Francis’ 2022 visit to Canada, during which he apologized to Indigenous peoples for the residential school system that forcibly removed Native children from their homes, he was met with demands for a formal repudiation of the papal bulls.

Two Indigenous women unfurled a banner at the altar of the National Shrine of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré on July 29 that read: “Rescind the Doctrine” in bright red and black letters. The protesters were escorted away and the Mass proceeded without incident, though the women later marched the banner out of the basilica and draped it on the railing.

In the statement, the Vatican said: “In no uncertain terms, the Church’s magisterium upholds the respect due to every human being. The Catholic Church therefore repudiates those concepts that fail to recognize the inherent human rights of indigenous peoples, including what has become known as the legal and political “doctrine of discovery.”

The Vatican offered no evidence that the three 15th-century papal bulls (Dum Diversas in 1452, Romanus Pontifex in 1455 and Inter Caetera in 1493) had themselves been formally abrogated, rescinded or rejected, as Vatican officials have often said. But it cited a subsequent bull, Sublimis Deus in 1537, that reaffirmed that Indigenous peoples shouldn’t be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property, and were not to be enslaved.

It was significant that the repudiation of the “Doctrine of Discovery” came during the pontificate of history’s first Latin American pope. The Argentine Francis, who even before the Canadian trip, had apologized to Native peoples in Bolivia in 2015 for the crimes of the colonial-era conquest of the Americas. It was issued while he was in the hospital Thursday with a respiratory infection.

Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, prefect of the Vatican’s culture office, said the statement was a reflection of the Vatican’s dialogue with Indigenous peoples.

“This Note is part of what we might call the architecture of reconciliation and also the product of the art

of reconciliation, the process whereby people commit to listening to each other, to speaking to each other and to growth in mutual understanding," he said in a statement.

## **Pickleball Slam: Roddick, Agassi, McEnroe, Chang take swings**

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP National Writer

When Andy Roddick agreed to join John McEnroe, Andre Agassi and Michael Chang at the Pickleball Slam, the 2003 U.S. Open champion figured he had two distinct advantages against the three other International Tennis Hall of Fame inductees participating in the made-for-TV exhibition in Hollywood, Florida.

At age 40, Roddick is the junior member of the quartet (McEnroe is 64, Agassi 52, Chang 51). And Roddick's serve, which topped 150 mph back in his days on the tennis tour, was the fastest among the group of retired Grand Slam title winners who signed up for something that features a \$1 million purse and airs Sunday on ESPN at noon EDT, before the March Madness women's championship game.

"As I'm walking through the (pickleball) rules, I saw they took away my youth with (limited) movement, and they took away my serve with having to serve underhand," Roddick said with a chuckle, "so I'm not really sure what's left." He will face Chang, then McEnroe will take on Agassi, before a McEnroe-Chang vs. Agassi-Roddick doubles competition at the Pickleball Slam — the latest in a series of attempts to draw eyeballs to a sport taking over courts in neighborhoods all over while still finding its footing on television.

"Everyone likes it instantly. It's pretty well-regarded by people that play it," Roddick said. "But you also don't know if it will ever translate to TV and be a very watchable product without knowing the ins and outs and nuances that, frankly, I don't know that people have the time to learn."

ESPN/ABC have shown pickleball in the past, there is a deal in place with one league for some of its competitions, and there are ongoing discussions with others.

"We're obviously not writing big checks for pickleball at this moment," said Tim Bunnell, ESPN senior vice president of programming. "The stage of development for the sport is: We're all still figuring out how it translates in the media world. We know how it translates participation-wise."

Horizon Sports & Experiences (HS&E) is producing the Pickleball Slam. The idea, HS&E co-CEO David Levy explained, was for bold-faced names from one racket sport to help promote another.

"Today, right now, nobody truly knows the top pickleball players. No one can even name maybe the top 50 pickleball players," said Levy, the former president of Turner Networks. "(But) it's a huge rising phenomenon in sport. And we decided to jump in, in a unique way."

Likening the appeal of Sunday's event to what drew fans to "The Match," a televised golf exhibition that began under his watch at Turner with Tiger Woods playing against Phil Mickelson in 2018, Levy said: "I've done this magic before."

He said he would love to get tennis stars such as the Williams sisters, Roger Federer or Rafael Nadal to play pickleball in future editions.

"Keep building this incredible, rising sport," Levy said, "with great brand names."

AP tennis: <https://apnews.com/hub/tennis> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## **Philippine ferry fire kills 31 people; at least 7 missing**

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — A fire broke out on a ferry in the southern Philippines and raged overnight for eight hours, killing at least 31 of the approximately 250 passengers and crew, officials said Thursday.

Many of the more than 200 people who survived the blaze jumped off the MV Lady Mary Joy 3 and were rescued from the dark sea by the coast guard, navy, a nearby ferry and local fishermen, said Gov. Jim Hataman of the southern island province of Basilan. Rescuers were still searching Thursday for at least seven missing people, he said.

Hataman said the burned ferry was towed to Basilan's shoreline, where the bodies of 18 of the 31 victims

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 32 of 86

were discovered in a budget section of the passenger cabin.

"These victims perished on board due to the fire," Hataman said by telephone. He said more people may have been on the ferry who were not listed on its manifest.

The ferry's skipper, however, told coast guard officials that he tried to run the burning ferry aground on the nearest shore to allow more people to survive or be rescued, regional coast guard commander Rejard Marfe said. The fire raged for about eight hours, he said.

The ferry was traveling to Jolo town in Sulu province from the southern port city of Zamboanga when it caught fire off Basilan close to midnight, Hataman said. At least 23 passengers were injured and taken to hospitals.

"Some of the passengers were roused from their sleep due to the commotion caused by the fire. Some jumped off the ship," Hataman said.

The steel-hulled ferry could accommodate up to 430 people and was not overcrowded, Marfe said. According to the manifest, it was carrying 205 passengers and a 35-member crew, he said. In addition, it had a security contingent consisting of four coast guard marshals and an unspecified number of soldiers who were not listed on the manifest for their protection, Marfe said.

He said officials are investigating whether the 33-year-old ferry was seaworthy, if there were passengers not listed on the manifest, and whether the crew properly guided passengers to safety.

Sea accidents are common in the Philippines because of frequent storms, badly maintained vessels, overcrowding, and spotty enforcement of safety regulations, especially in remote provinces.

In December 1987, the ferry Dona Paz sank after colliding with a fuel tanker, killing more than 4,300 people in the world's worst peacetime maritime disaster.

## Ukraine by rail: Inside Zelenskyy's efforts to buoy a nation

By JULIE PACE Associated Press

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine (AP) — The caravan of unmarked vehicles tears across the muddy grass next to the playground. On the merry-go-round, the children stop swinging and spinning. The curious — parents and other residents of this southeastern town — gather around. Car doors swing open, and heavily armed security guards in battlefield fatigues spill out.

And just like that, he is among them: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, wartime leader and his country's chief morale officer.

This week, Zelenskyy shuttled across the country on a 48-hour train trip to rally soldiers who are battling Russian forces — and, just as important, to buoy the communities often caught in the crossfire. Here, about 30 miles (50 kilometers) from the front lines, Zelenskyy came to see for himself the destruction from a Russian attack that damaged dozens of apartments one week ago.

The violence hit just steps from the playground and merry-go-round. One person was killed and 30 others wounded. For Zaporizhzhia, the attack was a reminder of the often arbitrary nature of the threats many Ukrainians face each day as Russian missile strikes stretch beyond the front lines.

But with the conflict now in its second year, Zelenskyy worries that both the outside world and Ukrainians far from the front lines are starting to become numb to the harsh, daily realities of war.

And so he comes — to reassure, to motivate, to comfort.

### KEEPING A NATION FOCUSED

"Thank you that you are not meeting with me only in the capital," Zelenskyy tells journalists from The Associated Press who traveled with him on the train journey. "Thank you," he says, that you "found such possibility to be in our places."

Zelenskyy has rarely traveled with reporters, and his office said AP's two-night trip with him was the most extensive since the war began.

For the past year, Zelenskyy has served as the public face of Ukraine's unexpectedly strong resistance to Russia's invasion. Backed by billions of dollars in Western military aid, Ukraine has pushed Russian forces



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 33 of 86

back repeatedly, including holding off efforts to take Kyiv in the early days of the war.

That success has led to what Zelenskyy sees as the split-screen “reality of modern war” — the capital city, where cafes and restaurants are filled, and the grinding, deadly battles in the east and elsewhere along Ukraine’s expansive border with Russia.

“From one side, it’s great that children, families, people — they love the life and it’s great. It’s great that our soldiers are bringing back normal life,” he says. “But from another side, it’s very dangerous.”

Dangerous, he says, because soldiers on the front lines could lose motivation if they sense their fellow citizens are turning attention elsewhere. Dangerous because some Ukrainians seem willing to let down their guard about the risks that still exist far from the front.

He laments that it has become a “natural habit” to ignore air raid sirens and not decamp to bomb shelters. He compares it to the way many people dropped their guard before the second wave of COVID-19 infections hopscotched around the world.

Zelenskyy is not wrong. Moments before his caravan arrives at the apartment block in Zaporizhzhia, air raid sirens ring out across the city. No one flees. No one even flinches.

## RIDING THE RAILS

Zelenskyy’s travel across Ukraine is a closely guarded secret. His whereabouts typically aren’t revealed until after he’s already moved on, when his robust government communications team posts photos and video online — often featuring him speaking to the camera. At the request of the president’s office, the AP is withholding some logistical information about his travel.

His schedule can be grueling. He departed Kyiv on Sunday night under cover of darkness for a 10-hour overnight train trip to the country’s southeastern corner. There he made private visits to troops on the front lines, awarded medals to ailing soldiers at a local hospital and huddled with the head of the UN’s atomic energy agency about a strategically important power plant that has faced repeated Russian attacks.

Zelenskyy has picked up the pace of his travel in recent weeks, often pushing closer to the front. He’s seeking to remind Ukrainians of their successes so far, attending ceremonies in small towns and cities marking their liberation from Russian forces one year ago.

“These people saved our country against Russian tanks and armed vehicles,” he told AP in Okhtyrka, a border city of about 50,000 that was heavily damaged in the war’s first months. Residents wiped away tears as Zelenskyy heralded Okhtyrka’s heroism as the names of soldiers who died defending the city were read aloud.

Most of Zelenskyy’s travel is done by train. He works from a specially outfitted coach car that, from the outside, is indistinguishable from the mass of Ukrainian state rail cars that regularly crisscross the expansive country. Other cars in the train are filled with two- and four-bed sleeper cabins, most occupied by Zelenskyy’s traveling advisers, security detail and railway staff.

Throughout the war, Ukraine’s rail system has been a crucial artery for moving people and goods at a time when commercial air traffic is shut down and roadways can be dangerous or unpredictable. The trains keep remarkably on schedule, almost as if defying the broader uncertainty that has enveloped the country.

Zelenskyy doesn’t keep still for long in any one place. He often zips off in well under an hour. He acknowledges that he sometimes pushes his security team beyond their comfort levels, particularly with his desire to visit troops in front-line positions. He knows the risks, though.

“I have to think also about their lives,” Zelenskyy says of his security team. “That’s why I’m as careful as I can be.”

Still, the high-energy president does occasionally find himself chafing at the restrictions that come with being a wartime leader. After complaining recently about his fading eyesight, he approached his head of security to see if he could get some fresh air. Perhaps some walks outside?

His security chief had other ideas. “He said, ‘OK. Open the window.’”

## FINDING PURPOSE IN WAR

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 34 of 86

They called him a lightweight at first.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy came to politics through a circuitous route, building a public persona as an actor and comedian. He was dismissed by many, including in Western capitals, after he was elected in 2019. He became known to many Americans through the first impeachment trial of then-U.S. President Donald Trump, who tried to leverage a sought-after visit by Zelenskyy to Washington for dirt on his then-political rival Joe Biden.

Now, Zelenskyy's past as an entertainer is rarely mentioned. When it is, it's billed as an asset.

He communicated aggressively in the war's early days, rallying support at home and around the world with nightly videos showing him planted in Kyiv as it faced the prospect of Russian encirclement, resisting attempts to move him to safer ground. He's a regular presence — usually virtually — at a range of international events, including the Grammys and the Super Bowl. His celebrity supporters are legion, even as Russian President Vladimir Putin casts him as an enemy and a dangerous renegade.

He has embraced the optics of a wartime president, scrapping pre-invasion suits for military-style sweat-shirts, cargo pants and boots, even when greeting world leaders. He has used his force of personality and public platforms to cajole dozens of them to visit Ukraine in recent months, casting each visit as another brick in the geopolitical wall isolating Russia from the rest of the world.

Like him, many of them take trains — a method of transport dubbed by Ukrainians as "Iron Diplomacy." A poster inside one of the cabins in Zelenskyy's train touts "300+ delegations safely delivered to the Capital of Bravery" and features photos of world leaders aboard the railway. Among them: Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron and Indonesian President Joko Widodo.

Zelenskyy has little down time. He says he stays energized by what he calls "moments of little victories" that provide a respite from the relentless war. The woman he met Tuesday in the liberated town of Trostianets who asked him for a hug. A quick phone call with his young son to talk about a second-place finish in a recent wrestling match.

"Sometimes these two or three minutes can bring you to a very adequate state," he says, "and you can relax."

## 'NOW I KNOW WHAT IS IMPORTANT'

Ask Zelenskyy what has surprised him the most about himself over this past year, and he laughs — and doesn't answer. "This question is the biggest surprise," he says. But he does acknowledge this much: The war has changed him, and it has focused him.

"Now I know what is important," he says. "My home, my God ... my country, my wife, my children and parents."

In the youngest of his two children — his son, who is nearly 10 — he sees a new generation of Ukrainians, young people who have been changed and shaped by a war he believes began nearly a decade ago with Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula.

"My son (is) a real child of the war," Zelenskyy says. "He's a real Ukrainian. He understands who is enemy, who is hero, who are our friends."

Zelenskyy acknowledges the toll the war has taken on Ukrainians. He hears it from all over, and he is living some of it himself. Often he appears filled with feeling, particularly when he meets families who have lost loved ones.

"Everyone's very emotional because of stress," Zelenskyy says. "There is nothing good in the war. Children without childhoods, without school years, without moments of friendship, moments of love."

Yet just as he projects hope and optimism when he speaks at his whistlestops of reassurance, Zelenskyy finds something about his nation's war to be grateful for. It has, he says, forced Ukraine, a relatively young democracy, to grow up quickly and learn what it is willing to fight for.

"It wasn't a surprise for me that people are ready to fight for freedom," he says. "Freedom is really in Ukrainians' hearts. It means that we are ready to stay as long as we need." \_\_\_\_\_

Julie Pace is senior vice president and executive editor of The Associated Press. AP journalists Hanna Ahirova and James Jordan in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, contributed to this report.

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

## Israel's Palestinians mostly sit out democracy protests

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

HAIFA, Israel (AP) — Amal Oraby is usually a fixture at street protests. But as tens of thousands of Israelis have demonstrated for months against a contentious government plan to overhaul the judiciary, Oraby is sitting this one out.

An activist and lawyer, Oraby is one of the many Palestinian citizens of Israel who have stayed on the sidelines of some of the country's largest and most sustained demonstrations — a glaring absence in a movement that says it aims to preserve the country's democratic ideals.

"I don't see myself there," Oraby said.

As minorities long plagued by systemic discrimination, Palestinian Israelis have potentially the most to lose if the plan, which would likely weaken the judiciary's independence, is implemented.

But the community harbors a deep sense that the system is already rigged against it and always has been — and sees the demonstrations as an exclusively Jewish movement unwilling to include issues that matter to Palestinians and blind to the longstanding injustices against them.

The patriotic hallmarks of the movement have only reinforced for many Palestinian Israelis that there is no place for them: the ubiquitous Star of David flag, the national anthem about the yearning of the Jewish soul for Israel, and the heavy participation of former officials from the military, an institution Palestinian citizens view with suspicion, if not hostility.

"In this demonstration, we don't talk about occupation. We don't talk about racism. We don't talk about discrimination," said Sami Abou Shehadeh, a former legislator in Israel's parliament. "And they call it a struggle for democracy."

Organizers say they have repeatedly invited Palestinian Israelis to participate but are keeping their message focused tightly on the overhaul.

The massive, monthlong demonstrations and a general strike forced Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this week to postpone the overhaul. But he did not scrap it, and the protests are expected to continue.

The plan as it currently stands would give the government control over who becomes a judge and limit judicial review on its decisions and legislation. Netanyahu's government says the proposal would ease the lawmaking process and rein in a judiciary that it sees as having liberal sympathies.

Critics say it would damage the country's system of checks and balances — and it galvanized opposition from a broad range of Israeli society, including leading economists, top legal officials and even the military.

While the protesters say their aim is to safeguard the Supreme Court, seen by Jews as a bulwark against tyranny, Palestinian Israelis see the court as having failed them repeatedly. They have long viewed Israel's democracy as tainted by both the country's treatment of them and its 55-year, open-ended occupation of lands the Palestinians seek for an independent state.

Israel's Palestinian citizens, who make up one-fifth of its 9.6 million people, have the right to vote and have Arab representatives in parliament, with one Arab party even recently joining a governing coalition for the first time — but they have long suffered discrimination in a range of spheres, from housing to jobs.

Descendants of Palestinians who remained within the borders of what became Israel, they are seen by many Jewish Israelis as a fifth column because of their ties and solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

While Palestinian Israelis have in many cases risen to the highest echelons of government, academia, and business, the population as a whole is poorer and less educated than Jewish Israelis.

In their criticism of the Supreme Court, Palestinian Israelis point to a 2021 decision to uphold a contentious law that defines the country as the nation-state of the Jewish people, a law they claim discriminates against minorities. They say the court generally permits Israel to build on occupied land and regularly

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 36 of 86

allows Israel to demolish the homes of Palestinian attackers.

Still, as a minority, they could have even more to lose were Israel to become more illiberal, said Muhammed Khalaily, a researcher at the Israel Democracy Institute, a Jerusalem think tank.

Existing protections could be threatened. A senior member of Netanyahu's government, for instance, once called for segregated maternity wards.

That grim potential future hasn't been enough to draw them into the protests.

Having watched their own rights attacked over the years, some in the community feel a sense of betrayal that Jewish Israelis never rallied against those injustices with the same fervor they have exhibited over the last three months.

"Where were you? Where were you during our struggle?" asked Oraby, the activist.

Protest organizer Shir Nosatzki said she recognized the complexities keeping Palestinian Israelis away, but added the movement has reached out to the community repeatedly and has had a growing number of Palestinians speak at the protests.

"There is no other group in Israeli society that's been the target of so much effort to rope it into the protest," said Nosatzki, who also heads a group fostering Jewish-Arab political partnerships.

But the reality is less welcoming for some. Former military officials have been constant presences, boasting of their battle achievements against Palestinians and others, claims that are painful for Palestinian Israelis to hear.

A small contingent of left-wing Israelis who oppose the occupation has been ostracized by other protesters for waving the Palestinian flag and trying to raise the Palestinian issue in the protests, for fear that it might push more nationalist Israelis away or be used by opponents to smear the protests as a cover for radical leftists.

The issue did elbow its way in after a rampage by West Bank Jewish settlers through a Palestinian town, Hawara, and what critics said was a muted response to it by Israeli security services. Protesters shouted at police: "Where were you in Hawara?" That became a recurring chant against the heightened police presence throughout the protests.

Some Palestinians support attending the protests, if only as a platform to share their perspective. Others have tried to piggyback on the demonstrations, creating their own movement demanding Israel treat all citizens equally.

Reem Hazzan, a political activist, said she accepted an invitation to speak at a protest last month in the northern city of Haifa but backed out at the last minute after she said organizers asked for changes to her speech, saying it was not the right tone for the demonstration. Nosatzki said all speakers submit their speeches in for review, which tends to cause tensions.

"It is a struggle that is lacking when it doesn't discuss the root of the problems," Hazzan said. "The real invitation for Arab citizens will be genuine when these protests will come and say, 'Friends, we want to build a future together, without occupation, with peace and with equality.'"

## Sibling, 5, fatally shoots 16-month-old brother in Indiana

LAFAYETTE, Ind. (AP) — A 16-month-old boy was fatally shot by his 5-year-old sibling at a northwestern Indiana apartment, authorities said.

The older sibling accessed a handgun inside the Lafayette apartment on Tuesday afternoon and fatally shot the boy, who was identified as Isiah Johnson, police said late Tuesday.

Lafayette police Lt. Matt Gard said someone outside of the apartment called 911 after the shooting to report that a child was not breathing.

"There was one adult and two children inside the apartment," Gard told the Journal & Courier.

An autopsy was scheduled for Wednesday to determine the child's cause and manner of death.

No arrests had been made as of Wednesday morning and the case remains under investigation, police said.

When the investigation is completed, officials said the case will be sent to the Tippecanoe County Pros-

ecutor's Office for review to determine if charges might be filed.

Lafayette is located about 60 miles (96 kilometers) north of Indianapolis.

## Gwyneth Paltrow's widely watched ski crash trial nears end

By SAM METZ Associated Press

PARK CITY, Utah (AP) — The closely watched trial over a 2016 ski collision between Gwyneth Paltrow and the retired optometrist suing her for the injuries he sustained is expected to draw to a close Thursday, when attorneys give closing arguments and send the case to the eight-member jury.

Terry Sanderson, 76, is suing Paltrow, claiming she skied out of control and crashed into him, leaving him with four broken ribs and a concussion with symptoms that have lasted years beyond the collision.

After a judge dismissed his initial \$3.1 million complaint, Sanderson amended and refiled the lawsuit seeking "more than \$300,000" — a threshold that provides the opportunity to introduce the most evidence and depose the most witnesses allowed in civil court. In response, Paltrow countersued for a symbolic \$1 and attorney fees.

Paltrow's defense team used most of their final full day in control of the witness stand to call medical experts to testify. Sanderson's attorneys are expected to begin on Thursday morning by recalling their medical experts to rebut claims made by Paltrow's. Each side will then have roughly one hour to give the jury their closing arguments.

Paltrow's attorneys are expected to continue their two-pronged approach, both arguing that the actor-turned-lifestyle influencer didn't cause the accident and that its effects aren't as bad as Sanderson claims. They've painted him as an "obsessed" man pushing "utter B.S." claims against someone whose fame makes them vulnerable to unfair, frivolous lawsuits.

Sanderson's team will likely cite how the man claiming to be the sole eyewitness testified to seeing Paltrow hit their client and continue spinning the case as a contemporary David versus Goliath tale in which Sanderson suffered injuries and had the courage to take on a movie star.

Sanderson testified Friday that he had continued to pursue damages seven years after the accident because the cascading events that followed — his post-concussion symptoms and the accusation that he sued to exploit Paltrow's celebrity — added insult to injury.

"That's the purpose: to make me regret this lawsuit. It's the pain of trying to sue a celebrity," he said on Wednesday in response to a question from his attorney about Paltrow's team probing his personal life, medical records and extensive post-crash international travel itinerary.

Though both sides have marshaled significant resources to emerge victorious, the verdict could end up being remembered as an afterthought dwarfed by the worldwide attention the trial has attracted. The amount of money at stake for both sides pales in comparison to the typical legal costs of a multiyear lawsuit, private security detail and expert witness-heavy trial.

With lengthy rosters of witnesses on call, attorneys have confronted difficult choices about how to juggle their hired experts with family members, doctors and testimony from Sanderson and Paltrow themselves.

Paltrow's defense team picked mostly experts to mount their final defense on Wednesday. They chose to call four medical experts to testify rather than Paltrow's husband, television producer Brad Falchuk.

In the final hour of their last full day to call witnesses, they called Sanderson back to the witness stand. A day earlier, they read depositions from Paltrow's two children — Apple and Moses — rather than calling them to testify as they earlier indicated they had planned.

Among the most bombshell testimony has been from Paltrow and Sanderson. On Friday members of the jury were riveted when Paltrow said on the stand that she initially thought she was being "violated" when the collision began. Three days later Sanderson gave an entirely different account, saying she ran into him and sent him "absolutely flying."

The trial has also shone a spotlight on Park City, known primarily as a ski resort that welcomes celebrities like Paltrow for each year's Sundance Film Festival.

Local residents have increasingly filled the courtroom gallery throughout the trial. They've nodded along

as lawyers and witnesses have referenced local landmarks like Montage Deer Valley, the ski-side hotel-spa where Paltrow got a massage after the collision. At times they have appeared captivated by Paltrow's reactions to the proceedings, while at others they have mirrored the jury, whose endurance has been tested by hours of jargon-dense medical testimony.

## A college in upheaval: War on 'woke' sparks fear in Florida

By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

SARASOTA, Fla. (AP) — Professors at the New College of Florida are using personal email because they're afraid of being subpoenaed.

Students are concerned, too. Some fear for their physical safety. Many worry their teachers will be fired en masse and their courses and books will be policed. It's increasingly hard to focus on their studies.

For years, students have come to this public liberal arts college on the western coast of Florida because they were self-described free thinkers. Now they find themselves caught in the crosshairs of America's culture war.

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis has targeted the tiny school on the shores of Sarasota Bay as a staging ground for his war on "woke." The governor and his allies say New College, a progressive school with a prominent LGBTQ+ community, is indoctrinating students with leftist ideology and should be revamped into a more conservative institution.

Students and faculty say America should take note because the transformation at New College could become a blueprint with national implications as DeSantis gears up for a likely presidential bid.

"I'm sorry, but this isn't an indoctrination facility. This isn't a factory that pumps out, you know, non-binary communists," says Viv Cargille, 20, a marine biology major from Miami. She is passionate about researching dolphin acoustics but finds it mentally exhausting to focus on classes in a climate she describes as turbulent, volatile and anxiety-inducing.

Her roommate Olivia Pare, a second-year biology major, wishes the politicians would leave their school alone. "My biggest frustration is the way it is impacting my education. I am here to learn. I am not here to be more woke — whatever that is," Pare said. When she does research in the organic chemistry lab, "we're not talking about organic chemistry anymore — we're talking about whether my professor will get her tenure approved."

In January, DeSantis and his allies overhauled the 13-member Board of Trustees and installed a majority of conservative figures. The new trustees promptly fired the college president and replaced her with a Republican politician, the first of several administrators to lose their jobs. Next, they dismantled the office of diversity and equity. They have not revealed future plans but trustees have posted vague warnings on social media like: "You will see changes in 120 days."

Changes so far have come in tandem with a new bill DeSantis unveiled Jan. 31 aimed at overhauling higher education in Florida. The bill would ban gender studies majors and minors, eliminate diversity programs and any hiring based on diversity, weaken tenure protections and put all hiring decisions in the hands of each university's board of trustees.

The effect at New College has been chilling and disruptive. Students and faculty compare the upheaval to a "hostile takeover" that feels even more jarring because of what the school has represented to so many students for so many years: a haven of open-mindedness and acceptance in a place of idyllic beauty, with palm-tree-lined paths along a stretch of white-sand coast.

"It felt very much like New College was a little bubble in Florida," said Willem Aspinall, 19, an environmental studies major who grew up in a Chicago suburb. "Now it feels like that has kind of been burst. The campus feels a lot less safe now."

Students and faculty are afraid of one thing most of all: The extinction of New College as they know it. They are not wrong to worry.

One of the new trustees is Christopher Rufo, a fellow at the conservative Manhattan Institute and architect of the right-wing outrage against critical race theory, a legal term that has come to represent teaching

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 39 of 86

about the ongoing effects of slavery. Rufo actively posts on social media about his vision for the future of New College, often in militaristic terms. He has referred to new trustees at the public institution as the "landing team," saying, "We got over the wall," and referencing an operation to "recapture" the college.

New College has its problems. The college performs poorly in certain state metrics, including a decline in enrollment until last year. Students complain of mold in dorms, broken elevators and other delayed maintenance because of years of underfunding. Some students say they would welcome more conservative students to balance the left-leaning student body. DeSantis and the new trustees cite the challenges as justification for the state intervention.

"We will be shutting down low-performing, ideologically-captured academic departments and hiring new faculty," Rufo said in one tweet. "The student body will be recomposed over time: some current students will self-select out, others will graduate; we'll recruit new students who are mission-aligned." He and others have posted plans to "redesign the curriculum" with a goal of making the school more politically conservative.

Some students are fleeing, for schools that feel safer. Many on campus have voiced a concern that the politically charged spotlight on their school could invite danger. Several professors who asked not to be named are sending out resumes. Trustee meetings have become a focal point of student protests, and the only source of information on the school's fate.

New College has long been an anomaly in a state filled with large public universities. It has barely 700 students, no fraternities or sororities and no football team. It is Florida's designated honors college and produces an impressive number of the state's Fulbright scholars. It has a uniquely self-directed curriculum that allows students to design individualized majors. The average class size is 11 students. There are no letter grades; students get detailed "narrative evaluations" as part of a pass-fail system.

The academic freedom is mirrored by a student body that feels free to express itself, say students and faculty, who describe New College as a haven for brainy kids who are high-achieving and intellectually curious. Some were the quiet kids in high school, or were bullied for being queer or different, or struggled socially because of autism or other disabilities. Some were homeschooled or come from alternative educational backgrounds that led them to be self-directed in their schooling. They arrived at New College and felt welcome in a way they never had before, say parents, students and faculty.

There is a long table in the center of the New College dining hall that epitomizes the school's culture of acceptance, according to several students. People sitting there invite newcomers to come join them. Anyone walking in knows they never need to eat alone.

"It is one of the most unique places I think that exists in American higher education," says Elizabeth C. Leininger, a neuroscientist and associate biology professor, who knows all her students by name. She compares an education at New College to small, private liberal arts schools at a fraction of the cost. In-state tuition at New College is \$7,000 and out-of-state is \$30,000, but many students get scholarships that cut tuition by at least half.

For the first time in her academic career, Leininger is wondering if some of her courses, like "Sex, Gender, Mind and Brain," will court trouble.

"I would have to think very carefully about how I am going to teach that class now," said Leininger, a graduate of Swarthmore College who did her Ph.D. at Columbia University, where she also taught. Like other faculty, Leininger is using personal email or encrypted messaging platforms when discussing the upheaval, fearing school email accounts will be subpoenaed. "There is very much a policing of ideas."

Students, too, have shifted conversations on organizing protests to encrypted platforms like Signal and Slack to ensure privacy, says Gaby Batista, 19, an anthropology major who has taken personal precautions as well. "I've made my Instagram private and took off my pronouns."

For parents who have felt the intense heartache of watching their child struggle and then the deep relief of seeing them thrive, the upheaval at New College is making them relive a painful past.

Psychologist Joyce White calls the experience "devastating" and "destabilizing" for the parents and students, particularly those who endured childhood bullying only to find themselves again feeling targeted.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 40 of 86

White's daughter, Lola, is a third-year biology major at New College with plans to be a veterinarian. Lola is autistic, has ADHD and "lives in a constant state of anxiety," her mother said. Ever since she was a child, Lola excelled at school but found it very stressful. She has difficulty adapting to change and feeling like she belongs. Until fifth grade, Lola threw up every day on the way to school, her mother said. The pandemic wreaked havoc on her mental health and disrupted Lola's college plans. She attended community college online for two years, before transferring in the fall of 2022 to New College.

"We found this little school that was perfect for Lola," said White, who moved her family from Minnesota to Sarasota to ease Lola into college. It wasn't easy at first, adjusting to the Florida heat and to in-person classes, but Lola was settling in. She loved her small classes at New College and the ability to meet professors one-on-one. Her confidence was growing, which made her less introverted. She felt safe, and one day she joked with another student that she had no friends. The student responded, "You're our friend," and invited Lola to study with her group at the library.

"I felt like I could connect to the people here. The kids are accepting – of anyone. There is no judgment," said Lola. She was amazed at the resources the school offered to help students who were struggling. She was assigned an academic adviser, a career coach and a special adviser for transfer students. "When I told them I was struggling, they reached out even more. No one has ever done that for me before in education," Lola said, seated beside her mother at sunset on a recent evening along the school's private beach.

"It's been such a long road, and I finally felt like I could see light at the end of the tunnel," said White, who recognizes in herself feelings of anxiety and depression as she worries if Lola will find her path again. "Now it feels like everything has blown up." She adds, "I'm trying to put on a brave face for her."

Two of Lola's friends are transferring out of New College. Lola has struggled lately with panic attacks, stress and difficulty concentrating on schoolwork. But for now, she plans to stay. "I can do it, but there will be repercussions on my mental health."

Meanwhile, students and faculty are noticing new restrictions they worry are aimed at curtailing freedom of expression. Faculty received a memo recently with new recommended guidelines for email signatures: They "should only include" name, title, college address, logo and phone number, which faculty see as a ruling that disallows pronouns. An event known as V.I.P. Weekend that was organized by the diversity and equity office to host prospective students overnight was also abruptly canceled. And maintenance crews recently were instructed to wash away chalk drawings and messages that covered a campus overpass, part of a longstanding tradition of eclectic artwork and expression. Many of the chalk messages voiced outrage at DeSantis and the new trustees or carried messages of support, such as: "Diversity is our strength."

Faculty are advising students to concentrate on schoolwork and block out the noise, but it's hard to shake the feeling that the worst is yet to come, said Aspinall, the environmental studies major.

"I'm concerned they're going to take a school that does not indoctrinate students and turn it into a school that does."

---

The Associated Press education team receives support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Twitter removes tweets about 'Trans Day of Vengeance'

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Twitter says it has removed thousands of tweets showing a poster promoting a "trans day of vengeance" protest in support of transgender rights in Washington, D.C., on Saturday.

Ella Irwin, Twitter's head of Trust and Safety, said in a tweet Wednesday that the company automatically removed more than 5,000 tweets and retweets of a poster promoting the event.

"We do not support tweets that incite violence irrespective of who posts them. "Vengeance" does not imply peaceful protest. Organizing or support for peaceful protests is ok," Irwin wrote in the tweet.

In removing the tweets, Twitter said it used automated processes to do it quickly at a large scale, without considering what context the tweets were shared in. Because of this, both tweets that were critical



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 41 of 86

of and those that supported the protests were removed.

This appeared to anger many conservative Twitter users who said the rules were unfairly applied to them because they were posting the image of the protest flyer to speak out against it.

But trans activists were quick to point out that "trans day of vengeance" is a meme that has been around in the trans community for years and is not a call to violence — and said Twitter is misguided in its reasoning behind removing the tweets in support of the protest.

Evan Greer, director of the nonprofit liberal advocacy group Fight for the Future, said Twitter's actions are "the latest example of Big Tech companies employing double standards in content moderation."

"They are slow to moderate content targeting trans people, but quick to silence us when we speak out or push back. 'Trans Day of Vengeance' is not a specific day or a call for violence. It's a meme that's been around for years, a way of expressing anger and frustration about oppression and violence the trans community faces daily," Greer said. "Context is everything in content moderation, which is why content policies should be based in human rights and applied evenly, not changed rapidly based on public pressure or news cycles."

The poster in question is a largely text-based digital flyer. It reads "we want more than visibility" on top, followed by "trans day of vengeance" and "stop trans genocide" as well as the date and time of the planned protest.

Many of the tweets Twitter removed were from conservative users sharing an image of the flyer in an attempt to connect the planned protests with the recent school shooting in Nashville, Tennessee. In the aftermath of the shooting, some right-wing activists and commentators have seized on the gender identity of the shooter in order to denounce transgender people and advocates, call transgender people violent, and "evil," and insinuate they are planning to engage in violence. U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Republican from Georgia, was among the Twitter users whose account was affected.

The shooting is still under investigation. As of Wednesday, police have shared no evidence that the shooter's gender or gender identity played a role in the shooting.

On its website, the group organizing Saturday's protest said it does not condone violence. In a statement posted on the site, the Trans Radical Activist Network and other organizers also strongly rejected any connection between the school shooting in Nashville and Saturday's protest, which organizers said was planned before the shooting took place.

"Vengeance means fighting back with vehemence," the protest's organizers wrote on their website. "We are fighting against false narratives, criminalization, and eradication of our existence."

Twitter, both currently under Elon Musk and before the billionaire bought the company, has long prohibited the incitement of violence in tweets. In early March, Twitter announced what it called a new policy prohibiting "violent speech" on its platform, though the new rules appear similar to guidelines against violent threats that the company had on its books before Musk took over.

Among the updates, Twitter had expanded its policy to include a ban on "coded language," which is often referred to as "dog whistles," used to indirectly incite violence. It also added a rule that prohibits "threatening to damage civilian homes and shelters, or infrastructure that is essential to daily, civic, or business activities."

## Across Latin America, migrant blaze families left reeling

SONIA PÉREZ D., MORGAN LEE and CLAUDIO ESCALÓN Associated Press

SAN MARTIN JILOTEPEQUE, Guatemala (AP) — The last Ana Marina López heard of her husband, the 51-year-old Guatemalan migrant told his family that he was being detained by Mexican immigration agents at the U.S.-Mexico border.

That was two days before a fire in an immigration detention center in Ciudad Juárez claimed the lives of at least 39 migrants and left more than two dozen injured.

Then his name appeared on a government list of the fire victims, but not specifying whether he was among the dead or the hospitalized. That has left López and her daughter back in their small western

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 42 of 86

Guatemalan town cling to hope that he may be alive.

And they aren't the only ones.

As images of the devastating blaze consume news broadcasts and social media, families scattered across the Americas are reeling in agony as they await news of their loved ones. The pain and uncertainty felt by families underscores how the effects of migration ripple far beyond the individuals who embark on the perilous journey north, touching the lives of people across the region.

In Juarez, Mexico, a sister waits for news of her Venezuelan brother who's been sedated and intubated in a hospital. In Honduras, families sit stunned after watching video of guards hurrying away from a growing cloud of flames and smoke in the immigration detention center.

And in Guatemala, López cradles a photograph of her husband in a cowboy hat unsure if he is alive or dead.

"This shouldn't be able to happen. (Migrants) are people, they are humans," López said, her voice shaking. "What I ask for is justice. They aren't animals and can't be treated as such."

Little is known about the cause of Monday night's fire, and authorities are investigating eight people, including a migrant, who may have started it.

When López's husband, Bacilio Sutuj Saravia, departed on his journey north in mid-March, he told her he was going to Mexico for tourism. Sutuj, who ran a small transport business with two pickup trucks, waited until he was in Mexico to tell her that his intention was to cross to the U.S. to see their daughter and two sons.

However, he never had the chance. Getting off a bus in Juárez's station on Saturday, immigration agents detained him.

López learned of the fire from television news reports. Their children had been unable to reach Sutuj since a brief call he made Saturday saying he had been caught.

"The authorities should be there watching them and taking care of them, not fleeing and leaving them locked up and burned. That pains me," López said.

In the rolling coffee-dotted mountains of western Honduras, the three families horrified by the surveillance video are awaiting confirmation of the fates of their sons. The three friends had set out together for the United States from their small town of Proteccion. Like many in the rural area, the men planned to work and send money back to support their families.

They met a smuggler in San Pedro Sula, a major point of departure in northern Honduras, who took them to Mexico.

On Tuesday the three men's names — Dikson Aron Cordova, Edin Josue Umaña and Jesús Adony Alvarado — were among those to appear on the government's list of victims without any details of whether they were alive.

"You want to be strong, but these are hard blows. They're unbearable," said José Córdoba Ramos, father of 30-year-old Cordova. "We're waiting for real news that would be the first and the last, as they say, if they are alive or dead."

Their concern is matched by anger from watching guards run away from growing flames and thickening smoke rapidly encapsulating migrants.

Another father rambles off questions: Who started the fire? How did they get fire in there? Did a guard give a lighter to someone inside?

"They didn't want to do anything," José Cordova said of the guards.

In Ciudad Juarez at the U.S.-Mexico border, 25-year-old Venezuelan nursing student Stefany Arango Morillo has been left with the same pit in her stomach.

She and her brother Stefan Arango Morillo, both single parents, migrated from their northern Venezuelan city of Maracaibo in February, leaving behind three young children between them with their mother in hopes of claiming asylum in the U.S.

Joining a rising wave of Venezuelans heading to the U.S. border, the siblings traversed seven countries in a month's time to reach Ciudad Juárez.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 43 of 86

Together, they attempted unsuccessfully each day to register through a smart-phone app for an appointment to apply for asylum in the U.S.

But their quest came to an abrupt halt Monday, when Stefan was detained by Mexican immigration authorities and placed behind bars in the detention center that hours later would turn into an inferno.

Stefany, searched desperately for her 32-year-old brother, fearing the worst when she received a text from his phone inside a private hospital. He was alive, but his injuries from smoke inhalation made it nearly impossible for him to talk.

In the hospital, Stefan's health deteriorated, and the aspiring physical education teacher was transferred to the hospital emergency room in a coughing fit.

Hours later, his sister pushed into the bustling hospital and planted a kiss on her brother's forehead shortly before he was sedated and intubated.

"He's playful, but also has a strong will," she said.

In the hospital waiting room she cries as she calls relatives in Venezuela, delivering the news. But as she waits, she clings to hope that she can bring him back home.

"This is a like a life lesson," Stefany said. "And believe me that I know and have faith that my brother, that he'll get out of there and also keep fighting for our dream."

---

Lee reported from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, and Escalón from Proteccion, Honduras. Associated Press writer Megan Janetsky contributed to this report from Mexico City.

## Manhattan claws back people as urban counties stem outflow

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

Turns out the pandemic hasn't permanently dissuaded people — especially immigrants — from seeking their fortunes amid Manhattan's gritty streets and neon lights.

The county that encompasses Manhattan added more than 17,000 residents in the year ending last July after losing almost 111,000 people in the previous 12-month period, according to population estimates released Thursday by the U.S. Census Bureau. The earlier decline was among the worst urban population losses from the COVID-19 outbreak.

New York County was among several large, urban U.S. counties that either gained residents or stemmed the rate of declines between July 2021 and July 2022 compared with a year earlier.

The reversal in population losses was particularly notable in King County, Washington, home to Seattle; as well as in large Sunbelt counties such as Dallas County, Texas; and two South Florida counties, Miami-Dade and Broward. The locations all had something in common: international immigration led the gains.

"The migration and growth patterns for counties edged closer to pre-pandemic levels this year," said Christine Hartley, a Census Bureau official.

Population change is driven by migration, both within U.S. borders as people move around, and international trends, as people arrive from abroad. It also depends on whether births outpace deaths, or vice versa.

Maricopa County, Arizona, home to Phoenix, had the biggest gain of any U.S. county, with almost 57,000 new residents last year. Domestic migration was primarily responsible. Harris County, Texas, home to Houston, followed, with more than 45,000 new residents and international arrivals and natural increases propelling that growth; 20,000 residents left. Collin County, Texas, a northern suburb of Dallas, ranked third in rising population, with more than 44,000 new residents who primarily came from other U.S. counties.

Los Angeles County, the most populous one in the U.S. with 9.7 million people, lost the most residents last year, more than 90,000, as Angelenos moved elsewhere. One bright spot: The loss from domestic migration was 20% less than the previous year. The next biggest population loss was in Cook County, Illinois, home to Chicago, and the nation's second most populous county. That change was also driven by people leaving.

Several San Francisco and San Jose area counties that saw populations dramatically wane from July 2020 to July 2021 — primarily due to tech workers working remotely — had significantly smaller declines in 2022.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 44 of 86

The counties with the biggest influx of international immigration last year were Miami-Dade County, Florida; Harris County; and Los Angeles County.

Harris County, Los Angeles County and Dallas County had the biggest natural increases. Three Florida counties — Pinellas, Sarasota and Volusia — led the U.S. in natural decreases attributed to deaths outpacing births. Florida's median age of 42.7 is one of the highest in the nation.

The growth in Manhattan's New York County was propelled by international migration, and to a lesser extent by domestic migration and births outpacing deaths.

All the population estimates rely on birth, death and migration data.

Despite the most recent gains, New York County was still running a population deficit of almost 98,000 residents as of last July when compared with April 2020, when COVID-19 spread quickly across the U.S. and the metropolitan area became an epicenter of the virus, spurring tens of thousands of residents to flee. Surrounding counties continued losing population last year. The three counties encompassing the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens recorded among the biggest population declines in the U.S., with losses ranging from 40,000 to 50,000 residents.

Several New Jersey counties near New York also experienced outflows last year. They included Hudson County, where the COVID-19 omicron variant closed preschools around Christmas 2021 and drove David Polonsky and his family to move temporarily to South Florida, near his parents. The move became permanent in 2022, as the family acclimated to being near relatives and because Polonsky and his wife could work their tech jobs remotely. They sold their home in Jersey City and purchased one in Palm Beach County, Florida.

Polonsky said he misses some things about the New York area, such as being able to walk places instead of driving, and getting a decent slice of pizza instead of mahi mahi, the fish ubiquitous on Florida menus.

"I love mahi mahi as much as the next person," he said. "But there's only so much mahi mahi you can eat."

---

Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at @MikeSchneiderAP

## Harris enters the fray over democracy with visit to Tanzania

By CHRIS MEGERIAN and EVELYNE MUSAMBI Associated Press

DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania (AP) — U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris will step onto the front lines of the battle for democracy in Africa on Thursday, spending time in Tanzania as it makes fragile progress toward restoring its reputation as a more inclusive government.

Samia Suluhu Hassan, Tanzania's first female president, has undone some of the country's more oppressive policies, such as a ban on opposition rallies, even though she came to power as a member of the ruling party.

She's finishing out the term of President John Magufuli, who died in office and earned a reputation for stamping out dissent, arresting critics and forcing them into exile. Hard-liners have been uncomfortable with some of Hassan's changes, however, which could cost her in the next election two years from now.

Harris, the first woman to serve as U.S. vice president, will meet with Hassan on Thursday, a noteworthy show of support from Washington as the United States deepens its outreach to Africa.

"There's so much excitement here and people are saying it's like Madam President's efforts in changing the country are being rewarded with recognition from an economic and political superpower that is the U.S.," said Tanzania-based analyst Mohamed Issa Hemed.

During a previous meeting in Washington, Harris told Hassan that "we welcome the progress that you have made during the course of your leadership and, in particular, the work you have done to empower women leaders in Tanzania and the work you have done to support human rights."

Harris arrived in Tanzania late Wednesday after spending three nights in Ghana. Much like at her first stop, she was greeted with music and dancing as she walked down a red carpet that was rolled out to Air Force 2. Some of the welcoming party wore shirts with Harris' face.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 45 of 86

Harris is scheduled to spend two nights in Tanzania, then conclude her weeklong trip with a stop in Zambia, another country that is striving to strengthen its democracy. She plans to return to Washington on Sunday.

Idayat Hassan, director of the Centre for Democracy and Development in Abuja, Nigeria, said Harris' visit can help galvanize enthusiasm at a time when there are concerns over backsliding into authoritarianism in Africa and around the world.

"Many people will want the U.S. to speak to the issue of democracy, which they feel is beginning to decline and is not what it used to be," she said. "There are more that need to be assured that democracy is here to stay."

Like Tanzania, Zambia has made uneven steps toward democracy since its independence. However, there's been a burst of hope after the country elected Hakainde Hichilema, a former opposition leader who once faced charges of treason.

Zambia has since decriminalized defamation of the president, a law that was used to stifle opposition. It's also serving as a co-host of President Joe Biden's second Summit for Democracy this week.

However, Hichilema warned this week that economic progress is necessary to sustain open societies.

"You can't eat democracy," he wrote in The Washington Post. "Human rights may sustain the spirit, but not the body."

---

Musambi reported from Nairobi, Kenya.

## **Ecuador court says congress can pursue impeaching president**

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Ecuador's Constitutional Court ruled Wednesday the opposition-dominated National Assembly can take up the question of whether to impeach President Guillermo Lasso over allegations of crimes against state security and corruption.

The ruling was only a first step. The congress still must follow a formal process that requires the presentation of evidence and arguments before legislators may vote on impeachment.

The court, which is the interpreter and guarantor of Ecuador's constitution, gave the go-ahead for impeachment proceedings on a 6-3 vote by the justices.

The issue was put before the court by the unicameral legislature, a body of 137 legislators in which a majority is held by opposition parties led by the Union for Hope party, which has ties to former President Rafael Correa, who governed in 2007-2017.

Lasso, a conservative former banker, began his four-year term in May 2021.

Allegations have been raised that the president's brother-in-law, Danilo Carrera, has links with public officials involved in corruption and drug trafficking. In urging the court to reject the matter, Lasso said there was no evidence to justify the accusations.

The National Assembly now has up to 45 days to complete the impeachment process against Lasso. Removing the president will require the votes of at least 92 of the 137 legislators.

There is constitutional provision that would allow Lasso to dissolve the legislature and then govern by decree for six months while running for re-election. But analysts think that unlikely due to his low popularity among Ecuadorians.

## **Mexico investigates 8 over deadly fire at migrant facility**

By FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ and MORGAN LEE Associated Press

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico (AP) — Mexican authorities said Wednesday that eight employees or officials are being investigated for possible misconduct at a migrant detention center where a fire killed 39 detained men.

Anger and frustration in the northern border city of Ciudad Juarez boiled over as hundreds of migrants walked to a U.S. border gate hoping to make a mass crossing.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 46 of 86

Mexican officials appeared to place blame for the deaths in the fire late Monday largely on private, subcontracted security guards at the detention center in Ciudad Juárez, across the border from El Paso, Texas. Video showed guards hurrying away from the smoky fire apparently without trying to free detainees.

No charges were announced, but authorities said they would seek at least four arrest warrants later in the day, including one for a migrant who was part of what they described as a small group that started the fire. They said a migrant also damaged a security camera inside the cell where the fire occurred.

Five of those under investigation for possible misconduct are private security guards, two are federal immigration agents and one is a Chihuahua state officer, federal Public Safety Secretary Rosa Icela Rodríguez said.

The investigation has centered on the fact that guards appeared to make no effort to open cell doors for the detained men — almost all from Guatemala, Honduras, Venezuela and El Salvador — before smoke filled the room in a matter of seconds.

The deaths caused frustration, and may have played a role in a mass march late Wednesday afternoon by hundreds of migrants, who began walking toward a U.S. border crossing in the belief that American authorities would let them through.

Adding to anger over the deaths was pent-up frustration of migrants who have spent weeks trying to make appointments on a U.S. cellphone app to file asylum claims. Rumors spread among the migrants that they might be let in into the U.S.

Jorman Colón, a 30-year-old Venezuelan migrant, walked hand-in-hand with his 9-year-old daughter, saying he had heard on social media that acquaintances had gotten through.

"We want to turn ourselves in," Colón said, referring to the first step in the asylum process.

Several hundred of the migrants crossed the shallow Rio Grande from Mexico toward the U.S. and approached a gate in the border fence that separates El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. Armed agents stood guard at the U.S. gate entrance.

Venezuelan migrant Victoria Molina, 24, complained that "the app never gives us an (appointment) date."

A group of about 50 migrants initially approached a Border Patrol vehicle and personnel and sat or kneeled on the ground. About 25 of them were then led in single file through the gate into the U.S. and onto a white school-bus style vehicle that drove away.

U.S. officials said Wednesday night that a total of about 1,000 migrants had crossed the river and were being processed in an orderly manner. It was unclear if they would be allowed to remain or be bussed to a formal border crossing for expulsion.

Smoke began billowing out of the migrant detention center late Monday after a group of detained migrants set fire to foam mattresses, to protest what they thought were plans to move or deport them.

Immigration authorities said they released 15 women when the fire broke out, but have not explained why no men were let out.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Wednesday that both immigration agents and security guards from a private contractor were present at the facility.

Also Wednesday, Pope Francis offered prayers at the end of his general audience for those who died in the "tragic fire."

Leaked surveillance video shows migrants, reportedly fearing they were about to be moved, placing foam mattresses against the bars of their detention cell and setting them on fire.

In the video, later confirmed by the government, two people dressed as guards rush into the camera frame, and at least one migrant appears by the metal gate on the other side. But the guards don't appear to make any effort to open the cell doors and instead hurry away as billowing clouds of smoke fill the structure within seconds.

It was unclear if the two guards actually had the keys, but authorities suggested Wednesday that they should have gotten them or broken the lock — a highly difficult task, given the quick spread of smoke.

U.S. authorities have offered to help treat some of the nearly 30 people who are hospitalized in critical or serious condition, most apparently from smoke inhalation.

The migrants were stuck in Ciudad Juarez because U.S. immigration policies don't allow them to cross the border to file asylum claims. But they were rounded up because Ciudad Juarez residents were tired of migrants blocking border crossings or asking for money.

"There were several complaints from neighbors about a group of migrants, we don't know if it was this group or another, that was allegedly acting aggressively, asking people in the street for money, demanding it," said Rodríguez.

The high level of frustration in Ciudad Juarez was already evident earlier this month when hundreds of mostly Venezuelan migrants tried to force their way across one of the international bridges to El Paso, acting on false rumors that the United States would allow them to enter the country. U.S. authorities blocked their attempts.

After that, Ciudad Juarez Mayor Cruz Pérez Cuellar started campaigning to inform migrants there was room in shelters and no need to beg in the streets. He urged residents not to give money to them, and said authorities removed migrants intersections where it was dangerous to beg and residents saw the activity as a nuisance.

On Wednesday, the mayor told AP his office had not received any report of rights abuses of migrants in detention facilities. He insisted that his government shared no responsibility for what happened.

"It's a terrible tragedy that pains all of us. We are grieving," he said, adding that authorities should "come down with the full weight of the law on those responsible – the people that for instance, didn't open the doors for the migrants."

---

Associated Press videojournalist Alicia Fernández and writers Maria Verza Guadalupe Peñuelas in Ciudad Juarez, Mark Stevenson in Mexico City, Sonia Pérez D. in Guatemala City and Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.

## Victims of Nashville school shooting honored in somber vigil

By TRAVIS LOLLER, KIMBERLEE KRUESI and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Hundreds gathered Wednesday at a candlelight vigil in Nashville to honor and mourn the three children and three adults who were killed in a shooting at a Christian school this week.

The downtown ceremony for the victims of the shooting at The Covenant School was somber and at times tearful, as speaker after speaker read the names of the victims and offered condolences to their loved ones. The family of Mike Hill, a 61-year-old custodian who was among those killed, was in attendance, including his seven children.

First lady Jill Biden also was on hand but did not address the crowd. Sheryl Crow sang "I Shall Believe" and ended with the lyrics from a Dionne Warwick song, "What the World Needs Now is Love, Sweet Love." Margo Price sang an a cappella version of "Tears of Rage." And Ketch Secor of Old Crow Medicine Show led the crowd in the Christian hymn, "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," which brought many to tears.

"Just two days ago was our city's worst day," Mayor John Cooper said. "I so wish we weren't here, but we need to be here."

Shaundelle Brooks, who lost her 23-year-old son, Akilah Dasilva, in the 2018 Nashville Waffle House shooting, said she went to the vigil to support the families of those slain at the school.

"I know what it's like to be a parent — what it feels like, like you're drowning and can't move, and that weakness and that hole that comes in your stomach," she said.

Police have said a 28-year-old former student drove up to the school Monday morning, shot out the glass doors, entered and began firing indiscriminately.

The dead were identified as students Evelyn Dieckhaus, Hallie Scruggs and William Kinney, all 9 years old; Katherine Koonce, 60, the head of the school; substitute teacher Cynthia Peak, 61; and Hill.

Authorities have not yet determined the shooter's motive but say the assailant did not target specific victims.

Price, who has been particularly vocal about Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee's position on state gun laws, tweeted

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 48 of 86

after the shooting: "Our children are dying and being shot in school, but you're more worried about drag queens than smart gun laws? You have blood on your hands." Crow and Secor also called for stricter gun laws in tweets posted after the shooting.

But there was no talk of gun control at the vigil, as people steered clear of the political divide between blue-leaning Nashville and ruby red Tennessee. Republicans and Democratic lawmakers stood together in asking for remembrance of the six who died.

Lee said Tuesday that Peak was a close friend of his wife, Maria, and that the two had been planning to meet for dinner after Peak's work that day.

"Maria woke up this morning without one of her best friends," Lee said in a video statement, adding that his wife once taught with Peak and Koonce. The women, he said, "have been family friends for decades."

Earlier Wednesday, Pope Francis sent condolences to Nashville and offered prayers to those affected.

George Grant, a pastor and leader with the Nashville Presbytery, also avoided any mention of politics.

"As pundits and politicians try to make sense out of the senseless, we're not really asking why. We know why — we live in a broken, fallen world," Grant said Wednesday morning. The church linked to the school is a member of the presbytery, which includes congregations in middle Tennessee and southwestern Kentucky.

In a blog post Wednesday, Grant recounted how notifications about an active shooter at the school interrupted a presbytery planning meeting that included Chad Scruggs, Covenant Presbyterian Church pastor and father of one of the shooting victims.

"We emptied into the hallway, stricken, eyes clouded with unbelief, horror and grief. ... Our worst fears were realized," Grant wrote.

Police said the shooter, identified as Audrey Hale, was under a doctor's care for an undisclosed emotional disorder and was not on the radar of police before the attack. Hale was fatally shot by police at the school Monday.

Authorities have given unclear information on Hale's gender.

For hours Monday, police identified the shooter as a woman. Later in the day, the police chief said Hale was transgender. In an email Tuesday, a police spokesperson said Hale "was assigned female at birth" but used masculine pronouns on a social media profile.

Maria Colomy, a former teacher at the Nossi College of Art & Design in Nashville, recalled Hale as a talented artist while a student in Colomy's social media class in 2017. Colomy remembered Hale "going above and beyond" on projects.

She said she saw postings on Facebook during the past year in which Hale wrote about the death of a romantic partner and asked to be called by a male name and male pronouns.

Hale had "been very publicly grieving" on Facebook, Colomy said. "It was during that grief (Hale) said, 'In this person's honor, I am going to be the person who I want to be, and I want to be called Aiden.'"

On Hale's first day at the Nossi School, Colomy said she saw Hale become frustrated while trying to log into the student portal and start to cry.

"I went up to (Hale) and said, 'Hey, if you need to step out, it's totally OK,'" Colomy said. But after that, Colomy said Hale began to feel safe at school and "really started thriving."

Samira Hardcastle, who attended both middle and high school with Hale, said Hale seemed sweet and socially awkward. Hardcastle said she spoke to Hale briefly last month at an event for a mutual friend, and nothing seemed out of the ordinary.

"I don't think we can rationalize irrational actions, so I am just trying to make peace with that," she said.

---

AP Religion News Editor Holly Meyer in Nashville and News Verification Reporter Beatrice Dupuy in New York contributed to this report.



## West Virginia governor signs ban on gender-affirming care

By LEAH WILLINGHAM Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — West Virginia Republican Gov. Jim Justice on Wednesday signed a bill banning gender-affirming care for minors, joining at least 10 other states that have enacted laws restricting or outlawing medically supported treatments for transgender youth.

The bill outlaws those under 18 from being prescribed hormone therapy and fully reversible puberty blockers. It also bans minors from receiving gender-affirming surgery, something physicians say doesn't even happen in West Virginia.

Unlike measures passed in other states, however, West Virginia's law contains a unique exemption: It permits doctors to prescribe medical therapy if a teenager is considered at risk for self-harm or suicide.

Under the law, which will take effect in January 2024, a patient can be prescribed puberty blockers and hormone therapy after receiving parental consent and a diagnosis of severe gender dysphoria from two clinicians, including a mental health provider or an adolescent medicine specialist.

Both practitioners must be trained to diagnose and treat young people with severe gender dysphoria and provide written testimony that medical interventions are necessary to prevent or limit possible or actual self-harm.

The provisions were added at the urging of Senate Majority Leader Tom Takubo, who is a physician.

"These kids struggle. They have incredible difficulties," the Republican said on the Senate floor earlier this month. Takubo cited more than a dozen peer-reviewed studies showing a decrease in rates of suicide ideation and attempts among youth with severe gender dysphoria who had access to medication therapy.

Gender dysphoria is defined by medical professionals as severe psychological distress experienced by those whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth.

The bill also prohibits minors from being prescribed hormone therapy before the age of puberty, something West Virginia physicians say doesn't happen anyway.

The medication dosage for any adolescent must be the lowest possible necessary to "treat the psychiatric condition and not for purposes of gender alteration," according to the bill.

The West Virginia law comes as Republican lawmakers across the U.S. have pursued several hundred proposals this year to push back on LGBTQ+ rights, particularly rights for transgender residents, including banning transgender girls from girls sports, keeping transgender people from using restrooms in line with their gender identities and allowing or requiring schools to deadname trans students.

Lawmakers in West Virginia and other states moving to enact bans on transgender health care for youth and young adults often characterize gender-affirming treatments as medically unproven, potentially dangerous in the long term and a symptom of "woke" culture.

Every major medical organization, including the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychiatric Association, supports gender-affirming care for youths.

A 2017 study by UCLA Law's The Williams Institute estimated West Virginia had the highest per capita rate of transgender youth in the country.

The rate of suicide ideation, or having suicidal thoughts or ideas, for transgender youth in West Virginia is three times higher than the rate for all youth in the state, according to West Virginia Youth Risk Behavior Survey data.

Natalie Frazier, who oversees gender-affirming care for Planned Parenthood in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia, said the bill Justice signed Wednesday was "better than it could have been."

"But it's still unnecessary — just an unnecessary barrier to care that is going to end up harming people," she said, adding that not every child's family will have the resources to travel to two different clinicians for a gender dysphoria diagnosis.

Frazier, who is also a certified nurse midwife, said the diagnosis of severe gender dysphoria with risk of suicide "could probably apply to just about any kid getting access to gender-affirming care."

"That's why people are so invested in providing the care because there is a disproportionate risk," she

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 50 of 86

said. "That's something that any of these kids could be at risk for and nobody's going into this care lightly."

West Virginia's ban also includes exemptions for people who are born intersex and for people taking treatments for infection, injury, disease or disorder that has been "caused by or exacerbated by the performance of gender transition procedures."

Surgeries can be performed if a child is at risk for "imminent danger of death or impairment of a major bodily function."

At least 11 states have now enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming care for minors: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Utah, South Dakota and West Virginia. Federal judges have blocked enforcement of laws in Alabama and Arkansas, and nearly two dozen states are considering bills this year to restrict or ban care.

## DeSantis' board says Disney stripped them of power

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — Board members picked by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis to oversee the governance of Walt Disney World said Wednesday that their Disney-controlled predecessors pulled a fast one on them by passing restrictive covenants that strip the new board of many of its powers.

The current supervisors of the Central Florida Tourism Oversight District said at a meeting that their predecessors last month signed a development agreement with the company that gave Disney maximum developmental power over the theme park resort's 27,000 acres in central Florida.

The five supervisors were appointed by the Republican governor to the board after the Florida Legislature overhauled Disney's government in retaliation for the entertainment giant publicly opposing so-called "Don't Say Gay" legislation that bars instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten through third grade, as well as lessons deemed not age-appropriate.

In taking on Disney, DeSantis furthered his reputation as a culture warrior willing to battle perceived political enemies and wield the power of state government to accomplish political goals, a strategy that is expected to continue ahead of his potential White House run.

The new supervisors replaced a board that had been controlled by Disney during the previous 55 years that the government operated as the Reedy Creek Improvement District. The new board members held their first meeting earlier this month and said they found out about the agreement after their appointments.

"We're going to have to deal with it and correct it," board member Brian Aungst said Wednesday. "It's a subversion of the will of the voters and the Legislature and the governor. It completely circumvents the authority of this board to govern."

Under the terms of the agreement, the district is prohibited from using the name "Disney" or any symbols associated with the theme park resort without the company's permission, nor can it use the likeness of Mickey Mouse, other Disney characters or other intellectual property in any manner. The company can sue for damages for any violations, and the agreement is in effect until perpetuity, according to the declaration.

If the agreement is deemed to violate rules against perpetuity, it will be in effect until 21 years after the death of the last survivor of the descendants of England's King Charles III, the declaration said.

In a statement, Disney said all agreements were above board and took place in public.

"All agreements signed between Disney and the District were appropriate, and were discussed and approved in open, noticed public forums in compliance with Florida's Government in the Sunshine law," the statement said.

Separately, Disney World service workers on Wednesday voted to accept a union contract offer that raises the starting minimum wage to \$18 an hour by the end of the year.

"Our cast members have always been at the heart of the Walt Disney World experience, and we are thrilled that, with the support of the union, they have overwhelmingly approved this new five-year agreement that significantly increases wages, alongside our leading benefits program that includes affordable medical coverage and more," Walt Disney World Resort president Jeff Vahle said in a statement. "Frontline employees also have access to 100 percent paid tuition for higher education through the Disney Aspire program."

The agreement covers around 45,000 service workers at the Disney theme park resort, including costumed

performers who perform as Mickey Mouse and other Disney characters, bus drivers, culinary workers, lifeguards, theatrical workers and hotel housekeepers.

Workers will see their hourly wages rise between \$5.50 and \$8.60 an hour by the end of the five-year contract, according to union leaders.

A contract approved five years ago made Disney the first major employer in central Florida to agree to a minimum hourly wage of \$15, setting the trend for other workers in the region dominated by hospitality jobs.

## California reparations amount, if any, left to politicians

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The leader of California's first-in-the-nation reparations task force on Wednesday said it won't take a stance on how much the state should compensate Black residents whom economists estimate may be owed more than \$800 billion for decades of over-policing, disproportionate incarceration and housing discrimination.

The \$800 billion is more than 2.5 times California's \$300 billion annual budget and does not include a recommended \$1 million per older Black resident for health disparities that have shortened their average life span. Nor does the figure count compensating people for property unjustly taken by the government or devaluing Black businesses, two other harms the task force says the state perpetuated.

"All forms of discrimination should be considered in reparations," Thomas Craemer, a public policy professor at the University of Connecticut, told the panel Wednesday. "The task force should feel free to go beyond our loss estimates, and determine what the right amount would be."

Black residents may not receive cash payments anytime soon, if ever, because the state Legislature and Gov. Gavin Newsom will ultimately decide whether any reparations are to be paid. The task force faces a July 1 deadline to recommend the forms of compensation to be awarded and who should receive it, along with other remedies to repair the harm.

But the panel's chair, Kamilah Moore, said Wednesday it's up to the state Legislature to ascribe a restitution amount based on the methodology economists recommended, and which the task force approved on Wednesday.

"The task force is pretty much done regarding the compensation component. Our task was to create a methodology for calculation for various forms of compensation that correspond with our findings," she said in an e-mail.

For those who support reparations, the staggering \$800 billion estimate underscores the long-lasting harm Black Americans have endured, even in a state that never officially endorsed slavery.

Several people who gave public comment Wednesday spoke of the urgent need to pay Black Americans for all that was taken from them.

"My family came from the South because they were running for their lives, they were fearful of being lynched, just for voting," said Charlton Curry of Sacramento, California, who discusses reparations on his Big C Sports podcast.

"Cash payments are necessary. Money talks," he said, noting that white people benefited from free U.S. government land through the 1862 Homestead Act, and Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II and Jewish Holocaust victims received reparations.

Critics pin their opposition partly on the fact that California was never a slave state and say current taxpayers should not be responsible for damage linked to events that germinated hundreds of years ago.

Bob Woodson, a prominent Black conservative, calls reparations impractical, controversial and counter-productive.

"No amount of money could ever 'make right' the evil of slavery, and it is insulting to suggest that it could," he said in an email to The Associated Press, adding that Black communities relied on faith and family to build thriving communities following slavery. "Some of these communities only began coming apart after we lost sight of these values, which also hold the key to these communities' restoration."

Financial redress is just one part of the package being considered. Other proposals include paying incar-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 52 of 86

cerated inmates market value for their labor, establishing free wellness centers and planting more trees in Black communities, banning cash bail, and adopting a K-12 Black studies curriculum.

Reparations talks are stalled at the federal level, but the idea flourished in California as well as U.S. cities and counties following the death of George Floyd, a Black man, at the hands of Minneapolis police. Newsom signed legislation in 2020 creating the reparations task force.

An advisory committee in San Francisco has recommended \$5 million payouts, as well as guaranteed income of at least \$97,000 and personal debt forgiveness for qualifying individuals. Supervisors expressed general support, but stopped short of endorsing specific proposals. They'll take up the issue later this year.

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris on Wednesday said from Ghana that she and President Joe Biden support a reparations study, but the president has so far sidestepped calls from advocates to create a federal commission.

The \$800 billion estimate in California includes \$246 billion to compensate eligible Black Californians whose neighborhoods were subjected to aggressive policing and prosecution in the "war on drugs" from 1970 to 2020. That would translate to nearly \$125,000 for every person who qualifies, the consultants wrote.

The numbers are approximate, based on modeling and population estimates. The economists also included \$569 billion to make up for the discriminatory practice of redlining in housing loans. That would amount to about \$223,000 per eligible resident from 1933 to 1977. The \$569 billion is considered a maximum and assumes all 2.5 million Californians who identify as Black would be eligible.

But they won't all be. People must meet residency and other requirements for monetary compensation. They also must be descendants of enslaved and freed Black people in the U.S. as of the 19th century, which leaves out Black immigrants.

The task force on Wednesday also endorsed methodologies for devaluation of black businesses and unjust property takings. Those methodologies have no numbers due to a lack of data.

---

AP White House reporter Chris Megerian contributed from Accra, Ghana

---

This story has been corrected to reflect that the task force is not required to recommend specific compensation amounts in its July 1 report to the Legislature. It is required to make recommendations on what form compensation should take and who should be eligible.

## **GOP lawmakers override veto of transgender bill in Kentucky**

By BRUCE SCHREINER Associated Press

FRANKFORT, Ky. (AP) — Republican lawmakers in Kentucky on Wednesday swept aside the Democratic governor's veto of a bill regulating some of the most personal aspects of life for transgender young people — from banning access to gender-affirming health care to restricting the bathrooms they can use.

The votes to override Gov. Andy Beshear's veto were lopsided in both legislative chambers — where the GOP wields supermajorities — and came on the next-to-last day of this year's legislative session. The Senate voted 29-8 to override Beshear's veto. A short time later, the House completed the override on a vote of 76-23.

As emotions surged, some people protesting the bill from the House gallery were removed and arrested after their prolonged chanting rang out in the chamber. The protesters, their hands bound, chanted "there's more of us not here" as they waited to be taken away from the Capitol.

Nineteen people were arrested and charged with third-degree criminal trespassing after the sergeant of arms requested assistance in restoring order, Kentucky State Police said. Officers gave each person "the option to leave without any enforcement action or be placed under arrest," said Capt. Paul Blanton, a state police spokesperson.

"I think it's unfortunate that it reached that level and certainly they were given, as I've been told since then, multiple opportunities to either quiet their chants or to leave voluntarily," Republican House Speaker David Osborne said later.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 53 of 86

The bill's opponents framed the issue as a civil-rights fight. Democratic Rep. Sarah Stalker said: "Kentucky will be on the wrong side of history" by enacting the measure.

The debate about the transgender bill will likely spill over into this year's gubernatorial campaign, with Beshear's veto drawing GOP condemnation as he seeks reelection to a second term. A legal fight also is brewing. The American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky reaffirmed that it intends to "take this fight to the courts" to try to preserve access to health care options for young transgender people.

"While we lost the battle in the legislature, our defeat is temporary. We will not lose in court," said Chris Hartman, executive director of the Fairness Campaign, an LGBTQ+ advocacy organization.

In praising the veto override, David Walls, executive director of The Family Foundation, said the bill puts "policy in alignment with the truth that every child is created as a male or female and deserves to be loved, treated with dignity and accepted for who they really are."

Activists on both sides of the impassioned debate gathered at the statehouse to make competing appeals before lawmakers took up the transgender bill following an extended break.

At a rally that drew hundreds of transgender-rights supporters, trans teenager Sun Pacyga held up a sign summing up a grim review of the Republican legislation. The sign read: "Our blood is on your hands."

"If it passes, the restricted access to gender-affirming health care, I think trans kids will die because of that," the 17-year-old student said, expressing a persistent concern among the bill's critics that the restrictions could lead to an increase in teen suicides.

Bill supporters assembled to defend the measure, saying it protects trans children from undertaking gender-affirming treatments they might regret as adults. Research shows such regret is rare, however.

"We cannot allow people to continue down the path of fantasy, to where they're going to end up 10, 20, 30 years down the road and find themselves miserable from decisions that they made when they were young," said Republican Rep. Shane Baker at a rally.

The legislation in Kentucky is part of a national movement, with state lawmakers approving extensive measures that restrict the rights of LGBTQ+ people this year — from bills targeting trans athletes and drag performers to measures limiting gender-affirming care.

At least 11 states have now enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming care for minors: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Utah, South Dakota and West Virginia. Federal judges have blocked enforcement of laws in Alabama and Arkansas, and nearly two dozen states are considering bills this year to restrict or ban care.

The debate among Kentucky lawmakers reflected the impassioned arguments put forth at rallies.

"We are denying families, their physicians and their therapists the right to make medically informed decisions for their families," Democratic Sen. Karen Berg said in opposing the bill. Berg read what her son, Henry Berg-Brousseau, wrote in advocating for transgender rights shortly before his death late last year at age 24. The cause was suicide, his mother said.

Republican Sen. Robby Mills said he supported the bill because of his belief that "puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones, when administered to youth under 18 for the purpose of altering their appearance, is dangerous for the health of that child."

Transgender medical treatments have long been available in the United States and are endorsed by major medical associations.

The Kentucky measure will ban gender-affirming care for minors. It will outlaw gender reassignment surgery for anyone under 18, as well as the use of puberty blockers and hormones, and inpatient and outpatient gender-affirming hospital services.

Doctors will have to set a timeline to "detransition" children already taking puberty blockers or undergoing hormone therapy. They could continue offering care as they taper a youngster's treatments, if removing them from the treatment immediately could harm the child.

Parts of the bill dealing with gender-affirming medical care will take effect in about three months.

The bill will not allow schools to discuss sexual orientation or gender identity with students of any age. It will also require school districts to devise bathroom policies that, "at a minimum," won't allow transgender

children to use the bathroom aligned with their gender identities.

It will further allow teachers to refuse to refer to transgender students by the pronouns they use and require schools to notify parents when lessons related to human sexuality are going to be taught.

Another trans teenager, Hazel Hardesty, said the potential discontinuation of gender-affirming health care would mean "my male puberty would continue," which would "cause a lot of mental distress."

"People don't even understand how it feels," the 16-year-old said in an interview at a rally. "Going through the wrong puberty, every day your body is a little bit farther from what feels like you. And eventually you don't even recognize yourself in the mirror."

## Nashville shooting timeline: What we know so far

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

Monday's shooting at a private Christian school in Nashville unfolded over approximately 15 minutes as a shooter opened fire inside, killing six people, before police arrived and fatally shot the suspect.

Three children and three adults were killed in the shooting at The Covenant School.

Ever since a May 2022 attack inside a classroom in Uvalde, Texas, police response times to school shootings have come under greater scrutiny. In that shooting, 70 minutes passed before law enforcement stormed the classroom.

In Nashville, police said about eight minutes passed from the initial call to when officers arrived at the scene. Within about four minutes after police arrived on campus, the shooter, Audrey Hale, 28, was taken down. Authorities have not yet determined the shooter's motive but said Hale, a former student at the school, did not target specific victims.

Here's a look at what is known about the shooting and the Nashville police response:

### THE SHOOTER'S ARRIVAL

9:53 a.m.

Hale arrived by car in the expansive parking lot Monday, according to a time stamp on edited school surveillance video released by police.

Hale drove past someone who appears to be a maintenance worker standing on a sidewalk, and later children on swings in a playground before parking the vehicle.

10:11 a.m.

Carrying two "assault-style" weapons as well as a handgun, Hale shot out glass doors at a side entrance to the school, according to surveillance video time stamps, kicked away remaining shards, ducked under a door crossbar and entered the school.

### THE POLICE RESPONSE

10:13 a.m.

Police said they got the call about an active shooter.

As officers responded, there were two immediate, glaring hurdles, according to Metropolitan Nashville Police Chief John Drake: Traffic was snarled as police tried to weave their way to the school and police cars in the parking lot had been hit by gunfire.

### SHOTS INSIDE THE SCHOOL

10:21 a.m.

With alarms blaring and the school's emergency lights blinking, Hale walked slowly through a hallway, checked doors and briefly went into an office.

The surveillance video finishes with the shooter far down a hallway, looking to the right where the hallway intersects with another room, and firing shots into the other room.

At the same time, officers arrived on campus, police spokesman Don Aaron said in an email, citing dispatch records.

### POLICE VIDEO

In a six-minute compilation of bodycam video from two different officers released by police that didn't include time stamps, Officer Rex Engelbert parked his patrol car, opened the trunk and removed a service

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 55 of 86

rifle from a duffelbag. He closed the trunk and walked up to a woman who told him that students were locked down and that people inside had just heard gunshots.

"OK," Engelbert replies in a calm tone. "Yes, ma'am."

Engelbert and other officers swiftly searched classrooms, holding rifles and announcing themselves as police. The officers went upstairs to the second floor and entered a lobby area, followed by a barrage of gunfire and officers yelling commands.

10:24 a.m.

Officers "engaged" the suspect, Drake said.

Within two minutes of that, the suspect was shot, according to the dispatch records.

Approximately 15 minutes had passed from when Hale shot in the doors, according to the surveillance video and dispatch records. It's not known exactly when Hale killed the six people.

## CHURCH LEADERS

At another Presbyterian church about 10 minutes away from The Covenant School, a meeting was taking place among area church leaders when news of the shooting quickly spread, said George Grant, a leader with the Nashville Presbytery, which is connected with the private school.

"The first calls came to us at about the same moment that the police were arriving on the property," Grant said.

In a separate blog post Wednesday, Grant said "suddenly, unexpectedly, our deliberations were interrupted by a flurry of calls and texts: there was an active shooter at Covenant's school facility. We emptied into the hallway ... The Covenant men hurried on their way back to the church. The rest of us began frenzied monitoring of the news while contacting our own flocks and families to mobilize prayer."

After the shooting, the remaining students who were locked down at the school were ferried to a safe location to be reunited with their parents.

## THE HOME SEARCH

Afternoon

During a search of Hale's home after the shooting, investigators found a sawed-off shotgun, a second shotgun and other unspecified evidence.

Drake said after Hale's parents were interviewed, it was determined the shooter legally purchased seven firearms from five different local gun stores. Three were used in Monday's shooting. Drake said.

Hale's parents were unaware that Hale had obtained most of the weapons. They said they believed Hale had only purchased one gun and had sold it.

---

AP Religion News Editor Holly Meyer contributed to this report.

## Most gig workers paid sick leave under new Seattle law

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Most gig workers in Seattle will be permanently entitled to paid sick leave and safe time under a first-in-the-nation law signed by Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell on Wednesday. The measure expands pandemic-era protections and strengthens labor rights for app-based workers.

Seattle previously allowed food delivery workers to accrue paid sick and safe time, but that policy was due to expire May 1, six months after the end of the emergency order imposed by the city during the coronavirus pandemic.

The City Council voted unanimously Tuesday to make it permanent for "on-demand" gig workers on apps such as DoorDash, Postmates and Instacart.

"A healthy workforce leads to a healthy community, and no one should have to choose between taking a sick day to care for themselves — or their families — and making rent," Harrell said.

The measure also expands the categories of workers covered by the policy beyond food delivery, to include those who work for car wash or other apps. Workers who set their own rates, such as those on some pet-sitting apps, will not be covered, however.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 56 of 86

Drivers for transportation companies such as Uber and Lyft already earn paid sick and safe time through a state law signed by Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee last year.

Seattle in 2012 became one of the first cities to require businesses to provide paid sick leave for gig workers when they have medical appointments or need to help care for a sick relative, and safe leave if they need to care for themselves or a family member because of domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault.

The city expanded the law to cover app-based food delivery workers in 2020, citing the danger many were exposing themselves to so they could earn money for rent or other expenses. Some companies failed to comply; Postmates agreed to pay nearly \$1 million after denying workers in Seattle sick time.

Making the policy permanent is the latest in a string of victories for labor advocates in the city. The council last spring approved a bill guaranteeing app drivers minimum pay and mileage.

In an emailed statement, Instacart suggested the measure was "misguided."

"Instacart is willing to work with any policymaker that prioritizes the health and safety of shoppers who choose to earn income through our platform," it said. "However, at a time of high inflation and tightening household budgets, it is critical that policymakers also take into account the rising financial burden their misguided policy proposals could have on their constituents."

Nationally, President Joe Biden's administration has proposed new standards that could make it more difficult to classify millions of workers as independent contractors and deny them minimum wage and benefits.

"I've heard from workers on these apps for years that ... being forced to work through injuries and sickness was always a huge challenge," Joel Shapiro, co-founder of the Seattle-based grocery-delivery app Dumpling, told the council. "All workers should have the ability to take sick time when needed, no matter what kind of work they do."

City Council Member Teresa Mosqueda, who sponsored the measure, thanked the workers for their efforts.

"Our city needs to be taking care of you the way that you've taken care of our families," Mosqueda said before the bill signing. "If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that we need to protect workers on the front line, protect their health, because your health is good for the population's health."

Under the law, workers will accrue one day of paid sick or safe time for every 30 days they make a work-related stop in Seattle. They would be paid their average daily compensation for each calendar day they worked in Seattle over the previous 12 months.

Maria Hernandez, who has worked for apps delivering food since 2019, testified before the council Tuesday that when she had surgery for breast cancer in 2021, doctors told her to take three months off to prepare for radiation. But she had little money in the bank and returned to work after just one month; her company insisted the paid sick leave was only for COVID-related illness, she said.

"This new permanent law will help create more than a free day for anyone who is sick," she said. "It will give us tranquility and some peace in our hearts."

## 7 California officers charged in death of man in custody

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Prosecutors charged seven California Highway Patrol officers and a nurse with involuntary manslaughter on Wednesday in connection with the 2020 death of a man who screamed "I can't breathe" while multiple officers restrained him as they tried to take a blood sample.

Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascón announced the charges in the death of Edward Bronstein, which the LA County coroner said was caused by "acute methamphetamine intoxication during restraint by law enforcement."

"The officers had a legal duty to Mr. Bronstein," Gascón said during a news conference. "He was in their custody. We believe that they failed their duty and their failure was criminally negligent, causing his death."

Bronstein, 38, was taken into custody following a traffic stop on suspicion of driving under the influence on March 31, 2020. He died at a CHP station in Altadena, north of downtown Los Angeles, less than two months before George Floyd was killed by police in Minneapolis as he, too, repeatedly told officers, "I



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 57 of 86

can't breathe."

Luis Carrillo, an attorney representing Bronstein's father, said in an email that his client "is glad that the CHP officers were charged with crimes because the CHP officers took a human life and left a family in grief and sadness."

A nearly 18-minute video showing the officers' treatment of Bronstein was released last year following a judge's order in an ongoing federal lawsuit that the man's family filed against the officers, alleging excessive force and a violation of civil rights.

Family members have said Bronstein was terrified of needles and believe that's why he was reluctant to comply with the CHP initially as they tried to take a blood sample.

The video, filmed by the sergeant, shows several officers forcing a handcuffed Bronstein to a mat on the floor as he shouts, "I'll do it willingly! I'll do it willingly, I promise!"

He continues screaming as six officers hold him face-down — the lawsuit alleges they put their knees on his back — and pleads for help.

"It's too late," one officer replies. "Stop yelling!" another shouts.

"I can't breathe!" and "I can't!" Bronstein cries, and an officer responds, "Just relax and stop resisting!"

But Bronstein's voice gets softer and he then falls silent. While he is unresponsive, the nurse continues to draw blood and the officers keep pinning him down.

After they realize he may not have a pulse and does not appear to be breathing, they slap his face and say, "Edward, wake up." More than 11 minutes after his last screams, they begin CPR.

Bronstein never regained consciousness and was later pronounced dead.

In a statement, CHP Commissioner Sean Duryee extended condolences to the family and said the agency's mission is to prioritize all Californians' safety.

"I am saddened that Mr. Bronstein died while in our custody and care. Any death in custody is a tragedy that we take with utmost seriousness," Duryee said. "I recognize this case will now move through the court system, and I respect the judicial process."

The seven CHP agents, who were put on administrative leave Wednesday, were identified as Sgt. Michael Little and Officers Dionisio Fiorella, Dustin Osmanson, Darren Parsons, Diego Romero, Justin Silva and Marciel Terry.

They face one count each of involuntary manslaughter and one felony count of assault under the color of authority. If convicted, they could get up to four years in prison.

It was not immediately clear whether they had lawyers who could speak on their behalf, and the California Association of Highway Patrolmen, the union that represents rank-and-file CHP officers, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The registered nurse, Arbi Baghalian, was also charged with involuntary manslaughter.

"I believe it is outrageous and irresponsible for the DA to charge a Registered Nurse (who was present to take a legal blood draw) with involuntary manslaughter," said John Kelly, an attorney for Baghalian's employer, Vital Medical, in a statement. "I am not aware of anyone who has opined that the nurse's conduct in any way caused or contributed to this unfortunate death."

An arraignment has not yet been scheduled.

Bronstein's death prompted the CHP to change its policies to prevent officers "from using techniques or transport methods that involve a substantial risk of positional asphyxia," the agency said. Additional training was also ordered for uniformed officers.

In September 2021, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a law barring police from using certain face-down holds that have led to multiple unintended deaths. The bill was aimed at expanding on the state's ban on chokeholds in the wake of Floyd's murder.

## Capitol riot: FBI informant testifies for Proud Boys defense

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An FBI informant who marched to the U.S. Capitol with fellow Proud Boys members on Jan. 6 testified on Wednesday that he didn't know of any plans for the far-right extremist group to invade the building and didn't think they inspired the violence that day.

The informant, who was identified in court and in a court record only as "Aaron," was a defense witness at the trial of former Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrío and four lieutenants charged with seditious conspiracy for what prosecutors said was a plot to keep Donald Trump in the White House after the 2020 presidential election.

The informant was communicating with his FBI handler as the mob of Trump supporters swarmed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, writing in a text message that police barriers were down and the crowd was almost at the building. He also told his handler that the Proud Boys "did not do it, nor inspire."

"The crowd did as a herd mentality. Not organized," he wrote. The handler's response was redacted from a screenshot that a defense attorney showed to jurors.

A prosecutor later suggested that the informant sent that text only after it became clear that he and other members could be in serious trouble. The prosecutor also suggested that the informant wasn't a mere observer to the riot, showing video that captured him helping another Proud Boy use a podium to block a security gate from closing.

The presence of government informants in the far-right group has repeatedly come up in the lengthy trial, as defense lawyers seek to undermine prosecutors' claim that the Proud Boys plotted to attack the Capitol to stop Congress from certifying President Joe Biden's electoral victory.

"Aaron," who was allowed to withhold a last name when he testified, is one of several Proud Boys associates who were informants before or after the Jan. 6 attack. He is the first to testify at the trial, one of the most important to emerge from the Justice Department's massive investigation of the Capitol riot.

Revelations about the informants have raised fresh questions about intelligence failures before the riot. A U.S. Senate report examining security failures surrounding the riot found that law enforcement had intelligence leading up to Jan. 6 that some Trump supporters were threatening violence and planning a siege to stop the certification of Biden's victory.

The informant, however, who joined the Proud Boys in 2019, said he wasn't a group leader and didn't know any Tarrío or any of the other leaders on trial. He was not in any of the Telegram chats the Proud Boys leaders on trial are accused of using to plot in the days leading up to Jan. 6.

Law enforcement routinely uses informants in criminal investigations, but their methods and identities can be closely guarded secrets. Federal authorities haven't publicly released much information about their use of informants in the far-right group.

The informant told jurors that his relationship with the FBI began around 2008 and investigators didn't ask him to join the Proud Boys or direct him to gather information about the group. The FBI also didn't ask him to go to Washington on Jan. 6 or march with the Proud Boys that day, he said.

The informant planned his travel to Washington with members of a Kansas City chapter of the Proud Boys, including at least four who were charged with conspiring to impede the Electoral College vote on Jan. 6, he said.

The informant told jurors that marching from the Washington Monument to the Capitol appeared to be a photo opportunity for the Proud Boys. He said he reached out to his handler when the violence erupted on Jan. 6 because he saw it as an "emergency situation."

"If there was any violence and all that, they would have wanted to know," he said of the FBI.

On cross-examination, prosecutor Conor Mulroe showed videos of the informant near Nordean and Biggs among rioters who breached police lines. In one video, the informant is seen pumping a fist. Asked why he didn't try to de-escalate the situation, the informant said he couldn't believe the mob would storm past police officers guarding the building.

"At that point, it was almost a circus before things got serious," he said.

The trial was briefly disrupted last week when prosecutors told defense attorneys that another person the defense had wanted to put on the witness stand secretly worked as a government informant for two years after the Jan. 6 attack.

Prosecutors said that person, who didn't officially become an informant until after months after the riot, was never told to gather information about the defendants or their lawyers and the FBI ended its relationship with her this past January after it learned she might testify.

Tarrio's lawyers ultimately decided not to put her on the witness stand after the judge said attorneys couldn't ask about her relationship with the FBI because it's not relevant to the trial.

Tarrio, a Miami resident who served as national chairman of the group, and the other Proud Boys could face up to 20 years in prison if convicted of seditious conspiracy. Tarrio wasn't in Washington on Jan. 6. Tarrio had been arrested in a separate case days earlier, but authorities say he helped put into motion the violence that day.

Two other former Proud Boys members, who agreed to cooperate with the government, also testified they didn't know of any specific plan to storm the Capitol.

But Bertino, a former regional leader from North Carolina who pleaded guilty to seditious conspiracy, told jurors that the group plotted to violently prevent Biden from taking office because they were trying to "save the country" from what they feared would be a tyrannical government.

Hundreds of privately exchanged messages shown to jurors show the Proud Boys becoming increasingly agitated as Trump's legal challenges failed in the weeks leading up to Jan. 6 and celebrating the attack on the Capitol and their role in it.

"Do what must be done," Tarrio wrote on social media as the mob stormed the Capitol. Later that day, someone asked in an encrypted group chat what they should do next.

"Do it again," Tarrio responded.

Also on trial with Tarrio are Ethan Nordean, Joseph Biggs, Zachary Rehl and Dominic Pezzola. Nordean, of Auburn, Washington, was a Proud Boys chapter leader. Biggs, of Ormond Beach, Florida, was a self-described Proud Boys organizer. Rehl was president of the Proud Boys chapter in Philadelphia. Pezzola was a Proud Boys member from Rochester, New York.

Prosecutors rested their case on March 20. Jurors are expected to hear several more days of testimony from defense witnesses before they hear closing arguments.

---

Associated Press writer Alanna Durkin Richer in Boston contributed to this report.

---

Follow the AP's coverage of the Capitol riot at <https://apnews.com/hub/capitol-siege>.

## Children lost in shooting were 'feisty,' a 'shining light'

By ADRIAN SAINZ, KRISTIN M. HALL, HOLLY MEYER and BEN FINLEY Associated Press  
NASHVILLE (AP) — Details from the rich, full lives of the three adults killed Monday at a Nashville elementary school have emerged quickly in the aftermath, but information on the three 9-year-old children — whose lives ended tragically young — has been slower to publicly surface from a community buried in grief.

The children slain at The Covenant School were Hallie Scruggs, described by an aunt as "always on the go"; Evelyn Dieckhaus, her family's "shining light"; and William Kinney, who had "an unflappable spirit."

A woman who identified herself as Hallie's aunt, Kara Scruggs Arnold, wrote on Facebook that Hallie was "incredibly smart, feisty enough to keep up with her 3 brothers and my 4 boys."

Hallie had a "love for life that kept her smiling and running and jumping and playing and always on the go," Arnold added in her post.

Hallie's father Chad Scruggs is the lead pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, which is associated with The Covenant School. The private Christian school has about 200 students from preschool through sixth grade, as well as roughly 50 staff members, according to its website.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 60 of 86

Evelyn was described as the Dieckhaus family's "shining light" on a GoFundMe page that has been set up for them. But her family, too, was reluctant to talk about her or the enormity of their loss.

Friends of the Kinney family set up an online fundraiser to help them with funeral expenses. A message posted on the GoFundMe page said William had "an unflappable sprit."

"He was unfailingly kind, gentle when the situation called for it, quick to laugh, and always inclusive of others," the page said. "He loved his sisters, adored his parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and was always excited to host friends of every age. Sweet Will knew no strangers, and our hearts (are) broken for his family as they try to find their way forward."

The adults who were killed were Katherine Koonce, 60, the head of the school, Mike Hill, 61, a custodian, and Cynthia Peak, 61, a substitute teacher.

In a video statement released Tuesday evening, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee said Peak was supposed to have dinner with his wife, Maria, after filling in as a substitute teacher at Covenant.

"Maria woke up this morning without one of her best friends," Lee said, adding that Peak, Koonce and his wife had once taught together and "have been family friends for decades."

Sandra McCalla, a former administrator at the high school Peak attended in Shreveport, Louisiana, said Peak served as the statistician at girls' basketball games and track meets before graduating in 1979.

"She was busy in the background making good things happen," said McCalla, who served as the principal of Captain Shreve High School for 30 years.

Chuck Owen, who knew Peak from childhood, said Peak's father was a well-known doctor in Leesville, Louisiana, where the family lived before moving to Shreveport.

He said, "everyone knew her, knew her family" and that she was "just a sweet person from a sweet family."

Owen added that Peak was a devout follower of God, and it did not surprise him that she was working at a Christian school.

"She told me that she got saved in college and that God's love changed her life," he said.

Nashville songwriter Natalie Hemby posted on Instagram that Peak "taught me how to swim. Keep my head above water... which is what we're all trying to do right now."

Peak's family issued a statement saying their "hearts are broken," and called Peak "a pillar of the community, and a teacher beloved by all her students."

"She never wavered in her faith and we know she is wrapped in the arms of Jesus," the statement said.

Koonce, the head of The Covenant School, was a woman of deep faith who saw educating kids as her mission.

"It's what God called her to do," close friend Jackie Bailey said.

"We're in such shock," Bailey added. "I was looking around my house, and every piece of cross stitch that I have on the wall, she did – she gave to me."

One of them said: "A friend loveth at all times."

"That's Proverb 17:17," Bailey said. "That's the kind of person she was. She loved at all times."

Bailey added: "If there was any trouble in that school, she would run to it, not from it. She was trying to protect those kids ... That's just what I believe."

Koonce's family said in a statement Wednesday that she "gave her life to protect the students she loved."

"We are devastated by our loss but depending on our God for comfort and healing," the family said. "It is our privilege to honor Katherine's legacy and to celebrate her remarkable spirit."

Before Koonce took the top role with Covenant, Anna Caudill, a former art teacher, worked with her for almost a decade at Christ Presbyterian Academy, another Christian school in the area connected to a Presbyterian Church in America congregation.

"She was an absolute dynamo and one of the smartest women I'll ever know," said Caudill, recalling how Koonce excelled at her day job while parenting her children, pursuing her masters and then her PhD, and writing a book.

Caudill, who grew up in several male-led Christian denominations, said Koonce was the first woman in such a setting to encourage her to keep learning and pursuing her life goals.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 61 of 86

"She wasn't Wonder Woman, but I never saw the two in the same place," Caudill said.

Friends of Hill, the custodian, said they believed he would have died protecting the school's children.

Pastor Tim Dunavant, of the Hartsville First United Methodist Church, said in a Facebook post that he hired Hill to work at Covenant more than a decade ago.

"I don't know the details yet. But I have a feeling, when it all comes out, Mike's sacrifice saved lives," Dunavant wrote.

Hill's family issued a statement saying, "We pray for the Covenant School and are so grateful that Michael was beloved by the faculty and students who filled him with joy for 14 years. He was a father of seven children ... and 14 grandchildren. He liked to cook and spend time with family."

Another pastor, Jim Bachmann, said Hill was "one of those people you cannot not like" and that he made a point of learning the names of all the students and talking to them.

Bachmann was the founding pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church, which runs the school, and is the current pastor of Stephens Valley Church, where Hill was a member and sometimes served as a greeter.

On those occasions, Hill would "dress up like he was going to meet the president of the United States," Bachmann said. He added, "Everybody loved Mike, and he loved them back."

---

Associated Press reporters Travis Loller in Nashville and Beatrice Dupuy in New York contributed to this story. Sainz reported from Memphis. Finley reported from Norfolk, Virginia.

## **Biden: World 'turning the tide' after backslide on democracy**

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Wednesday offered an optimistic outlook on the health of democracy worldwide, declaring that leaders are "turning the tide" in stemming a yearslong backslide of democratic institutions.

Opening his second democracy summit, Biden looked to spotlight hopeful advancements over the past year despite Russia's war in neighboring Ukraine and U.S. tensions with China over its military and economic influence in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

The president cited signs of progress across the globe, from Angola's effort to create an independent judiciary, Croatia's move to boost government transparency and the Dominican Republic's anti-corruption steps. At home, Biden pointed to his stalled push for voting protections in Congress as evidence of his administration's commitment to support democracy.

"Today, we can say, with pride, democracies of the world are getting stronger, not weaker," Biden said. "Autocracies of the world are getting weaker, not stronger. That's a direct result of all of us."

The summits, which Biden promised as a candidate in 2020, have become an important piece of his administration's effort to try to build deeper alliances and nudge autocratic-leaning nations toward at least modest changes.

He said the U.S. will spend \$690 million bolstering democracy programs — supporting everything from free and independent media to free and fair elections — around the world. He said he also wanted to use the summit to foster discussion about the use of technology to "advance democratic governance" and ensure such technology is "not used to undermine it."

The U.S. also signed a joint statement with nine other countries to deepen international cooperation on countering the proliferation and misuse of commercial spyware. Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, France, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom signed on the agreement.

About 40 participants had signed on, as of Wednesday, to a set of guiding principles for how the governments should use surveillance technology, according to a senior administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to preview the agreement before its formal announcement. The guidelines are to be published before the close of the summit on Thursday.

The White House announced plans for the U.S. Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency to partner with nine other countries to work on protecting human rights and other activist groups that are at risk

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 62 of 86

of facing transnational cyber attacks. The UK is co-leading the effort and Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Japan, New Zealand and Norway have also signed on.

Earlier this week, Biden signed an executive order restricting the U.S. government's use of commercial spyware tools that have been used to surveil human rights activists, journalists and dissidents around the world.

Since Biden's first democracy summit in December 2021, countries have emerged from the coronavirus pandemic and Russia invaded Ukraine, the largest-scale war in Europe since World War II.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, pushed back at those suggesting it was time for a negotiated settlement with Russian leader Vladimir Putin. "We should get rid of the illusion that compromising with evil can give something to freedom, and enemies of democracy must lose," Zelenskyy told the summit.

The Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, said the invasion was a jolting moment for the world's democracies. "For decades, the idea of war in Europe seemed unthinkable. But we were wrong as Russia's brutalization of Ukraine has shown we cannot assume that democracy, freedom and security are givens, that they are eternal," Rutte said.

Kenya's president, William Ruto, said building democracy was essential to the growth of developing nations. Ruto was the winner last year of Kenya's close presidential race in which opposition candidate Raila Odinga had alleged irregularities. Kenya's Supreme Court unanimously rejected the challenges.

"This is our path to sustainable development," Ruto said.

The U.S. hosted the last summit on its own. This time, it recruited four co-hosts — Costa Rica, the Netherlands, South Korea and Zambia — after ambassadors from China and Russia criticized the first summit and accused Biden of causing a global divide with a Cold War mentality.

Still, some countries would rather not get between Washington and Beijing, an increasingly important economic and military player.

Pakistan announced, as it did in 2021, that it received an invitation but would skip the summit, a move seen in part as an effort by the impoverished Islamic nation to assuage longtime ally China, which was not invited.

Xu Xueyuan, the charge d'affaires of China's embassy in Washington, on Wednesday called the summit "at odds with the spirit of democracy."

"The U.S. draws an ideological line between countries, and through its narrative of 'democracy versus authoritarianism,' it has formed factions and caused divisions in the international community," she said.

The Biden administration has also expanded its invitation list. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Gambia, Honduras, Ivory Coast, Lichtenstein, Mauritania, Mozambique and Tanzania were invited this year after being left off the list in 2021.

The first day of the summit was convened in a virtual format and will be followed on Thursday by hybrid gatherings in each of the host countries.

Costa Rica will focus on the role of youth in democratic systems. The Dutch are taking on media freedom. South Korea is looking at corruption. Zambia is centering on free and fair elections.

The U.S. is no stranger to the challenges facing democracies, including deep polarization and pervasive misinformation.

Lies spread about the 2020 presidential election by then-President Donald Trump and his supporters have convinced a majority of Republicans that Biden was not legitimately elected, normalized harassment and death threats against election officials, and been used to justify efforts in Republican-controlled legislatures to adopt new voting restrictions.

Later this year, the Supreme Court will rule in a case from Alabama that voting rights advocates fear could virtually dismantle the nearly 60-year-old Voting Rights Act. Congressional efforts to shore up that federal law and increase voting access have failed.

Biden came into office vowing that human rights and democracy would play significant roles in his approach to foreign policy. But he's faced criticism from some human rights activists for being too soft on Saudi Arabia and Egypt over their human rights records. The administration sees both nations as important partners in bringing stability to the Middle East.

More recently, Biden administration officials have been at odds with close ally Israel as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tries to push forward a far-reaching judicial overhaul that the U.S. worries will diminish Israel's democracy.

Netanyahu, in remarks at the summit's opening session, said Israel remained a "robust democracy" in the midst of "a very intensive public debate."

"Democracy means the will of the people as expressed by a majority, and it also means protection of civil rights, individual rights. It's the balance between the two," he said.

Later Wednesday, Biden hosted President Alberto Fernández of Argentina, a summit participant, for talks.

Associated Press writers Munir Ahmed in Islamabad, Tom Verdin in Sacramento, California, Daniel Politi in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and Seung Min Kim, Ellen Knickmeyer, and Colleen Long contributed to this report.

## **NFL hits highs in diverse executives, lacks in head coaches**

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — The NFL took another step at the owners meetings to increase diversity throughout the league while continuing to face criticism and a lawsuit for lack of representation among head coaches.

Each team is now required to have a person in charge of diversity, equity and inclusion. Currently, 15 clubs have a DEI head and two others have someone leading that department and another one.

"They actually have to have specific roles and deliverables that are in their job description so that is a big thing," NFL executive Jonathan Beane said in an interview with The Associated Press. "The reason why that's so important is we have to have a single point of accountability at the clubs where they are focused on driving it throughout their organization, in football operations and coaching, in business operations, engaging with ownership to make sure that this is a priority throughout the whole ecosystem of a club."

The league has reached milestone points in diverse hirings in the front office, but critics point to the sidelines where there are only three Black head coaches in a sport that had 56.4% Black players in 2022.

The NFL now has seven minority team presidents, including five who are Black and three women, and nine general managers, including eight Black men.

But there are six minority head coaches overall. Mike Tomlin (Pittsburgh Steelers), Todd Bowles (Tampa Bay Buccaneers) and DeMeco Ryans (Houston Texans) give the league three Black head coaches entering a season for the fifth year in a row.

"While increased diversity in executive roles could lead to increased diversity on the sidelines, progress on this front has remained stagnant for years," said Devan Rawlings, the author of Revelio Labs' NFL report. "The NFL has a significant disparity between the diversity of its players and that of its coaching staff — the largest among men's major leagues — and this has not changed despite a large pool of diverse former players that could meet a demand for coaching talent."

Brian Flores, the former Miami Dolphins head coach, sued the league and three teams last year, saying the NFL was "rife with racism," particularly in its hiring and promotion of Black coaches. Flores was an assistant with the Pittsburgh Steelers last season and is the new defensive coordinator for the Minnesota Vikings.

"I will acknowledge our representation of diverse head coaches, in particular Black head coaches, is certainly below our expectation and is not where anyone wants it to be or knows it needs to be," said Beane, the senior vice president, chief diversity and inclusion officer for the NFL.

"We have way too much talent out there to have the representation among the head coaches that we have. However, I think it's really, really important to look at other areas that are CEO-type positions, that are critical positions to the success or failure."

The number of minority presidents and GMs are the most in NFL history. The league didn't even have its first Black president until the Washington Commanders hired Jason Wright in August 2020. Kevin Warren (Chicago Bears), Sashi Brown (Baltimore Ravens), Sandra Douglass Morgan (Las Vegas Raiders) and Damani Leech (Denver Broncos) have joined him in the past two years.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 64 of 86

Just four years ago, Miami's Chris Grier was the only Black GM in the NFL. Kwesi Adolfo-Mensah (Minnesota Vikings), Ryan Poles (Chicago Bears), Andrew Berry (Cleveland Browns), Martin Mayhew (Washington Commanders), Brad Holmes (Detroit Lions), Terry Fontenot (Atlanta Falcons) and Ran Carthon (Tennessee Titans) have joined him.

"And we know we still can do better," Beane said. "Those are roles that are extremely vital. There is no role that is less important than the other. Head coach is vital, but GM is just as important. President is just as important. They all drive to the success of the organization and you need all three of those thriving in order to be successful. And so when we look at whether we're making progress, we have to look at all of the roles in an organization, especially in senior roles. So it's not just head coach. All of these other roles are vital and determine the success and failure of a club."

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell agrees there's room for improvement.

"We still feel like there's better work and more work ahead of us," Goodell said last month. "There's progress, and we're pleased to see progress, but it's never enough. We always look to sort of say, 'How can we do better?'"

AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/hub/nfl> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](https://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## Latest storm piles more snow on California mountains

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A cold low pressure system spinning off the coast of California sent bands of rain and snow across the state Wednesday, making travel difficult and adding to an epic mountain snowpack.

Forecasters said the storm was not as strong as the systems that pounded the state all winter, but that chains were required for vehicles on highways through the Sierra Nevada. A section of U.S. 395 on the eastern side of the range was closed because of the snowfall.

The San Francisco Bay Area was hit by gusty winds, hail and periods of heavy rain as multiple storm cells intensified quickly, the National Weather Service said. Flood advisories were issued in the afternoon for three counties south of San Francisco.

The Mammoth Mountain ski resort in the Eastern Sierra declared its snowiest season on record after 28 inches (70 centimeters) of snow since Tuesday afternoon pushed season snowfall totals to 695 inches (17.6 meters) at its main lodge and 870 inches (22.1 meters) at the summit of the 11,053-foot (3,369-meter) peak.

"It's deep out there," the resort wrote on its website.

Another foot (30 cm) or more of snow fell at resorts around Lake Tahoe, including 14 inches (35 cm) at Palisades south of Truckee. That resort is now within 11 inches (28 cm) of reaching its record of 701 inches (17.8 meters) and has announced plans to keep some slopes open until the Fourth of July.

The storm's effects were more modest in Southern California, where steady rain ended by afternoon and sunshine returned. But forecasters cautioned that there could be evening thunderstorms and overnight snow in the mountains as the very cold low pressure system moved down the coast.

California was three years into a drought, with dwindling reservoirs and parched landscapes, until an unexpected series of powerful storms began in late December and continued into spring. While causing widespread damage that forced the declaration of emergencies in dozens of counties, the storms also have raised reservoir levels and built an extraordinary Sierra snowpack, a significant source of California's water.

As of Wednesday, the water content of the snowpack was 234% of the April 1 average, a benchmark for its historical peak, according to the state Department of Water Resources.

The turnabout has allowed a rollback of some water-use restrictions, although Gov. Gavin Newsom has been careful to not declare the drought over.

California is expected to get additional precipitation by Saturday in the north and by Monday in the south. Forecasters said the system will be weaker than the current storm.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 65 of 86

## MLB opening day offers clocks, shift bans, Ohtani and Judge

By BEN WALKER AP Baseball Writer

A major shift in how Major League Baseball is played. About time, too.

Aaron Judge aiming at his own home run record, Shohei Ohtani trending with every pitch and swing, Dusty Baker trying to win another World Series ring.

All-Stars in different spots, a new scheduling concept featuring each team facing all 29 opponents.

If it sounds like these plot lines are from a movie — “Everything Everywhere All at Once” comes to mind — it’s true.

Opening day is Thursday and the full slate includes games at Dodger Stadium, Fenway Park, Wrigley Field and Yankee Stadium. And good news for fans — there’s no snow in the forecast at any of them.

### TICK-TOCK

Manny Machado drew the first pitch clock violation in spring training and it was nuisance. A game between the Braves and Red Sox ended on a clock call and it was a novelty.

Chances are, if Max Scherzer or Nolan Arenado or some other intense star gets timed out in a key spot, it could go nuclear.

But MLB realized it had to do something to cut all the dead periods when absolutely nothing was happening. Well, except for hitters adjusting their batting gloves or pitchers pawing at the rubber. So with games routinely dragging on for more than three hours, the slowdown is getting sped up.

The sport that never had a clock suddenly has them all over the park. Gerrit Cole, Max Fried and the rest of the pitchers get 15 seconds to throw with nobody on base, 20 seconds with runners on. Vladimir Guerero Jr., Mookie Betts and the hitters need to be ready.

The early returns were good, spring training games lasted nearly a half-hour less this year. But remember, that was in Clearwater, Tempe and Lakeland — it might be a lot different, especially early in the season, when umpires begin pointing to their wrists at Busch Stadium, Camden Yards and Petco Park.

### VERY SHIFTY

NL home run champ Kyle Schwarber, 2020 World Series MVP Corey Seager and a bevy of left-handed boppers should benefit hugely by this rule change. Because from now on, those pull hitters won’t face a wall of three infielders on the right side.

Defensive shifts dominated the game in recent years, a big reason why batting averages plummeted so sharply. José Ramírez, Cody Bellinger and other lefties increasingly found themselves being thrown out from shallow-to-medium right field.

No longer. Realizing that shifts were a winning strategy on the field but a losing proposition with fans, MLB banned them. These days, two infielders must be standing on each side of second base. And no playing deep on the grass to rob hits, either — Dansby Swason, Jeremy Peña and other infielders need to be on the dirt.

One likely effect: With more grounders sneaking through for singles, look for the number of no-hitters and near-gems to drop.

### SHO OR GO?

All eyes will be on Shohei Ohtani when he starts for the Los Angeles Angels on opening day at Oakland. Here’s what fans will really watch: Where will the two-way sensation wind up?

Quite possibly the most popular and talented player on the planet, Ohtani clinched the World Baseball Classic for Japan and earned the MVP trophy by striking out Angels teammate Mike Trout.

Ohtani can become a free agent after this year. He’s never reached the postseason since joining the Halos in 2018 — Trout, a three-time MVP, has never won a single playoff game, but that’s another matter.

At 28, it’s hard to imagine Ohtani sticking around Anaheim after yet another lost season. If they don’t start winning soon, the Angels can either trade him to a very ambitious team or risk letting him walk away for nothing.

### STAR SCRAMBLE

Two-time Cy Young Award winner Jacob deGrom bolted New York for a greener field in Texas. Three-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 66 of 86

time Cy Young winner Justin Verlander, a model of power pitching, now on the mound for the Mets.

Trea Turner smoothly slid over to join pal Bryce Harper on the Phillies. Xander Bogaerts livened up a San Diego lineup that already included sluggers Manny Machado, Juan Soto and the suspended Fernando Tatis Jr.

AL batting champion Luis Arraez was traded from Minnesota to Miami and former MVP José Abreu signed with the World Series champion Houston Astros.

Maybe the most intriguing newcomer: Red Sox outfielder Masataka Yoshida. He powered Japan in the WBC and was penciled into the Boston cleanup spot even before his major league debut.

## EXTRA BAGGAGE

We get it: Stolen bases are for suckers, modern metrics show they're not worth the gamble. Miami's Jon Berti stole 41 last season and topped the majors; it was the lowest total for the MLB leader since 1963, when Maury Wills and Luis Aparicio each swiped 40.

Execs hope bigger bases that are 18-inch squares, up from 15-inch squares, will help entice more speedsters to try. It cuts down the distance between the bags by a few inches. They "look like a pizza box," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said. Pitchers also will be limited in how many pickoff throws they can make.

Note to MLB: If you really want to get Randy Arozarena, Bobby Witt Jr. and Ronald Acuña Jr. on the run, see Andrés Giménez and others drop down more surprise bunts, open up hitting lanes and just increase overall offense, here's a better idea — shorten the bases to 88 feet.

The NFL spruced up its game by moving back the extra-point line, making the PAT a more competitive play and prompting coaches to go for two. The NBA overhauled its sport way back by adding the 3-point arc. We know baseball has its hallowed distances — 90 feet and 60 feet, 6 inches — but they don't have to stay that way forever, especially not with younger audiences eager for more action.

AP MLB: <https://apnews.com/hub/mlb> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## Trump grand jury poised to take pre-planned break from case

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Manhattan grand jury investigating hush money paid on Donald Trump's behalf is scheduled to consider other matters next week before taking a previously scheduled two-week hiatus, a person familiar with the matter said Wednesday. That means a vote on whether or not to indict the former president likely wouldn't come until late April at the earliest.

The break, which was scheduled in advance when the panel was convened in January, coincides with Passover, Easter and spring break for the New York City public school system.

The person who confirmed the grand jury's schedule was not authorized to speak publicly about secretive grand jury proceedings and did so on condition of anonymity. A message left with the district attorney's office was not immediately returned.

In a statement released through a lawyer, Trump said: "I HAVE GAINED SO MUCH RESPECT FOR THIS GRAND JURY."

The grand jury has been meeting regularly Monday and Wednesday afternoons, though its Wednesday sessions were called off this week and last. It met Monday, when a longtime Trump friend and potential key witness in the investigation was seen leaving the building where the grand jury has been meeting.

News earlier this month that Trump had been invited to appear before the grand jury fueled widespread speculation that a vote on an indictment would soon be forthcoming. Trump himself added to that anticipation with a post on his social media platform saying that he expected to be arrested soon, though his representatives later said that they had not received any such indication from prosecutors.

The district attorney's office is legally prohibited from publicly discussing the grand jury process, but witnesses and their attorneys aren't bound by the same secrecy rules, and some have spoken out. On March 20, the grand jury heard from a witness favorable to Trump.

People familiar with how grand jury processes typically unfold cautioned that the schedule could change

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 67 of 86

and that prosecutors could still ask jurors to consider charges or vote on an indictment on one of the days they're expected to meet on other matters.

Few people — Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg and the prosecutors in charge of the grand jury investigation — know precisely how the grand jury investigation is proceeding and at what pace. They control when witnesses are called to testify and decide whether, and when, to seek an indictment.

It's not uncommon for grand juries to take breaks for holidays. But it's unclear why the panel isn't hearing testimony on the Trump probe on some of its other customary days — and what the grand jurors will make of that, said Touro Law Center criminal law professor Richard Klein.

"Even in a situation where there's an investigative grand jury, usually the prosecutor doesn't start the process until they're ready to move forward with it," said Klein, a former public defender in Manhattan. In general, he said, prosecutors like to keep proceeding steadily so that grand jurors don't lose the thread of what they've heard, or speculate about why there are hiatuses.

Since Trump's March 18 post, authorities ratcheted up security, deploying additional police officers, lining the streets around the courthouse with barricades and dispatching bomb-sniffing dogs.

They've also had to respond to myriad threats, including bomb and death threats, a suspicious powder scare and a protester who was arrested Tuesday after witnesses say she pulling a knife on passersby outside the courthouse.

The grand jury is investigating money paid during Trump's 2016 presidential campaign to two women who alleged that they had extramarital sexual encounters with him. Trump has denied the allegations.

Trump's former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen, who has testified as a key prosecution witness, paid porn actress Stormy Daniels \$130,000 through a shell company he set up and was then reimbursed by Trump, whose company logged the reimbursements as legal expenses.

Earlier in 2016, Cohen also arranged for former Playboy model Karen McDougal to be paid \$150,000 by the publisher of the supermarket tabloid the National Enquirer, which squelched her story in a journalistically dubious practice known as "catch-and-kill."

Meanwhile, other Trump investigations have been busily proceeding with crucial wins for prosecutors.

A Trump lawyer appeared last week before a federal grand jury in Washington investigating Trump's possible mishandling of classified documents after prosecutors were able to persuade a judge they had evidence that the former president was using his legal representation in furtherance of a crime.

And a judge has also ruled that former Vice President Mike Pence must provide some grand jury testimony in a separate investigation into efforts by Trump and his allies to undo the results of the 2020 presidential election.

If the Manhattan grand jury's schedule holds, that panel wouldn't return to the Trump matter until April 24. That's five days after Trump's longtime finance chief Allen Weisselberg is slated to be released from jail for his role in a unrelated tax fraud scheme involving fringe benefits from Trump's company.

Weisselberg made key decisions in how Trump and his Trump Organization kept their books, and Cohen alleges he was involved in the hush-money arrangements, but Weisselberg does not appear to be cooperating with the grand jury investigation.

Meanwhile, a former magazine columnist's rape lawsuit against Trump is set to go to trial April 25 at a federal courthouse steps away from where the hush-money grand jury has been meeting. Both Trump and rape accuser E. Jean Carroll are expected to testify in the civil trial.

She alleges he raped her in a luxury department store dressing room in the mid-1990s. He denies it and says he had no idea who she was before she went public with the allegation in 2019.

The AP does not identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted unless they come forward publicly.

\_\_\_ Associated Press writers Jennifer Peltz in New York and Eric Tucker in Washington contributed to this report. \_\_\_ Follow Michael Sisak on Twitter at [twitter.com/mikesisak](https://twitter.com/mikesisak). Send confidential tips by visiting <https://www.ap.org/tips/>.

## EU slams prison term for Russian father in antiwar art case

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Russia's prosecution of a single father whose daughter drew an antiwar sketch at school elicited outrage from the European Union on Wednesday, even as the man, who fled house arrest before the verdict was announced, remained at large.

Alexei Moskalyov was convicted of discrediting the Russian army and sentenced to two years in prison in his hometown of Yefremov on Tuesday in a case that has grabbed international attention and underscored the intensity of the Kremlin's crackdown on dissent against the war in Ukraine.

European Commission spokesman Peter Stano tweeted that Moskalyov's sentence was "a total disgrace." Earlier this month, he said the prosecution of Moskalyov represented political repression reaching "new levels," akin to what happened in the Soviet Union under Josef Stalin.

Russia "should respect its own constitution" and international "obligations instead of punishing kids & parents for political reasons," Stano wrote.

Moskalyov, 54, was charged over social media posts criticizing the invasion under a law adopted shortly after the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. During his one-day trial, which concluded Monday, he insisted he had nothing to do with the posts.

According to his lawyer and supporters, Moskalyov's troubles began after his daughter Maria, now 13, drew an antiwar picture at Yefremov School No. 9 that depicted missiles flying over a Russian flag at a woman and child and said "No to war" and "Glory to Ukraine," according to his lawyer and his supporters.

The school called police, the girl was questioned and Moskalyov was fined for critical comments on social media. His apartment was raided in December and a criminal case was opened against him. He was placed under house arrest and his daughter was placed into the orphanage.

Moskalyov had been under house arrest in his apartment in the town south of Moscow, but he escaped before the verdict was announced.

He has been declared a political prisoner by Memorial, one of Russia's oldest and most prominent rights groups that won the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize.

Another prominent rights group — OVD-Info — has provided Moskalyov with a lawyer and said it would continue to defend him and his daughter both on the charges of discrediting the army and on the issue of parental rights.

A court in Yefremov next week is expected to consider the authorities' petition to restrict Moskalyov's parental rights.

His supporters said father and daughter love each other, and Maria called him "my hero" in a letter she wrote for him in an orphanage, according to Moskalyov's lawyer who visited the facility on Tuesday. Moskalyov has been raising Maria alone for about 10 years.

## Pope to be hospitalized for days with respiratory infection

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis was hospitalized with a respiratory infection Wednesday after experiencing difficulty breathing in recent days and will remain in the Rome hospital for several days of treatment, the Vatican said.

The 86-year-old pope, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, doesn't have COVID-19, spokesman Matteo Bruni said in a statement late Wednesday.

The hospitalization was the first since Francis spent 10 days at the Gemelli hospital in July 2021 to have 33 centimeters (13 inches) of his colon removed.

It immediately raised questions about Francis' overall health, and his ability to celebrate the busy Holy Week events that are due to begin this weekend with Palm Sunday.

Bruni said Francis had had trouble breathing in recent days and went to the Gemelli hospital Wednesday for tests.

"The tests showed a respiratory infection (COVID-19 infection excluded) that will require some days of

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 69 of 86

medical treatment in the hospital," Bruni's statement said.

Francis appeared in relatively good form during his regularly scheduled general audience earlier Wednesday, though he grimaced strongly while getting in and out of the "popemobile." He nevertheless rode around the square as usual, kissing babies and greeting the faithful.

Bruni said Francis, an Argentine Jesuit, was grateful for the prayers and messages wishing him a speedy recovery, including from the Italian bishops conference.

President Joe Biden, at the start of an Oval Office meeting with President Alberto Fernández of Argentina, told reporters he had just learned of Francis's health problems and said he was concerned about his dear "friend."

Francis had part of one lung removed when he was a young man due to a respiratory infection, and he often speaks in a whisper. But he got through the worst phases of the COVID-19 pandemic without at least any public word of ever testing positive.

Francis was scheduled to celebrate Palm Sunday this weekend, kicking off the Vatican's Holy Week observances: Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil and finally Easter Sunday on April 9. He has canceled all audiences through Friday, but it wasn't clear whether he could keep the Holy Week plans.

Francis has used a wheelchair for over a year due to strained ligaments in his right knee and a small knee fracture. He has said the injury was healing and been walking more with a cane of late.

Francis also has said he resisted having surgery for the knee problems because he didn't respond well to general anesthesia during the 2021 intestinal surgery.

He said soon after the surgery that he had recovered fully and could eat normally. But in a Jan. 24 interview with The Associated Press, Francis said his diverticulosis, or bulges in the intestinal wall, had "returned."

## Dangerous storms, tornadoes may target Midwest, South

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

A seemingly relentless series of severe storms, likely with deadly tornadoes, are forecast to rip across parts of America's Midwest and South over the next couple weeks, especially Friday, meteorologists said.

An unusual weather pattern has set in, last week triggering the devastating tornado that hit Rolling Fork, Mississippi, and meteorologists fear this Friday will be one of the worst days, with much more to come. The National Weather Service said 16.8 million people live in the highest risk zone, and more than 66 million people overall should be on alert Friday.

"It's pretty darn clear that somebody is going to take it on the nose on Friday," said Northern Illinois meteorology professor and tornado expert and chaser Victor Gensini. "It's just a matter of where and exactly when."

The weather service is cautioning a large area of the country – including parts of Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, West Virginia, Georgia and Kansas – to be alert for intense thunderstorms, tornadoes and other damaging winds. Big cities in the highest danger area include Memphis, St. Louis, Des Moines and Little Rock.

Gensini fears Friday's onslaught will be deadly.

The storms are expected to start Friday afternoon and go overnight, which is particularly dangerous because people can't see them coming and often won't seek shelter, weather service Storm Prediction Center warning coordination meteorologist Matt Elliott said Wednesday.

"The storms will be moving very quickly," Elliott said. "So you won't have a lot of time to react to warnings as well. So now's the time to start preparing."

Though all the ingredients are there for dangerous storms, it's possible they may not combine precisely enough to pose the threat that meteorologists are warning about, Elliott and others said.

Another batch of severe storms, powered by a "firehose" of unstable waves in the atmosphere that keep flowing from the cold west and combine with moist air from the east, could hit next Tuesday and the next few days after that, said Walker Ashley, another meteorology professor at Northern Illinois and

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 70 of 86

Gensini's storm-chasing partner.

"You could see these things coming days in advance," Ashley said. They will be "continual punches, one, two, three, four."

The weather service is already forecasting another batch of intense storms next Tuesday in the same general area as Friday with fairly high confidence, Elliott said.

At least the first 10 days of April will be rough, said Accuweather meteorologist Brandon Buckingham.

The current persistent pattern of storm ingredients reminds Gensini of the April 2011 tornado onslaught that killed 363 people in six states, hitting Alabama hardest. That was one of the largest, deadliest and most destructive tornado outbreaks in American history, the weather service said.

Even before Friday, "it's been the most active we've seen in several years" starting around last November, with a large number of winter storms through this year, Elliott said. The deadly storms that hit Rolling Fork were part of that pattern.

Buckingham and the other meteorologists said current conditions come along only once every few years to create the potential for a train of supercells, which spawn the worst of the tornadoes and damaging hail.

Central to this is a fast-moving rollercoaster-like jet stream, the shifting river of air that moves weather systems, such as storms, from west to east. On the west side of the jet stream is extreme cold air and to the east, parked off Florida and Caribbean, is a very warm and dry high-pressure system.

"When you kind of combine the two it kind makes those hairs on the back of your neck stand up," Buckingham said. "The ingredients are here. They're primed towards the extreme end of things."

Add to that the Gulf of Mexico, which provides moisture heat and energy for storms, is roughly 2 to 5 degrees (1 to 1.5 degrees Celsius) warmer than average or more, meteorologists said — "on fire," as Ashley put it.

"The additional warmth and humidity really get these thunderstorms firing up," Buckingham said.

The worst weather will be "underneath the clashing" of hot and cold air, a battleground of sort, Gensini said. Friday's lunchtime forecast at Storm Lake, Iowa, is around 67 degrees (19 degrees Celsius) but just 140 miles (225 kilometers) to the northwest, Brookings, South Dakota is forecast to be barely above freezing.

"The greater the temperature gradient, the stronger the storm systems are," Gensini said.

The winds twirling at opposite directions on the west and east of the jet stream battleground add to the problem, the meteorologists said.

Ashley said current conditions are mostly random weather variability, though he said the hotter Gulf of Mexico and human-caused climate change may have made a small contribution.

"These events have always occurred," Ashley said. "The question is are we turning the knob a little bit by contributing more moisture, more heat, more instability?"

\_\_\_ Follow AP's climate and environment coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate-and-environment>

\_\_\_ Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears

\_\_\_ Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Ukraine's Zelenskyy is 'ready' for Chinese leader to visit

By JULIE PACE and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

ON A TRAIN FROM SUMY TO KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's president invited his powerful Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, to visit his nation, saying they haven't been in contact since the war began and he is "ready to see him here."

"I want to speak with him," Volodymyr Zelenskyy told The Associated Press on Tuesday, the week after Xi visited Russian President Vladimir Putin last week. China had no immediate response about whether a Xi visit to Ukraine would happen.

China has been economically aligned and politically favorable toward neighboring Russia across many

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 71 of 86

decades, and Beijing has provided Putin diplomatic cover by staking out an official position of neutrality in the war. Xi, a powerful leader who commands the resources of the world's most populous nation, is an important player in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and even China's lack of involvement is a potent statement.

Zelenskyy spoke to the AP aboard a train shuttling him across Ukraine, to cities near some of the fiercest fighting and others where his country's forces have successfully repelled Russia's invasion. Zelenskyy rarely travels with journalists, and the president's office said AP's two night train trip with him was the most extensive since the war began.

Zelenskyy has extended invitations to Xi before in recent months, but this explicit call to visit comes days after the Chinese leader visited Putin in Russia last week. But the Ukrainian leader said he hasn't communicated with Xi for the duration of the conflict.

"We are ready to see him here," Zelenskyy said. "I had contact with him before full-scale war. But during all this year, more than one year, I didn't have."

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning was asked whether Xi would accept an invitation from Zelenskyy — or whether one had been officially extended. She told reporters she had no information to give. She did say that Beijing maintains "communication with all parties concerned, including Ukraine."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, asked whether a meeting between Xi and Zelenskyy would be useful to resolve the conflict in Ukraine, said Russian authorities "highly appreciate" China's balanced position on the issue and "have no right to come up with any advice" on whether the two should meet. "The Chinese leader himself decides the appropriateness of certain contacts," Peskov said during his daily conference call with reporters Wednesday.

In Washington, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said the United States supports talks between Xi and Zelenskyy, "and my goodness, we've been saying that for weeks."

Xi's Russia visit last week raised the prospect that Beijing might be ready to provide Moscow with the weapons and ammunition it needs to refill its depleted stockpile. But Xi's trip ended without any such announcement. Days later, Putin announced that he would be deploying tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus, which neighbors Russia and pushes the Kremlin's nuclear stockpile closer to NATO territory.

Zelenskyy suggested Putin's move was intended to distract from the lack of guarantees he received from China.

"What does it mean? It means that the visit was not good for Russia," Zelenskyy speculated.

---

Julie Pace is senior vice president and executive editor of The Associated Press. Hanna Arhirova is a Ukraine-based AP correspondent. Follow AP's coverage of the war in Ukraine: <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

## **FDA approves over-the-counter Narcan. Here's what it means**

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Wednesday approved selling the leading version of naloxone without a prescription, setting the overdose-reversing drug on course to become the first opioid treatment drug to be sold over the counter.

It's a move that some advocates have long sought as a way to improve access to a life-saving drug, though the exact impact will not be clear immediately.

Here's a look at the issues involved.

**WHAT IS NARCAN?**

The approved nasal spray from Gaithersburg, Maryland-based Emergent BioSolutions is the best-known form of naloxone.

It can reverse overdoses of opioids, including street drugs such as heroin and fentanyl and prescription versions including oxycodone.

Making naloxone available more widely is seen as a key strategy to control the nationwide overdose crisis, which has been linked to more than 100,000 U.S. deaths a year. The majority of those deaths are

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 72 of 86

tioned to opioids, primarily potent synthetic versions such as fentanyl that can take multiple doses of naloxone to reverse.

The drug has been distributed to police and other first responders nationwide.

Advocates believe it's important to get naloxone to the people who are most likely to be around overdoses, including people who use drugs and their relatives.

The decision "represents a decisive, practical and humane approach to help people and flatten the curve of overdose deaths," said Chuck Ingolia of the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, in a statement.

## WHAT DOES THE FDA APPROVAL MEAN?

Narcan will become available over-the-counter by late summer, the company said.

Other brands of naloxone and injectable forms will not yet be available over the counter, but they could be soon.

Several manufacturers of generic naloxone that's made similarly to Narcan will now be required to file applications to switch their drugs over the counter as part of a requirement by the FDA.

The nonprofit Harm Reduction Therapeutics Inc., which has funding from OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma, already has an application before the FDA to distribute its version of spray naloxone without a prescription.

## HOW IS NALOXONE DISTRIBUTED NOW?

Even before the FDA's action, pharmacies could sell naloxone without a prescription because officials in every state have allowed it.

But not every pharmacy carries it. And buyers have to pay for the medication — either with an insurance co-pay or for the full retail price. The cost varies, but two doses of Narcan often go for around \$50.

The drug is also distributed by community organizations that serve people who use drugs, though it's not easily accessible to everyone who needs it.

Emergent has not announced its price and it's not clear yet whether insurers will continue to cover it as a prescription drug if it's available over the counter.

FDA Commissioner Robert Califf in a statement encouraged Emergent to make the drug available "at an affordable price."

## DOES MAKING NALOXONE OVER-THE-COUNTER IMPROVE ACCESS?

It clears the way for Narcan to be made available in places without pharmacies — convenience stores, supermarkets and online retailers, for instance.

Jose Benitez, the lead executive officer at Prevention Point Philadelphia, an organization that tries to reduce risk for people who use drugs with services including handing out free naloxone, said it could help a lot for people who don't seek services — or who live in places where they're not available.

Now, he said, some people are concerned about getting naloxone at pharmacies because their insurers will know they're getting it.

"Putting it out on the shelves is going to allow people just to pick it up, not have stigma attached to it," he said.

But it remains to be seen how many stores will carry it and what the prices will be. The U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which now cover prescription naloxone for people on the government insurance programs, says that coverage of over-the-counter naloxone would depend on the insurance program. The centers have not given any official guidance.

Maya Doe-Simkins, a co-director of Remedy Alliance/For The People, which launched last year to provide low-cost — and sometimes free — naloxone to community organizations, said her group will continue to distribute injectable naloxone.

## HOW WILL PEOPLE LEARN TO USE NARCAN?

Emergent had to conduct a study examining whether untrained people could follow directions for using



Narcan.

Last month, an FDA expert panel voted to make the drug available over the counter, despite numerous errors in using the device reported in the company study. The FDA suggested Emergent make several changes to how the directions will be displayed on the packaging and said the device can be safely used "without the supervision" of a health care worker.

Keith Humphreys, a Stanford University addiction expert, said one benefit of currently having pharmacists involved in dispensing the drug is that they can show buyers how to use it. One key thing people need to be reminded of: Call an ambulance for the person receiving naloxone after it's been administered.

He also said there are fears that if the drug isn't profitable as an over-the-counter option, the drugmaker could stop producing it.

AP Health Writer Matthew Perrone contributed to this story

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Musk, scientists call for halt to AI race sparked by ChatGPT

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Are tech companies moving too fast in rolling out powerful artificial intelligence technology that could one day outsmart humans?

That's the conclusion of a group of prominent computer scientists and other tech industry notables such as Elon Musk and Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak who are calling for a 6-month pause to consider the risks.

Their petition published Wednesday is a response to San Francisco startup OpenAI's recent release of GPT-4, a more advanced successor to its widely-used AI chatbot ChatGPT that helped spark a race among tech giants Microsoft and Google to unveil similar applications.

### WHAT DO THEY SAY?

The letter warns that AI systems with "human-competitive intelligence can pose profound risks to society and humanity" — from flooding the internet with disinformation and automating away jobs to more catastrophic future risks out of the realms of science fiction.

It says "recent months have seen AI labs locked in an out-of-control race to develop and deploy ever more powerful digital minds that no one — not even their creators — can understand, predict, or reliably control."

"We call on all AI labs to immediately pause for at least 6 months the training of AI systems more powerful than GPT-4," the letter says. "This pause should be public and verifiable, and include all key actors. If such a pause cannot be enacted quickly, governments should step in and institute a moratorium."

A number of governments are already working to regulate high-risk AI tools. The United Kingdom released a paper Wednesday outlining its approach, which it said "will avoid heavy-handed legislation which could stifle innovation." Lawmakers in the 27-nation European Union have been negotiating passage of sweeping AI rules.

### WHO SIGNED IT?

The petition was organized by the nonprofit Future of Life Institute, which says confirmed signatories include the Turing Award-winning AI pioneer Yoshua Bengio and other leading AI researchers such as Stuart Russell and Gary Marcus. Others who joined include Wozniak, former U.S. presidential candidate Andrew Yang and Rachel Bronson, president of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, a science-oriented advocacy group known for its warnings against humanity-ending nuclear war.

Musk, who runs Tesla, Twitter and SpaceX and was an OpenAI co-founder and early investor, has long expressed concerns about AI's existential risks. A more surprising inclusion is Emad Mostaque, CEO of Stability AI, maker of the AI image generator Stable Diffusion that partners with Amazon and competes with OpenAI's similar generator known as DALL-E.

### WHAT'S THE RESPONSE?

OpenAI, Microsoft and Google didn't respond to requests for comment Wednesday, but the letter already

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 74 of 86

has plenty of skeptics.

"A pause is a good idea, but the letter is vague and doesn't take the regulatory problems seriously," says James Grimmelmann, a Cornell University professor of digital and information law. "It is also deeply hypocritical for Elon Musk to sign on given how hard Tesla has fought against accountability for the defective AI in its self-driving cars."

IS THIS AI HYSTERIA?

While the letter raises the specter of nefarious AI far more intelligent than what actually exists, it's not "superhuman" AI that some who signed on are worried about. While impressive, a tool such as ChatGPT is simply a text generator that makes predictions about what words would answer the prompt it was given based on what it's learned from ingesting huge troves of written works.

Gary Marcus, a New York University professor emeritus who signed the letter, said in a blog post that he disagrees with others who are worried about the near-term prospect of intelligent machines so smart they can self-improve themselves beyond humanity's control. What he's more worried about is "mediocre AI" that's widely deployed, including by criminals or terrorists to trick people or spread dangerous misinformation.

"Current technology already poses enormous risks that we are ill-prepared for," Marcus wrote. "With future technology, things could well get worse."

## Pamela Smart's latest bid for sentence reduction dismissed

By KATHY McCORMACK Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — New Hampshire's highest court on Wednesday turned away the latest attempt to get a sentence reduction for Pamela Smart, who is serving life in prison for plotting with her teenage lover to have her husband killed in 1990.

Smart, 55, was a 22-year-old high school media coordinator when she began an affair with a 15-year-old student who later shot and killed her husband, Gregory Smart. He was freed in 2015 after serving a 25-year sentence. Though she denied knowledge of the plot, she was convicted of conspiracy to commit murder and other crimes and sentenced to life without parole.

Having exhausted her judicial appeal options, Smart returned for a third time to an elected state council, seeking a sentence reduction hearing last year. The five-member Executive Council, which approves state contracts and appointees to the courts and state agencies, rejected her latest request in less than three minutes, prompting another appeal to state Supreme Court.

The justices dismissed the petition Wednesday, saying it would violate the separation of powers to order the council to reconsider a "political" question.

"This ruling by the New Hampshire Supreme Court is a continuing disappointment that devastates our hopes for Pamela Smart finally receiving reasonable and fair process in the State of New Hampshire," Smart's spokeswoman, Eleanor Pam, said in an email.

She added that Smart "has never been given the opportunity to be heard or allowed to make her case directly. Pamela Smart is fully rehabilitated and is no danger to society."

The state attorney general's office has opposed commutation for Smart, saying she has never accepted full responsibility for the crimes.

Smart, who has earned two master's degrees behind bars, tutored fellow inmates, been ordained as a minister and is part of an inmate liaison committee, said in her latest petition that she is remorseful and has been rehabilitated. She apologized to Gregory Smart's family, though relatives said she has failed to take full responsibility.

A cousin of Gregory Smart was glad to hear of the court's dismissal.

"She has had more than her fair share of being heard," Val Fryatt said. "It is not easy for us. We are coming up on 33 years without Gregg, and never once has she admitted her part, so I am unsure how she is rehabilitated. Gregg is the true victim in all of this. Pamela needs to admit what she did not only for my family's sake but for her family's sake, as well."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 75 of 86

Smart's longtime attorney, Mark Sisti, argued that the elected council "brushed aside" her chance at freedom, spending no time discussing her voluminous petition — which included many letters of support from inmates, supervisors and others — before rejecting her request.

"We will not stop our attempts to free Pam Smart," Sisti said in a statement. Smart can refile a petition with the council every two years.

As governor, Chris Sununu brings forth matters for the council to consider, and did put the commutation request on the agenda, argued Laura Lombardi, senior assistant attorney general. She said there is no requirement for the governor and council to create rules regarding the process.

The trial was a media circus and one of America's first high-profile cases about a sexual affair between a school staff member and a student. Joyce Maynard wrote "To Die For" in 1992, drawing from the Smart case. That inspired a 1995 film of the same name, starring Nicole Kidman and Joaquin Phoenix. The killer, William Flynn, and three other teens cooperated with prosecutors, served shorter sentences and have been released.

In February, several of Smart's supporters traveled to New Hampshire to hear the court discuss the case, wearing pink T-shirts with the words "Enough is Enough."

Kelly Harnett, 41, who designed the T-shirts, did time with Smart at the maximum security Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in New York. She said Smart helped her through legal and personal setbacks, and deserves a hearing.

Vanessa Santiago also met Smart in 2003 as a fellow inmate, working with her as a teacher's aide and participating with her in an arts rehabilitation program. They stayed in touch after Santiago's release from Bedford in 2020, and she too supports her petition.

"Pamela is like an icon in a sense, meaning, she has life with no parole, and when things are tough, you remember Pamela," Santiago said.

---

Associated Press reporter Holly Ramer contributed to this story from Hopkinton, New Hampshire.

## US: Credit Suisse violates deal on rich clients' tax evasion

By JAMEY KEATEN and COURTNEY BONNELL Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Credit Suisse violated a plea agreement with U.S. authorities by failing to report secret offshore accounts that wealthy Americans used to avoid paying taxes, U.S. lawmakers said Wednesday, releasing a two-year investigation that detailed the role employees at the embattled Swiss bank had in aiding tax evasion by clients.

The U.S. Senate Finance Committee pointed to an ongoing, possibly criminal conspiracy tied to nearly \$100 million in accounts belonging to a family of American taxpayers that the bank did not disclose. It also said Credit Suisse helped a U.S. businessman hide more than \$220 million in offshore accounts from the IRS.

Credit Suisse revealed that it had found 23 accounts each worth more than \$20 million that were not declared to tax authorities, many of them unveiled just days before the report was released, according to the committee. It said its findings show that more than \$700 million was concealed in violation of the bank's 9-year-old plea deal with the U.S. Justice Department.

"Credit Suisse got a discount on the penalty it faced in 2014 for enabling tax evasion because bank executives swore up and down they'd get out of the business of defrauding the United States," said Sen. Ron Wyden, the Democratic chairman of the committee.

"This investigation shows Credit Suisse did not make good on that promise, and the bank's pending acquisition does not wipe the slate clean," he said.

The Swiss government pressed for a \$3.25 billion takeover of long-troubled Credit Suisse by rival bank UBS this month amid turmoil in the global financial system. The collapse of two U.S. banks ignited wider fears that sent shares of Switzerland's second-largest bank tumbling as customers withdrew their money.

The Senate findings pose new problems for UBS as it tries to absorb Credit Suisse and create a single

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 76 of 86

Swiss megabank, coming the same day that UBS named a new CEO to help push through the takeover. It's also Credit Suisse's latest run-in with U.S. authorities, following settlements worth hundreds of millions of dollars over mortgage-backed securities that were behind the 2008 financial crisis.

Credit Suisse, whose yearslong troubles range from hedge fund losses to fines for failing to prevent money laundering by a Bulgarian cocaine ring, said it "does not tolerate tax evasion" and insisted that the Senate report described "legacy issues" — some dating to a decade ago — that have been addressed since.

"We have implemented extensive enhancements since then to root out individuals who seek to conceal assets from tax authorities," the Zurich-based bank said.

"Our clear policy is to close undeclared accounts when identified and to discipline any employee who fails to comply with bank policy or falls short of Credit Suisse's standards of conduct," it said.

UBS said it has assessed outstanding lawsuits and investigations as part of the Credit Suisse acquisition and expects the deal to be beneficial for shareholders. It's working to close the sale and get approval from regulators in the coming weeks or months.

The Senate report noted Credit Suisse's cooperation with the investigation, including having appointed new leadership.

The Swiss lender paid a discounted fine of \$1.3 billion to the U.S. Justice Department after pleading guilty in 2014 to conspiracy to aid and assist U.S. taxpayers in filing false income tax returns and other documents with the IRS.

The bank acknowledged "knowingly and willfully" helping thousands of Americans open accounts that weren't declared to tax authorities and concealing offshore assets. It avoided criminal charges in exchange for agreeing to report undeclared accounts and provide other information to U.S. officials.

The Senate committee said secret offshore accounts belonging to a family of dual U.S.-Latin American citizens and worth nearly \$100 million were closed in 2013 but the money was transferred to other banks without telling U.S. authorities.

With that maneuver, "Credit Suisse enabled what appears to be potentially criminal tax evasion by a client to go undetected for almost a decade," the report says.

The committee said former senior bankers helped manage that family's accounts. In addition, Credit Suisse employees helped a U.S. businessman hide \$220 million from U.S. authorities despite long knowing he was an American, according to the report, which said whistleblowers flagged the scheme after the plea deal.

Credit Suisse workers were incentivized to help accounts hide U.S. ties because their bonuses depend on the amount of money being managed, the report said. To that end, employees who had clients with assets above \$20 million or \$30 million may have given those accounts special consideration because it would mean they got larger bonuses, the committee said.

Investigators say bankers figured out how to code accounts for Americans who possess dual citizenship. Those bankers would use the non-U.S. passport of wealthy individuals to evade internal systems designed to look for identifying marks in U.S. passports.

Lawmakers on the committee became aware of 13 out of 23 potentially undeclared accounts worth over \$20 million just days before releasing their report. That raises concerns Credit Suisse is still disclosing hundreds of millions of dollars in large, undeclared accounts belonging to ultra-wealthy Americans years after signing the plea deal and facing additional scrutiny, the committee said.

—  
Bonnell reported from London. AP reporters Michelle Chapman and Charles Sheehan in New York contributed.

## Ukraine's Zelenskyy: Any Russian victory could be perilous

By JULIE PACE and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

ON A TRAIN FROM SUMY TO KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned Tuesday that unless his nation wins a drawn-out battle in a key eastern city, Russia could begin building international support for a deal that could require Ukraine to make unacceptable compromises. He also

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 77 of 86

invited the leader of China, long aligned with Russia, to visit.

If Bakhmut fell to Russian forces, their president, Vladimir Putin, would “sell this victory to the West, to his society, to China, to Iran,” Zelenskyy said in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press.

“If he will feel some blood — smell that we are weak — he will push, push, push,” Zelenskyy said in English, which he used for virtually all of the interview.

The leader spoke to the AP aboard a train shuttling him across Ukraine, to cities near some of the fiercest fighting and others where his country’s forces have successfully repelled Russia’s invasion. Zelenskyy rarely travels with journalists, and the president’s office said AP’s two-night train trip with him was the most extensive since the war began.

Since then, Ukraine — backed by much of the West — has surprised the world with the strength of its resistance against the larger, better-equipped Russian military. Ukrainian forces have held their capital, Kyiv, and pushed Russia back from other strategically important areas.

But as the war enters its second year, Zelenskyy finds himself focused on keeping motivation high in both his military and the general Ukrainian population — particularly the millions who have fled abroad and those living in relative comfort and security far from the front lines.

Zelenskyy is also well aware that his country’s success has been in great part due to waves of international military support, particularly from the United States and Western Europe. But some in the United States — including Republican Donald Trump, the former American president and current 2024 candidate — have questioned whether Washington should continue to supply Ukraine with billions of dollars in military aid.

Trump’s likely Republican rival, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, also suggested that defending Ukraine in a “territorial dispute” with Russia was not a significant U.S. national security priority. He later walked that statement back after facing criticism from other corners of the GOP.

Zelenskyy didn’t mention the names of Trump or any other Republican politicians — figures he might have to deal with if they prevailed in 2024 elections. But he did say that he worries the war could be impacted by shifting political forces in Washington.

“The United States really understands that if they stop helping us, we will not win,” he said in the interview. He sipped tea as he sat on a narrow bed in the cramped, unadorned sleeper cabin on a state railway train.

The president’s carefully calibrated railroad trip was a remarkable journey across land through a country at war. Zelenskyy, who has become a recognizable face across the world as he doggedly tells his side of the story to nation after nation, used the morale-building journey to carry his considerable clout to regions close to the front lines.

He traveled with a small cadre of advisers and a large group of heavily armed security officials dressed in battlefield fatigues. His destinations included ceremonies marking the one-year anniversary of the liberation of towns in the Sumy region and visits with troops stationed at front-line positions near Zaporizhzhia. Each visit was kept under wraps until after he departed.

Zelenskyy recently made a similar visit near Bakhmut, where Ukrainian and Russian forces have been locked for months in a grinding and bloody battle. While some Western military analysts have suggested that the city is not of significant strategic importance, Zelenskyy warned that a loss anywhere at this stage in the war could put Ukraine’s hard-fought momentum at risk.

“We can’t lose the steps because the war is a pie — pieces of victories. Small victories, small steps,” he said.

Zelenskyy’s comments were an acknowledgement that losing the 7-month-long battle for Bakhmut — the longest of the war thus far — would be more of a costly political defeat than a tactical one.

He predicted that the pressure from a defeat in Bakhmut would come quickly — both from the international community and within his own country. “Our society will feel tired,” he said. “Our society will push me to have compromise with them.”

So far, Zelenskyy says he hasn’t felt that pressure. The international community has largely rallied around Ukraine following Russia’s Feb. 24, 2022, invasion. In recent months, a parade of world leaders have visited Zelenskyy in Ukraine, most traveling in on trains similar to the ones the president uses to crisscross the

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 78 of 86

country.

In his AP interview, Zelenskyy extended an invitation to Ukraine to one notable and strategically important leader who has not made the journey — Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"We are ready to see him here," he said. "I want to speak with him. I had contact with him before full-scale war. But during all this year, more than one year, I didn't have."

China, economically aligned and politically favorable toward Russia across many decades, has provided Putin diplomatic cover by staking out an official position of neutrality in the war.

Asked whether Xi would accept an invitation from Zelenskyy — or whether one had been officially extended — Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told reporters she had no information to give. She did say that Beijing maintains "communication with all parties concerned, including Ukraine."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, asked whether a meeting between Xi and Zelenskyy would be useful to resolve the conflict in Ukraine, said Russian authorities "highly appreciate" China's balanced position on the issue and "have no right to come up with any advice" on whether the two should meet. "The Chinese leader himself decides the appropriateness of certain contacts," Peskov said during his daily conference call with reporters Wednesday.

Xi visited Putin in Russia last week, raising the prospect that Beijing might be ready to provide Moscow with the weapons and ammunition it needs to refill its depleted stockpile. But Xi's trip ended without any such announcement. Days later, Putin announced that he would be deploying tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus, which neighbors Russia and pushes the Kremlin's nuclear stockpile closer to NATO territory.

Zelenskyy suggested Putin's move was intended to distract from the lack of guarantees he received from China.

"What does it mean? It means that the visit was not good for Russia," Zelenskyy speculated. He was unsparing in his assessment of Putin, calling him an "informationally isolated person" who had "lost everything" over the last year of war.

"He doesn't have allies," Zelenskyy said.

The Ukrainian president makes few predictions about the biggest question hanging over the war: how it will end. He expressed confidence, however, that his nation will prevail through a series of "small victories" and "small steps" against a "very big country, big enemy, big army" — but an army, he said, with "small hearts."

And Ukraine itself? While Zelenskyy acknowledged that the war has "changed us," he said that in the end, it has made his society stronger.

"It could've gone one way, to divide the country, or another way — to unite us," he said. "I'm so thankful. I'm thankful to everybody — every single partner, our people, thank God, everybody — that we found this way in this critical moment for the nation. Finding this way was the thing that saved our nation, and we saved our land. We are together."

---

Julie Pace is senior vice president and executive editor of The Associated Press. Hanna Arhirova is a Ukraine-based AP correspondent. Follow AP's coverage of the war in Ukraine: <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

## A different March Madness: Online hate for the athletes

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — It wasn't so much that social media was criticizing his son. That happens sometimes — especially after a loss like THAT.

But when a post came up suggesting Terrance Williams II, a junior forward for Michigan, be left for dead in a ditch, his dad decided enough was enough. Terrance Williams Sr.'s profanity-laced response to all the haters was, in many ways, an expected byproduct of social media vitriol that bubbled up after the Wolverines blew an eight-point lead in a one-point loss to Vanderbilt earlier this month — not in the NCAA Tournament but in the NIT.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 79 of 86

"You actually root for them when they're good," Williams Sr. said of the Michigan fans in an interview with The Associated Press two days after the season-ending loss. "But then they make a mistake, and a game doesn't go your way and you turn to hate. That's unacceptable."

The episode was just one of countless examples of the toxic minefield that athletes, coaches, friends and family face all too often on social media, all of it amplified for college basketball players when the calendar flips to March and the madness begins.

College administrators and coaches alike have warned for several years that students and athletes are facing increasing mental-health challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. And never have there been more outside voices that not only scrutinize every move players make on the court, but impact their emotional well-being away from it.

"The feedback right now, it can be so harsh and it's so immediate, and I think that's the hardest part," said Melissa Streno, a Denver-based mental health consultant for high-level athletes. "It's the immediacy of the feedback from people they don't even know. And it can be so impactful on their identity and how they see themselves as a player on the court."

Turning off social media is one option, but it's not really practical, not with the way society interacts in the 21st century. And many athletes use social media to open the door to cash. It comes with a toll.

A survey conducted by the NCAA in the fall of 2021 found spikes among athletes who experienced mental exhaustion, anxiety and depression compared with a similar survey two years earlier — before the pandemic, and also before name-image-likeness deals became an everyday reality of college sports. The survey also found that despite a growing recognition of mental health as something to be addressed, fewer than half the respondents felt comfortable seeking support from a counselor on campus.

Even so, those counselors have been busy; a growing number of questions they field from the players involve how to manage social media.

"For some of them, social media brings pressure to put out information, to create content, build their brand and that can cause anxiety," said Charron Sumler, a former college basketball player who is now an athletic counselor at Ohio State. "On the flip side, there's the input where they're receiving messages. And with phones in the locker room, sometimes they're receiving that negative feedback and content before they've even had a chance to debrief with their coaches or with themselves."

Just this month, Virginia's Kihei Clark started trending for the wrong reasons when his ill-advised pass at the end of a first-round March Madness game against Furman allowed the Paladins to make the game-winning 3-pointer that sent the Cavaliers home.

After the game, Clark sat in the locker room and patiently answered every question. Predictably, social media was destroying him before the final buzzer even sounded.

Among those who knew the feeling was Matthew Fisher-Davis. He was the Vanderbilt guard who, thinking the Commodores were trailing, fouled a Northwestern player in the waning seconds of a first-round game in 2017. In fact, Vanderbilt was ahead by one; Northwestern made both free throws after the foul and won by a point.

Before the next season, Fisher-Davis released a slickly produced video showing him working out, the main theme of which was: "Everybody's got something to say."

"It gets to the point where, the stuff coming from outside the locker room doesn't make anything easier," Fisher-Davis told the AP in an interview this month.

Stanford's Haley Jones was named most outstanding player at the women's Final Four after helping the Cardinal win the national title in 2021. Two weeks ago, when Stanford made an early exit from this year's March Madness, Jones' performance — and her prospects for the upcoming WNBA draft — were being dissected, sometimes cruelly, on social media.

"Right after every game. I know what I did well, and I know what I didn't do well," said Jones, who is part of a program called Game 4 Good that focuses on mental wellness for athletes. "I don't need to go and listen to thousands of people who don't know me tell me these same things, and probably say it in a lot meaner way."

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 80 of 86

On rare occasions, players get ripped for doing something good.

In an episode that illustrates the parallel explosive growth of both social media and online sports wagering, TCU's Damion Baugh was the object of scorn in the second round this month when he launched a shot at the buzzer from near the halfcourt logo in a game that had already been sealed by Gonzaga.

Baugh's 3 went in. It trimmed TCU's final deficit to three, which allowed the Horned Frogs to cover the 4.5-point spread. That shot did nothing to change the brackets, but it did flip millions of dollars across the country and Baugh was roundly ripped on Twitter.

Baugh barked back: "I don't get how y'all mad because I played until the last buzzer."

Former Ohio State guard E.J. Liddell also felt compelled to defend himself after he missed a late free throw that was key to an upset loss to Oral Roberts two years ago.

"Honestly, what did I do to deserve this? I'm human," he said in a post in which he posted screenshots of some of the insults directed at him, including a death threat.

Even one of social media's biggest stars, Oregon's Sedona Prince, who became famous after her video outlining the disparity between men's and women's weight rooms at the 2021 NCAA Tournaments went viral, had to take a brief break last year from TikTok.

"I'm not any different because I'm on TikTok. I'm still a person," Prince said in a tearful video since taken down, while acknowledging her mental health had been declining.

Streno, the mental health consultant, said social media can exacerbate depression and anxiety.

During a three-month stretch last spring, at least five college athletes died by suicide. Among the reasons given by friends and family were the constant pressure of performing at a high level, the pressure to maintain a certain weight or physique, the fear of being perceived as weak because of injuries and the limited social opportunities because of the demands of a sports schedule.

Given the amount of daily interaction athletes have with friends and family on social media apps, Streno said it's more realistic to coach players on how to deal with feedback than simply advising them to shut down everything.

"If it were as simple as 'don't look at your phone,' then this wouldn't be an issue," she said. "But there's such a quick, immediate, 'Oh, this must mean this about me. I'm not good enough, or I'm not living up to this level.' And then your mind can kind of start going down into this spiral."

Williams, the father of the Michigan forward, said his son does a good job of shutting out social media during the season. After the events of this month, the dad planned on going dark for a while, too.

"People said he didn't play well, and I get that," Williams said. "But when you say my son, who I've raised and who I love tremendously, that you wish him to be dead in a ditch, that's when I've got to turn the switch."

AP March Madness coverage: <https://apnews.com/hub/march-madness> and bracket: <https://apnews.com/hub/ncaa-mens-bracket> and <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-college-basketball-poll> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## Apple rolls out buy now, pay later service: What to know

By CORA LEWIS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Apple is getting into the buy now, pay later space with a few tweaks to the existing model — including no option to pay with a credit card. The company will roll out the product to some consumers this spring, and will begin reporting the loans to credit bureaus in the fall.

Since the start of the pandemic, the option to "buy now, pay later" has skyrocketed in popularity, especially among young and low-income consumers who may not have ready access to traditional credit.

If you shop online for clothes or furniture, sneakers or concert tickets, you've seen the option at checkout to break the cost into smaller installments over time. Companies like Afterpay, Affirm, Klarna, and Paypal already offer the service, typically with late fees for missed payments and the option to use a credit card or bank account to make installment payments.



# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 81 of 86

Apple's version, which is integrated with Apple Pay and facilitated by MasterCard, will require the consumer to use a debit card and a bank account to make those payments, the company said, and will not charge flat or percentage late fees. Instead, missed payments will eventually result in the consumer losing access to these kinds of loans.

Here's what you need to know:

**HOW DOES BUY NOW, PAY LATER WORK?**

Branded as "interest-free loans," buy now, pay later services require you to download an app, link a bank account or debit or credit card, and sign up to pay in weekly or monthly installments. Some companies, such as Klarna and Afterpay, do soft credit checks, which aren't reported to credit bureaus, before approving borrowers. This is how Apple's product will operate as well. Most users are approved in minutes. Scheduled payments are then automatically deducted from one's bank account or charged to one's card.

The services generally don't charge more than a customer would have paid up front, meaning there's technically no interest, so long as one makes the payments on time.

But if a customer pays late, they may be subject to a flat fee or a fee calculated as a percentage of the total owed. These can run as high as \$34 plus interest. If a customer misses multiple payments, they may be shut out from using the service in the future, and the delinquency could hurt one's credit score.

In Apple's case, the company said there will be no late fees, either flat or as a percentage — only the possibility of missed payments reported to credit bureaus, and a loss of access to the loans. If a user wishes to defer payments, or set up a different payment plan, Apple said they can contact support. Several services allow users to defer payments in this way.

**ARE MY PURCHASES PROTECTED?**

In the U.S., buy now, pay later services are not currently covered by the Truth in Lending Act, which regulates credit cards and other types of loans (those paid back in more than four installments).

That means you could find it more difficult to settle disputes with merchants, return items, or get your money back in cases of fraud. Companies can offer protections, but they don't have to. Apple's protections are offered through Mastercard.

Lauren Saunders, associate director at the National Consumer Law Center, advises borrowers to avoid linking a credit card to buy now, pay later apps whenever possible. If you do, you lose the protections you get from using the credit card while also opening yourself up to owing interest to the card company.

"Use the credit card directly and get those protections," she said. "Otherwise, it's the worst of both worlds."

Apple's decision not to permit consumers to link a credit card to its buy now, pay later product means the consumer avoids stacking debt in this way.

**WHAT ARE THE OTHER RISKS?**

Because there's no centralized reporting of buy now, pay later purchases, those debts won't necessarily appear on your credit profile with major credit rating agencies.

That means more companies may let you buy more items, even if you can't afford them, because the lenders don't know how many loans you have set up with other companies.

Payments you make on time aren't reported to credit rating agencies, but missed payments are.

"Right now, buy now, pay later can't generally help you build credit, but it can hurt," said Saunders.

Elyse Hicks, consumer policy counsel at Americans for Financial Reform, a progressive nonprofit, said people may not consider seriously enough whether they'll still be able to afford payments down the road.

"Because of inflation, people may think, 'I'm going to have to get what I need and pay for it later in these installments,'" she said. "But are you still going to be able to afford the things you're affording now six months from now?"

**WHY DO RETAILERS OFFER BUY NOW, PAY LATER?**

Retailers accept the backend fees of buy now, pay later services because the products increase cart sizes. When shoppers are given the option to pay off purchases in installments, they're more likely to buy more goods in one go.

When Apple announced it would be creating its own buy now, pay later service, Josiah Herndon, 23,

joked on Twitter about "paying off 6 carts of (things) I can't afford with Apple, Klarna, Afterpay, PayPal Pay in 4, Shop Pay in 4, & Affirm."

Herndon, who works in insurance in Indianapolis, said he started using the services because it was taking a long time for him to be approved for a credit card, since his age meant he didn't have an extensive credit history. He's since used them to pay for high-end clothes, shoes, and other luxury goods. Herndon said he lines the payment schedules up with his paychecks so he doesn't miss installments, and called the option "very convenient."

#### WHO SHOULD USE BUY NOW, PAY LATER?

If you have the ability to make all payments on time, buy now, pay later loans are a relatively healthy, interest-free form of consumer credit.

"If (the loans) work as promised, and if people can avoid late fees and don't have trouble managing their finances, they have a place," said Saunders, of the National Consumer Law Center.

But if you're looking to build your credit score, and you're able to make payments on time, a credit card is a better choice, she said. The same goes if you want strong legal protections from fraud, and clear, centralized reporting of loans.

If you're uncertain whether you'll be able to make payments on time, consider whether the fees charged by buy now, pay later companies will exceed the penalties and interest a credit card company or other lender would charge.

#### HOW WILL ECONOMIC INSTABILITY AFFECT BUY NOW, PAY LATER?

As the cost of living increases, some shoppers have started breaking up payments on essentials, rather than just big-ticket items like electronics or designer clothes. A poll by Morning Consult last fall found 15% of buy now, pay later customers were using the service for routine purchases, such as groceries and gas, sounding alarm bells among financial advisors.

Hicks points to the rising number of delinquent payments as a sign that buy now, pay later could already be contributing to unmanageable debt for consumers. A July report from the Fitch ratings agency found delinquencies on the apps increased sharply in the 12 months that ended March 31 of last year, to as high as 4.1% for Afterpay, while credit card delinquencies held relatively steady at 1.4%.

"The increasing popularity of this is going to be interesting to see over these different economic waves," Hicks said. "The immediate fallout is what's happening now."

---

Follow all of AP's financial wellness coverage at: <https://apnews.com/hub/financial-wellness>

---

The Associated Press receives support from Charles Schwab Foundation for educational and explanatory reporting to improve financial literacy. The independent foundation is separate from Charles Schwab and Co. Inc. The AP is solely responsible for its journalism.

## Grisham's 'The Exchange,' sequel to 'The Firm,' out in fall

NEW YORK (AP) — One of literature's most famous whistleblowers, attorney Mitch McDeere of John Grisham's "The Firm," will soon be back in action — and back in trouble.

Doubleday announced Wednesday that Grisham's "The Exchange," a sequel to his million-selling breakout book from 32 years ago, will be published Oct. 17. The new novel takes place 15 years after McDeere and his wife, Abby, helped expose underworld ties at a Memphis firm and fled for their lives. The McDeeres are now in New York, where he's a partner in the world's largest international legal practice.

"His work takes him across the globe, and not always to safe places," Grisham said in a statement. "During a trip to Libya, his trusted associate is kidnapped, and an execution is threatened unless an enormous ransom is paid. Only Mitch can facilitate the exchange, and I hope readers have as much fun with the novel as I am writing it."

"The Firm" was Grisham's second book, after "A Time to Kill," and the basis for the hit film of the same name starring Tom Cruise. In 2012, it was adapted into a television series starring Josh Lucas and set a

decade after the original story.

## Dolly Parton and Garth Brooks to host ACM Awards in May

By The Associated Press NASHVILLE, Tenn.

Dolly Parton will return for a second consecutive year as host of the Academy of Country Music Awards but this year she's bringing a new plus-one to help — Garth Brooks.

The show is set for May 11 and will stream live on Amazon Prime Video from Ford Center at The Star in Frisco, Texas. A full rebroadcast of the ceremony and performances will stream the next day for free on Amazon Freevee.

It's the second consecutive year that the show will be hosted by Parton but marks the first time Brooks will take the stage to host an awards show.

"I am thrilled to return to host the ACM Awards, this time with my friend Garth," said Parton in a statement. "While I've had the pleasure of spending time with him throughout the years, I can't believe we've never had the chance to work together."

"Anyone with Dolly Parton makes a fantastic couple," added Brooks.

## Nashville shooting highlights security at private schools

By HOLLY MEYER and ANNIE MA Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — An alarm blared and lights flashed as a heavily armed assailant stalked the hallways of The Covenant School.

Surveillance footage of the shooting Monday at the private Christian school in Nashville showed many familiar security measures, including the double set of locked glass doors the killer shot their way through before fatally shooting three children and three school employees.

"It's just next to impossible to stop someone" coming through that door with a high-powered weapon, said George Grant, a leader with the Nashville Presbytery, which is connected with the school. Grant said the presbytery doesn't have a formal security program for its churches and schools but that members have worked together to share best practices and improve safety.

Around the U.S., private schools generally do not face as many requirements as public schools for developing security plans. In Tennessee, laws requiring schools to develop and submit safety plans do not apply to private schools, an emailed statement from the state Department of Education said.

Private schools also sometimes lack access to government programs to bolster security, though private schools in some states are eligible for state money to bolster security with staff, equipment and technology. Some federal grants also are available to private schools for security aid.

Generally, private schools don't have access to the police many public schools have assigned to their campuses, said Mo Canady, executive director of the National Association of School Resource Officers. He said some private schools have arranged to hire recently retired officers.

"I would imagine after this horrific situation in Nashville that there may be more attempts by private schools to try to not only bolster security but to get school resource officers."

Still, amid widespread concerns about mass shootings, experts say private schools have invested similarly to public schools in violence prevention.

Private schools were among institutions that invested most heavily in security in the aftermath of the 2012 shooting that killed 26 people at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut. Today, private schools have some of the highest-paid security specialists, including retired federal agents, said Michael Dorn, who has been involved in assessing security at thousands of schools as executive director of Safe Havens International, a nonprofit school safety center.

Security protocols for private schools are similar to those for public schools, but they are more tailored to each school's location and circumstances, said Myra McGovern of the National Association of Independent Schools.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 84 of 86

Security such as metal detectors may not be as visible at private schools, which also have considerations including boarding students and, in some cases, the children of heads of state to look after, she said.

"Attention to security is similar, but the way that it manifests is perhaps different," McGovern said.

The quality of safety plans for private schools also varies widely, as it does for public schools, Dorn said.

"We see schools that are pretty behind and some that are exceptional," he said.

In Tennessee, an executive order last year by Gov. Bill Lee on school safety measures directed the state to conduct a report on the use of armed guards in nonpublic schools and assess their need for active-shooter training.

Most U.S. school systems conduct active-shooter and lockdown trainings, and the Nashville school had in fact undergone active-shooter training in 2022, which prevented further loss of life during Monday's shooting, city police spokesperson Brooke Reese said.

Private or not, shootings are more common at middle and high schools than at elementary schools like Covenant, which are less likely to have assigned security officers. Educators also are wary of unsettling young learners with more heavy-handed security measures.

The Covenant School has about 200 students from preschool through sixth grade. The school and the Covenant Presbyterian Church are connected with the Nashville Presbytery, which includes congregations in the Presbyterian Church in America, across Middle Tennessee and southwestern Kentucky.

"Over the last several years, most of our churches have undergone training and have really scrutinized their security arrangements," said Grant, the immediate past moderator for the Nashville Presbytery. "It's not an official sort of presbytery-wide initiative, but it has just sort of grown out of relationships."

Grant said Franklin Classical School, a school under the spiritual oversight of his church, Parish Presbyterian Church in Franklin, Tennessee, has lockdown procedures and security codes in place. The school always has a former police officer on site when school is in session. It is unknown whether The Covenant School had a security officer.

Grant said his church's security team has called for a review of security protocols and already had training planned for the week after Easter.

"This is just a good reminder that we live in a broken, fallen world," he said. "And we need to be vigilant to care for one another as best we can."

\_\_\_ Ma reported from Washington, D.C. Associated Press writers Jonathan Mattise in Nashville and Michael Melia in Hartford, Conn., contributed to this report.

The Associated Press education team receives support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## WWE's WrestleMania extravaganza draws sponsors to the ring

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — WWE's WrestleMania, the Super Bowl for the sports entertainment company, arrives this weekend to a massive audience and vastly larger sponsorship revenue as it seeks to establish itself as a serious contender for major dollars from such partnerships.

Craig Stimmel, WWE's senior vice president and head of global sales and partnerships, told The Associated Press in an interview that sponsorship revenue for this year's event has doubled to more than \$20 million, a record for any WWE event.

Those numbers are critical in light of the return in January of Vince McMahon, the founder and majority shareholder of WWE, who said the sports entertainment company could be up for sale.

There are numerous rumors circulating about who might be willing to buy WWE and for how much, and it's unknown if anyone has stepped forward with a bid yet. But the company's broadening presence everywhere from TikTok to streaming channels could lift its asking price.

Marketing experts see WWE as a prime venue for brands due to the makeup of its core audience. That audience ranges from minors to seniors, has a wide range of incomes, it's global, and it's fervently devoted to the craft, said T. Maxwell, a partner at Max Sports Marketing.

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 85 of 86

"WWE fans are fiercely loyal and dedicated, they are hooked, they crave storytelling and will be WWE fans for life," Maxwell said. "This creates an amazing opportunity for savvy brands to connect with a unique audience for life."

The company, based in Stamford, Connecticut, is increasingly leaning into its marketing potential and finding new ways to resonate with fans and sponsors.

For the first time at a premium live event in January, WWE incorporated a single company's branding (Mountain Dew) on the ring canvas, in post-show press conferences and elsewhere. WWE also played off the product the company was introducing to consumers, a drink called "Pitch Black." The match was held in the dark, in a ring with fluorescent ring ropes and gear.

During last year's WrestleMania, wrestlers Shinsuke Nakamura and Rick Boogs incorporated the colors used by Mike's Hard Lemonade to launch a new drink into the gear they wore in the ring.

Stimmel said WWE will incorporate corporate brands into this year's WrestleMania in a multitude of ways, including a match sponsorship, a "blurring of the fourth wall" between what home viewers see vs. what live audience members observe and an augmented reality experience.

"We try to find the perfect marriage of brand and story," Stimmel said.

WrestleMania 39, a two-day event that begins Saturday at SoFi Stadium outside of Los Angeles, has 12 sponsors, half of them returning from last year's event.

While there has been pushback by fans in some sports leagues that have tried to introduce more advertising, it does not appear to be an issue for WWE.

"I think WWE fans are much more accepting of (sponsors) than the traditional sports," Maxwell said.

Sponsors are keen to take advantage of WWE's push into social media as the company pursues a multifaceted online effort to reach viewers on YouTube, TikTok and elsewhere.

The company surpassed 16 billion social video views in the final quarter of last year. It has nearly 94 million YouTube subscribers and has more than 20 million followers on TikTok. Its female wrestlers comprise five out of the top 15 most followed female athletes in the world, across Facebook, Twitter & Instagram, led by Ronda Rousey with 36.1 million followers.

WWE had more than 7.5 billion digital and social media views in January and February of this year, up 15% from the same time frame a year ago.

The size of the net that WWE is throwing out to capture viewers has been noticed by retail analysts.

"WWE has multiple channels to connect with customers which is important for sponsors who don't want to rely on just one medium," said Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData. "It basically gives brands multiple bites of the cherry to reach customers. WWE has built out an entire entertainment ecosystem which brands can tap into and use to push their marketing messages."

Even the timing of WrestleMania in early April, which falls between the end of the National Football League season and early days of the Major League Baseball season, puts WWE in a position to capture more sponsors.

"WrestleMania is our Super Bowl," said Stimmel.

## Today in History: March 30, Ronald Reagan shot and wounded

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, March 30, the 89th day of 2023. There are 276 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 30, 1981, President Ronald Reagan was shot and seriously injured outside a Washington, D.C., hotel by John W. Hinckley Jr.; also wounded were White House press secretary James Brady, Secret Service agent Timothy McCarthy and a District of Columbia police officer, Thomas Delahanty.

On this date:

In 1822, Florida became a United States territory.

In 1842, Dr. Crawford W. Long of Jefferson, Georgia, first used ether as an anesthetic during an opera-

# Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 30, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 265 ~ 86 of 86

tion to remove a patient's neck tumor.

In 1867, U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward reached agreement with Russia to purchase the territory of Alaska for \$7.2 million, a deal ridiculed by critics as "Seward's Folly."

In 1870, the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibited denying citizens the right to vote and hold office on the basis of race, was declared in effect by Secretary of State Hamilton Fish.

In 1923, the Cunard liner RMS Laconia became the first passenger ship to circle the globe as it arrived in New York.

In 1945, during World War II, the Soviet Union invaded Austria with the goal of taking Vienna, which it accomplished two weeks later.

In 1959, a narrowly divided U.S. Supreme Court, in *Bartkus v. Illinois*, ruled that a conviction in state court following an acquittal in federal court for the same crime did not constitute double jeopardy.

In 1975, as the Vietnam War neared its end, Communist forces occupied the city of Da Nang.

In 1987, at the 59th Academy Awards, "Platoon" was named best picture; Marlee Matlin received best actress for "Children of a Lesser God" and Paul Newman was honored as best actor for "The Color of Money."

In 2010, President Barack Obama signed a single measure sealing his health care overhaul and making the government the primary lender to students by cutting banks out of the process.

In 2015, Comedy Central announced that Trevor Noah, a 31-year-old comedian from South Africa, would succeed Jon Stewart as host of "The Daily Show."

In 2020, Florida authorities arrested a megachurch pastor after they said he held two Sunday services with hundreds in attendance in violation of coronavirus restrictions. (The charges were later dropped.)

Ten years ago: Kaufman County, Texas, District Attorney Mike McLelland and his wife, Cynthia, were found killed in their house two months after one of his assistants, Mark Hasse, was gunned down near their office. (Ex-Justice of the Peace Eric Williams was later sentenced to death for the murder of Cynthia McLelland while his wife, Kim, received 40 years for her role in the killings.) The Associated Press became the first international news agency to open a bureau in Myanmar. Phil Ramone, 79, the masterful award-winning engineer, arranger and producer, died in New York.

Five years ago: The widow of the gunman who slaughtered 49 people at a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, was acquitted on charges that she had helped plot the attack and had lied to the FBI afterward. Thousands of Palestinians marched to Gaza's border with Israel and Palestinian health officials said 15 of the protesters were killed by Israeli fire on the first day of what Hamas organizers said would be six weeks of daily protests against a border blockade; it was the area's deadliest violence in four years.

One year ago: Russian forces bombarded areas around Kyiv and another city just hours after pledging to scale back military operations in those places to help along negotiations with Ukraine. Maine Sen. Susan Collins said she would vote to confirm Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson, giving Democrats at least one Republican vote and all but assuring that Jackson would become the first Black woman on the Supreme Court. (Jackson would be confirmed on April 7.) With the help of the Hubble telescope, astronomers discovered the most distant star to date, a super-hot, super-bright giant that formed nearly 13 billion years ago.

Today's Birthdays: Game show host Peter Marshall is 97. Actor John Astin is 93. Actor-director Warren Beatty is 86. Rock musician Eric Clapton is 78. Actor Justin Deas is 75. Actor Paul Reiser is 67. Rap artist MC Hammer is 61. Singer Tracy Chapman is 59. Actor Ian Ziering is 59. TV personality Piers Morgan is 58. Rock musician Joey Castillo is 57. Actor Donna D'Errico is 55. Singer Celine Dion is 55. TV personality/producer Richard Rawlings is 54. Actor Mark Consuelos is 52. Actor Bahar Soomekh is 48. Actor Jessica Cauffiel is 47. Singer Norah Jones is 44. Actor Fiona Gubelmann is 43. Actor Katy Mixon is 42. Actor Jason Dohring is 41. Country singer Justin Moore is 39. Actor Tessa Ferrer is 37. Country singer Thomas Rhett is 33. Rapper NF is 32.