

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 1 of 83

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- School Board Agenda](#)
- [4- City Council Agenda](#)
- [5- Notice of Garbage Pickup](#)
- [6- SD News Watch: Easter services a chance to reverse church attendance decline in South Dakota](#)
- [12- Today on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [13- SearchLight: Supreme Court: Release T. Denny Sanford court records](#)
- [14- SearchLight: Child care needs greater attention from the Legislature](#)
- [15- SearchLight: Biden rule on transgender athletes would set conditions on school sports bans](#)
- [16- SearchLight: Biden vetoes attempt to repeal WOTUS rule on wetlands](#)
- [17- SearchLight: IRS slated to hire thousands of workers, boost audits of wealthy taxpayers](#)
- [18- Weather Pages](#)
- [22- Daily Devotional](#)
- [23- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [24- Subscription Form](#)
- [25- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [26- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Groton Community Calendar

### Friday, April 7

Good Friday  
City Hall Closed, No School  
Ecumenical Service at Methodist Church, 7 p.m.  
Catholic: Stations of the Cross 7:00 pm  
St. John's Lutheran: Good Friday Service, 7 p.m.  
Track at Hitchcock-Tulare, 11:30 a.m.

### Saturday, April 8

Easter Egg Hunt at the Groton Area Elementary School, 10 a.m.  
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.

### Sunday, April 9

EASTER SUNDAY  
Groton CM&A: Breakfast, 9:30 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS

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

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



Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Sunrise Service with communion, 7 a.m.; Breakfast between services; Worship with communion, 9:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at Zion, 7:30 a.m., and at St. John's, 9 a.m.

United Methodist: Groton Sunrise service, 7 a.m.; Groton Breakfast, 8 a.m.; Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Easter egg hunt after breakfast, 8:30 a.m.

### Monday, April 10

City Hall Closed  
Senior Menu: Hamburger cabbage roll hot dish, corn, pears, muffins.  
School Breakfast: Cereal.  
School Lunch: Chicken and dumpling soup.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6 p.m.  
United Methodist: PEO meeting (outside group), 7 p.m.  
Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.  
School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

© 2023 Groton Daily Independent

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 2 of 83

## The Bulletin by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

### World in Brief

former president failed to plan a withdrawal he agreed on with the Taliban in 2020.

- China announced further sanctions on Taiwan's de facto ambassador to the U.S., Hsiao Bi-khim, and on two American companies over Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen's visit to the U.S.
- Donald Trump ordered his lawyer to delay paying adult film actress Stormy Daniels "as long as possible" to prevent a story of his infidelity from being published before the 2016 election, prosecutors say.
- President Joe Biden's administration wants to make it illegal for schools to "categorically" ban transgender students from sports teams that align with their gender identity.
- The Japanese army helicopter that went missing with 10 crew members aboard is said to have crashed into the sea. Rescuers are scanning waters off southern Japan for survivors, officials said.
- About 10,000 people fled from Myanmar to Thailand since Wednesday as fighting intensified between the country's military and armed rebels, marking one of the biggest cross-border movements since the military seized power two years ago.
- Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas has accepted luxury trips from a Republican megadonor for more than two decades without reporting them on financial disclosure forms, according to a ProPublica report.
- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, seven civilians were killed in Ukrainian attacks in the Russian-occupied areas of eastern Ukraine. Russia has "highly likely advanced" into Bakhmut, the U.K. defense ministry said. French President Emmanuel Macron pressed his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping to "bring Russia to its senses" and end the ongoing conflict.

- Tennessee Republicans are being accused of racism after expelling Black Democratic Rep. Justin Jones and Justin Pearson from the heavily-controlled state House over breaching decorum while participating in a gun control protest.

- Two women were reportedly killed, and one seriously injured, in an alleged Palestinian shooting attack near a West Bank Israeli settlement.

- The Biden administration has mostly blamed the chaotic U.S. pullout from Afghanistan on Donald Trump, noting the

**GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6**  
**School Board Meeting**  
**April 10, 2023 – 7:00 PM – GHS Library Conference Room**

**AGENDA:**

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

**POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3**

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

1. Approval of March 2023 District bills for payment.
2. Approval of minutes of March 13, 2023 and March 27, 2023 school board meetings.

**OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:**

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Approval of March 2023 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approval of March 2023 School Lunch Report.
4. Approval of March 2023 School Transportation Report.
5. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Approve District Membership Agreement for North Central Special Education Cooperative.
2. Consider Resolution Approving Amendment to ASBSD Protective Trust Joint Powers Agreement and ByLaws.
3. Consider ASBSD Protective Trust Worker's Compensation Renewal Motion.
4. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(1) personnel and SDCL 1-25-2(4) negotiations.

**ADJOURN**

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 4 of 83

## Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

April 11, 2023 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

- Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1

(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)

- Open Sealed Bids for 2023 Street Resurfacing
- Department Reports
- Baseball Concessions – LWCF Grant
- Sign for Groton PD Building
- Appoint Library Board Members
- 2023-2024 Malt Beverage License Renewals:
  - MJ's Sinclair
  - Ken's Food Fair
  - Dollar General
- Approval of Special Event Alcohol Beverage License – Groton Fireman's Fun Night – April 22, 2023
- Minutes
- Bills
- Economic Development
- Announcement: Spring Garbage Routes are In Effect
- Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
- Establish Miscellaneous Pool Wages
- Hire Summer Employees
- Adjournment



**Effective the week of April 10th, to help preserve our streets, Groton residents are asked to bring their garbage to the following locations until further notice:**

- **Railroad Avenue, Main Street, Sixth Street, & Highway 37**
- **Residents of the Broadway Mobile Home Park need to take their garbage to Highway 37.**
- **Residents north of 13th Avenue (Olson and Jacobson Development) need to bring their garbage to the Bus Barns.**



## Easter services a chance to reverse church attendance decline in South Dakota

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

South Dakota churches will undoubtedly see attendance jump during Easter services on Sunday as Christians come out in large numbers to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But behind the scenes, many church leaders will worry whether they can maintain the holiday momentum as religious affiliation and church attendance continue a long downward slide across the United States.

The Rev. J. Joseph Holzhauser, pastor of Saints Peter & Paul Catholic Church in Pierre, is one of numerous clergy in South Dakota trying to rebuild or at least maintain current church membership levels.

In roughly the past decade, the church has seen attendance at its Saturday evening and two Sunday morning masses fall by 13%, from about 800 a weekend eight years ago to 700 a weekend now.

In the Sioux Falls Catholic Diocese, which serves all of East River South Dakota, records indicate that church attendance in 2022 was down 26% compared with 2010 and that membership has also fallen.

Holzhauser said there had been "slippage" in church attendance and affiliation for several years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. But churches have seen a significant decline since.

"We're never going to get everyone back," he said. "It's not necessarily anti-God. It's just that people's habits are changing. It (the pandemic) severed some ties, and it's hard to break a habit, good or bad, and we've seen this new habit of not going to church."

Membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, one of the largest churches in South Dakota, is down 40% over the past 30 years nationally and has fallen by almost 12% in South Dakota over roughly the past decade. Attendance at Lutheran churches in South Dakota is down about 10% since 2013, and the ELCA recently closed churches in Newell and Bradley.

### More people watching from home

Prior to the pandemic, Holzhauser's church developed a live-streaming option for churchgoers who were infirm or who wanted to stay home and watch masses live or on video on the church website. Online attendance has grown since the pandemic, with some members who used to attend in person finding it more desirable to watch at their own convenience.

Holzhauser said Easter and Christmas are two annual "surge points" in church attendance that he hopes may attract new members or encourage occasional visitors to attend more regularly.



**Attendance at churches has dropped the past few years and was hastened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which pushed services virtually. Many parishioners never returned.** Illustration: Shutterstock

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 7 of 83



**Even as membership in many churches in South Dakota has fallen, holidays and special events can still fill the pews, including at this Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Joseph in Sioux Falls.** Photo:

Courtesy Catholic Diocese of Sioux Falls

While the church has no formal program to attract new members, parish leaders have asked church members who attend regularly to encourage attendance among occasional attendees or to communicate with non-members to bring them into the parish.

"We've asked them to make peer contacts, to talk to their friends and neighbors," he said.

Holzhauser said churches in America seeing reduced membership may find greater commitment in parishioners who remain. "What we're going to end up with is not as many people, but those who are left behind will be really really invested," he said.

Holzhauser said continued declines in attendance and membership may delay or put an end to maintenance of existing buildings or construction of anything new. "I think the outcome will be some of the physical plants, brick and mortar things, will just have to go away," he said.

Some churches, especially in rural areas undergoing population declines, may close or consolidate if attendance continues to fall off. That trend has already played out in some regions of South Dakota, including in Hughes County, where Holzhauser said three or four rural churches have closed in recent decades.

## **People's views of God are changing**

The importance of religion in the lives of individuals and religion's influence on the country as a whole are also falling. Individuals who said religion is very important in their lives fell from 58% in 2001 to 49% in 2021. Gallup polling in 2001 showed that only 39% of Americans felt the influence of religion was falling in the United States, compared with 78% who said its influence was falling in 2021.

Poll results also show a decline in belief in the Bible, God, angels, heaven and hell.

Those changing beliefs have resulted in lower religious affiliation and reduced church membership and attendance, according to Gallup.

Perhaps most worrisome for church leaders in South Dakota and elsewhere is that in recent surveys, the people who do not affiliate with any religion, the so-called nones, are the fastest-growing segment of the national population as indicated in surveys about religion, faith and beliefs. Their ranks nearly tripled in the past 20 years, from 8% in 2001 to 21% in 2021. For several years in the 1950s, only 1% of Americans reported no religious affiliation.

Religious scholars and church leaders say the decline in church membership and attendance is being fueled by many factors, most of them cultural shifts within society at large.

They include demographic changes that are reducing rural populations where churches are a cornerstone; greater political and cultural divisions within modern society that are driving people apart; generational changes that have made young people less willing to join groups; and self-inflicted wounds within organized religion in the form of sexual and financial crimes and scandals.

## **Long-term effects could impact society**

On a practical level, a decline in church membership and attendance reduces church revenues and availability of human capital. That weakens a church's ability to bring people together and perform charity work and other good deeds that help individuals and a community survive and thrive.

It can also eliminate or reduce the effectiveness of a long-relied-upon way that people in cities large and

small come together to get to know one another, to commune and form lasting personal relationships that strengthen communities.

On a spiritual level, some church leaders believe they are in a fight for the soul of the state, of the nation and of individual human beings.

Zach Kingery, a pastor at two United Methodist Churches in southeastern South Dakota, said it is impossible to overstate the important role churches play in communities and the lives of individuals. To Kingery, attending church is one important way people learn not only to get closer to God, and to live together in harmony and mutual support, but also to live a more godly life that makes the world a better place.

"Every week we close the service and I tell people that they are sent out into the world to share the word of God and be the light of Christ, to be more like Christ, to reach out to others and to help people," he said. "Peace, patience, joy, love, goodness, kindness, all the fruits of the spirit. Those are meant to be shared with people."



**Richard Swanson**

Richard Swanson, a religion professor at Augustana University in Sioux Falls, said the drop in religious affiliation and attendance is troubling because now, perhaps more than ever, people need a place to gather, to share in triumphs and tragedies, to commune with other humans and a higher power, and to seek and perhaps find deeper meaning in their lives and in the world.

Swanson said the reduced interest in religion and church attendance in America could have the long-term effect of making individuals and communities more callous to the pain and suffering of others and less willing to help.

"I grew up believing that in the universe, it is expected that little kids would not go to bed hungry, or that other basic problems must be solved," he said. "To me, losing a religious community would take away the place where I would learn social responsibility. Church communities have been one of the places where that sense of social responsibility has been fostered."

### **Loss of a church hastens overall rural decline**

The loss of a church or decline in its reach or influence can hasten the demise of small towns in South Dakota that already suffer population loss or languish economically. Especially in a small town, it can be seen as one more reason for some residents to move away, Swanson said.

"Does it matter to the town if there's a grocery store or a church? Well, yes, it matters a great deal," he said. "The town I grew up in lost its last grocery store, and now people say the town is hollowed out and there's nothing left. The loss of a religious community in a small town has that same impact because no longer is there a space where you sit with people, sing with people or think with people and explore spirituality with people."

Demographic changes, especially in rural areas, are playing a large role in declining church membership and attendance, Swanson said.

As rural populations have shrunk, and young adults have increasingly fled small towns where they grew up to reside in larger cities, churches have suffered a generational break in attendance patterns, he said.

"For people that grew up in small-town South Dakota, going to church was something they just grew



**Embrace Church in Sioux Falls went all virtual at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.** Photo:

Erin Woodiel / Argus Leader



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 9 of 83

up with. Going to church was for them simply as ordinary a part of life as going to the grocery store or going bowling," Swanson said. "People have been fleeing rural communities for a century, and when they land in big cities, they discover they don't have the same patterns there, and that population has become significantly disconnected from churches."

## Politics and division also part of the equation

Another reason for the declines in organized religion is the influence of politics within individual congregations as well as national religious denominations, said George Tsakiridis, a professor of religion at South Dakota State University.

From strong positions on abortion, sexuality or even the response of governments and individuals to the COVID pandemic, the more political and cultural views permeate the church, the less likely some people will be to attend regularly, Tsakiridis said.

"You have political emphases within those denominations that then affect people in the pews. It allows people to say, 'Hey, I don't agree with this political stance the church is now taking, so therefore I don't feel comfortable here anymore,'" he said.

The decline in church attendance can be traced in part to divisions in American society that have deepened in recent years, whether based on political party, liberal versus conservative thinking or in regard to religious beliefs, said Tsakiridis.

Swanson also sees the divide in politics and culture in America oozing into churches and hurting their ability to appeal to a wide range of people from differing backgrounds or ideologies.

"People have commented on the decreasing ability of Americans to talk to one another with civility," he said. "People in church organizations, just as people in political discussions, have found themselves engaging in vitriol more than in conversation, and that's a piece that has split some congregations, and it drives some people away."

## Abusive church leaders also drive people away

Meanwhile, the sometimes binary approach to good and evil, and worthy and unworthy, that can arise in religious preachings, does not create a welcoming feeling among churchgoers or those who may consider joining a church, Swanson said.

"If people are done with politics, people are also done with religion in the same way because they're tired of the yelling and the blaming and the rigidity that goes with religion," Swanson said.

Swanson said religion, like other social groupings, has historically attracted leaders who are narcissistic or who have the capacity to abuse or disregard others, and he theorized that the church in America has been slow to recognize that fact and to take steps to protect churchgoers or better screen for potentially troubled leaders.

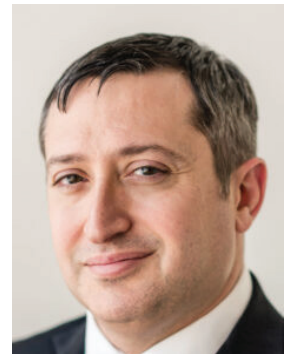
The abuse of children and vulnerable adults by priests and others in the Catholic Church, and the cover-up of the abuse and transfer of abusive priests from one place to another, has caused a distrust of religion in general in America that is hard to shake, Swanson said.

Religious organizations are not alone in having abused human beings, Swanson said, noting that sports, education, entertainment and business and industry have all had to face improper behaviors from people in power. But the damage done to the church in such cases creates a deeper sense of pain that has turned some people away from organized religion in a general sense, he said.

"People approach a community of faith, and somewhere deep in their being, they expect it to be a safe place," Swanson said. "When that safety is compromised, and people are assaulted in a religious context,



**Peace Valley Evangelical Church in Harding County was built in the early 1900s and has long been abandoned. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987.** Photo: Shutterstock



**George Tsakiridis**

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 10 of 83



**Wessington Springs United Methodist Church Pastor Zach Kingery, at left, plays bass with the Praise Band during a community event at Shakespeare Garden in 2019. With Kingery are band members, left to right, Kirk Luymes, Lila Hoffman, Jessie Baker, Jessica Kingery and Lisa Edwards.** Photo: Courtesy

Lynda Luymes, UMC

it affects us deeply, more deeply than if that occurred someplace else.”

## **Fewer, younger worshipers with different beliefs**

Meanwhile, the average age of churchgoers is rising, and people who eventually die or become unable to attend church are not being replaced by younger adults, Tsakiridis said.

“You have a lot of older churches. So many of the people in those churches are 60, 70 or 80 years old, and those mid-aged families that are missing often formed the heart of churches,” Tsakiridis said.

Some people who never attended church or no longer do so may have a hard time making sense of the role religion is supposed to play in their lives, he added.

“My own theory is that many people shy away from organized religion either because they struggle with the problem of evil. ... They wonder why a good God would allow all the bad things we see in the world,” he said. “Or they struggle in a personal sense in that they

grow up in a church that was very restrictive or hypocritical in their view, so they moved away from it.”

Tsakiridis said people who are spiritual may feel that they can do better on their own without the support of a church to tell or guide them how to live.

“They still have some spirituality in that they believe in God or a higher power, and they live their life according to that, but they don’t feel the need to attend church as part of that belief,” he said. “They think to themselves, ‘If I’m focused on just being a good person or helping my fellow human beings, I don’t see the need for the church to create that within me.’”

On a basic level, Tsakiridis said, many people would like to see the church as a place to feel better about themselves and the world around them, and the sometimes didactic approach of religion has turned some of those people away.

“When people go to houses of worship and are made to feel bad about themselves ... they wonder why am I being treated this way,” he said. “They’re not thinking about whether this church has the proper theology or not. They’re going to gauge how they are treated and how they feel in that community.”

## **Religion can be replaced with ‘uglier forms’ of solace**

Swanson and Tsakiridis both said one big danger of the decline in religious affiliation and church attendance is that some people may fill the gap religion once played in their life by joining groups with far less noble motives.

“If people don’t feel loved, that’s not good for a society because there’s suddenly a bunch of people who are not having a key need met in their lives,” Tsakiridis said. “Whether it is social gatherings or intimate faith relationships in spiritual life ... something is lacking and is going to create problems for our society.”

For example, individuals who have unmet spiritual needs may be more likely to turn to alcohol, drugs, violence or radical political views either to cover up their pain or seek solace with others who feel alone or who think alike, Tsakiridis said.

“Religion is one of the roots of our community that we’re losing because we don’t have that stable place to go to to meet those needs,” he said. “That affects the rootedness of individual human beings, and if there’s a need that’s not being met, that can start to take uglier forms.”

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 11 of 83

## Trying to reverse the trend

Religious leaders in South Dakota are well aware of the declining interest in and engagement with churches across the state, and they are taking steps to reverse the trend.

On a national level, the Catholic Church launched a three-year effort that will trickle down to the diocese and parish levels and include a detailed look at attendance and membership trends while also seeking local solutions to increase church membership that can be duplicated across the country.

The Sioux Falls diocese recently created a new position to foster growth of churches and to more assertively seek new church members.

The ELCA in South Dakota recently created a rural liaison position to aid small towns in protecting the church populations they have but also to listen closely to the needs of rural churchgoers or potential members and respond to any desires or concerns to spur greater membership.

Church leaders in various denominations across the state are acknowledging they must adapt to the cultural changes happening outside the church. While still sharing the Scripture and promoting the virtues of Christianity, church leaders say they must be more welcoming and upbeat, listen more to the needs of individuals and communities, and foster an environment of encouragement and support within the church.

"As the world keeps turning and changing around us, we expect the church to always be the same," said Constanze Hagmaier, bishop of the South Dakota Synod of the ELCA.

"God will be the same, but nowhere does it say the church must be the same. If we can't hear the voices that are out there and respond with faith, then we're emptying the church on our own. We're just helping them pack and go out the door because we refuse to open ourselves up to actually listen."

Those kinds of changes, Swanson said, will be critical to the future of churches and organized religion. "Without soul searching and without honesty, the church has no future at all," he said.

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at [sdnewswatch.org](http://sdnewswatch.org).

## SYNOD SNAPSHOT: LUTHERAN CHURCH IN S.D AND U.S. IN DECLINE

Here is a look at some key data points from the past eight years for the South Dakota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or Lutheran church, and below find statistics on the national ELCA church system. Other organized religions in the United States are seeing similar declines.

### South Dakota ELCA

Category	2013	2021	% change
Churches	208	195	— 6.3%
Members	106,000	93,450	— 11.8%
Avg attendance	28,480	25,752*	— 9.6%
Member giving	\$47.0 mill	\$42.9 mill	— 8.7%
Total income	\$56.3 mill	\$48.8 mill	— 13.3%
Operating costs	\$32.9 mill	\$35.9 mill	+ 9.1%

### National ELCA

1990: 11,100 congregations; 5.24 million baptized members

2020: 8,895 congregations; 3.14 million baptized members

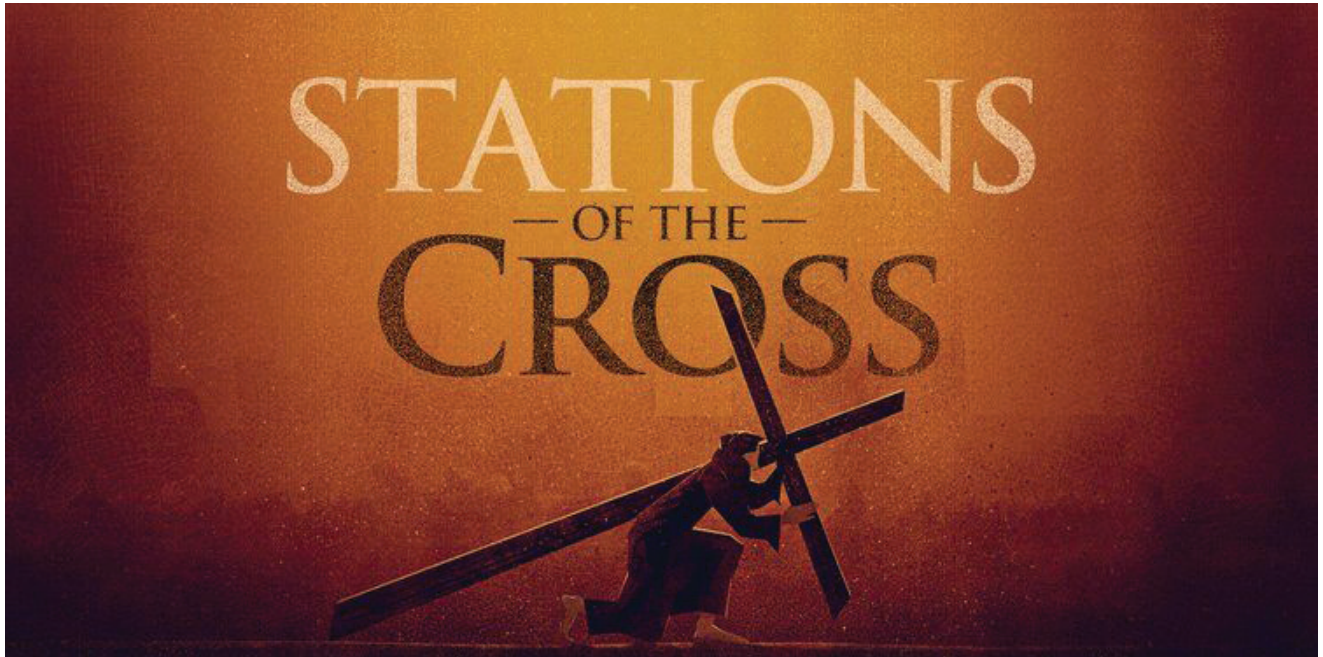
30-year change: congregations down 19%; membership down 40%

Sources/notes: Membership numbers for SD and US are for baptized members; operating costs do not include debt payments, capital improvements or mission support; 2021 avg. attendance includes in-person and online. Source is ELCA reports.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 12 of 83

# GDILIVE.COM



**7 p.m., Friday, April 7, 2023**  
**St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church**  
**Groton, SD**

**Free to watch for GDI Subscribers or \$5 Ticket Required.**



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Supreme Court: Release T. Denny Sanford court records**

**Affidavits outlining child porn investigation could come by month's end**

**BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 6, 2023 12:25 PM**

Court records ought to be released to the public that could finally shed light on why the property of South Dakota's richest man was searched as part of a child pornography investigation, the South Dakota Supreme Court ruled on Thursday.

It's the second loss in a row at the state's high court for T. Denny Sanford, who was never charged with a crime after searches of his property three years ago. Sanford is a philanthropist and the owner of First Premier Bank and Premier Bankcard.

Sanford initially sought to keep secret the five search warrant affidavits and other materials related to the now-closed investigation. Sanford lost that case in the state Supreme Court in 2021, which precipitated the release of some – but not all – of the records associated with the search warrants.

The affidavits, which would be released near the end of April barring further legal action by Sanford, could expose the underlying information that sparked the investigation.

Affidavits are sworn statements to a judge from law enforcement that explain the reasons for seeking search warrants. Such documents typically present the evidence already known to investigators, outline why a search warrant is necessary and what information the investigators intend to seek.

Minnehaha County Judge James Power ruled that the Sanford affidavits could compromise an ongoing investigation, but that they should be open to the public once the investigation was completed. The investigation ended last spring. Sanford had broken no state laws, detectives found.

Sanford's legal team once again appealed to block the release of the documents. This time, Sanford's lawyers did not argue that the affidavits ought to be closed in perpetuity, but rather that their client ought to be allowed to screen them and request that personal and proprietary information be scrubbed prior to any public release.

Judge Power denied that request last June, setting up the second Supreme Court appeal.

In their ruling on Thursday, the justices said that Power's redactions of personal information are sufficient, and that Sanford has no explicit right to request a preview.

Thursday's 5-0 opinion, authored by Chief Justice Steven Jensen, sides with Power, who "noted that Sanford had not cited any authority that would require the court to permit the parties to participate in the redaction process."

The state Division of Criminal Investigation, the ruling notes, joined lawyers for media organizations in opposing additional delays. The DCI characterized Sanford's appeal as a request for "a special right of access" to the documents.

"It is evident that the circuit court viewed Sanford's most recent motion as a belated and unpersuasive effort to further delay the unsealing of the affidavits required by statute," the ruling says.

Even so, the ruling says, Judge Power had offered Sanford every opportunity to make his case for delay, and that Power had issued a thoughtful and reasoned decision rejecting it.

Stacy Hegge, who represented Sanford at the March hearing at the Supreme Court, said her team had no comment on the ruling.

*John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux falls Argus Leader.*

## COMMENTARY

### **Child care needs greater attention from the Legislature**

**DANA HESS**

Veto day may have been the official end of the legislative session, but it did not mean the end of legislative work. The work of lawmakers continues past those nine weeks in the winter as veto day also marks the start of the summer study season.

On veto day, the Legislature's Executive Board met to choose the subjects for its summer studies. From 17 selections, they hit on two that were deemed the most worthy: long-term care sustainability and county funding and mandated services.

On April 20, the board will meet again to assign legislators to the summer study committees. Those committees will meet throughout the summer, taking testimony from experts and stakeholders. In the best of all worlds, they will emerge from their studies with legislation for consideration during the next legislative session.

To their credit, lawmakers won't stop at just two summer studies. According to Republican House Majority Leader Will Mortenson, informal work groups will also delve into topics as wide ranging as child care, nuclear energy, alternate graduation requirements, alternative certification for teachers, public notices and official newspapers.

While all are worthy topics, it would have been best if the Legislature devoted an official summer study to the topic of child care. It's easy to predict that no matter how much effort they put into their work groups, someone is bound to dismiss their findings because they weren't part of a formal summer study.

In the list of potential topics, child care was mentioned in three summer study proposals. Gov. Kristi Noem placed an emphasis on the topic in her re-election campaign, yet there was only one child care bill offered in the recent legislative session and it was tabled.

Republican Sen. Lee Schoenbeck of Watertown, who made the request for the long-term care study, said that in a series of meetings with community and business leaders earlier this year, the number one issue they discussed was child care. This isn't surprising as child care is one of the keys to workforce development.

As they try to attract business and industry, South Dakota communities have to ask themselves if they can attract enough people to the area available to fill jobs. If the answer is yes, they have to work on finding affordable housing for those workers. The Legislature took a giant step with the passage of Senate Bill 41, which freed up \$200 million in housing infrastructure funding that had been put on hold for a year after concerns about who had the legal authority to disburse the funds.

If communities can get past those hurdles, they need to make sure they can offer affordable, dependable child care. That's a topic that the Legislature has had trouble getting its arms around in the past. Larger businesses that can afford it have tackled the subject head-on, subsidizing their employees' child care costs or offering on-site child care.

Some are looking into private/public partnerships to provide child care. While officials at every level struggle for answers, parents continue to deal with the dwindling number of in-home day cares and ever longer wait lists for service.

Republican Sen. Tim Reed of Brookings will lead an informal task force on child care, bringing together legislators, economic development professionals and child care workers. In a South Dakota Searchlight story, Reed said that the study would not focus on subsidies or expanding education to pre-kindergarten.

While they may not be the emphasis of the study, those topics should be considered. Establishing pre-kindergarten or offering child care subsidies would be expensive, but consider that the Legislature has just come off a session in which it was so awash in cash that it could offer a \$100 million sales tax cut. In a meeting with the Joint Committee on Appropriations, the Department of Social Services reported that it has \$38 million in discretionary funding from the American Rescue Plan act that must be spent by September 2024.

Affordable child care is one of the keys to workforce development. Certainly the Legislature can't plead poverty if Reed's task force comes up with an expensive solution.

*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.*

## Biden rule on transgender athletes would set conditions on school sports bans

**Noem issues statement: 'President Biden, we'll see you in court'**

**BY: JACOB FISCHLER - APRIL 6, 2023 5:41 PM**

The Biden administration will advance a rule to make it more difficult for schools to exclude transgender youth athletes from competition based on their gender identity, a senior U.S. Education Department official told reporters Thursday.

The proposed rule would prohibit blanket bans of transgender athletes competing in sports consistent with their gender identity. But it would allow schools to issue exclusions for particular sports and grade levels, if the school can show it has a particular need to do so and takes steps to minimize harms caused to anyone excluded.

Any exclusion must be "substantially related to the achievement of an important educational objective," according to the text of the proposed rule the Education Department released Thursday. The rule would apply to any educational institution that accepts federal funding, essentially every U.S. public school.

"The proposed rule also recognizes that in some instances, particularly in competitive high school and college athletic environments, some schools may adopt policies that limit transgender students' participation," according to a fact sheet.

The move comes as numerous Republican-led states have enacted bans on transgender athletes competing in sports consistent with their gender identity. South Dakota enacted a ban last year.

After news broke of the Biden administration's proposed rule on Thursday, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem issued a written statement.

"South Dakota will not allow this to stand. We will lead. We will defend our laws. Only girls will play girls' sports. President Biden, we'll see you in court," Noem's statement said.

Kansas this week became the 20th state with such a ban, as the Republican-controlled Legislature overrode the veto of Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly. The legislation requires children to participate in school activities based on the gender they were assigned at birth, from elementary school to college.

And with a new super-majority in the North Carolina General Assembly, Republicans in the Tar Heel State introduced measures targeting transgender participation in sports.

Such bans would not appear to comply with the proposal, which requires that any exclusions based on gender identity are tailored to a specific sport and grade. Department of Education officials did not address what would happen when a federal rule conflicts with state law.

"A one-size-fits-all, categorical ban that includes all transgender girls and women from participating on any female athletic teams, for example, would not satisfy this proposed regulation," the official, who spoke to reporters on the condition the official was not named, said Thursday.

But the proposal would still provide schools broad discretion to define what qualifies as "an important educational objective." Considerations such as competitive fairness or safety could qualify, the official said.

If a school decided that an exclusion of transgender athletes was appropriate, it would need to identify on what basis it decided on the ban.

"It would need to have looked at the particular needs for the particular sport," the official said. "It would need to have looked at the particular need for competitive fairness in the sport, if that is the issue that school is trying to address."

The school would also have to ensure that whatever restrictions it put in place were minimized to those harmed by it, the official said.

Asked if the department thought the rule would avoid lawsuits from states that have threatened legal action if the federal government sought to force schools to allow transgender athletes in all cases, the

official said the rule was written to comply with federal laws.

Differences in sports offered to different sexes are allowed under Title IX, the federal civil rights law that requires that schools receiving federal funding provide women equal access to educational programs, including sports. For example, some schools may exclude girls from a football team or boys from a volleyball team if the athletic department as a whole provides equal opportunities.

The U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce advanced a bill last month that would block transgender girls from competing in school sports consistent with their gender identity. It is expected to be passed by the Republican-controlled House, but likely won't be taken up in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

Rep. Bobby Scott, the top Democrat on the committee, praised the proposed rule in a statement.

"School sports offer invaluable life lessons—from leadership to teamwork—that every child in America should be able to access and enjoy," said Scott, of Virginia. "To that end, the proposed rule ensures that school sports are, above all, fair and safe for our nation's children."

— *South Dakota Searchlight* staff contributed to this report.

*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.*

## Biden vetoes attempt to repeal WOTUS rule on wetlands

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - APRIL 6, 2023 4:22 PM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Thursday vetoed a measure that would repeal a rule expanding which types of wetlands can be regulated under the Clean Water Act.

Biden promised to veto the legislation that saw Democrats crossing party lines in both chambers to join Republicans in rolling back a rule that is unpopular with the agriculture industry. Farmers see the regulation as an obstacle to operations on private property with wetlands that might fall under the administration's new scope of Waters of the United States, or WOTUS.

Biden said Thursday his 2023 revised definition "provides clear rules of the road" for which wetlands qualify, and that rollback would "negatively affect tens of millions of United States households that depend on healthy wetlands and streams."

Democratic Sens. 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, joined their GOP counterparts in a 53-43 vote on March 29.

The legislation was not subject to the Senate's usual 60-vote filibuster, because Republicans forced a vote under the Congressional Review Act that allows for Congress to challenge recent executive branch decisions.

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.

Nine House Democrats crossed party lines on March 10 to repeal the new rule. They included two Georgia lawmakers, Reps. David Scott and Sanford Bishop, who respectively hold ranking member spots on the House Agriculture Committee and House Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee.

Defining which wetlands qualify under WOTUS has been a yearslong issue. The EPA under former President Barack Obama established a new definition, which was then narrowed under the Trump administration.

The contentious issue has reached the U.S. Supreme Court, which is expected to decide on the Obama-era rule this session after an Idaho couple challenged it.

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



## IRS slated to hire thousands of workers, boost audits of wealthy taxpayers

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - APRIL 6, 2023 4:00 PM

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service on Thursday detailed its plan to spend \$80 billion in additional funding that Democrats approved last year as part of their climate change and health care package.

The plan says the agency will boost tax enforcement by increasing its “focus on segments of taxpayers with complex issues and complex returns where audit rates are minimal today, such as those related to large partnerships, large corporations, and high-income and high-wealth individuals.”

The 10-year outlook from the IRS shows nearly \$46 billion would go to enforcement activities, with another \$25 billion spent on operations support. The proposal would dedicate \$5 billion to business systems modernization, \$3.2 billion to taxpayer services and \$500 million to clean energy.

The 150-page detailed proposal shows the IRS plans to hire more than 10,000 people during the current fiscal year with the vast majority of those hires, about 7,400, going to taxpayer services. The remaining 1,500 would go to enforcement, with about 700 going to operations support and 350 to business systems modernization.

During fiscal 2024, slated to begin on Oct. 1, the IRS plans to hire an additional 20,000 full-time employees. About 7,200 would work in enforcement; 6,500 would work in taxpayer services; 3,800 would be in operations support; 1,800 in energy security; and just under 200 in business systems modernization.

IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel said in a statement accompanying the report the “plan is a bold look at what the future can look like for taxpayers and the IRS.”

“Now that we have long-term funding, the IRS has an opportunity to transform its operations and provide the service people deserve,” Werfel added. “Through both service and technology enhancements, the experience of the future will look and feel much different from the IRS of today.”

### GOP objections

Congress approved the legislation that provided the \$80 billion in additional IRS funding in August amid a wave of objections from Republicans who said it would subject taxpayers to increased audits.

Democrats argued during debate on the package the additional funding would not go toward increasing audits on people making less than \$400,000.

The U.S. Treasury Department reinforced that pledge Thursday, writing the IRS plan “will not be used to raise audit rates for small businesses and households making less than \$400,000 a year, relative to historical levels.”

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the IRS plan “shows how the IRS will continue this transformation by providing world-class service, upgrading decades-old technology, and reducing the tax gap by ensuring high earners play by the same rules as working and middle-class families.”

Maryland Democratic Sen. Chris Van Hollen, chair of the panel in charge of the annual IRS funding bill, said the plan will allow the IRS “to dramatically improve customer service and efficiency for taxpayers who have struggled with its outdated systems.”

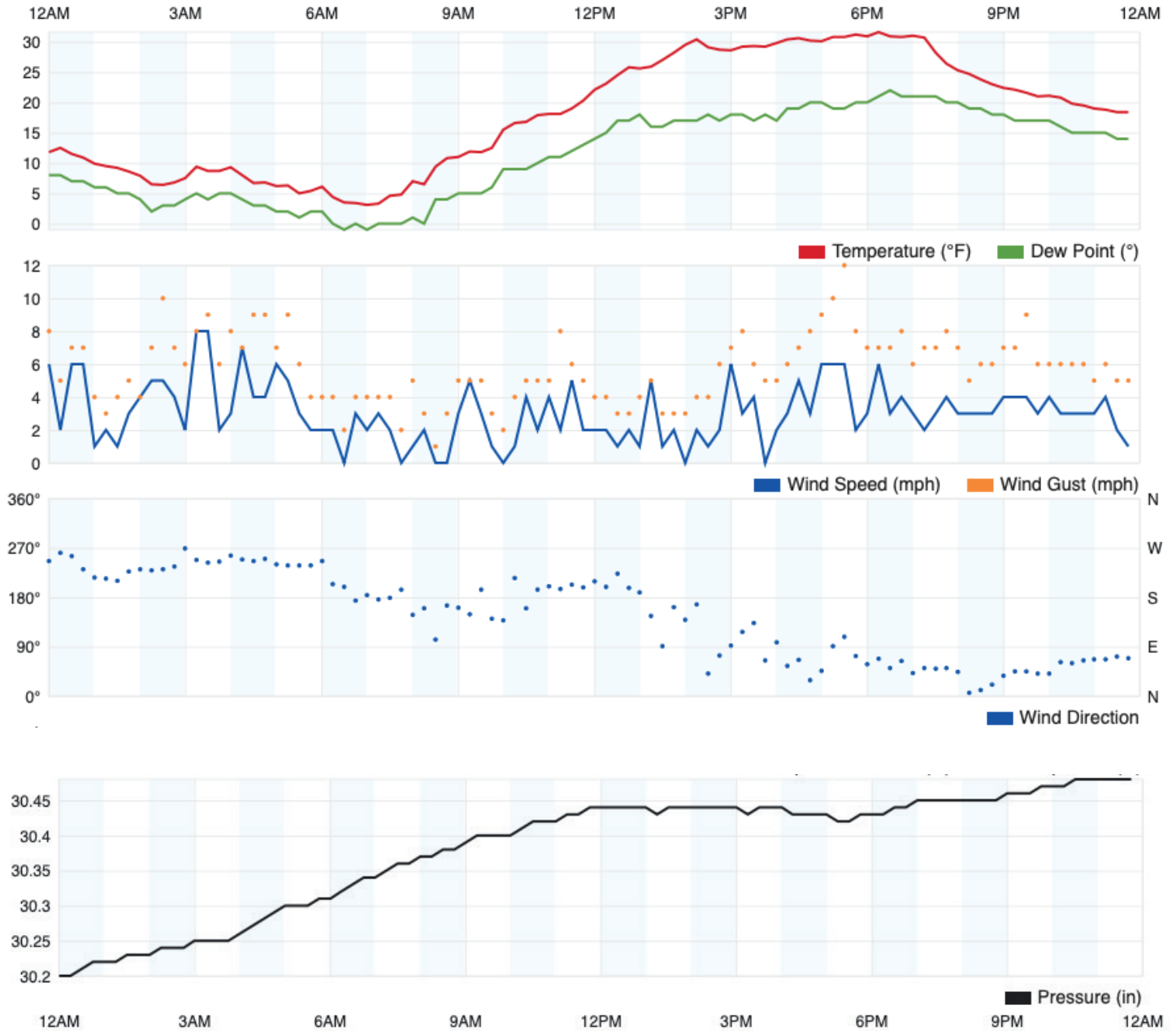
“For too long the IRS has lacked the tools it needs to go after rich tax cheats and those billion-dollar corporations that have used various schemes to hide their wealth and fail to pay what they already owe,” Van Hollen said. “It’s time that these corporations and individuals paid the taxes that are due rather than have the rest of the country pick up the tab.”

*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.*

# Groton Daily Independent



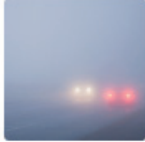




Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 18 of 83

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

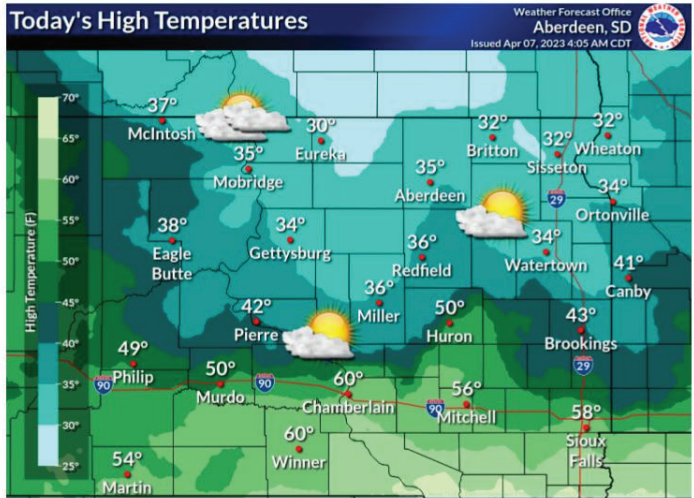


# Groton Daily Independent

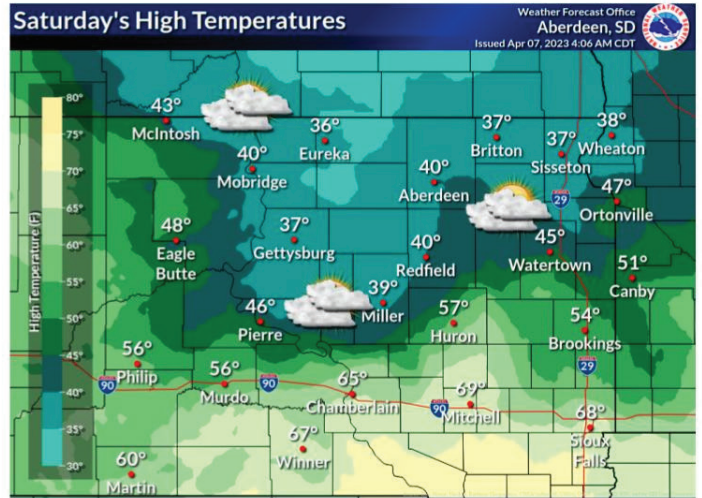
Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 19 of 83

Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Patched Fog then Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Patched Fog	Patched Fog then Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 34 °F	Low: 19 °F	High: 39 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 40 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 47 °F

 **Slowly Warming Temperatures Heading Into The Weekend** April 7, 2023  
4:24 AM



**DRY**



**DRY**

 **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** U.S. Department of Commerce **National Weather Service**  
Aberdeen, SD

A slow and steady warm up is expected to take place over the course of the next couple days. As we head into the upcoming weekend, daytime highs will gradually warm above the freezing mark for most locales. Some morning fog will be possible the next couple days with perhaps some lingering low cloud cover through a portion of the day.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 20 of 83

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 32 °F at 6:14 PM

Low Temp: 3 °F at 7:04 AM

Wind: 12 mph at 5:25 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 09 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 86 in 1988

Record Low: 2 in 2018

Average High: 54

Average Low: 28

Average Precip in April.: 0.31

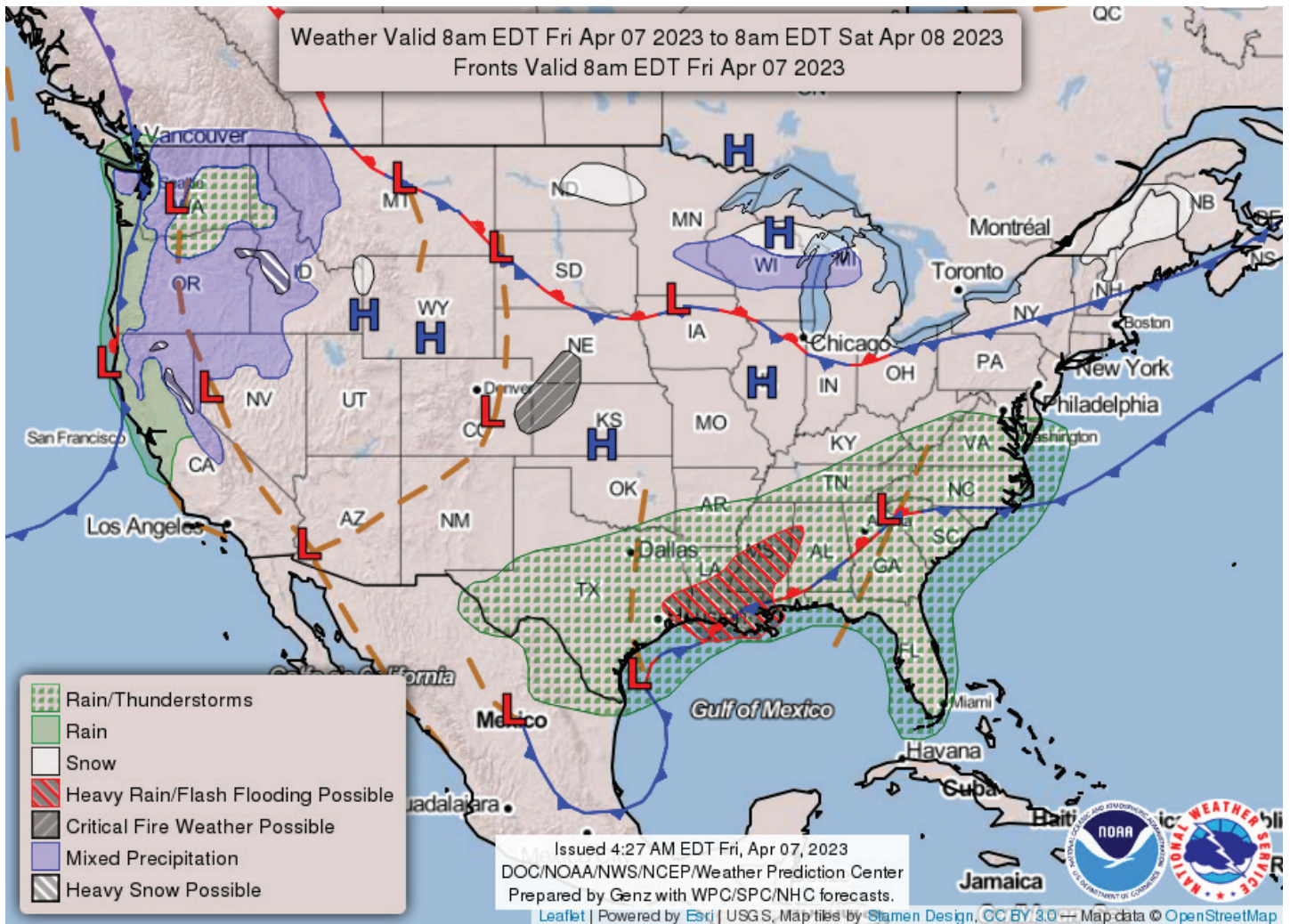
Precip to date in April.: 0.48

Average Precip to date: 2.37

Precip Year to Date: 4.41

Sunset Tonight: 8:09:18 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:57:52 AM



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 21 of 83

## Today in Weather History

April 7, 2001: Ten inches to two feet of snow fell in central South Dakota in a five-day period, beginning April 8th. Many roads became impassable. Several businesses, government offices, and schools closed on the 11th. Twenty-four inches fell at Ree Heights and Gettysburg, 20.0 inches at Faulkton, 18.0 inches at Kennebec, 16.0 inches at Pierre, and 10.0 inches at Doland.

1857 - A late season freeze brought snow to every state in the Union. Even as far south as Houston TX the mercury plunged to 21 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1926: Lightning started a disastrous oil fire at San Luis Obispo, California, which lasted for five days, spread over 900 acres, and burned over six million barrels of oil. Flames reached 1000 feet, and the temperature of the fire was estimated at 2,500 degrees. The fire spawned thousands of whirlwinds with hundreds the size of small tornadoes. One vortex traveled one mile to the east-northeast of the blaze, destroying a small farmhouse and killing two people. Damage totaled \$15 million.

1929 - Record heat prevailed across New England. Hartford CT reported an afternoon high of 90 degrees. (David Ludlum)

1935 - Amarillo, TX, reported dust obscuring visibility for twenty hours. Blowing dust was reported twenty-seven of thirty days in the month. On several days the visibility was reduced to near zero by the dust. (The Weather Channel)

1948: Six tornadoes ripped through Northern Illinois and Indiana; mainly across the southern and eastern suburbs of Chicago. The hardest hit was from a tornado that moved east from near Manteno, IL to near Hebron, Indiana. This storm left four people dead; three in Grant Park, IL and one near Hebron, IN with 67 injuries and over a million dollars damage. Other strong tornadoes in the area moved from near Coal City, IL to Braidwood, IL and from Calumet City, IL into Indiana. Further south, two strong tornadoes occurred across the northern parts of Champaign and Vermilion Counties in Illinois.

1980: Severe thunderstorms spawned tornadoes that ripped through central Arkansas. The severe thunderstorms also produce high winds and baseball size hail. Five counties were declared disaster areas by President Carter. A tornado causing F3 damage also affected St. Louis and St. Charles counties in Missouri producing \$2.5 million in damage. Click [HERE](#) for a radar video of the F2 tornado that cut a path from near Mayflower to the north of Beebe, Arkansas.

1980 - Severe thunderstorms spawned tornadoes which ripped through central Arkansas. The severe thunderstorms also produce high winds and baseball size hail. Five counties were declared disaster areas by President Carter. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - International Falls, MN, with record warm afternoon high of 71 degrees, was warmer than Miami FL, where the high was a record cool 66 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - High winds in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region gusted to 172 mph atop Grandfather Mountain NC. Twenty-nine cities in the southwest and north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including Yankton SD with a reading of 91 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-seven cities in the southwestern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 92 degrees in Downtown San Francisco and 104 degrees at Phoenix AZ established records for April. Highs of 78 degrees at Ely NV and 93 degrees at San Jose CA equalled April records. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Low pressure brought strong winds to the Alaska peninsula and the Aleutian Islands. Winds gusted to 68 mph at Port Heiden two days in a row. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed across central Alaska. Yakutat reported a record high of 54 degrees. Unseasonably cold weather prevailed over central sections of the Lower Forty-eight states. A dozen cities from Kansas to Indiana and Alabama reported record low temperatures for the date. Evansville IN equalled their record for April with a morning low of 23 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2010: The record heat that affected the region on April 6-7 included 93 degrees at the Washington-Dulles Airport on April 6, the earliest 90-degree reading on record. On April 7, Newark, New Jersey, shattered its daily record by seven degrees when the maximum temperature rose to 92 degrees. The Northeast ended up with its second warmest April in 116 years.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 22 of 83

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### READY OR NOT

A truck came speeding down a steep hill. It was necessary to make a quick turn at the bottom of the hill to avoid going into a lake. Unfortunately, the driver failed to make the turn and ended up in the lake. Fortunately, the driver escaped, unharmed.

As he climbed from the cab of the truck and waded from the lake to the crowd that had assembled onshore, he was shaking his head from side to side. Finally someone asked, "What happened?"

"Well," he said, "I guess I should have gotten brake fluid before I needed it."

Procrastination, at times, seems to invade everyone's life. Occasionally, we "all plan to do tomorrow what we could have done today." And there are many excuses that encourage us to do so. One might be fear. Another might be thinking the task is unimportant or even too difficult. Again, we may not want to be bothered by a request or even have a desire to inconvenience the one who is depending on us. Time is one of God's greatest gifts. Once gone, it can never be reclaimed or returned. So, we must learn to see time from God's perspective and place a high value on it. God gives us time, first of all, to accept His salvation. Then, whatever days He allows us to live, are to be lived in service to Him and others who need to know Him as Savior and Lord.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to make the most of the time You give us, so that we may accomplish the purpose You have for us. May we live each day realizing that it is a gift. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Don't be like your ancestors who would not listen or pay attention when the earlier prophets said to them, - This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies says: Turn from your evil ways, and stop all your evil practices.' Zechariah 1:4



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

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 23 of 83

## 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 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 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

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 24 of 83

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

**Groton Daily Independent**  
**www.397news.com**

### Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to  
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)

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

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 25 of 83



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.04.23

1 37 45 62 64 4

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$414,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 1 Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.05.23

23 28 38 39 41 2

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,100,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 13 Hrs 1 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.06.23

3 10 17 33 36 6

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

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 31 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.05.23

13 27 28 30 31

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

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 13 Hrs 1 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.05.23

12 30 46 52 59 1

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

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 13 Hrs 23 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.05.23

3 5 9 42 52 11

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$186,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 13 Hrs 23 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Minnesota utility will keep stake in North Dakota coal plant

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A Minnesota utility has reversed its decision to divest from a large North Dakota coal-fired power plant, citing new risks in the Midwest electricity market and new customers.

Fergus Falls-based Otter Tail Power announced in 2021 that it would sell its minority stake in the Coyote Station Power Plant in Beulah, North Dakota, and end its involvement with the plant by 2028. At the time, Otter Tail said the plant had become too costly and would become unnecessary as it added more renewable energy.

But Otter Tail has now told Minnesota regulators that it still needs Coyote Station, the Star Tribune reported Thursday. The utility said in a recent filing that it has added some large customers, increasing its need for generation capacity. It specifically cited a cryptocurrency operation in Jamestown, North Dakota, that has become its second-largest customer.

The company also cited concerns about future costs and availability of electricity on the regional power grid, and price volatility for natural gas.

"We don't want to do anything that can't be undone that we would regret," Nate Jensen, Otter Tail's manager of resource planning, told the newspaper.

Clean energy and environmental groups had praised the plan to exit Coyote Station, calling it one of the "dirtiest coal-fired plants in the country." They plan to fight the company's new proposal before the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.

"It is obviously disturbing that they are willing to remain dependent on this highly polluting coal plant," said Barbara Freese, staff attorney for the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy.

Coyote Station is the largest emitter of nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide of any coal plant in Minnesota or North Dakota, Freese said, citing federal data. It's also a major source of carbon dioxide, and "climate change isn't going away," she added.

Otter Tail serves about 137,000 homes and businesses in Minnesota and the Dakotas. It operates and co-owns Coyote Station, along with another coal-fired plant in Big Stone, South Dakota, with three other utilities. It owns the largest stake in Coyote Station at 35%.

But Otter Tail also reserves the right to exit Coyote Station if the plant is faced with a large "non-routine" capital investment, such as big-ticket items to limit emissions other than carbon dioxide. While North Dakota regulators last year determined that Coyote Station didn't need additional reductions, Otter Tail told the Minnesota utilities commission that federal regulators may not accept North Dakota's approach.

### Court rules documents in Sanford case must be unsealed

By MARGARET STAFFORD Associated Press

The South Dakota Supreme Court ruled Thursday that affidavits from an investigation into child pornography allegations against billionaire philanthropist T. Denny Sanford must be unsealed.

In 2019, South Dakota investigators searched his email account, as well as his cellular and internet service providers, for evidence of possession of child pornography, after his accounts were flagged by a technology firm.

Sanford, the state's richest man, was not charged after the South Dakota attorney general's office said its investigation into the allegations found no prosecutable offenses within the state's jurisdiction.

Sanford had sought to bar affidavits used to issue search warrants in the case. But the Sioux Falls Argus Leader and ProPublica argued in court that the documents should be made public.

After the decision not to file charges, Judge James Power ordered in June 2022 that South Dakota law required the affidavits to be unsealed. They were kept sealed while Sanford's attorneys appealed, sending the case to the state Supreme Court.

Sanford argued that releasing the documents could have an impact on his privacy and reputation.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 27 of 83

Initially, the court documents referred only to "an implicated individual," leading the Argus Leader and ProPublica to go to court seeking access to the records.

The search warrants were unsealed in 2021, identifying Sanford by name for the first time, but the affidavits remained sealed.

In Thursday's unanimous decision, the state Supreme Court's found the lower court had thoroughly considered all legal and constitutional ground asserted by Sanford.

"The court's approach to redaction fell soundly within its discretion, and the court appropriately exercised its discretion to "decide whether there (were) sufficient grounds to prohibit access" to the affidavits.

Sanford has donated billions to hospitals, universities and charities, and the Sanford Health system is named for him. He made his fortune as the founder of First Premier Bank in South Dakota, which is known for issuing high-interest credit cards to those with poor credit.

His attorney, Stacey Hegge, argued that Sanford should be able to inspect and participate in redacting the affidavits before the circuit court unseals them, to avoid any disclosure of trade secrets.

Hegge declined to comment Thursday on the ruling and would not say if an appeal was planned.

Shelly Conlon, the Argus Leader's news director, applauded the court's decision.

"To take on a Goliath of an influence in our community and win today is a strong victory for the public's right to know," Conlon said. "The law is clear, and the Court's decision only reaffirms the role journalism has in accountability and understanding government, public figure and law enforcement decisions."

Jon Arneson, attorney for the Argus Leader, noted that the ruling came just two weeks after attorneys argued the case before the state Supreme Court.

"Obviously, I agree with the Supreme Court's unanimous decision," he said. "The reasoning was sound and well articulated."

The court's ruling also noted that attorneys for the state had argued that unsealing an affidavit after the investigation was over was consistent with society's interests in having law enforcement and the judiciary operate in public, even when no charges are filed.

## Native activist LaDuke resigns from environmental group

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Native American activist Winona LaDuke has resigned as executive director of the Indigenous-led environmental group Honor the Earth after the organization lost a sexual harassment lawsuit filed by a former employee.

LaDuke announced her resignation Wednesday in a Facebook post, saying she failed Margaret Campbell by not responding sufficiently to her allegations of sexual harassment by a coworker in 2014 and 2015. A Minnesota jury awarded Campbell \$750,000 last week in the suit against Honor the Earth.

"I take personal responsibility for the mistakes made," LaDuke wrote. "I was the executive director, and it was my job to create a good foundation to heal and move forward."

LaDuke, 63, a member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, is best known for leading opposition to Enbridge Energy's Line 3 oil pipeline across northern Minnesota in 2021 and participated in protests against the Dakota Access pipeline near North Dakota's Standing Rock Reservation in 2016. She also ran for vice president as Ralph Nader's running mate on the Green Party ticket in 1996 and 2000. She founded Honor the Earth 30 years ago with members of the musical duo Indigo Girls.

LaDuke, who owns an industrial hemp farm, said she planned to take some time off and is already busy with preparations for spring planting and maple syrup gathering.

Krystal Two Bulls, who had been co-executive director since December, will now lead Honor the Earth.

## Pope Francis to miss Way of the Cross event in cold Rome

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican says Pope Francis, who was recently hospitalized for bronchitis, won't preside over Good Friday's late-night Way of the Cross event due to extremely cold weather in Rome.

It said that instead of presiding over the torch-lit procession at the Colosseum, Francis will watch from the hotel where he lives in the Vatican.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 28 of 83

He will still attend the earlier Passion of the Lord celebration at St. Peter's Basilica, the Vatican added. There, the cross will be unveiled before it goes to the Colosseum for the procession.

Francis, 86, was discharged from a Rome hospital on Saturday following treatment for bronchitis. The Vatican said at the time that he would carry out the complete Holy Week schedule, including the Way of the Cross procession and Easter Sunday Mass in St. Peter's Square.

On Thursday, he presided over Mass in St. Peter's Basilica and later washed and dried the feet of a dozen residents of a Rome juvenile prison in a ritual symbolizing humility.

## Going, going, gone: Study says climate change juicing homers

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Climate change is making major league sluggers into even hotter hitters, sending an extra 50 or so home runs a year over the fences, a new study found.

Hotter, thinner air that allows balls to fly farther contributed a tiny bit to a surge in home runs since 2010, according to a statistical analysis by Dartmouth College scientists published in Friday's Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society. They analyzed 100,000 major league games and more than 200,000 balls put into play in the last few years along with weather conditions, stadiums and other factors.

"Global warming is juicing home runs in Major League Baseball," said study co-author Justin Mankin, a Dartmouth climate scientist.

It's basic physics.

When air heats up, molecules move faster and away from each other, making the air less dense. Baseballs launched off a bat go farther through thinner air because there's less resistance to slow the ball. Just a little bit farther can mean the difference between a homer and a flyout, said Alan Nathan, a University of Illinois physicist who wasn't part of the Dartmouth study.

Nathan, one of a group of scientists who has consulted with Major League Baseball on the increase in homers, did his own simple calculation, based purely on known physics of ballistics and air density as it changes with temperature, and said he got the same result as the Dartmouth researchers.

Both Nathan and the Dartmouth team found a 1% increase in home run likelihood with every degree the air warms (1.8% with each degree Celsius). Total yearly average of warming-aided homers is only 1% of all home runs hit, the Dartmouth researchers calculated.

Non-climate factors contribute even more to the barrage of balls flying out of the park, scientists and baseball veterans said. The biggest is the ball and the size of the stitches, Nathan said, and MLB made slight adjustments to deaden the ball prior to the 2021 season. Others include batters' recent attention to launch angle; stronger hitters; and faster pitches. The study started after the end of baseball's infamous steroids era saw a spike in home runs.

Veteran baseball players and executives said the research fits with what they've seen on the field.

"We always felt that way for years," Phillies president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said. "When it's warmer, the ball travels more and they have scientific evidence to back that up."

Homers have always varied by ballpark due to simple factors like dimensions that are friendlier to pitchers than hitters, or vice versa, as well as wind conditions.

The Dartmouth team found the climate homer effect varied by field, too. Chicago's Wrigley Field, which still hosts a lot of day games, has the most warming-homer friendly confines. The statistical analysis found no significant heat-aided homers at Tampa's Tropicana Field, the only full-time domed stadium in Major League Baseball.

"It's interesting to think about," said five-time All-Star pitcher David Cone, who once threw a perfect game and is now a television baseball analyst. "I'd probably more likely look at the makeup of the baseball itself, the variances and the specs. Of course, weather matters, definitely I wouldn't shoo it away."

After a 1-0 victory in Coors Field, Colorado Rockies reliever Brent Suter said the study, which mentions more than 500 home runs since 2010, rings true to him.

"Obviously I'm not a fan in any way as a pitcher," Suter said with a laugh. "500 seems a lot, but I could

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 29 of 83

believe it.”

The heat is also hard on players and fans, Suter said: “I remember pitching some games I was just, like ‘This does not feel like normal heat. It’s crazy hot.’”

Mankin called what’s happening “a fingerprint of climate change on our recreation.” Callahan said what’s been seen so far is nothing compared to projections of hundreds of extra homers in the future.

How many extra homers depends on how hot it gets, which depends on how much greenhouse gas the world spews from the burning of coal, oil and gas. Callahan ran different scenarios of carbon pollution through computer simulations.

In the worst-case warming trajectory – which some scientists say the world is no longer on based on recent emissions – there would be about 192 warming-aided homers a year by 2050 and around 467 hot home runs by the year 2100. In more moderate carbon pollution scenarios, closer to where Earth is now tracking, there would be about 155 warming-aided homers a year by 2050 and around 255 extra dingers at the end of the century, Callahan said.

Because baseball has so many statistics and analytics, such as the tracking system Statcast, trends can be seen more easily than other effects of climate change, Mankin said. Still, the scientists can’t point to a single homer and say that’s a warming-aided home run. It’s a detail that can be only seen in the more than 63,000 homers hit since 2010.

Several climate scientists told The Associated Press that the study makes perfect sense and the statistics are analyzed properly, though they also point out factors other than climate change are in play and likely have bigger effects.

Both Texas A&M’s Andrew Dessler and University of Illinois’ Don Wuebbles said while the rise in home runs is interesting, it pales next to the issues of extreme weather and rising seas.

But Callahan said it actually brings home the threat of climate change in a unique way. Besides resulting in more home runs, a warming climate will likely require more domed stadiums because it will simply be too hot outside for humans in some places.

“Global warming is going to reshape so many of the things that we care about in so many pernicious and subtle ways,” Callahan said. “And the fact that we’ll get to go to fewer baseball games played in open air is not a civilization-ending crisis, but it is another sign of the way that we have reshaped our lives due to our greenhouse gas emissions.”

---

Associated Press reporters Pat Graham contributed from Denver and Ron Blum contributed from New York.

---

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.

## US would bar full ban on trans athletes but allow exceptions

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Schools and colleges across the U.S. would be forbidden from enacting outright bans on transgender athletes under a proposal released Thursday by the Biden administration, but teams could create some limits in certain cases — for example, to ensure fairness.

The proposed rule sends a political counterpunch toward a wave of Republican-led states that have sought to ban trans athletes from competing in school sports that align with their gender identities. If finalized, the proposal would become enshrined as a provision of Title IX, the landmark gender-equity legislation enacted in 1972.

It must undergo a lengthy approval process, however, and it’s almost certain to face challenges. While

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 30 of 83

opponents sharply criticized the proposal, some advocates for transgender athletes were concerned that it did not go far enough.

The proposal comes on the same day that the Supreme Court said a 12-year-old transgender girl in West Virginia can continue competing on her middle school track and cross-country teams while legal battles over the state's transgender law continue. The law bans transgender athletes from female teams.

All told, at least 16 states now have bans in effect covering at least high school interscholastic sports. Some also extend to intramural, club or college sports. Enforcement of bans in at least three other states has been put on hold by courts, and one more has adopted a ban that doesn't take effect until July.

Under the Education Department's proposed rule, no school or college that receives federal funding would be allowed to impose a "one-size-fits-all" policy that categorically bans trans students from playing on sports teams consistent with their gender identity. Such policies would be considered a violation of Title IX.

Still, the proposal leaves room for schools to develop team eligibility rules that could ultimately result in restrictions around trans athletes' participation.

That would be allowed only if it serves "important educational objectives," such as fairness in competition and reduction of injury risks.

Any limits would have to consider the sport, the level of competition and the age of students. Elementary school students would generally be allowed to participate on any teams consistent with their gender identity, for example. More competitive teams at high schools and colleges could add limits, but those would be discouraged in teams that don't have tryouts or cuts.

"Every student should be able to have the full experience of attending school in America, including participating in athletics, free from discrimination," said Miguel Cardona, Biden's education secretary, in a statement.

Biden's administration used "fairness of competition" as criteria, which has been part of the debate both in the U.S. and globally. But officials offered no specifics on how this could be done.

Of the tens of millions of high school students in the U.S., about 300,000 youth between the ages of 13 to 17 identify as transgender, according to a 2022 study from the Williams Institute, a think tank at UCLA focused on LGBTQ+ issues. The number of athletes within that group is much smaller; a 2017 survey by Human Rights Campaign suggested fewer than 15% of all transgender youth play sports.

Asked about the proposal, Bobbie Hirsch, a transgender man and sophomore on the Wayne State men's fencing team, said "anything helps." But he feared the language in the rule would make it easier for schools to tell transgender athletes they can't play on a team. "That's the direction things have been going," he said in a phone interview.

Hirsch competed on the women's team in the 2021-22 season, and began transitioning socially in high school and medically last summer.

Eli Bundy, an 18-year-old transgender resident of Charleston, South Carolina, said they welcomed the proposal but were stopping short of celebrating.

"I have a hard time feeling relief when positive stuff happens at the national level, because there's still so much at the state level from the South Carolina Legislature that is antagonistic and sends a really harmful message to trans youth," said Bundy, who testified in 2021 against the state's ban on transgender students' participation in girls' or women's sports at public schools and colleges.

Asked about the state bans now in place, a senior Education Department official briefing reporters on condition of anonymity said Title IX is the law of the land and officials would work to ensure it's being followed in all the states.

In the West Virginia case, the Supreme Court refused to undo an appeals court order that made it possible for the girl, Becky Pepper-Jackson, to continue playing on her school's teams. The state's law on transgender athletes defines male and female by looking to the student's "reproductive biology and genetics at birth." It applies to middle and high schools, as well as colleges.

Elsewhere, Republican lawmakers insisted they had the right to set policies in their states. The Biden administration's announcement came a day after Kansas lawmakers succeeded in overriding Democratic

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 31 of 83

Gov. Laura Kelly's third veto in three years of a bill to ban transgender female athletes from girls' and women's sports.

"At what point does the federal government not understand the U.S. Constitution that says we have states' rights?" said Republican state Rep. Brenda Landwehr, of Wichita. "We can make decisions on our own."

Critics argue transgender athletes have an advantage over cisgender women in competition. Last year, Lia Thomas became the first transgender woman to win an NCAA swimming title. College sports' governing body, however, adopted a sport-by-sport approach to transgender athletes in January 2002, though recently the NCAA's board decided it won't be fully implemented until 2023-24.

The NCAA released a statement Thursday night saying: "The NCAA's current transgender student-athlete participation policy aligns with the Olympic movement and balances fairness, inclusion and safety for all student-athletes. That policy remains in place while the lengthy Title IX regulatory process plays out."

At the same time, international sports-governing bodies are instituting policies that effectively ban the vast majority of trans women from track field and swimming events.

Donna de Varona, a two-time Olympic gold medalist in swimming and a member of the Women's Sports Policy Working Group, said her hope is to find a "nuanced approach" to finding space for transgender athletes while allowing for Title IX to make sure girls and women have "fairness, opportunity and safety."

"There's plenty of room. ... Why does it have to be in the women's category? We're already being compromised in our reproductive rights and now we have the other spectrum with sports," de Varona said in a phone interview.

Sasha Buchert, Lambda Legal senior attorney and director of the group's Nonbinary and Transgender Rights Project, said the proposed rule provided "critical recognition of the importance of participating in sports for transgender youth." At the same time, she expressed concern about whether it would eliminate discrimination against transgender students.

But an attorney for cisgender runners decried the proposal as "a slap in the face to female athletes who deserve equal opportunity to compete in their sports."

"The Biden administration's rewriting Title IX degrades women and tells them that their athletic goals and placements do not matter," said Christiana Kiefer, senior counsel at Alliance Defending Freedom. She represented Connecticut runners who sued over the participation of two transgender girls in track and field events.

President Joe Biden's administration has made it a priority to bolster the rights of trans students. Last year it proposed a separate federal rule that for the first time would extend Title IX rights to LGBTQ+ students, broadly protecting them from discrimination in education.

That rule — which drew more than 240,000 comments from the public and sharp opposition from conservatives — is expected to be finalized as soon as next month.

The new proposal doesn't offer examples of acceptable limits that could be placed on school sports, but it clarifies that restrictions couldn't be directed at trans students only. Schools would be left to navigate that tricky legal terrain, with the knowledge that any violation could bring a federal civil rights investigation or lawsuits.

Schools that choose to impose limits must "minimize harms" to students who lose out on athletics opportunities, the proposal says. If a school can achieve objectives like fairness in ways that cause less harm, then the school could be deemed to be violating Title IX.

"Preventing students from participating on a sports team consistent with their gender identity can stigmatize and isolate them," according to background information provided by the administration. "This is different from the experience of a student who is not selected for a team based on their skills."

Schools that violate Title IX can face penalties up to a complete loss of federal funding, although no school has ever been dealt that punishment.

AP Sports Writers Eric Olson in Omaha, Nebraska, and John Zenor in Birmingham, Alabama, and AP writers Pat Eaton-Robb in Hartford, Connecticut, James Pollard in Columbia, South Carolina, and John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas, contributed to this report.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 32 of 83

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

## US adds a healthy 236,000 jobs despite Fed's rate hikes

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's employers added a solid 236,000 jobs in March, suggesting that the economy remains on solid footing despite the nine interest rate hikes the Federal Reserve has imposed over the past year in its drive to tame inflation.

The unemployment rate fell to 3.5%, just above the 53-year low of 3.4% set in January.

At the same time, some of the details of Friday's report from the Labor Department raised the possibility that inflationary pressures might be easing and that the Fed might soon decide to pause its rate hikes. Average hourly wages in March were up 4.2% from 12 months earlier, down sharply from a 4.6% year-over-year increase in February. Measured month to month, though, wages rose 0.3% from February to March, a tick up from a mild 0.2% gain from January to February.

In another sign that might reassure the Fed's inflation fighters, a substantial 480,000 Americans began looking for work in March. Typically, the bigger the supply of job seekers, the less pressure employers feel to raise wages. The result is often an easing of inflation pressures.

In its report Friday, the government also revised down its estimate of job growth in January and February by a combined 17,000.

"The labor market continues to soften," said Sinem Buber, economist at the job firm ZipRecruiter. "That should reduce inflationary pressures in the coming months and give the Federal Reserve greater confidence regarding the inflation outlook."

Among the sectors of the economy that gained jobs in March were restaurants and bars, healthcare providers and government agencies.

Despite last month's healthy job growth, the latest economic signs suggest that the economy may be slowing, which would help cool inflation pressures. Manufacturing is weakening. America's trade with the rest of the world is declining. And though restaurants, retailers and other services companies are still growing, they are doing so more slowly.

For Fed officials, taming inflation is Job One. They were slow to respond after consumer prices started surging in the spring of 2021, concluding that it was only a temporary consequence of supply bottlenecks caused by the economy's surprisingly explosive rebound from the pandemic recession.

Only in March 2022 did the Fed begin raising its benchmark rate from near zero. In the past year, though, it has raised rates more aggressively than it had since the 1980s to attack the worst inflation bout since then.

And as borrowing costs have risen, inflation has steadily eased. The latest year-over-year consumer inflation rate — 6% — is well below the 9.1% rate it reached last June. But it's still considerably above the Fed's 2% target.

Complicating matters is turmoil in the financial system. Two big American banks failed in March, and higher rates and tighter credit conditions could further destabilize banks and depress borrowing and spending by consumers and businesses.

The Fed is aiming to achieve a so-called soft landing — slowing growth just enough to tame inflation without causing the world's biggest economy to tumble into recession. Most economists doubt it will work; they expect a recession later this year.

So far, the economy has proved resilient in the face of ever-higher borrowing costs. America's gross domestic product — the economy's total output of goods and services — expanded at a healthy pace in second half of 2022. Yet recent data suggests that the economy is losing momentum.

On Monday, the Institute for Supply Management, an association of purchasing managers, reported that U.S. manufacturing activity contracted in March for a fifth straight month. Two days later, the ISM said



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 33 of 83

that growth in services, which accounts for the vast majority of U.S. employment, had slowed sharply last month.

On Wednesday, the Commerce Department reported that U.S. exports and imports both fell in February in another sign that the global economy is weakening.

The Labor Department on Thursday said it had adjusted the way it calculates how many Americans are filing for unemployment benefits. The tweak added nearly 100,000 claims to its figures for the past two weeks and might explain why heavy layoffs in the tech industry this year had yet to show up on the unemployment rolls.

The Labor Department also reported this week that employers posted 9.9 million job openings in February, the fewest since May 2021 but still far higher than anything seen before 2021.

In its quest for a soft landing, the Fed has expressed hope that employers would ease wage pressures by advertising fewer vacancies rather than by cutting many existing jobs. The Fed also hopes that more Americans will start looking for work, thereby adding to the supply of labor and reducing pressure on employers to raise wages.

## 2 killed in West Bank after Israel strikes Lebanon, Gaza

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel unleashed rare airstrikes on Lebanon and continued bombarding the Gaza Strip on Friday, an escalation that sparked fears of a broader conflict following days of violence over Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site.

Later Friday, there were signs that both sides were trying to keep the hostilities in check. Fighting on Israel's northern and southern borders subsided after dawn, and midday prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem passed peacefully. But a Palestinian shooting attack in the Israeli-occupied West Bank killed two women near an Israeli settlement just hours later — a grim reminder of the combustible situation.

The early morning Israeli strikes followed an unusually large rocket barrage fired at Israel from southern Lebanon — what analysts described as the most serious cross-border violence since Israel's 2006 war with Lebanon's Hezbollah militants. The violence erupted after Israeli police raided the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem earlier this week, sparking unrest in the contested capital and outrage across the Arab world.

The Israeli strikes seemed designed to avoid drawing in the Iran-backed Shiite group, which Israel considers its most immediate threat. The Israeli military said its warplanes struck infrastructure belonging to Palestinian militants that it accused of firing the nearly three dozen rockets that slammed into open areas and northern Israeli towns on Thursday. Nonetheless, the Israeli military said it believed the Palestinian militants acted with the knowledge of Hezbollah, which holds sway over much of southern Lebanon.

There were no reports of serious casualties, but several residents of the southern Lebanese town of Qalili, including Syrian refugees, said they were lightly wounded.

"I immediately gathered my wife and children and got them out of the house," said Qalili resident Bilal Suleiman, who was jolted awake by the bombing.

A flock of sheep was also killed when the Israeli missiles struck an open field near the Palestinian refugee camp of Rashidiyeh, according to an Associated Press photographer. Other airstrikes hit a bridge and power transformer in the nearby town of Maaliya and damaged an irrigation system providing water to orchards in the area.

In the Gaza Strip, Israel's military pounded what it said were weapons production sites and underground tunnels belonging to Hamas, the militant group ruling the Palestinian enclave. Residents inspected the damage left after Israeli strikes — including to a children's hospital in Gaza City, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

After the retaliatory strikes, Israelis living along the southern border returned home from bomb shelters. Most missiles that managed to cross into Israeli territory hit open areas, but one landed in the nearby town of Sderot, sending shrapnel slicing into a house.

There were no reports of casualties on either side of the southern border.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 34 of 83

The Israeli military said everyone wanted avoid a full-blown conflict. "Quiet will be answered with quiet," said Lt. Col. Richard Hecht, a spokesman for the Israeli military.

Tensions remained high in the region. In the West Bank, a Palestinian shooting attack near an Israeli settlement in the Jordan Valley killed two sisters in their 20s and seriously wounded their 45-year-old mother, Israeli medics and officials said. The three victims were residents of the Israeli settlement of Efrat, near the Palestinian city of Bethlehem, said Oded Revivi, the mayor of the settlement. The girls' father was driving in another car behind his wife and daughters and witnessed the attack, Revivi added. Medics said they dragged the unconscious women from the smashed car that appeared to have been pushed off the road.

The Israeli military said it was searching for those behind the attack, setting up roadblocks in the area. No militant group immediately claimed responsibility. But Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem hailed the attack "in retaliation for the crimes committed by Israel in the West Bank and the Al-Aqsa mosque."

Jerusalem's holy site of Al-Aqsa, a tinderbox for Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sits on a hilltop sacred to both Muslims and Jews. In 2021, an escalation also triggered by clashes at the sacred compound spilled over into an 11-day war between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers.

Over 130,000 worshippers poured into the compound for midday prayers on Friday, which ended without incident. Before dawn prayers, chaos had erupted at one of the entrances to the esplanade as Israeli police wielding batons descended on crowds of Palestinian worshippers, who chanted slogans praising Hamas as they tried to squeeze into the site. An hour later, according to videos, people leaving the prayers staged a largescale protest on the limestone courtyard, with Palestinians raising their fists and shouting against Israel. Israeli police forced their way into the compound, inflaming tensions during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

Police did not comment on the earlier beatings, but said security forces entered the holy compound after prayers in response to "masked suspects" who threw rocks toward officers at one of the gates. Israeli authorities control access to the area but the compound is administered by Islamic and Jordanian officials.

The unrest comes at a delicate time for Jerusalem's Old City, which on Friday was teeming with pilgrims from around the world. The Christian faithful retraced the route Jesus is said to have taken for Good Friday, Jews celebrated the weeklong Passover holiday and Muslims prayed and fasted for Ramadan.

The current round of violence began Wednesday after Israeli police twice raided the Al-Aqsa Mosque — in one case fiercely beating Palestinians, who responded by hurling rocks and firecrackers. That led Thursday to rocket fire from Gaza and, in a significant and unusual escalation, the barrage from southern Lebanon and the Israeli retaliation.

Lebanon's Foreign Ministry said Friday it had instructed the country's mission to the United Nations in New York to submit a complaint to the U.N. Security Council against the "deliberate Israeli bombing and aggression" in the south, which it condemned as "a flagrant violation of Lebanon's sovereignty."

Even as a tense calm took hold along the Lebanese and Gaza borders, the West Bank remained volatile. Violence has surged to new heights in the territory in recent months, with Palestinian health officials reporting the start of 2023 to be the most deadly for Palestinians in two decades.

Nearly 90 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank since the start of the year, according to an Associated Press tally. During that time, 16 people have been killed in Palestinian attacks on Israelis — all but one of them civilians. Israel says most of those Palestinians killed have been militants. But stone-throwing youths protesting police incursions and people not involved in the confrontations have also been killed.

---

Associated Press writer Abby Sewell in Beirut contributed to this report.

## Filipinos nailed to crosses despite church objection

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

SAN PEDRO CUTUD, Philippines (AP) — Eight Filipinos were nailed to crosses to reenact Jesus Christ's suffering in a gory Good Friday tradition that draws thousands of devotees and tourists to the Philippines despite being rejected by the Catholic church.

The real-life crucifixions in the farming village of San Pedro Cutud in Pampanga province north of Manila resumed after a three-year pause due to the coronavirus pandemic. About a dozen villagers registered but only eight men participated, including 62-year-old sign painter Ruben Enaje, who was nailed to a wooden cross for the 34th time in San Pedro Cutud.

In a news conference shortly after his brief crucifixion, Enaje said he prayed for the eradication of the COVID-19 virus and the end of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has contributed to gas and food prices soaring worldwide.

"It's just these two countries involved in that war, Russia and Ukraine, but all of us are being affected," said Enaje, who appeared to be well and showed his two bandaged hands to journalists.

The father of four said he wanted to end his extraordinary penitence because of his age but would decide with finality before Lent next year. While the pain from the nailing was not as intense as anticipated, he said he always felt edgy before each crucifixion.

"To be honest, I always feel nervous because I could end up dead on the cross," he told The Associated Press before Friday's nailing.

"When I'm laid down on the cross, my body begins to feel cold," he said. "When my hands are tied, I just close my eyes and tell myself, 'I can do this. I can do this.'"

Surviving nearly unscathed when he fell from a three-story building in 1985 prompted Enaje to undergo the ordeal as thanksgiving for what he considered a miracle. He extended the ritual after loved ones recovered from serious illnesses, one after another, turning him into a village celebrity as the "Christ" in the Lenten reenactment of the Way of the Cross.

Ahead of their crucifixion on a dusty hill, Enaje and the other devotees, wearing thorny crowns of twigs, carried heavy wooden crosses on their backs for more than a kilometer (more than half a mile) in the scorching heat. Village actors dressed as Roman centurions later hammered 4-inch (10-centimeter) stainless steel nails through his palms and feet, then set him aloft on a cross under the sun for about 10 minutes.

Other penitents walked barefoot through village streets and beat their bare backs with sharp bamboo sticks and pieces of wood. Some participants in the past opened cuts in the penitents' backs using broken glass to ensure the ritual was sufficiently bloody.

The gruesome spectacle reflects the Philippines' unique brand of Catholicism, which merges church traditions with folk superstitions.

Many of the mostly impoverished penitents undergo the ritual to atone for sins, pray for the sick or for a better life, and give thanks for miracles.

Church leaders in the Philippines have frowned on the crucifixions and self-flagellations, saying Filipinos can show their deep faith and religious devotion without hurting themselves and by doing charity work instead, such as donating blood.

Robert Reyes, a prominent Catholic priest and human rights activist in the country, said the bloody rites reflect the church's failure to fully educate many Filipinos on Christian tenets, leaving them on their own to explore personal ways of seeking divine help for all sorts of maladies.

Folk Catholicism has become deeply entrenched in the local religious culture, Reyes said, citing a chaotic procession of a black statue of Jesus Christ called the Black Nazarene each January, which authorities say draw more than a million devotees each year in one of Asia's largest religious festivals. Many bring towels to be wiped on the wooden statue, believing it has powers to cure ailments and ensure good health and a better life.

"The question is, where were we church people when they started doing this?" Reyes asked, saying the clergy should immerse itself in communities more and converse regularly with villagers. "If we judge them, we'll just alienate them."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 36 of 83

The decadeslong crucifixion tradition, meanwhile, has put impoverished San Pedro Cutud — one of the more than 500 villages in rice-growing Pampanga province — on the map.

Organizers said more than 15,000 foreign and Filipino tourists and devotees gathered for the cross nailings in Cutud and two other nearby villages. There was a festive air as villagers peddled bottled water, hats, food and religious items, and police and marshals kept order.

"They like this because there is really nothing like this on earth," said Johnson Gareth, a British tour organizer, who brought 15 tourists from eight countries, including the United States, Canada and Germany, to witness the crucifixions. "It's less gruesome than people think. They think it's going to be very macabre or very disgusting but it's not. It's done in a very respectful way."

In the past, Gareth said tourists were "genuinely inspired and I think they left with a newfound respect for people's beliefs."

---

Associated Press journalists Aaron Favila and Cecilia Forbes contributed to this report.

## Abortion pill plan clears Kansas Legislature; veto expected

By JOHN HANNA AP Political Writer

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Abortion opponents pushed a bill through the Kansas Legislature early Friday to require providers to tell patients that a medication abortion can be "reversed" once it's started — a measure that could face a state court challenge if its supporters can overcome the governor's expected veto.

Republican lawmakers pursued the bill even though experts dispute abortion opponents' claims about medication abortions. Democrats argue the measure defies a decisive statewide vote in August affirming abortion rights. Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly vetoed a similar measure in 2019.

Kansas has been an outlier on abortion among states with GOP-controlled legislatures because its legal and political climate won't allow a ban on abortion, despite the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in June 2022 that states can outlaw abortion. The Kansas Supreme Court ruled in 2019 that access to abortion is a matter of bodily autonomy and a "fundamental" right under the state constitution, and last year's vote was to reject stripping out that protection.

"The people of Kansas have spoken," state Rep. Christina Haswood, a Democrat from the liberal north-eastern Kansas community of Lawrence, home to the main University of Kansas campus, said during Friday's brief debate. "They do not want us touching anything on abortion."

Republican lawmakers and anti-abortion groups contend the vote last year doesn't preclude "reasonable" restrictions. They contend that the "abortion pill reversal" measure only ensures that patients have information.

"They need to be knowledgeable about what can happen," Republican state Rep. Susan Humphries, of Wichita, during a debate on the issue last week.

The votes for the final version of the bill were 80-38 in the House and 26-11 in the Senate. In both chambers, abortion opponents were short of the two-thirds majorities needed to override a veto but enough absent lawmakers might have voted "yes" for an override to be possible.

But even then, the measure still could be challenged in court by providers who believe it would force them to give patients inaccurate information. Lawsuits have prevented Kansas from enforcing a 2015 ban on a common second-trimester abortion procedure and a 2011 law imposing extra health and safety rules for abortion providers.

Meanwhile, legislators this week also approved a bill dealing with live deliveries during certain types of abortion procedures. Doctors could face criminal charges or lawsuits for monetary damages if they are accused of not providing reasonable care to an infant delivered alive during certain types of abortion procedures.

And lawmakers have included \$2 million in state tax dollars in the next state budget for centers that provide free prenatal and post-birth counseling and other services as they seek to discourage women from having abortions. Abortion opponents also are pursuing creation of an income tax credit for donors

to those centers, allowing up to \$10 million total a year.

"This is not about abortion and it's not about a ban. We heard the vote. We get that," House health committee Chair Brenda Landwehr, a Wichita Republican, told colleagues during a debate on the issue last week. "We also heard you say we don't care and now we're trying to step up to the plate."

The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology says there is no scientific evidence that the "reversal" method, involving using the hormone progesterone in place of the second abortion medication, is safe or effective.

Two physicians started using the "reversal" method more than 15 years ago, and abortion opponents note that progesterone is often used to try to prevent women from miscarrying a pregnancy. One of the doctors who participated in a 2018 study said doctors followed more than 750 women who'd sought to reverse medication abortions and said a sizeable majority were successful.

Critics have said the study was flawed and couldn't show whether the women would have carried their pregnancies to term without progesterone.

"Kansas deserves providers who are free to stick to fact-based health care and not forced to spread scientific myths," Democratic state Rep. Melissa Oropeza, a Kansas City nurse practitioner, said during Friday's debate.

But abortion opponents said it's not improper to promote what is essentially an off-label use for progesterone.

"Heck, we use a lot of things off label," state Rep. John Eplee, a northeastern Kansas doctor, said during last week's debate. "Viagra — sildenafil — was used as a medication for pulmonary hypertension for five years until they found all the male patients woke up with complications, quote-unquote, from it."

Follow John Hanna on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/apjdhanna>

## Man kills hostage at California park after wounding officer

By RICH PEDRONCELLI and STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

ROSEVILLE, Calif. (AP) — A man fleeing police in Northern California took two hostages at a public park, killing one of them before surrendering, after earlier wounding a California Highway Patrol officer, authorities said.

It happened Thursday in Roseville, a city of about 150,000 northeast of Sacramento, in the early afternoon as families played at nearby baseball fields and children attended camp.

The California Highway Patrol officer was in stable condition at a hospital. The names of the two adults taken hostage, including the one who died, were not immediately released.

The surviving hostage was taken to a hospital with what appeared to be non-life threatening injuries, according to a statement from the city of Roseville, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) northeast of Sacramento.

The suspect, who also was not immediately named, was hospitalized with gunshot wounds but there was no immediate word on his condition, the city statement said.

It was unclear how he was wounded. Police didn't immediately indicate whether officers had fired any shots.

The events unfolded when highway patrol officers attempted to serve the man a warrant, prompting him to shoot at and wound an officer. The Roseville Police Department received a radio call around 12:30 p.m. alerting them an officer had been shot, Capt. Kelby Newton said.

When Roseville police arrived, the suspect was seen carrying a gun and running. He then grabbed two civilians in the park and held them hostage, shooting both, Newton said.

Newton said he did not know what prompted the warrant.

Victor Michael was at batting practice with his child at Mahany Park when he saw what he thought was kids playing paintball. But then he heard police tell someone to stop and "get down." Then, gunfire.

"I can't tell you who shot first, I just know that I saw a suspect look back and the volley of fire just went off. It was crazy," Michael said. "I just told my kid and everybody to get down."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 38 of 83

Michael heard between 20 and 30 gunshots in all and took refuge with his child behind the tires of his truck, he said.

The sprawling park tucked into a quiet suburb of Sacramento includes a sports complex, public library, aquatics center and nature trails. The fitness center and library were temporarily locked down, and students attending camps were taken to a nearby school to be reunited with their families.

Dazio reported from Los Angeles. Associated Press writers Adam Beam in Sacramento, California, and Christopher Weber in Los Angeles contributed.

## As streamers cut costs, TV shows — and residuals — vanish

By R.J. RICO Associated Press

Actor Diana-Maria Riva is all too familiar with one of her shows being canceled. For a performer, it's a painful, unfortunate part of show business. But this was different.

In December, Riva was floored when she found out that "Gordita Chronicles," her recently canceled family comedy, would be removed from HBO Max's vast streaming library — one of dozens of shows that HBO last year effectively wiped from existence for U.S. viewers. Among others: "Westworld," "The Time Traveler's Wife," "Minx," "Mrs. Fletcher" and numerous animated and reality series.

For Riva, the developments were crushing. Over 10 episodes, the critically lauded series followed a plus-sized 12-year-old named Cucu as she and her Dominican family adapt to life in 1980s Miami.

"It was as if somebody had broken up with you and then came back to remind you a couple of weeks later that we've broken up," says Riva, who played Cucu's mother. "It was already heartbreaking. But then it's an added punch to just say, 'Now we're going to wipe the evidence of you ever having been here.'"

As streamers face mounting pressure to save money, several have followed HBO's lead. Erasing original shows from their libraries can help streamers get tax write-downs and, to a smaller extent, save on residual payments. But it brings criticism that they are sidelining already marginalized voices and shortchanging creatives out of already slimmer residual paychecks. These issues have increased tension between executives and writers amid union contract negotiations that started late last month and could lead to a significant work stoppage this spring.

Streaming companies offer this defense: They never promised that shows would live forever. In a hyper-competitive, changing market, they say, each streamer is trying to balance ample offerings with sheer survival.

### STREAMERS TIGHTEN THEIR BELTS

Amid the downturn in the tech and media industries, streamers are being pushed to cut spending and turn a profit rather than "chasing growth at all costs," media analyst Dan Rayburn says.

"These companies have had to change the way they're spending on content because Wall Street says you've got to get to profitability much faster," Rayburn says. He cites how Disney's stock nosedived in November after the company revealed that its direct-to-consumer unit, which includes Disney+, Hulu and ESPN+, lost nearly \$1.5 billion in one quarter.

HBO's 2022 purges — which occurred as its parent company, Warner Bros., merged with Discovery, enabling a slew of tax write-off possibilities — were the most notable example. But its rivals quickly followed suit. In January, Starz erased a handful of shows including "Dangerous Liaisons," a costume drama that disappeared from its streaming app days after the finale aired. Some fans said they missed the last episode.

Then, a few weeks later, Showtime underwent its own culling. It eliminated the Jeff Daniels-led drama "American Rust," among others. Paramount+, with Showtime integrating into the service, did the same with some of its offerings, including Jordan Peele's revival of "The Twilight Zone."

Some of those shows have found new homes. For those that haven't, including "Gordita Chronicles," the effects of their disappearance are widespread. Potential viewers might never have a chance to discover it. Actors and writers no longer know whether their work will be seen again. And the original streamer no longer has to pay residuals.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 39 of 83

How much money streamers save through these erasures is unclear. But Rayburn says the companies clearly concluded that the excised shows weren't bringing in enough new customers or significantly aiding retention efforts. Instead, streamers have been shopping the programming to rivals, including free, ad-supported streaming TV channels like Tubi, which recently began hosting some HBO shows, including "Westworld."

Streamers, Rayburn says, are under no obligation to host shows for years. What's more, customers have gotten used to hopping among apps to hunt down titles that bounce between them.

Casey Bloys, chair and CEO of HBO and HBO Max, said on a recent episode of "The Watch" podcast that streamers are taking a closer look at their libraries and seeing how best to profit.

"The idea that everything a company produces will be in one spot forever and ever, for \$15 a month, for eternity, is a relatively new concept," Bloys said. "\$15 a month is going to cover everything for the rest of time? It's a nice idea, but it's not viable."

## THE DECLINE OF RESIDUALS

The shifting landscape has alarmed creatives who have already seen their residuals dwindle over the years.

Residuals were once a cornerstone of an actor's or writer's livelihood, with large checks consistently rolling in as series were syndicated and appeared as reruns. Now, creatives say, their residual income has plummeted as streamers have grown. As part of union-negotiated contracts, streamers still pay residuals, but those back-end payments are hardly the size that casts and crews receive from TV channels.

Per the Writers Guild of America West's contract with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, a single rerun of an hourlong prime-time broadcast show on ABC would currently net its writer \$24,558. But if that show were on Netflix, the writer would earn — at most — \$20,018 in domestic residuals for the episode. And if the show were on a smaller streamer like HBO Max, that annual payment would max out at \$13,346. Each additional year a show is on a streamer, the residuals decrease. That, of course, assumes the show remains part of the library.

The decline of residuals is an issue that industry insiders say could come to a head as the WGA's contract expires in May, followed shortly by the expiration of the directors' and actors' guild contracts, which are both due to lapse June 30. In addition to seeking better residual rates, writers want higher minimum pay rates and better financial security in an industry that is far more likely to order a 10-episode season than the 22-episode season that was standard when broadcasters dominated the medium. The last writers' strike, a 100-day work stoppage that ended in 2008, cost the California economy an estimated \$2 billion.

"In case y'all are wondering why a WGA strike may be impending, my first residual check for the broadcast show I wrote on was \$12,000. I just got my first residual check for my streaming show... \$4," screenwriter Kyra Jones tweeted.

Even though residuals have fallen, Riva says they play a crucial role in ensuring that an actor makes enough money over a given year — currently \$26,470 — to retain insurance eligibility via the actors' guild, SAG-AFTRA.

"If you didn't get much work recently, but at least had enough residuals to get you over that minimum threshold — that means you can insure your family," Riva says.

## MARGINALIZED VOICES SHELVED

In a February news release, the Writer's Guild of America West decried HBO's removal of its shows, saying it "illustrates how consolidation increases the power of gatekeepers at the expense of marginalized voices."

The guild cited HBO's decisions to pull "Gordita Chronicles" and "Tuca & Bertie," an animated series whose two leads were voiced by women of color. It also highlighted the studio's highly unusual move to ax "Batgirl" — a nearly completed movie starring Leslie Grace, an Afro-Latina actor — that HBO shelved for a tax write-off instead of releasing. In January, Warner Bros. Discovery CFO Gunnar Wiedenfels said the company is "done" pursuing those content-related write-offs.

"We can't just let shows disappear, especially shows that depict immigration and Latinx families in a positive light," said "Gordita Chronicles" showrunner Brigitte Muñoz-Liebowitz. "Our communities are humanized through comedy. And to not have the show be there as part of our media lexicon, it shows a regression to me."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 40 of 83

In a statement, HBO Max said cancelling "Gordita Chronicles" was a "very difficult decision" it made as part of a shift away from family entertainment. The streamer also confirmed it has returned the show's rights to Sony.

While other affected shows have found new homes through licensing deals, "Gordita Chronicles" remains in limbo, all but impossible to find. For a while, some episodes were still streaming on American Airlines flights, but they, too, recently vanished from in-flight viewing options.

Both Muñoz-Liebowitz and Juan Javier Cardenas, who played Cucu's father on the show, hope Sony finds a new home for it. Cardenas says that when other shows of his were canceled, he took solace in knowing "the work would survive." That's not the case with "Gordita Chronicles" — at least, not now.

"To know that in the end," Cardenas says, "despite all the heart and soul we put into the show, that it won't be available for people in the future to watch and enjoy — that's a very sad thing."

## Why do Jerusalem tensions fuel regionwide unrest?

JERUSALEM (AP) — It's become something of a grim, springtime tradition in the Holy Land.

Israeli police fire tear gas and rubber bullets at Palestinians stockpiling rocks and fireworks inside one of the most bitterly disputed holy sites on Earth. The violence ripples across Israel and the occupied West Bank, and militants from as far away as Gaza and Lebanon respond with rockets.

Similar tensions in 2021 boiled over into an 11-day Gaza war. Violence at the holy site in 2000 ignited a five-year Palestinian uprising and a fierce Israeli military crackdown across the occupied territories. One of the first major outbreaks of Jewish-Arab violence occurred in Jerusalem's Old City in the spring of 1920, in what became known as the Nebi Musa riots.

What is it about Jerusalem? What is it about the hilltop compound in the heart of the Old City known to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary and to Jews as the Temple Mount?

WHY IS THE JERUSALEM HOLY SITE SACRED TO MUSLIMS AND JEWS?

The Noble Sanctuary, home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the iconic golden Dome of the Rock, is the third holiest site in Islam. It is also the holiest site for Jews because it was the location of biblical temples.

The Romans destroyed the Second Temple in 70 A.D., with only the Western Wall remaining. The mosques were built centuries later.

Neighboring Jordan serves as the custodian of the site, which is operated by an Islamic endowment known as the Waqf. The site is open to tourists during certain times but only Muslims are allowed to pray there. That's according to informal rules established after the 1967 Mideast war in which Israel captured east Jerusalem where the shrine is located, along with the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel, Jordan and Muslim religious authorities helped set the rules, known as the status quo. The Western Wall is the holiest site where Jews can pray.

WHAT'S BEHIND THE VIOLENCE AT THE JERUSALEM HOLY SITE?

The Palestinians view the holy site as the last remnant of their homeland that is not under full Israeli control, and they fear that Israel plans to one day take over the site or partition it.

Israeli officials say they have no intention of changing the status quo that has prevailed at the site since 1967. But the country is currently governed by the most right-wing government in its history, with religious ultranationalists in senior positions.

In recent days, Palestinians have barricaded themselves inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque with stones and firecrackers, demanding the right to pray there overnight, something Israel has in the past only allowed during the last 10 days of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The Palestinians also say they are seeking to prevent religious Jews from carrying out ritual animal slaughter at the site. Israel bars the ancient practice, but Jewish extremists have called for it to be revived, offering cash rewards to those who try to do so.

In recent years, groups of religious and nationalist Jews escorted by police have been visiting the compound in greater numbers and holding prayers in defiance of the longstanding rules. The Palestinians view the frequent visits and attempted prayers by Jews as a provocation, and it often ignites scuffles or



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 41 of 83

more serious violence.

This year, Ramadan and the Jewish high holiday of Passover overlap, with large numbers of Jews flocking to the site for visits that police typically facilitate in the early morning after forcibly driving the Palestinians out.

Some Israelis say the site should be open to all worshippers. The Palestinians refuse, fearing that it would pave the way for Israel to take full control of it.

**WHY IS JERUSALEM IMPORTANT TO ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS?**

Israel views Jerusalem as its "unified, eternal" capital. East Jerusalem, captured by Israel in 1967, includes the Old City, with major sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The Palestinians want east Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza for their future state, with east Jerusalem serving as their eventual capital. Israel annexed the eastern part of the city in a move not recognized internationally.

The fate of east Jerusalem and its holy sites has been one of the thorniest issues in the peace process, which ground to a halt more than a decade ago.

Jews born in east Jerusalem are Israeli citizens, while Palestinians from east Jerusalem are granted a form of permanent residency that can be revoked if they live outside the city for an extended period. They can apply for citizenship, but it's a long and uncertain process and most choose not to because they don't recognize Israeli control.

Israel has built Jewish settlements in east Jerusalem that are home to some 230,000 people. An estimated 360,000 Palestinians live in east Jerusalem. Israel has also severely limited the growth of Palestinian neighborhoods, leading to overcrowding and the unauthorized construction of thousands of homes that are at risk of demolition.

Jewish settlers have also sought to evict dozens of Palestinian families from their homes in sensitive neighborhoods in and around the Old City. A decades-long legal campaign to evict Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood culminated in nightly protests in 2021, contributing to the tensions that ignited that year's Gaza war. Those evictions were later put on hold.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Israeli rights group B'Tselem have cited the discriminatory policies in east Jerusalem in reports arguing that Israel is guilty of the international crime of apartheid. Israel rejects those allegations, saying Jerusalem residents are treated equally.

**WHY DOES VIOLENCE IN JERUSALEM SPREAD AROUND THE REGION?**

Many Muslims view the violence at Al-Aqsa as an attack on the faith. It provides a powerful rallying cry for political factions and armed groups across the region, who blame not only Israel but the growing roster of Arab Muslim rulers who have made peace with it.

The Palestinian militant group Hamas, which rules Gaza, has repeatedly called for a new intifada, or uprising, like the one triggered by an Israeli politician's visit to Al-Aqsa in 2000.

This week the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group in Gaza and Palestinian militants in Lebanon fired rockets into Israel in solidarity with worshippers. Protests have been held in the occupied West Bank and in Arab communities inside Israel.

Jordan and other Arab nations that have friendly ties with Israel have condemned its actions at the holy site. So has the Palestinian Authority, which cooperates with Israel on security matters.

The U.S. and the EU have also condemned the violence and called for restraint while saying Israel has the right to defend itself.

## **Tennessee's House expels 2 of 3 Democrats over guns protest**

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI and JONATHAN MATTISE Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — In an extraordinary act of political retaliation, Tennessee Republicans on Thursday expelled two Democratic lawmakers from the state Legislature for their role in a protest calling for more gun control in the aftermath of a deadly school shooting in Nashville. A third Democrat was narrowly spared by a one-vote margin.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 42 of 83

The split votes drew accusations of racism, with lawmakers ousting Reps. Justin Jones and Justin Pearson, who are both Black, while Rep. Gloria Johnson, who is white, survived the vote on her expulsion. Republican leadership denied that race was a factor, however.

The visitors' gallery exploded in screams and boos following the final vote. After sitting quietly for hours and hushing anyone who cried out during the proceedings, people broke into chants of "Shame!" and "Fascists!"

Banishment is a move the chamber has used only a handful times since the Civil War. Most state legislatures have the power to expel members, but it is generally reserved as a punishment for lawmakers accused of serious misconduct, not used as a weapon against political opponents.

GOP leaders said Thursday's actions were necessary to avoid setting a precedent that lawmakers' disruptions of House proceedings through protest would be tolerated.

Republican Rep. Gino Bulso said the three Democrats had "effectively conducted a mutiny."

At an evening rally, Jones and Pearson pledged to be back at the Capitol next week advocating for change. "Rather than pass laws that will address red flags and banning assault weapons and universal background checks, they passed resolutions to expel their colleagues," Jones said. "And they think that the issue is over. We'll see you on Monday."

Jones, Pearson and Johnson joined in protesting last week as hundreds of demonstrators packed the Capitol to call for passage of gun-control measures. As the protesters filled galleries, the three approached the front of the House chamber with a bullhorn and participated in a chant. The scene unfolded days after the shooting at the Covenant School, a private Christian school where six people were killed, including three children.

Pearson told reporters Thursday that in carrying out the protest, the three had broken "a House rule because we're fighting for kids who are dying from gun violence and people in our communities who want to see an end to the proliferation of weaponry in our communities."

Johnson, a retired teacher, said her concern about school shootings was personal, recalling a day in 2008 when students came running toward her out of a cafeteria because a student had just been shot and killed.

"The trauma on those faces, you will never, ever forget," she said.

Thousands of people flocked to the Capitol to support Jones, Pearson and Johnson on Thursday, cheering and chanting outside the House chamber loudly enough to drown out the proceedings.

The trio held hands as they walked onto the floor and Pearson raised a fist during the Pledge of Allegiance.

Offered a chance to defend himself before the vote, Jones said the GOP responded to the shooting with a different kind of attack.

"We called for you all to ban assault weapons, and you respond with an assault on democracy," he said.

Jones vowed that even if expelled, he would continue pressing for action on guns.

"I'll be out there with the people every week, demanding that you act," he said.

Bulso accused Jones of acting with "disrespect" and showing "no remorse."

"He does not even recognize that what he did was wrong," Bulso said. "So not to expel him would simply invite him and his colleagues to engage in mutiny on the House floor."

The two expelled lawmakers may not be gone for long. County commissions in their districts get to pick replacements to serve until a special election can be scheduled and they could opt to choose Jones and Pearson. The two also would be eligible to run in those races.

Under the Tennessee Constitution, lawmakers cannot be expelled for the same offense twice.

During discussion, Republican Rep. Sabi Kumar advised Jones to be more collegial and less focused on race.

"You have a lot to offer, but offer it in a vein where people are accepting of your ideas," Kumar said.

Jones said he did not intend to assimilate in order to be accepted. "I'm not here to make friends. I'm here to make a change for my community," he replied.

Fielding questions from lawmakers, Johnson reminded them that she did not raise her voice nor did she use the bullhorn — as did the other two, both of whom are new lawmakers and among the youngest members in the chamber.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 43 of 83

But Johnson also suggested race was likely a factor on why Jones and Pearson were ousted but not her, telling reporters it "might have to do with the color of our skin."

That notion was echoed by state Sen. London Lamar, a Democrat representing Memphis.

Lawmakers "expelled the two black men and kept the white woman," Lamar, a Black woman, said via Twitter. "The racism that is on display today! Wow!"

However, House Speaker Cameron Sexton, a Republican who voted to expel all three, denied that race was at play and said Johnson's arguments might have swayed other members.

"Our members literally didn't look at the ethnicity of the members up for expulsion," Majority Leader William Lamberth added. He alleged Jones and Pearson were trying to incite a riot last week, while Johnson was more subdued.

In Washington, President Joe Biden also was critical of the expulsions, calling them "shocking, undemocratic, and without precedent."

"Rather than debating the merits of the issue (of gun control), these Republican lawmakers have chosen to punish, silence, and expel duly-elected representatives of the people of Tennessee," Biden said in a statement.

Before the expulsion votes, House members debated more than 20 bills, including a school safety proposal requiring public and private schools to submit building safety plans to the state. The bill did not address gun control, sparking criticism from some Democrats that it only addresses a symptom and not the cause of school shootings.

Past expulsion votes have taken place under distinctly different circumstances.

In 2019, lawmakers faced pressure to expel former Republican Rep. David Byrd over accusations of sexual misconduct dating to when he was a high school basketball coach three decades earlier. Republicans declined to take action, pointing out that he was reelected as the allegations surfaced. Byrd retired last year.

Last year, the state Senate expelled Democrat Katrina Robinson after she was convicted of using about \$3,400 in federal grant money on wedding expenses instead of her nursing school.

Before that, state lawmakers last ousted a House member in 2016 when the chamber voted 70-2 to remove Republican Rep. Jeremy Durham over allegations of improper sexual contact with at least 22 women during his four years in office.

## Kansas approves bill to end gender-affirming care for minors

By JOHN HANNA AP Political Writer

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Republican legislators in Kansas approved a plan early Friday to end gender-affirming care for transgender youth, capping a week of intensifying efforts to rolling back LGBTQ rights like other states with GOP-controlled legislatures.

The Kansas House voted 70-52 to pass a bill requiring the state's medical board to revoke the licenses of doctors who provide gender-affirming care to minors, even though many professionals who deal with transgender youth see such care as vital to preserving their mental health and preventing suicides. The Senate then voted 23-12 to approve the measure, sending it to Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly.

The governor is expected to veto it, having promised LGBTQ youth during a Statehouse lobbying day last month that she would protect their rights and reject any measure "that aims to harm or discriminate against you." Supporters were well short of the two-thirds majorities in both chambers needed to override a veto.

LGBTQ-rights advocates believe they're seeing a national effort to erase transgender, non-binary, gender non-conforming and gender fluid people from American society, at least legally. Dr. Beth Oller, a family physician in a small northwestern Kansas town who provides gender-affirming care, saw GOP lawmakers going "in search of a dog whistle" to unite their party.

"This one was a winner because they found it palatable to strip rights from a population that was small and did not affect most of them," she said in an email Thursday night. "They delude themselves with groupthink so that they can pretend this isn't about hate but about protection, but we know the truth."

Thirteen other states have enacted laws against gender-affirming care for minors, though federal judges

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 44 of 83

have blocked enforcement of them in Alabama and Arkansas. Republican lawmakers across the U.S. have pursued several hundred proposals this year pushing back on LGBTQ rights.

Supporters of the Kansas ban argue it's about protecting children medical care that comes with side effects or cannot be reversed later. They contend that only an adult — and not a minor's parent — can consent to the treatments.

"We all now children change their minds," Republican state Rep. Susan Humphries of Wichita said. "How many children know what they want to be when they grow up?"

The care falling under the bill would include puberty-blocking drugs and hormone therapy. While the bill would not keep transgender youth from receiving counseling or psychiatric therapy, the measure applies to acts performed or "causing" acts "to affirm the child's perception of the child's sex" if it differs from gender assigned at birth.

"Where I kind of part ways with some of this is with surgical procedures," said state Rep. Steve Howe, a Republican from central Kansas. "I do agree that all kids have value, and that's why I'm going to support the bill."

The Kansas vote came after its lawmakers on Thursday passed a "parents' rights" bill allowing families to pull their children out of lessons and activities involving LGBTQ-themed materials and another measure restricting rooming arrangements for transgender students on school trips.

Republicans on Tuesday approved a broad bathroom bill that would prevent transgender people from changing the gender on their driver's licenses. On Wednesday they overrode Kelly's veto of a bill banning transgender female athletes from girls' and women's sports.

"People are finally getting tired of this push toward trying to push our kids in the wrong direction, and I think that this is a pushback from parents, from people who see this as a big problem," said state Sen. Mike Thompson, a conservative, Kansas City-area Republican who backed all of the measures. "For hundreds and hundreds and thousands of years, I think that this has not been a problem. Then all of a sudden it seems like it is."

Humphries suggested "a social contagion" driven by social media is helping increase "confused" young people's desire to transition do a different gender, repeating an idea that's been debunked by multiple studies.

Transgender medical treatments for children and teens have been available in the U.S. for more than a decade and are endorsed by major medical associations.

"Gender-affirming medicine is lifesaving," Jordan Smith, a Kansas City-area resident who identifies as gender fluid and is the Kansas chapter leader for Parasol Patrol, a group advocating for LGBTQ youth, said after a transgender-rights rally at the Statehouse last week.

"You know, the kids are trying to understand who they are and they're supposed to look to the adults to have that guidance," they added, "and the adults are wanting to say, 'No, you can't be that way. No, that's not right. You're just confused.'"

After last week's transgender rights rally, Ian Benalcazar, a 13-year-old transgender northeastern Kansas boy, said his decision to socially transition to male was "one of the greatest decisions of my life."

"I feel so much more free and so much more myself, and it's allowed me to make so many great connections with people and just be authentically me," he said.

Oller, the northwestern Kansas doctor, said she has patients who are "terrified" they won't be able to access care and she's worried enactment of a law against gender-affirming care could force her to leave her small town.

But she also said she would probably sue the state, "because I'm not going to take this lying down." \_\_\_\_

Follow John Hanna on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/apjdhanna>

## Chinese man who chained, abused woman sentenced to 9 years

BEIJING (AP) — A Chinese man on Friday was sentenced to nine years in prison for abusing and unlawfully detaining a woman who was shown chained in a viral video that sparked an outcry in China last year.

The abuse of the woman, “Xiaohuamei,” or Little Plum Blossom, raised widespread concerns in China in February last year and at times overshadowed Beijing’s Winter Olympics online. Her story appeared in Chinese social media despite digital and human censors and prompted commentators to exhort national media to highlight the scandal.

After the announcement of the sentencing on Friday, the case became one of the most searched topics on the Chinese social media platform Weibo, with many people complaining that nine years imprisonment for the man was too lenient of a punishment for what he did to her.

The court in Xuzhou city that handed down the sentence said in a statement that Dong Zhimin and his late father bought Little Plum Blossom in the late 1990s for 5,000 yuan (\$727) and that he had abused her in recent years by chaining her around the neck and tying her body with pieces of cloth and ropes. She suffered from hunger and lived in a place without water or electricity, it said. That was despite him fathering eight children with her.

“Dong Zhimin’s abuse has caused serious harm to Little Plum Blossom’s health. After examination, Little Plum Blossom was diagnosed with schizophrenia,” the statement said.

The court also sentenced five others to prison for between eight and 13 years and fined them for trafficking her decades ago.

According to an investigation, Little Plum Blossom was first brought to Jiangsu province on China’s eastern coast from southwestern Yunnan province after she was abducted by two of the five people in early 1998. They sold her to a farmer for 5,000 yuan (\$727).

After living with the farmer for a while, the woman went missing and was found by a couple in Henan province in central China in June 1998. The couple then sold her to two others for 3,000 yuan (\$436) and that pair subsequently sold her for 5,000 yuan (\$727) to the Dongs in Feng county in Jiangsu.

The wife of the couple was not charged because the impact of her role was considered relatively minor, the court said, but her husband and the pair who sold Little Plum Blossom to Dong were among the five who were charged and sentenced for trafficking her.

The official Xinhua news agency quoted Little Plum Blossom’s doctor in a report saying she was still being treated in a hospital. But her eldest son told the agency that his mother, who once could not identify him at times, can now recognize him and call him by his name.

On Weibo, many people expressed their anger over the case. “Only nine years? Nine years for ruining her life? Go to hell really,” one user wrote.

---

Associated Press writer Kanis Leung in Hong Kong and researcher Chen Wanqing in Beijing contributed to this report.

## IRS pledges more audits of wealthy, better customer service

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The IRS released details Thursday on how it plans to use an infusion of \$80 billion for improved operations, pledging to invest in new technology, hire more customer service representatives and expand its ability to audit high-wealth taxpayers.

While some Republicans have suggested without evidence that the money from the Democrats’ landmark climate change and health care bill would help create a mob of armed auditors to harass middle-class taxpayers, new IRS Commissioner Daniel Werfel said it will not include spending for new agents with guns.

The agency’s newly released strategic operating plan lays out the specifics of how the IRS will allocate the \$80 billion, through fiscal year 2031, that was approved in that legislation.

Some improvements have been long expected, such as bringing more paper-based systems online and

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 46 of 83

answering taxpayers' phone calls promptly. Others are more ambitious: continuing to explore ways to create a government-operated electronic free-file tax return system, for example.

No hiring boost is foreseen for the criminal investigation unit, which represents 3% of the agency's workforce and employed roughly 2,077 special agents as of the 2022 budget year, according to the IRS' annual report. Those are the agents who may be armed.

There are "no plans to increase" that division, Werfel said during a call with reporters. "That will stay at its current rate."

Since President Joe Biden signed the measure, known as the "the Inflation Reduction Act," in August, some Republicans have claimed the IRS would use the new money to hire an army of 87,000 tax agents with weapons.

That claim comes from a plan the Treasury Department proposed in 2021 to bring on that many IRS employees over the next decade if it got the money. At least 50,000 IRS employees are expected to retire over the next five years.

The strategic plan does not include final numbers on long-term hiring.

During the call with reporters, Treasury Deputy Secretary Wally Adeyemo said the plan "is heavily driven by the fact that we need to make technology investments that will improve productivity, which will mean that over time the number of employees and the mix of employees at the IRS will change."

After Congress passed the legislation last summer, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen directed the IRS to develop a plan outlining how the tax agency would overhaul its technology, customer service and hiring processes. Her memo sent instructions to IRS leadership not to increase audit rates on people making less than \$400,000 a year annually.

Officials are promising not "to raise audit rates on small businesses and households making under \$400,000 per year, relative to historic levels." The report says more than half of the new money — \$45.6 billion — will be devoted to pursuing high-wealth individuals and companies.

"Given the size and complex nature of these tax filings, this work often requires specialized approaches, and we will make these resources available," the report said. "We will use data and analytics to improve our understanding of the tax filings of high-wealth individuals."

Treasury and IRS officials have in recent months promoted the impact of the new spending on internal processes.

Robert Nassau, director of the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic at Syracuse University College of Law, said he has seen some noticeable differences.

"The phone line is amazingly improved, that part of the IRS is working amazingly better," he said. "But I can see the processing time of written submissions is not back to pre-pandemic sufficiency."

Additional money for the IRS has been politically controversial since 2013, when the agency during the Obama administration was found to have scrutinized political groups that applied for tax-exempt status. A report by the Treasury Department's internal watchdog found that both conservative and liberal groups were chosen for close review.

Erin Collins, the national taxpayer advocate, wrote in a blog post that the while plan focuses disproportionately on enforcement, "for the first time in my 40 years as a tax professional, the tax administration stars seem to be aligning," with the newly released plan.

Jean Ross, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, said in an emailed statement that "the funding will more than pay for itself by ensuring that the IRS can hold the very wealthy and large corporations accountable."

## Israel stages rare strikes in Lebanon, also hits Gaza Strip

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and FARES AKRAM Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel launched rare strikes in southern Lebanon early Friday and pressed on with bombing targets in the Gaza Strip, marking a widening escalation in the region following violence this week at Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 47 of 83

The cross-border fighting erupted during a time of heightened religious fervor — when Jews are celebrating the Passover holiday and Muslims are marking the Ramadan holy month. In 2021, an escalation also triggered by clashes at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, spilled over into an 11-day war between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers.

Friday's strikes in southern Lebanon came a day after militants fired nearly three dozen rockets from there at Israel, wounding two people and causing some property damage. The Israeli military said it targeted installations of Hamas, the Palestinian militant group, in southern Lebanon.

Associated Press correspondents in the area said several missiles fired by Israeli warplanes struck an open field in the town of Qalili near the Palestinian refugee camp of Rashidiyeh, close to the coastal southern city of Tyre, while others struck a bridge and power transformer in the nearby town of Maaliya and a farm on the outskirts of Rashidiyeh, killing several sheep. No human deaths were reported.

Israeli strikes in Lebanon risk drawing Lebanon's Hezbollah militia into the fighting, which could lead to war. The Iran-backed group, armed with thousands of rockets and missiles, holds sway over much of southern Lebanon and is viewed by Israel as a bitter foe.

The Israeli military was careful to note in its announcement about Friday's attack that it was targeting only sites linked to Palestinian militants. In recent years, Hezbollah has stayed out of other flareups related to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which stands on a hilltop revered by Muslims and Jews.

In Jerusalem before dawn prayers on Friday, violence erupted again at the hilltop compound as Israeli police stationed at one of the gates forcibly dispersed vast crowds of worshippers who chanted praise for Hamas while pushing their way into the limestone courtyard. Videos from the scene showed police beating large groups of Palestinian men with sticks until they stumbled backward, falling and knocking down vendors' tables.

The head of the U.N. peacekeeping force in Lebanon, Maj. Gen. Aroldo Lázaro, said he was in contact with Israeli and Lebanese authorities early Friday. The force, known as UNIFIL, said that both sides have said they do not want war.

Meanwhile, Israeli air strikes on Gaza resumed early Friday, after militants fired more rockets from the blockaded territory, setting off air raid sirens in the Israeli coastal city of Ashkelon. The military said targets included the entry shaft to an underground network used for weapons manufacturing.

The current round of violence began Wednesday after Israeli police twice raided the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem's Old City. That led Thursday to rocket fire from Gaza and, in a significant escalation, the rocket barrage from Lebanon.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convened his Security Cabinet for a three-hour meeting late Thursday. "Israel's response, tonight and beyond, will extract a heavy price from our enemies," he said in a statement after the meeting.

Almost immediately, Palestinian militants in Gaza began firing rockets into southern Israel, setting off air raid sirens across the region. Loud explosions could be heard in Gaza from the Israeli strikes, as outgoing rockets whooshed into the skies toward Israel. For now, Palestinian militants have fired only short-range rockets from Gaza, rather than the long-range projectiles that can reach as far as Tel Aviv and typically invite harsher Israeli retaliation.

The Israeli military said the rocket fire on its northern and southern fronts was carried out by Palestinian militants in connection to this week's violence at Al-Aqsa where Israeli police stormed into the building with tear gas and stun grenades to confront Palestinians barricaded inside on two straight days. The violent scenes from the mosque ratcheted up tensions across the region.

In a briefing with reporters, Lt. Col. Richard Hecht, an Israeli military spokesman, said the army drew a clear connection between the Lebanese rocket fire and the recent unrest in Jerusalem.

"It's a Palestinian-oriented event," he said, adding that either the Hamas or Islamic Jihad militant groups, which are based in Gaza but also operate in Lebanon, could be involved. But he said the army believed that Hezbollah and the Lebanese government were aware of what happened and also held responsibility.

The mosque — the third-holiest site in Islam — stands on a hilltop revered by Jews as the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism. The competing claims to the site have repeatedly spilled over into violence

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 48 of 83

over the years.

No faction in Lebanon claimed responsibility for the salvo of rockets. A Lebanese security official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to media, said the country's security forces believed the rockets were launched by a Lebanon-based Palestinian militant group, not by Hezbollah.

Lebanon's caretaker prime minister, Najib Mikati, condemned the firing of rockets from Lebanon, adding that Lebanese troops and U.N. peacekeepers were investigating and trying to find the perpetrators. Mikati said his government "categorically rejects any military escalation" and the use of Lebanese territories to stage acts that threaten stability.

Hezbollah has condemned the Israeli police raids in Jerusalem. Both Israel and Hezbollah have avoided an all-out conflict since a 34-day war in 2006 ended in a draw.

The current escalation comes against the backdrop of Netanyahu's domestic problems. For the past three months, hundreds of thousands of Israelis have been demonstrating against his plans to overhaul the country's judicial system, claiming it will lead the country toward authoritarianism.

Key military units, including fighter pilots, have threatened to stop reporting for duty if the overhaul is passed, drawing a warning from Defense Minister Yoav Gallant that Israel's national security could be harmed by the divisive plan. Netanyahu said he was firing Gallant, but then backtracked as he put the overhaul on hold for several weeks. Critics could also accuse him of trying to use the crisis to divert attention from his domestic woes.

Netanyahu said that the domestic divisions had no impact on national security and that the country would remain united in the face of external threats.

Tensions have simmered along the Lebanese border as Israel appears to have ratcheted up its shadow war against Iranian-linked targets in Syria, another close ally of Iran, Israel's archenemy in the region.

Suspected Israeli airstrikes in Syria in recent weeks have killed two Iranian military advisers and temporarily put the country's two largest airports out of service. Hecht, the military spokesman, said Thursday's rocket fire was not believed to be connected to events in Syria.

In Washington, the principal deputy State Department spokesman, Vedant Patel, said, "Israel has legitimate security concerns and has every right to defend themselves."

But he also urged calm in Jerusalem, saying that "any unilateral action that jeopardizes the status quo to us is unacceptable," he said.

In Jerusalem, the situation remained tense at Al-Aqsa. For the previous two nights, Palestinians barricaded themselves in the mosque with stones and firecrackers.

Worshippers have been demanding the right to pray overnight inside the mosque — which authorities typically only permit during the last 10 days of the monthlong Ramadan holiday. They also have stayed in the mosque in protest over threats by religious Jews to carry out a ritual animal slaughter at the sacred site for Passover.

Israel did not try to prevent people from spending the night in the mosque early Friday — apparently because it was the weekend, when Jews do not visit the compound. But tensions could re-ignite Sunday when Jewish visits resume.

Israel bars ritual slaughter on the site, but calls by Jewish extremists to revive the practice, including offers of cash rewards to anyone who even attempts to bring an animal into the compound, have amplified fears among Muslims that Israel is plotting to take over the site.

In this week's violence, Israeli police fired stun grenades and rubber bullets to evict worshippers who had locked the doors of the building. Palestinians hurled stones and fireworks at officers. After a few hours of scuffles that left a trail of damage, police managed to drag everyone out of the compound.

Police fiercely beat Palestinians and arrested over 400 people. Israeli authorities control access to the area but the compound is administered by Islamic and Jordanian officials.

The violence at the site has resonated across the region, with condemnations pouring in from Muslim leaders.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 49 of 83

Akram reported from Gaza City, Gaza Strip. Associated Press writer Bassem Mroue in Beirut also contributed.

## Most oppose Social Security, Medicare cuts: AP-NORC poll

By AMANDA SEITZ and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most U.S. adults are opposed to proposals that would cut into Medicare or Social Security benefits, and a majority support raising taxes on the nation's highest earners to keep Medicare running as is.

The new findings, revealed in a March poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, come as both safety net programs are poised to run out of enough cash to pay out full benefits within the next decade.

Few Americans would be OK with some ways politicians have suggested to shore up the programs: 79% say they oppose reducing the size of Social Security benefits and 67% are against raising monthly premiums for Medicare. About 65 million older and disabled people access government-sponsored health insurance through Medicare and rely on monthly payments from Social Security.

Instead, a majority — 58% — support the idea of increasing taxes on households making over \$400,000 yearly to pay for Medicare, a plan proposed by President Joe Biden last month.

Ninety-year-old Marilyn Robinson disagrees with nearly everything the Democratic leader says, but she thinks his plan to increase taxes on wealthy Americans to pay for the health care program's future makes sense.

She doesn't know anyone in her rural, farming town of White Creek, New York, who makes that much money. Robinson herself, who has been on Medicare for the past 25 years, receives just \$1,386 in Social Security and pension checks every month.

"I can survive on that much money," she said. "But if you're talking about \$400,000, you're just in another category. There's nobody around here making money like that."

That's about the only change to the entitlement programs that most Americans say they would support.

One way or another, changes are in store for the programs. Last week, the annual Social Security and Medicare trustees report released Friday warned that Medicare will only have enough cash to cover 89% of payments for inpatient hospital visits and nursing home stays by 2031. Just two years later, Social Security will only be able to pay 77% of benefits to retirees.

The poll found that many Americans have doubts about the stability of both programs: Only about 2 in 10 are very or extremely confident that the benefits from either program will be available to them when they need them, while about half have little or no confidence.

Republican and Democratic leaders have publicly promised not to cut benefits for Social Security or Medicare. Some Republicans, however, have floated the idea of raising the eligibility age for Social Security and Medicare to keep the programs flush.

But a majority of Americans overwhelmingly reject that, too. Three-quarters of Americans say they oppose raising the eligibility age for Social Security benefits from 67 to 70, and 7 in 10 oppose raising the eligibility age for Medicare benefits from 65 to 67.

U.S. lawmakers who support raising the eligibility to keep those programs afloat may have been given a preview of the difficult road ahead in France, where the president's proposal to increase the country's pension retirement age from 62 to 64 has been met with violence and demonstrations by 1 million people.

Back in the U.S., 29-year-old James Evins in San Francisco says he doesn't worry much about the future of Social Security or Medicare programs. As a middle school language arts teacher, he thinks he'll have enough money saved in the state's retirement program down the road.

"Couldn't they raise more money for the fund?" asked Evins, who added that raising Medicare taxes on those making \$400,000 or more is a better option. "That sucks for people who are trying to retire. To me, 65 is so late."

Just 10 years out from his planned retirement, 55-year-old Mark Ferley of Chesapeake, Virginia, is wor-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 50 of 83

ried about the future of the programs — and that he won't get back the money he paid in. He supports raising the eligibility ages for Social Security and Medicare to 70. Ferley, who said he leans conservative, also believes that taxes should be raised on households earning \$400,000 or more to keep the social programs solvent.

While most support increasing taxes on households earning more than \$400,000 a year to pay for Medicare, the poll shows a political divide on doing so: 75% of Democrats support the tax but Republicans are closely divided, with 42% in favor, 37% opposed and 20% supporting neither.

While the American public may be in agreement on solutions for the programs, Ferley worries that elected officials won't come up with a plan to fix the program.

"Until our leadership determines that the term compromise is no longer a dirty word, I don't have a whole lot of optimism," he said.

His concerns are valid, said Paul Ginsburg, a professor of health policy at the University of Southern California. Most legislators are not taking dire warnings about the future of Social Security and Medicare seriously. Instead, the federal government is coming up with short-term solutions to keep the programs extended for a few more years.

"People are just going to go back to business as usual and not worry about it," Ginsburg said Friday, after the latest trustees' report warned of Social Security and Medicare shortfalls on the horizon. "It's particularly problematic for Social Security. In Social Security, you have a situation where if you make changes now, they can be quite modest. If you wait until 2035, they're going to be draconian."

AP writer Fatima Hussein in Washington contributed to this report.

The poll of 1,081 adults was conducted Mar. 16-20 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points.

## Koepka living large at Masters, leads with Rahm and Hovland

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Brooks Koepka carved out a new identity that sure looked familiar Thursday in the Masters.

This wasn't about his surprising defection last year to LIV Golf, or even his victory four days ago that made him the Saudi-funded circuit's first multiple winner. He just looked like "Big Game Brooks," the player who built a reputation for playing his best in the majors.

Koepka was in full flight in the opening round at Augusta National, and he had company. He birdied his last two holes for a 7-under 65, giving him a share of the lead with Jon Rahm and Viktor Hovland.

Koepka couldn't stoop to read putts two years ago at the Masters when he tried to return from knee surgery in three weeks. He felt so hobbled last year he had reason to believe his run in the majors — four wins over three years — was about to be a memory.

He is getting his swagger back.

"Once you feel good, everything changes," Koepka said.

As for Rahm, he never went away. Never mind that he dropped from a sure-fire No. 1 in the world to No. 3 in the span of a month. The Spaniard overcame a four-putt double bogey on the opening hole with a sublime display of shotmaking.

Hovland played bogey-free to join them atop a leaderboard filled with red numbers and the ominous "weather warning" signs that figure to play a big role this week.

A bad forecast has been talked about almost as much as how 18 players from Saudi-backed LIV Golf would perform amid the high-stakes pressure of a major over 72 holes with a cut.

Koepka carried the flag, though he was more thrilled with having healthy legs.

Rahm had a cool head. He took four putts from 40 feet, and on his way to the second tee thought of the famous quote from his Spanish idol, Seve Ballesteros, who once four-putted at Augusta and said, "I

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 51 of 83

miss, I miss, I miss, I make.”

“If you’re going to make a double or four-putt, it might as well be the first hole — 71 holes to make it up,” Rahm said.

That he did. The Spaniard followed with seven birdies and an eagle, and his 65 was the lowest score in Masters history by anyone who started with a double bogey.

Koepka won the 2019 PGA Championship — his fourth major in a span of three years — that gave him a five-year exemption to the Masters. That runs out next year, and with LIV not getting any world ranking points, his path to Augusta is limited.

“If you win, you’re fine,” he said, bluntly and unbothered.

Hovland was among the early starters. The highlight was a 25-foot eagle putt on the second hole and being 7 under through 13 holes until he cooled at the end. The Norwegian star also stood out for other reasons. The azaleas are starting to lose their color from an early bloom. Hovland made up for it with his shirt.

“It’s definitely a little bit out there,” Hovland said. “But I think I’d rather take these than the pink pants I had last year. So we’re making progress.”

The warm, muggy air and relatively soft greens allowed for good scores for just about everyone. Cameron Young and Jason Day were at 67.

Defending champion Scottie Scheffler, trying to become only the fourth player to win back-to-back, was in the group at 68 that included major champions Shane Lowry, Adam Scott and Gary Woodland, along with Xander Schauffele and U.S. Amateur champion Sam Bennett.

Missing from the red numbers was Tiger Woods, who now has to worry about a chance to don that Sunday red shirt. He has never missed the cut as a pro in the Masters and will have some work to do if he wants to keep that streak alive.

Woods had a few lip-outs and a lot of limping. Woods saw plenty of birdies — he played with Hovland and Schauffele — but made only one himself over 14 holes. He had a late spark until finishing with a bogey for a 74.

It was his highest start in the Masters since 2005. He wound up winning that year, but this is a 47-year-old Woods with hardware holding his right leg together and a back that has gone through five surgeries. He said he was sore. He looked the part.

“Most of the guys are going low today. This was the day to do it,” Woods said. “Hopefully, tomorrow I’ll be a little bit better, a little bit sharper, and kind of inch my way through it.”

Woods wasn’t the only one who failed to take advantage. Rory McIlroy, needing a Masters green jacket to complete the career Grand Slam, took a double bogey from the trees on the par-4 seventh and had three more bogeys to offset his good play. He wound up with a 72, already seven shots behind a world-class leaderboard.

Rahm only a month ago was playing so well he looked unstoppable — three wins on the PGA Tour over his first five starts, all against strong fields. And then he dropped from No. 1 to No. 3 in no time as Scheffler and McIlroy surged.

Consider his opening round — even the four-putt double bogey — to be a reminder that his game is sharp and his passion is burning hot to be the next Spaniard to win the Masters.

That he could recall a funny line from Ballesteros so soon after a crushing start was a good sign. He thought his putting stroke was good on all of them. So he moved on. Rahm hit every fairway and missed only one green.

He hammered a 4-iron from 249 yards on the par-5 eighth that caught the ridge side of the green and fed down to 4 feet for eagle. He birdied four of his last six holes, finishing with an 8-iron to 3 feet on the 18th.

“The one on 18 takes the cake,” Rahm said. “The one on 18 was just perfect drive, great second shot and tap-in for birdie. You don’t usually get a walk-off birdie over here, and those two swings were about as good as they could feel.”

For Koepka, it’s all about feeling good.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 52 of 83

His health — not to mention a nine-figure signing bonus — is one reason he went from supporting the PGA Tour to making the leap to LIV. Koepka says he started to feel healthy again toward the end of last year. He arrived in Augusta off a win.

"Get myself in contention with nine to go on Sunday," he said. "That's the whole goal."

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

## Pope washes feet in Holy Thursday rite at Rome youth prison

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — In a Holy Thursday ritual symbolizing humility, Pope Francis washed and dried the feet of a dozen residents of a Rome juvenile prison, assuring them of their dignity and telling them "any of us" can fall into sin.

The Casal del Marmo facility on the outskirts of Rome is the same juvenile prison where Francis performed the first feet-washing ritual of his papacy, demonstrating his belief that the Catholic Church should give attention to people living on society's margins.

On Thursday, Francis repeated the ritual on 10 male and two female residents who are serving time at the facility. He leaned over and poured water on one foot of each, then used a white towel to gently pat the foot dry before kissing it.

When Francis looked up at them in turn to smile, they shook his hand and kissed it. Many of the young people whispered into the pope's ear, and he chatted with them briefly in return.

The ritual recalls the foot-washing Jesus performed on his 12 apostles at their last supper together before he would be taken away to be crucified.

Jesus "washes all our feet," Francis told several dozen residents assembled in the prison chapel. "He knows all our weaknesses," the pope said in a completely improvised homily.

Among the 12, six were minors while the others had become adults while serving their sentences. The dozen included a Muslim from Senegal, as well as young people from Romania, Russia and Croatia, the Vatican said.

Francis explained that the foot-washing was "not folklore" but a "gesture which announces how we should be toward one another." He lamented that "others profit off each other, (there is) so much injustice...so many ugly things."

Still, he said, "any one of us can slip" and fall from grace. The foot-washing "confers on us the dignity of being sinners." The lesson, he added, should be to "help one another, so life becomes better."

The pontiff, who has a chronic knee problem, navigated the small spaces of the chapel either unaided or with the help of a cane, although he used a wheel chair to leave after the roughly 90-minute appearance.

On Saturday, Francis was discharged from a Rome hospital where he was treated for bronchitis. The Vatican said at the time that he would carry out the complete Holy Week schedule, including the Good Friday late-night Way of the Cross procession at Rome's Colosseum and Easter Sunday Mass in St. Peter's Square.

Earlier Thursday, he presided over Mass in St. Peter's Basilica as part of his stamina-testing Holy Week appointments.

At Thursday's basilica Mass, dozens of rows of priests in simple white cassocks sat in front of rank-and-file Catholics in the packed church.

Francis used the homily as a pep talk to priests, after decades of scandals involving sex abuse of children by clergy caused many faithful to lose trust in their pastors.

The pope didn't cite the scandals or church hierarchy cover-ups. But, he spoke of "crisis" affecting priests. "Sooner or later, we all experience disappointment, frustration and our own weaknesses," Francis said. "Our ideals seem to recede in the face of reality, a certain force of habit takes over, and the difficulties that once seemed unimaginable appear to challenge our fidelity."

The basilica ceremony traditionally includes the blessing of ointments and priests' renewal of promises

made when they were ordained to the priesthood.

Highlighting the spirit of renewal that the pope indicated the priesthood needs, added to the ointments at this year's Mass was bergamot perfume that came from trees in southern Italy on land confiscated by authorities from mobsters.

In off-the-cuff remarks during the homily, Francis admonished priests not to "forget being pastors of the people."

## **In India, mangrove trees make way for booming city of Kochi**

By K PRAVEEN KUMAR, Press Trust of India undefined

KOCHI, India (AP) — Burrowed between mangroves and a bustling skyline, 70-year-old Rajan, who only uses one name, reminisces about his old home.

For nearly sixty years, Rajan has lived comfortably among the trees in Mangalavanam forest in India's southern Kerala state. In the last two decades, the surrounding city of Kochi has boomed as the state's financial capital and swallowed up once-protected green areas, including Rajan's former home.

He was forced to sell his land to a local private realtor when the area was bought up for construction about 15 years ago. He moved into a makeshift dwelling on the edge of a protected bird sanctuary.

"Now there are buildings all around and no wind," said Rajan, adding that the towering concrete has made the city and forest stifling hot.

Government buildings, private offices and homes have sprung up at pace, cutting deep into the forest known as the "green lung of Kochi." The trees are now squeezed on all sides by buildings, construction and smog.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is part of a series produced under the India Climate Journalism Program, a collaboration between The Associated Press, the Stanley Center for Peace and Security and the Press Trust of India.

Environmentalists are concerned over the loss and declining health of mangrove cover, which is particularly effective at sucking planet-warming carbon dioxide out of the air, can fend off scorching heat for nearby residents and sustains populations of local wildlife.

Officials and developers alike defend the need to house the state's dense population and harness economic growth in the world's soon-to-be most populous nation, but experts say this cannot come at the cost of green spaces.

Kerala has lost nearly 98% of its mangrove forests, shrinking from 700 square kilometers (270 square miles) to just 17 square kilometers (6.5 square miles) since 1975, according to figures from the Kerala Forest Research Institute. Mangrove cover across the country crept up slightly between 2017 to 2019 at a rate of 0.5% per year thanks to concerted efforts by the government with restoration and maintenance projects springing up in Kerala and beyond.

"I had literally fought with the government to come out with plans to protect the mangrove forests," said Kathireshan Kandasamy, who studies India's mangrove forests and is a former member of the National Mangrove Committee, a body set up by the government to advise on conservation.

In 2022 the Indian government, following Kandasamy and the committee's advice, identified 44 critical mangrove ecosystems in the country, including two in Kerala. It launched a management action plan to protect and maintain the areas. State governments also started sanctioning funds for conservation projects.

The shrunken Mangalavanam is now listed as a protected area, but there are concerns about the impact of nearby development.

"I found out that some city drainage is passing through this mangrove ecosystem," said Rani Varghese, a research scholar at the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies. Varghese said the runoff "is changing its whole ecosystem."

While the trees themselves are still sucking planet-warming carbon dioxide out of the air, Varghese explained, effluents and pollutants in the soil hamper how good of a sink for carbon the soil can be.

With record amounts of carbon dioxide being pumped into the air by human activity, maintaining eco-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 54 of 83

systems like mangrove forests can counteract some of the harms of warming.

The potential of the forest to store carbon "is actually in the state of deterioration," said Varghese.

A. Anil Kumar, who's mayor of the city's administrative body, the Kochi Corporation, said while they cannot do anything about wastewater runoff immediately the area will continue to be studied.

In the meantime, property companies use what's left of the squeezed forests as a selling point for extravagant homes and office buildings in the area.

Signs outside new developments boast about their luxury apartments' untouched green views from properties' multiple balconies. Long, plastic advertising boards line nearby roads with images of thick forests.

The apartments give residents spectacular sights of backwaters merging with the Arabian Sea and, for a premium, Mangalavanam's last green stronghold in the form of the bird sanctuary, which is surrounded by construction and scaffolding.

K. Krishnankutty, a nearby resident, comes for a morning walk every day on the surrounding road, where mangrove branches hang overhead, lining wide pavements. He said he loves the shade and chirping birds but laments how much the lush space has slimmed in recent years.

"All around this Mangalavanam used to be open with no tall buildings," Krishnankutty said. "So many migratory birds used to come here. Now we cannot see any as the buildings cover up this area."

Experts fear the loss of Kerala's forests could worsen in the coming years.

Some 75% of the remaining mangroves across Kerala are in the hands of private individuals and could be cleared for more lucrative intensive shrimp farming, said M. Ramit, a program officer for the Wildlife Trust of India, who is working on a project to restore mangroves in Kannur, a coastal district in northern Kerala.

"The Kerala government had earlier devised a plan to acquire the mangrove land from private individuals in order to conserve them," Ramit said, but "somehow, the plan was later dropped."

But Kerala's state department of environment and climate change contested the claims and said there is no threat to the existing mangrove forests, regardless of ownership, as the forests are protected by state laws.

Varghese, the Kerala University researcher, said there's still hope that the trend of mangrove loss can be reversed and the forest ecosystem can function normally in the near future.

"If we stop the adverse human interventions in the sanctuary and divert the drainage from Mangalavanam, in another 10 years we could regain all the potential benefits of the mangrove ecosystem," Varghese said.

With the right measures, she said, communities can "turn it around as a good carbon sink."

## Buenos Aires airport turns into unofficial homeless shelter

By VICTOR R. CAIVANO and NATACHA PISARENKO Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — At the start of the long Easter weekend, the airport in Argentina's capital is eerily quiet before dawn, hours before it will fill with travelers. About 100 people who sleep inside the facility are getting ready to start their day.

One of them is Ángel Gómez, who has been living in the Jorge Newbery International Airport for two years and has seen how the number of people joining him has soared.

"After the pandemic, this became a total invasion," Gómez said early Thursday as he sat next to a sign advertising the Perito Moreno glacier, an iconic tourist attraction in the Patagonia region.

As passengers and staff start arriving early in the morning, dozens of people are still sleeping, some on chairs and others on the floor. Some have blankets, but many sleep directly on the floor, strewn across the airport with their few possessions close by.

The airport, known colloquially as Aeroparque, has practically become a homeless shelter at night. Once passengers start arriving, some of the overnighters head off to spend the day at soup kitchens, though others hang around the airport grounds begging for change at traffic lights and some stay seated in chairs blending in with the travelers.

It's a stark reflection of the rising poverty in a country where one of the world's highest inflation rates is making it difficult for many to make ends meet.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 55 of 83

"If I pay rent, I don't eat. And if I pay for food, I'm on the street," said Roxana Silva, who has been living at the airport with her husband, Gustavo Andrés Corrales, for two years.

Silva gets a government pension of around 45,000 pesos, which is equivalent to about \$213 at the official exchange rate and about half of that on the black market.

"I don't have enough to live on," Silva laments. She said that she and her husband take turns sleeping so someone is always watching their possessions.

More and more Argentines are finding themselves in Silva's situation as inflation worsens, hitting at an annual rate of 102.5% in February. Although Argentina has been used to double-digit inflation for years, that was the first time the annual rise in consumer prices reached triple digits since 1991.

The high inflation has been especially pronounced for basic food items, hitting the poor the hardest. The poverty rate rose to 39.2% of the population in the second half of 2022, an increase of three percentage points from the first six months of the year, according to Argentina's national statistics agency, INDEC. Among children under age 15, the poverty rate increased more than three percentage points to 54.2%.

Horacio Ávila, who runs an organization devoted to helping homeless people, estimates the number of people without a roof in Argentina's capital has soared 30% since 2019, when he and others carried out an unofficial count of 7,251 people in this city of around 3.1 million.

Amid the increased cost of living and diminishing purchasing power, more people started to look to the airport as a possible refuge.

Laura Cardoso has seen this increase firsthand in the year she has been living in the airport "sleeping sitting up" on her wheelchair.

"More people just came in," Cardoso said while accompanied by her two dogs that she says make it difficult for her to find a place to live because no one wants to rent to her. "It's packed with people."

Mirta Lanuara is a new arrival, living in the airport only about a week. She chose the airport because it's clean.

Teresa Malbernat, 68, has been living in the airport for two months and says it's safer than being in one of the city's shelters, where she says she was robbed twice.

The Argentine company that operates the airport, AA2000, says it "lacks police power" and "the authority to evict these people" while also saying it has the obligation to ensure "non-discrimination in the use of airport facilities."

For Elizabet Barraza, 58, the sheer number of homeless people living in the airport illustrates why she's choosing to emigrate to France, where one of her daughters has been living for five years.

"I'm going there because the situation here is difficult," Barraza said as she waited to board her flight. "My salary isn't enough to rent. Even if they increase the salaries, inflation is too high so it isn't enough sometimes to rent and survive."

"I don't want to come back," Barraza said.

## Fentanyl caused 'Gangsta's Paradise' rapper Coolio's death

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Gangsta's Paradise" rapper Coolio suffered an accidental death from the effects of fentanyl, heroin and methamphetamine last year, the Los Angeles County coroner's office reported Thursday.

The county agency also cited cardiomyopathy, a disease that makes it more difficult for the heart to pump blood to the body, as a "significant condition." Investigators also determined Coolio's severe asthma and cigarette smoking played a role in his death.

Coolio's former longtime manager Jarez Posey also confirmed the cause of death Thursday.

Coolio — born Artis Leon Ivey Jr., on Aug. 1, 1963 — died at the Los Angeles home of a friend on Sept. 28, 2022. He was 59.

Coolio won a Grammy for best solo rap performance for "Gangsta's Paradise," the 1995 hit from the soundtrack of the Michelle Pfeiffer film "Dangerous Minds" that sampled Stevie Wonder's 1976 song "Pastime Paradise."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 56 of 83

Coolio was born in Monessen, Pennsylvania, and later moved to Compton, California.

He started rapping at 15 and knew by 18 it was what he wanted to do with his life, he said in interviews. Coolio attended community college before devoting himself full-time to the hip-hop scene.

His career album sales totaled 4.8 million, with 978 million on-demand streams of his songs, according to Luminate. He was nominated for six Grammys.

With his distinctive persona, he became a cultural staple, acting occasionally, providing a voice for an animated show and providing the theme music for a Nickelodeon sitcom.

Coolio's estate plans to release a studio album later this year that he had been working on in the days before he died.

## Tribe, US officials reach deal to save Colorado River water

By KEN RITTER and TERRY TANG Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A Native American tribe in Arizona reached a deal Thursday with the U.S. government not to use some of its Colorado River water rights in return for \$150 million and funding for a pipeline project.

The \$233 million pact with the Gila River Indian Community, announced in Phoenix, was hailed as an example of the kind of cooperation needed to rescue a river crucial to a massive agricultural industry and essential to more than 40 million people in seven Western U.S. states and Mexico. Officials termed it "compensated conservation."

It's part of a broader effort to get states that rely on the Colorado River to substantially lessen their water use amid an ongoing drought that has dramatically dried up reservoirs including Lake Mead behind Hoover Dam.

"Today's announcements and our partnerships with tribes like the Gila River Indian Community prove that tribes are a key part of the solutions," Deputy U.S. Secretary of the Interior Tommy Beaudreau said. "We don't have any more important partners in this effort than in Indian Country."

The federal government previously promised to use some \$4 billion for drought relief, and Colorado River users have submitted proposals to get some of that money through actions like leaving fields unplanted. Some cities are ripping up thirsty decorative grass, and tribes and major water agencies have left some water in key reservoirs — either voluntarily or by mandate.

Beyond the Gila River announcement, the Interior Department has shared few details about how it plans to divvy up the rest of the \$4 billion, including how much will go to agricultural interests in the mammoth Imperial Irrigation District in California.

In total, the Biden administration plans to spend about \$15.4 billion approved by Congress for infrastructure improvements and inflation reductions for drought-related projects across the West, according to a government fact sheet released with Thursday's announcement.

The Gila River tribe will get \$83 million for the pipeline project to reuse about 20,000 acre-feet (25 million cubic meters) of water per year, and \$50 million per year over three years not to use 125,000 acre-feet (154 million cubic meters) per year of water currently stored at Lake Mead. The latter is part of a broader effort to get Colorado River water users to substantially lower their water use.

An acre-foot of water is enough to cover an acre of land 1 foot deep (1,233 cubic meters), or about enough to serve two average households per year.

Gila River Indian Community Gov. Stephen Roe Lewis also pointed in a statement to a third pact providing a federal grant for a solar-covered canal project.

"These three agreements, taken together, represent a future of how we can work together to confront the urgency of this moment," Lewis said, "... to find, foster and fund innovative solutions that will have a long-term impact for the Colorado River."

Thursday's announcement comes days before the Bureau of Reclamation, the federal agency that controls water flows on the river, is expected to outline plans for all seven Colorado River basin states — Arizona, California, Nevada, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Wyoming — to use less water.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 57 of 83

The states, together, are allocated 15 million acre-feet (18.5 billion cubic meters) per year, and Mexico is allocated another 1.5 million acre-feet (1.9 billion cubic meters). U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Camille Touton called on the states last year to collectively cut up to 4 million acre-feet (4.9 billion cubic meters) of use, but the number has proven elusive.

The Gila River tribe, by comparison, is allocated 653,000 acre-feet (805 million cubic meters) per year. It committed to give up about one-fifth of its allocation until 2025.

In all, 22 of 30 federally recognized tribes in the Colorado River basin have recognized rights to 3.2 million acre-feet (3.9 billion cubic meters) annually, or up to 26% of the basin's current annual flow, according to a 2021 policy paper by the Getches-Wilkinson Center for Natural Resources, Energy and the Environment at the University of Colorado.

Data shows the river flow was overestimated 100 years ago, and has decreased due to drought since 2000, to about 12.4 million acre-feet (15.3 billion cubic meters) per year, the center's study said.

Officials said an exceptional series of wet winter storms that have swept from the Pacific Ocean into California and the West this year will not be enough to break a megadrought that scientists call the worst in 1,200 years. The dry spell has led to concerns that hydropower plants could go dry and water deliveries could stop for farms that grow crops for the rest of the nation.

"Despite recent heavy rain and snow, the historic 23-year drought has led to record low water levels at Lake Powell and Lake Mead," the Interior Department said in its fact sheet.

The announcement in Phoenix was part of a series of appearances by Biden administration officials, including one on Wednesday outlining plans to spend \$585 million for 83 projects including dams, canals and water systems in 11 states. That announcement was made at the Imperial Dam in Yuma, Arizona, which is slated to receive more than \$8 million.

Officials also said \$36 million promised under Reclamation's Lower Colorado River Basin System Conservation and Efficiency Program will go to California's Coachella Valley. The main water district in that region promised to conserve 30,000 acre-feet (37 million cubic meters) of water in Lake Mead.

Another \$20 million was pledged toward water storage projects in Utah and California, including at the Salton Sea, a drying inland lake formed when the Colorado River flooded in 1905.

Combined, Lake Mead on the Nevada-Arizona state line and Lake Powell formed by Glen Canyon Dam on the Arizona-Utah line were at 92% capacity in 1999. Today, they are at less than 30%.

Ritter reported from Las Vegas.

## **GOP's DeSantis visits Whitmer's Michigan, the 'anti-Florida'**

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Ahead of a highly anticipated presidential announcement, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis visited Michigan for his first appearance this year in the battleground state transformed by Democratic majorities under high-profile Gov. Gretchen Whitmer.

The visit put the contrasting leadership styles of the Republican and Democrat on display after they scored landslide 2022 reelection victories that vaulted them to be their parties' brightest emerging stars.

In Florida, DeSantis and the GOP-dominated Legislature have moved the state further right, waging a culture war on what the governor has called "woke" agendas. In Michigan, Whitmer has led the way on codifying abortion rights and advancing sweeping gun reform with Democrats in full control for the first time in decades.

Whitmer has been a top ally to President Joe Biden and a kind of proxy for his leadership in their party — and what's possible under Democrats. DeSantis is one of the top potential candidates looking to unseat Biden next year.

Thursday's visit was also one of DeSantis's first out-of-state appearances since former President Donald Trump was indicted. With all eyes on Trump, others vying for the GOP nomination have found it difficult to gain much notice.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 58 of 83

Trump frequently targets DeSantis — a similarity the governor shares with Whitmer, who Trump labeled “that woman from Michigan” during his presidency. Recently, Trump has ramped up his DeSantis criticism, saying during a rally in Waco on March 25 that the Florida politician was disloyal and “dropping like a rock.”

DeSantis began Thursday’s tour by speaking at a GOP event in center of the state. He avoided mentioning Trump but criticized Biden, who he called “weak” and “controlled by the most left party elements of his own party.”

DeSantis told the crowd he brought “a message of optimism based on what we’ve done in the free state of Florida,” while outlining his “bold agenda.” He drew distinct policy comparisons to Michigan in the areas of education and COVID-19 lockdowns.

“I do remember during COVID people fleeing those lockdowns in Michigan,” DeSantis said. “People were treated very, very poorly and parents were upset with the schools and everything else, and they would tell me this.”

State Rep. Bill G. Schuette, a Midland-area Republican, described Michigan as the “anti-Florida” as he introduced DeSantis.

Since Florida’s legislative session began in early March, DeSantis has worked to expand the state’s so-called Don’t Say Gay law, ban diversity and equity programs at public universities and eliminate concealed carry restrictions. The state has also begun passing a six-week abortion ban backed by DeSantis.

DeSantis is scheduled to speak Thursday night at Hillsdale College, a small, Christian classical liberal arts college in southern Michigan. He called the school a “model” for his transformation of Florida’s New College, a small liberal arts school he said is indoctrinating students with leftist ideology and should be revamped into a more conservative institution.

The Midland event drew over 100 demonstrators outside. Michigan Board of Education President Pamela Pugh, a graduate of Florida A&M, attended the protest and said demonstrators were sending DeSantis a message that “the hatemongering ends” in Michigan. One protester’s sign also dubbed Michigan “the anti-Florida.”

Potentially the fifth state to hold its Republican primary, Michigan could prove pivotal for the GOP presidential nomination winner. Michigan House Republican Floor Leader Bryan Posthumus flew to Florida in December to deliver a letter signed by 18 other state House Republicans encouraging DeSantis to run for president.

“When he becomes an actual candidate, I will be doing another letter saying we endorse you for President of the United States of America,” Posthumus told The Associated Press.

Michigan voters have overwhelmingly rejected Republicans in the seven years since Trump won the state. Democrats control the statewide offices of governor, attorney general and secretary of state in addition to holding majorities in the Legislature.

With full control of the Statehouse for the first time in 40 years, Michigan Democrats have prioritized further protecting reproductive and LGBTQ+ rights that are being rolled back in Republican-led states across the nation.

On Wednesday, Whitmer signed legislation repealing a 1931 abortion ban after voters in November enshrined rights to the procedure in their constitution.

She called out Florida and other Republican-led states for taking steps to pass “un-American, anti-free and, frankly, sickening” abortion laws.

Often saying that “bigotry is bad for business,” the Michigan governor said the state’s liberal measures will help attract socially-conscious businesses and new talent. Last month, Michigan became the first state in nearly 60 years to repeal a union-restricting law known as “right-to-work.”

Some business advocates disagree, saying Florida proves otherwise. It was one of the first states to implement a “right-to-work” law that allows employees to opt out of paying union dues and fees, and began advancing legislation last week that would ban automatic paycheck deductions for members.

In terms of job growth, Michigan increased by 2.1% over the past year, coming in 35th in the nation. Florida was tied for second at 4.6%. Florida saw the largest population increase of any state from 2021 to

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 59 of 83

2022 — at 1.9% — while Michigan's population slightly decreased over the same period.

Still, "most of these movements reflect long-term trends that are tied to climate and economics more than politics," said Brad Hershbein, a senior economist at the nonpartisan W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

"Florida has been growing over decades, no matter which party controlled the governor's office, mostly because of its climate and zero income tax," Hershbein said.

Gun legislation, an increasingly polarizing issue following multiple school shootings to start the year, has also differed greatly in Michigan and Florida.

DeSantis and Republicans have begun rolling back restrictions that were implemented after the 2018 school shooting in Parkland. DeSantis signed a bill Monday that will allow carrying concealed guns without a permit. He has said he wants to allow people to openly carry guns.

In Michigan, Democrats are close to passing an 11-bill gun safety package that Whitmer has said she will sign, including red flag laws and safe storage requirements, following a shooting at Michigan State University in February.

This story has been corrected to show that Bryan Posthemus is the Michigan House Republican floor leader, not Republican House speaker.

Associated Press writer Anthony Izaguirre in Tallahassee, Florida, contributed to this report.

## Catholic church in Maryland slammed after sex abuse report

By LEA SKENE Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — While the Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore has long touted its transparency in publishing the names of clergy credibly accused of sexual abuse, a report released this week by the Maryland attorney general's office raises questions about the integrity of the church's list.

Following the report's long-awaited release Wednesday, victims and advocates called on the Baltimore archbishop to address discrepancies — their latest demand for transparency in a decadeslong fight to expose the church's coverup tactics.

They also celebrated a major step toward potential legal recourse: state legislation passed Wednesday that would eliminate the existing statute of limitations on civil litigation against institutions like the archdiocese in cases of child sexual abuse. Similar proposals failed in recent years, but the attorney general's investigation brought renewed attention to the issue this legislative session. The bill has been sent to Gov. Wes Moore, who has said he supports it.

The report reveals the scope of over eight decades of abuse and coverup within the Archdiocese of Baltimore. More than 150 Catholic priests and others associated with the archdiocese sexually abused over 600 children and often escaped accountability, the investigation found.

The report also names 39 people who aren't included on the archdiocese's list, which officials first published in 2002 and have continued to update since.

The Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests, known as SNAP, said in a statement Wednesday that some omissions "might be understandable," but called for the archbishop to "err on the side of being more transparent" for the sake of victims and others.

The archdiocese acknowledged the discrepancies Thursday, saying none of the 39 people are currently serving in ministry in the Baltimore area, and at least 33 have died. Archdiocese spokesperson Christian Kendzierski said most didn't make the list because they are laypeople, including deacons and teachers; they were never assigned to ministry in the Archdiocese of Baltimore; or they were first accused posthumously and received only a single, uncorroborated allegation.

Kendzierski said the archdiocese is reviewing its list "in light of the Attorney General's report" and expects to add more names soon. The report recommended expanding the list to include non-priests, which officials are also reviewing.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 60 of 83

When Cardinal William Keeler released the Baltimore list in 2002, his decision earned the diocese a reputation for transparency at a time when the nationwide scope of wrongdoing remained largely unexposed. But years later, a Pennsylvania grand jury accused Keeler himself of covering up abuse allegations in the 1980s.

While Baltimore was among the first, other dioceses across the country have since published similar lists. "But there's always the concern that even credibly accused people have been left off these lists," said Terence McKiernan, president of BishopAccountability.org, which tracks clergy abuse nationwide. "Now, in Baltimore, we have confirmation that's what was happening."

Several of the clergy members not on the church's list admitted to abusing children and teens, according to the report. Sometimes they were asked to leave the ministry but often avoided serious consequences. In some cases, church officials agreed to financial settlements with victims — actions that suggest the allegations were considered credible, McKiernan said.

For example, one victim repeatedly contacted church officials in the late 1990s and early 2000s to report abuse he experienced in the 1930s at the hands of Father Alphonsus Figlewski, who would take altar boys on Baltimore's streetcars and touch them inappropriately, according to the report. The diocese ultimately engaged in mediation and reached a settlement, the report says — but Figlewski was never listed as a credibly accused priest.

One of the church officials who reviewed the case, Father Michael Kolodziej, was himself later accused of abuse and included on the list.

Allegations in another case surfaced in 1968 and Father Albert Julian admitted to having an "almost uncontrollable sexual attraction toward young people of the opposite sex" and said he "had yielded to temptation from time to time," according to the report, which cites a 1970 letter from the archdiocese to Vatican authorities. Julian received psychiatric treatment and was assigned to desk work "where he would not be exposed to temptation," the report says. He requested to leave the church in 1970 and get married.

Further allegations against Julian came to light in 2002, but he was never listed on the archdiocese's list. Yet another priest, Father Thomas M. Kelly — whose heavy drinking, overt racism and "bad habit of pawing women" came up during a 1971 meeting of his colleagues and superiors — was hospitalized for psychiatric treatment and allowed to continue ministering, according to the report. In 1982, he caused a car crash that killed another priest and escaped criminal charges. He died in 1987.

When a woman reported in 2006 that Kelly had sexually abused her as a child in 1971, church officials deemed her account not credible, the report says. He also was never included on the archdiocese's list.

"They talk about being transparent, but it's time for this diocese to take responsibility," said David Lorenz, director of the Maryland chapter of SNAP.

Lorenz and others advocated strongly for the legislation passed Wednesday to eliminate the statute of limitations for civil lawsuits.

Currently, victims of child sex abuse in Maryland can't sue after they turn 38. The bill, if signed into law by Moore, would eliminate the age limit and allow for retroactive lawsuits. However, the measure includes a provision that would pause lawsuits until the Supreme Court of Maryland can determine whether it's constitutional.

The Maryland Catholic Conference, which represents the three dioceses serving Maryland, opposed the measure, contending it was unconstitutional to open an unlimited retroactive window for civil cases.

"While there is clearly no financial compensation that can ever rectify the harm done to a survivor of sexual abuse, the devastating impact that the retroactive window provision will potentially have by exposing public and private institutions — and the communities they serve — to unsubstantiated claims of abuse, cannot be ignored," the group said in written testimony.

Several other states have passed similar legislation in recent years, and in some cases, the resulting lawsuits have driven dioceses into bankruptcy. Just last month, the Diocese of Albany sought bankruptcy protection amid a deluge of lawsuits following a 2019 law change in New York that allowed more people to sue.

Barry Salzman, a New York attorney who has represented numerous victims of church sex abuse pro bono in recent years, said the Maryland legislation is unique in entirely eliminating a statute of limitations.

"I see this as another jurisdiction coming on the right side of things," he said. "It would be a dramatic change."

Associated Press reporter Brian Witte contributed to this report from Annapolis. Sarah Brumfield contributed from Silver Spring.

## 660-mile rescue flight highlights Alaska's unique challenges

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The Alaska Air National Guard this week traveled nearly 660 miles (1,062 kilometers) to rescue a pregnant woman on a small island 2 miles (3 kilometers) from Russia, reflecting the challenges patients face in the nation's largest state where the most remote areas have no roads and hospitals can be hundreds of miles away.

There was no air strip for a fixed-wing aircraft, so the crews flew a twin-engine combat search and rescue helicopter from the Anchorage area to the island in the Bering Strait. A long-range search and rescue aircraft guided the helicopter through mountain passes and refueled it in the air several times during the 5-hour flight.

Russian aircraft routinely fly near the Bering Strait, but Alaska Air National Guard Maj. Sara Warren, who was the on-duty rescue officer, said they took every measure to avoid any conflict, including staying on the U.S. side of the international date line.

"There was absolutely no activity from them," she said of the Russians.

These types of extreme rescues by both the guard and other agencies are common in a state that is almost 2 1/2 times the size of Texas and has more shoreline than the lower 48 states combined. The Alaska Air National Guard has conducted 14 such rescues already this year, the agency said.

"It's very different here in Alaska because we don't have the infrastructure that they have down in the lower 48," said Alaska National Guard spokesperson Alan Brown. "You're looking at the civilian agencies (that) have a more robust capability; there are more of them."

Alaska, with a population of only about 730,000 people, is remote, spread out and often has extreme weather, forcing everyone to team up to conduct life-saving missions. A total of 41 people worked on the recent rescue mission on the small island.

"Our guys, fortunately, because of the nature of their federal mission for search and rescue, they have to be capable," Brown said. "They have to train regularly in extreme weather conditions all across the region and that just makes them prime for this type of rescue."

The rescue call came Monday morning, said Warren. They were informed of a pregnant woman with severe abdominal pains in Diomedede, a village of 80 people on the western side of Little Diomedede Island. It's a traditional Ingalikmiut Eskimo village, whose residents live a subsistence lifestyle, hunting seal, polar bears and blue crab. There are no medical professionals living on the island.

It's separated from Big Diomedede Island, which is owned by Russia, by 2 miles (3 kilometers) of frozen Bering Sea ice this time of the year. The international date line runs between the two islands.

Compounding the rescue was not only lingering fog from sea ice, but also a power outage in Diomedede, Warren said. Townspeople would call the nearest hospital in Nome, 130 miles (209 kilometers) away, every hour providing updates on the woman's condition and then shut the phones off to conserve power. A doctor in Nome would then relay the most current information back to those at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage.

A civilian medical crew was on standby in Nome, but they were unable to fly their helicopter because of the poor weather conditions, so the National Guard aircraft launched from Anchorage. The plane would fly ahead after fueling the helicopter to perform weather reconnaissance, leading the helicopter away from storms, through several passes of the Alaska Range and to Diomedede. Warren and others at the base

monitored all of it in real time.

"They eventually did get her out without causing any kind of incidents," Warren said.

The woman was then flown to Nome and was doing fine, she said.

Such a complex mission is second hand to the Alaska Air National Guard as compared to other states, where guard crews might be involved in search and rescue missions. This incident involved the Alaska Air National Guardsmen of 210th, 211th and 212th Rescue Squadrons.

In Alaska, guardsmen are accustomed to handling complex missions, factoring in bad weather, solving time-distance problems and dealing with harsh terrain, mainly because they train in these conditions as well.

The Guard considers — and even counts on — such missions part of their regular training and thus could not provide a cost estimate for the rescue. The missions provide "exceptional real-world training opportunities not otherwise available," Brown said.

"Standing up and planning for these types of missions, flying through challenging conditions over varied terrain and saving lives keeps our skills sharp and perfectly translates into mission capability for our national defense," he added.

The guard's 176th Wing conducted 55 missions in 2022 and 57 in 2021.

Of the most recent rescue, Warren said, "That was just another Monday."

## **Biden review of chaotic Afghan withdrawal blames Trump**

By ZEKE MILLER and NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's administration on Thursday laid the blame on his predecessor, President Donald Trump, for the deadly and chaotic 2021 withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan that brought about some of the darkest moments of Biden's presidency.

The White House publicly released a 12-page summary of the results of the so-called "hotwash" of U.S. policies around the ending of the nation's longest war, taking little responsibility for its own actions and asserting that Biden was "severely constrained" by Trump's decisions.

It does acknowledge that the evacuation of Americans and allies from Afghanistan should have started sooner, but blames the delays on the Afghan government and military, and on U.S. military and intelligence community assessments.

The brief document was drafted by the National Security Council, rather than by an independent entity, with input from Biden himself. The administration said detailed reviews conducted by the State Department and the Pentagon, which the White House said would be transmitted privately to Congress on Thursday, were highly classified and would not be released publicly.

"President Biden's choices for how to execute a withdrawal from Afghanistan were severely constrained by conditions created by his predecessor," the White House summary states, noting that when Biden entered office, "the Taliban were in the strongest military position that they had been in since 2001, controlling or contesting nearly half of the country."

Trump responded by accusing the Biden administration of playing "a new disinformation game" to distract from "their grossly incompetent SURRENDER in Afghanistan." On his social media site, he said, "Biden is responsible, no one else!"

The report does fault overly optimistic intelligence community assessments about the Afghan army's willingness to fight, and says Biden followed military commanders' recommendations for the pacing of the drawdown of U.S. forces.

"Clearly we didn't get it right," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Thursday, but side-stepped questions about whether Biden has any regrets for his decisions and actions leading up to the withdrawal.

Kirby said of the report that "the purpose of it is not accountability," but rather "understanding" what happened to inform future decisions.

The White House asserts the mistakes of Afghanistan informed its handling of Ukraine, where the Biden administration has been credited for supporting Kyiv's defense against Russia's invasion. The White House says it simulated worst-case scenarios prior to the February 2022 invasion and moved to release intel-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 63 of 83

ligence about Moscow's intentions months beforehand.

"We now prioritize earlier evacuations when faced with a degrading security situation," the White House said.

In an apparent attempt to defend its national security decision-making, the Biden administration also notes that it released pre-war warnings over "strong objections from senior officials in the Ukrainian government."

Republicans in Congress have sharply criticized the Afghanistan withdrawal, focusing on the deaths of 13 service members in a suicide bombing at Kabul's airport, which also killed more than 100 Afghans.

Shawn Vandiver, a Navy veteran and founder of #AfghanEvac, an effort to resettle Afghans fleeing the country, called the NSC report an "important next step."

"We are glad to see acknowledgement of lessons learned and are laser focused on continuing relocation and resettlement operations," Vandiver said in a statement.

But Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., tweeted Thursday that the withdrawal was "an unmitigated fiasco," adding, "Passing the buck in a blame-shifting report won't change that."

The administration's report appears to shift any blame in the Aug. 26, 2021, suicide bombing at Hamid Karzai International Airport, saying it was the U.S. military that made one possibly key decision.

"To manage the potential threat of a terrorist attack, the President repeatedly asked whether the military required additional support to carry out their mission at HKIA," the report said, adding, "Senior military officials confirmed that they had sufficient resources and authorities to mitigate threats."

Kirby credited U.S. forces for their actions in running the largest airborne evacuation of noncombatants in history during the chaos of Kabul's fall.

"They ended our nation's longest war," he told reporters. "That was never going to be an easy thing to do. And as the president himself has said, it was never going to be low grade or low risk or low cost."

Since the U.S. withdrawal, Biden has blamed the February 2020 agreement Trump reached with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, saying it boxed the U.S. into leaving the country. The agreement has been blamed by analysts for undercutting the U.S.-backed government, which collapsed the following year.

Under the U.S.-Taliban Doha agreement, roughly 5,000 Taliban prisoners were released as a condition for what were supposed to be separate future peace talks between the Kabul government and the Taliban. Kirby noted that release and other examples of what he said was a "general sense of degradation and neglect" inherited by Biden.

But the agreement also left an opening for the U.S. to call off its withdrawal deal with the Taliban if the promised Taliban-Afghan peace talks failed — which they did under Biden, as the U.S. military was pulling out and Taliban fighters advancing.

The U.S. was to remove all forces by May 1, 2021. Biden pushed a full withdrawal to September but declined to delay further, saying it would prolong a war that had long needed to end.

Since the withdrawal, the U.S. carried out a successful operation to kill al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahri — the group's No. 2 leader during the Sept. 11 attacks — which the White House has argued is proof it can still deter terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

But the images of disorder and violence during the fall of Kabul still reverberate, including scenes of Afghans falling from the undercarriages of American planes, Afghan families handing infants over airport gates to save them from the crush and violence of the crowd, and the devastation after the suicide bombing at the Abbey Gate.

A February report by the U.S. government's special inspector general for Afghanistan placed the most immediate blame for the Afghan military's collapse on both the Trump and Biden administrations: "Due to the (Afghan security force's) dependency on U.S. military forces, the decision to withdraw all U.S. military personnel and dramatically reduce U.S. support to the (Afghan security forces) destroyed the morale of Afghan soldiers and police."

Pressed by reporters Thursday afternoon, Kirby repeatedly defended the U.S. response and effort to evacuate American citizens and argued with reporters who referred to the withdrawal as chaotic. At one point, he paused in what appeared to be an effort to gather his emotions.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 64 of 83

"For all this talk of chaos, I just didn't see it, not from my perch," said Kirby, who was the Pentagon spokesman during the withdrawal. "At one point during the evacuation, there was an aircraft taking off full of people, Americans and Afghans alike, every 48 minutes, and not one single mission was missed. So I'm sorry, I just won't buy the whole argument of chaos."

The release of the NSC review comes as the State Department and House Republicans battle over documents for classified cables related to the Afghanistan withdrawal. Rep. Michael McCaul, the Texas Republican who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee, called Kirby's comments "disgraceful and insulting."

—  
AP writers Josh Boak, Ellen Knickmeyer, Seung Min Kim, Lolita C. Baldor and Farnoush Amiri contributed.

## Justice Thomas reportedly took undisclosed luxury trips

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas has for more than two decades accepted luxury trips nearly every year from Republican megadonor Harlan Crow without reporting them on financial disclosure forms, ProPublica reports.

In a lengthy story published Thursday the nonprofit investigative journalism organization catalogs various trips Thomas has taken aboard Crow's yacht and private jet as well as to Crow's private resort in the Adirondacks. A 2019 trip to Indonesia the story detailed could have cost more than \$500,000 had Thomas chartered the plane and yacht himself, ProPublica reported.

Supreme Court justices, like other federal judges, are required to file an annual financial disclosure report which asks them to list gifts they have received. It was not clear why Thomas omitted the trips, but under a judiciary policy guide consulted by The Associated Press, food, lodging or entertainment received as "personal hospitality of any individual" does not need to be reported if it is at the personal residence of that individual or their family. That said, the exception to reporting is not supposed to cover "transportation that substitutes for commercial transportation" and properties owned by an entity.

A Supreme Court spokeswoman acknowledged an email from the AP seeking comment from Thomas but did not provide any additional information. ProPublica wrote that Thomas did not respond to a detailed list of questions from the organization.

Last month, the federal judiciary beefed up disclosure requirements for all judges, including the high court justices, although overnight stays at personal vacation homes owned by friends remain exempt from disclosure.

Last year, questions about Thomas' ethics arose when it was disclosed that he did not step away from election cases following the 2020 election despite the fact that his wife, conservative activist Virginia Thomas, reached out to lawmakers and the White House to urge defiance of the election results. The latest story will likely increase calls for the justices to adopt an ethics code and enhance disclosure of travel and other gifts.

In a statement, Crow told ProPublica that he and his wife have been friends of Thomas and his wife since 1996, five years after Thomas joined the high court. Crow said that the "hospitality we have extended to the Thomas's over the years is no different from the hospitality we have extended to our many other dear friends" and that the couple "never asked for any of this hospitality."

He said they have "never asked about a pending or lower court case, and Justice Thomas has never discussed one, and we have never sought to influence Justice Thomas on any legal or political issue."

ProPublica's story says that Thomas has been vacationing at Crow's lavish Topridge resort virtually every summer for more than two decades. During one trip in 2017, other guests included executives at "Verizon and PricewaterhouseCoopers, major Republican donors and one of the leaders of the American Enterprise Institute, a pro-business conservative think tank," ProPublica reported.

Crow wrote that he is "unaware of any of our friends ever lobbying or seeking to influence Justice Thomas on any case, and I would never invite anyone who I believe had any intention of doing that."

The disclosure of the lavish trips stands in contrast to what Thomas has said about his preferred methods of travel. Thomas, who grew up poor in Georgia, has talked about enjoying traveling in his motorcoach



and preferring "Walmart parking lots to the beaches."

## Champion LSU women accepting Biden invitation to White House

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — LSU's national champion women's basketball team will accept an invitation from President Joe Biden to visit the White House.

University spokesman Michael Bonnette confirmed LSU's intentions on the matter on Thursday, a day after Tigers star forward Angel Reese suggested during a podcast interview that her team should celebrate their title with former President Barack Obama and former first lady Michelle Obama rather than President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden.

Reese made the suggestion after saying she was not inclined to accept an apology from Jill Biden for suggesting that both LSU and runner-up Iowa be invited to the White House. President Biden did not follow through on that idea, inviting only LSU and men's national champion Connecticut.

Vanessa Valdivia, a spokesperson for Jill Biden, has said the first lady had meant no disrespect to LSU and that her comments were intended to applaud the historic game and all women athletes. With its 102-85 triumph over the Hawkeyes, LSU's point total was the most ever scored in a championship game by a single team. The 187 combined total also shattered the previous mark. The game also drew a television audience of 9.9 million, a record for an NCAA women's title game.

There is currently no set date for a White House visit, Bonnette said. He could not confirm whether all players and coaches would be able to attend.

At an appearance in Denver on Monday, Jill Biden had praised Iowa's sportsmanship and congratulated both teams. She also said that as part of the longstanding tradition of having champions visit the White House, Iowa should come as well "because they played such a good game."

Reese on Monday called Jill Biden's suggestion "a joke."

Some social media commenters noted the racial dynamics involved, saying that only winners should be rewarded with a White House visit and that hosting both teams would detract from the achievement by LSU's team, which is predominantly Black. The Iowa team is largely white. Others noted the important role of Black women in Democratic Party politics.

President Biden was Obama's running mate and vice president for eight years. Obama, meanwhile, actively campaigned for Biden in the 2020 election.

Following LSU's victory, coach Kim Mulkey said she would go to the White House if invited. Reese said Wednesday she was uncertain if she would go.

Reese faced criticism on social media for mockingly waving her hand in front of her face while staring down Iowa star Caitlin Clark near the end of the game. Clark, The Associated Press Player of the Year, made a similar gesture to no one in particular during Iowa's victory over Louisville in the Elite Eight.

Reese said she didn't think LSU, had it lost to Iowa, would have gotten the same praise from Jill Biden as the Hawkeyes did.

"If we were to lose, we would not be getting invited to the White House," she added. "I remember she made a comment about both teams should be invited because of sportsmanship. And I'm like, 'Are you saying that because of what I did?' Stuff like that, it bothers me because you are a woman at the end of the day. White, Black, it doesn't matter, you're a woman, you're supposed to be standing behind us before anything."

During LSU's championship parade through campus on Wednesday night, a smiling Reese continued to wave her hand in front of her face, in between waves to cheering fans, as she sat in the back of an orange convertible Corvette.

Reese's expressiveness on and off the court has sparked increasing interest in her. According to Canada Sports Betting, Reese gained 500,000 Instagram followers in the two days after LSU's national title triumph, pushing her total of followers above 1 million.

Reese also has been touted by high-profile athletes with global followings. Seven-time Formula 1 champion driver Lewis Hamilton posted a photo of Reese on his Instagram page. And when the Memphis Grizzlies

visited New Orleans this week, star guard Ja Morant made the short trip to LSU's Baton Rouge campus for a meeting with Reese that was posted on social media.

More AP coverage of March Madness: <https://apnews.com/hub/march-madness> and <https://apnews.com/hub/womens-college-basketball> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## The Pink Ladies get their origin story in Paramount+ series

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

Four years before Frenchy, Rizzo and Sandy ever donned their own pink jackets, a group of friends at Rydell High leaned into their image of "bad girls," called themselves the Pink Ladies and created a girl gang. Their formation is chronicled in the new 10-episode musical series "Grease: Rise of the Pink Ladies" streaming now on Paramount+.

Set in 1954, new student Jane Facciano (Marisa Davila) gets labeled as "easy" by the Rydell High quarterback and she's suddenly an outcast. Jane ends up bonding with a few other teen girls, (played by Cheyenne Isabel Wells, Ari Notartomaso, and Tricia Fukuhara) who are struggling in their own way to fit in.

That theme of finding your people looms large throughout "Grease" as a whole, says creator Annabel Oakes.

"When you say Pink Ladies and T-Birds, you're like, 'Oh, those are the cool kids in school.' But when you watch the movie, Rizzo is cool, Kenickie is cool. John Travolta's Danny Zuko is cool. Jan's not cool. Frenchie's not cool. Sonny (and) Doody, are not cool. They are these lovely weirdos who banded together to kind of get through high school together. And I love telling stories about friendship like that."

"Rise of the Pink Ladies" goes big with 30 original songs and a cover of "Grease," the beloved song sung by Frankie Valli (lyrics by Barry Gibb) for the 1978 film.

The "Pink Ladies" songs are from hitmaker Justin Tranter, who has worked with a who's who list of recording artists. Tranter has helped write songs such as "Sorry" by Justin Bieber, "Believer" by Imagine Dragons and "Cake by the Ocean" by DNCE.

"The reason I got into music in the first place was movie musicals, whether it was 'Grease' or 'Annie' or 'The Little Mermaid,' said Tranter. "When I read the script I fought really hard for this job."

Oakes and the writers — with Tranter's input — decide where to insert musical numbers in the episodes. "There's always the rule that when the feelings are too big to speak, you sing them," said Oakes. "It really is pretty natural to find out the point in a script where somebody needs to sing."

There were moments though where Tranter felt a musical opportunity was missing. When the cast was filming the 10th episode, Tranter was still thinking that the second one could benefit from one more song.

"The song 'I Want More' (second episode) is the last song that we wrote (for season one)," they explained. "The episode was shot, it was done. .. I had already seen a rough cut. Jane (played by Davila) is so defeated and learns she might not be able to apply for colleges. It's a devastating moment. Then I got the call that we could add a song to episode two, I was like, 'She is singing right there.' The collaboration just never ends in a musical."

Jamal Sims devised the choreography for the series. Sims created the dance moves for "Encanto," 2019's live action "Aladdin" and the first three "Step Up" movies. As dialogue and scenes changed during the writing process, so would the music, and thus the movement. Tranter and Sims mastered their own dance of communicating directly to get the job done.

"There was a lot of stops and starts," recalled Sims about finding their rhythm. "Then all of a sudden, Justin and I jumped on a call. We were like, 'Let's talk to each other.'"

Once they talked directly and "got on the same page, everything opened up," Sims said. "That's how we made it work."

Beyond "Pink Ladies," Oakes hopes to create a "Grease" cinematic universe much like the MCU, but centered around Rydell High.

"My husband loves 'Star Wars,' and I see how much joy he's gotten out of that universe and how they've

provided all this depth and context and different worlds. I've always wanted a cinematic universe that would speak to me that I could really get into," she said. "Our show has 20 ensemble dancers who are actors, with their own distinct characters and stuff happening in the background. We have futures and stories for all those people and I can't wait to tell them."

## Civil rights probe launched after fatal Park Police shooting

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department has opened a federal civil rights investigation after a U.S. Park Police officer fatally shot a 17-year-old who drove off with an officer in the back seat after the teenager was found asleep in a suspected stolen car.

The FBI and the U.S. attorney's office in Washington launched the investigation this week after federal officials released body-worn camera footage showing the officer fatally shooting Dalaneo Martin last month.

The police video is one of the first released by the National Park Service and follows a 2022 order by Interior Secretary Deb Haaland requiring the agency's 3,000 law enforcement officers to wear body cameras. It is also one of the first times body-worn camera footage has ever been released by a federal law enforcement agency.

Martin's death comes amid an ongoing national reckoning over authorities' use of force and months as the beating death of Tyre Nichols by police in Memphis, Tennessee, renewed scrutiny on this issue after widespread protests over the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020.

The March 18 encounter began around 9 a.m. when two Park Police officers were called by a Metropolitan Police Department officer who was responding to a report of a suspicious vehicle in northeast Washington. Several officers surrounded the car, saw Martin asleep behind the steering wheel and told dispatchers that the ignition of the car was "punched," a sign the car might be stolen, authorities said.

As the officers moved toward the vehicle, footage showed them opening the back passenger's side door and a Park Police officer climbing into the back seat. But Martin woke up and started to drive away, briefly dragging another officer outside the car.

While in the back seat, the officer shouted to Martin, "Stop, man, just let me out." As Martin continued to drive, the officer drew his gun and called out, "Stop. Stop or I'll shoot."

About a second later, the officer fired repeatedly, striking Martin in the back multiple times.

The car crashed into a house after Martin was shot. He was later pronounced dead at the scene. The officer was not seriously injured and no one in the home was hurt. A gun was found inside the car, police said.

"The loss of a life is always tragic but is especially heartbreaking when it involves a child," the U.S. attorney's office said in a statement announcing the investigation.

Park Police officers regularly patrol in the Washington area, where the Park Service has a large footprint. Under the law, those federal officers have the same policing powers in the nation's capital as city police officers.

The Park Police union said the officer inside the car was at "immediate risk of death" when he fired in his weapon, and that the officer outside the car hit his head on the pavement when he fell free of the fleeing car. The union's board said in a statement that both officers followed all policies and laws.

The officer is on paid administrative leave, said a Park Police spokesperson who declined to release the officer's name.

Martin's family has said the officer who shot the 17-year-old should be arrested.

"I don't sleep. I don't eat. And justice needs to be served," his mother, Terra Martin, said Wednesday.

## Saudi, Iran restore ties, say they seek Mideast stability

By MALAK HARB Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Long-time Mideast rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia took another significant step toward reconciliation Thursday, formally restoring diplomatic ties after a seven-year rift, affirming the need for regional stability and agreeing to pursue economic cooperation.

The agreement was reached in Beijing during a meeting between the Iranian and Saudi foreign ministers, a month after China had brokered an initial reconciliation agreement between the two regional powerhouses.

The latest understanding further lowers the chance of armed conflict between the rivals, both directly and in proxy conflicts around the region. It could bolster efforts by diplomats to end a long war in Yemen, a conflict in which both Iran and Saudi Arabia are deeply entrenched.

Thursday's announcement also represents another diplomatic victory for the Chinese as Gulf Arab states perceive the United States slowly withdrawing from the wider region.

But it remains to be seen how far the reconciliation efforts will progress. The rivalry dates back to the 1979 revolution that toppled Iran's Western-backed monarchy, and in recent years the two countries have backed rival armed groups and political factions across the region.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian laid out details of Thursday's agreement in a tweet, after his talks with Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud.

The minister wrote that Thursday marked the beginning of "official diplomatic relations ... economic and commercial cooperation, the reopening of embassies and consulates general, and the emphasis on stability, stable security and development of the region." Amirabdollahian said that the issues are "agreed upon and on the common agenda."

The official Iranian news agency, IRNA, said that in addition to reopening embassies in the two capitals, diplomatic missions would start operating in two other major cities — Mashhad in Iran and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. The report said both sides also agreed to study the prospects of resuming flights and official and private visits between the two nations, in addition to how to facilitate the visa process for their people.

China's Foreign Ministry last month reported that both sides had agreed to reopen their embassies and missions within two months.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the two foreign ministers signed a joint statement and expressed their determination to improve ties in line with their talks in Beijing last month.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency carried a brief news item on the meeting, saying "discussions were held on joint relations and ways to enhance cooperation in many fields," with both sides aiming to "enhance the security, stability, and prosperity of the two countries and peoples."

Thursday's talks in Beijing marked the first formal meeting of senior diplomats from the two nations since 2016, when the kingdom broke ties with Iran after protesters invaded Saudi diplomatic posts there. Saudi Arabia had executed a prominent Shiite cleric with 46 others days earlier, triggering the demonstrations.

The warming of ties shows that "regional countries have the will and ability to take the lead" in maintaining peace, Mao said at the briefing.

She said China is ready to support both sides in fostering good relations, urging the international community to help the Middle Eastern countries resolve their differences.

"The colonial hegemonic tactics of stirring up contradictions, creating estrangement and division should be rejected by the people all over the world," she said.

The United States has welcomed diplomatic progress between Saudi Arabia, with which it has a close but complicated alliance, and Iran, which it considers a regional menace. But U.S. officials have also expressed skepticism about whether Iran will change its behavior.

"If this dialogue leads to concrete actions by Iran to curb its destabilizing activities in the region, including the proliferation of dangerous weapons, then of course, we would welcome that," said Vedant Patel, the principal deputy State Department spokesman.

While the reopening of embassies would mark a major step forward, the extent of the rapprochement could depend on peace efforts in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia has been at war with the Iran-backed Houthi rebels since 2015, following the rebels' capture of the capital and much of northern Yemen.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 69 of 83

Saudi Arabia is also deeply suspicious of Iran's nuclear program, which has advanced significantly since the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from a 2015 agreement with world powers to curb Iran's atomic activities in exchange for sanctions relief.

"I know from my conversations with the Saudis, they are going to be watching the Yemen space," Tim Lenderking, the Biden administration's envoy for Yemen, told a think-tank audience in Washington earlier this week.

"If the Iranians want to show that they're really turning a corner on the conflict, then there won't be smuggling of weapons to the Houthis anymore in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions." He pointed to alleged Iranian involvement in smuggling narcotics as well.

Lenderking cited Iran's support for an ongoing truce there as a recent positive sign, and called on Iran to support political efforts for a lasting peace agreement.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the restoration of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran is "a very important development" to increase stability in the region, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Thursday.

Associated Press writers Kanis Leung in Hong Kong, Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran and Ellen Knickmeyer in Washington contributed.

## Former NBA guard Ben Gordon arrested on weapons charge

STAMFORD, Conn. (AP) — Former NBA guard Ben Gordon was arrested on weapons and threatening charges after he began behaving erratically in a Connecticut juice shop, police said.

The episode started just before 10 a.m. Tuesday when several 911 callers reported "a male acting aggressively and in a bizarre manner" inside a juice shop in Stamford, the city's assistant police chief, Richard Conklin, said Thursday.

The man, identified as Gordon, continued to act erratically when officers arrived and tried to take him into custody, Conklin said.

The officers eventually subdued Gordon and placed him under arrest. They found a folding knife clipped to Gordon's pocket, and a stun gun and brass knuckles in his backpack, Conklin said.

Gordon was arrested on charges including carrying a dangerous weapon, second-degree threatening and interfering with an officer.

The former basketball star, who played for the University of Connecticut before a decade-long NBA career that ended with the 2014-2015 Orlando Magic, was taken to the police detention center and then to a hospital for a mental health evaluation, Conklin said.

Gordon was released late Tuesday on \$10,000 bond, he said. A message seeking comment was left with Gordon's attorney.

It's not Gordon's first brush with the law. Last October, he was charged with punching his son at New York's LaGuardia Airport. And in November, he was charged with a misdemeanor in Chicago for allegedly punching a McDonald's security guard.

This week's arrest came hours after Gordon's alma mater, UConn, defeated San Diego State University 76-59 to win the school's fifth NCAA championship. Gordon was on the UConn team that won the championship in 2004.

Tuesday, the day Gordon was arrested, was also his 40th birthday.

## House Republicans subpoena former prosecutor in Trump case

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans on Thursday subpoenaed one of the former Manhattan prosecutors who had been leading a criminal investigation into Donald Trump before quitting last year in a clash over the direction of the probe.

Rep. Jim Jordan, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, ordered Mark Pomerantz to testify before

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 70 of 83

the committee by April 30. The subpoena, reviewed by The Associated Press, is the latest escalation by Republicans as they probe Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, days after Trump was charged in a 34-count felony indictment in connection with a hush-money scheme involving a porn actor.

Pomerantz refused to voluntarily cooperate with the committee's request last month at the instruction of Bragg's office, citing the ongoing investigation. The Manhattan D.A.'s office has accused Jordan's committee of overstepping its legal authority and infringing on New York state sovereignty.

Jordan has now written in a letter to Pomerantz, "Based on your unique role as a special assistant district attorney leading the investigation into President Trump's finances, you are uniquely situated to provide information that is relevant and necessary to inform the Committee's oversight and potential legislative reforms."

A request for comment from Pomerantz was not immediately returned.

Bragg called the subpoena another example of a Republican "attempt to undermine an active investigation and ongoing New York criminal case."

"Repeated efforts to weaken state and local law enforcement actions are an abuse of power and will not deter us from our duty to uphold the law," Bragg wrote in a tweet.

Republicans had rallied around Trump in the leadup to his indictment Tuesday, labeling Bragg's investigation a "political persecution." Jordan and other senior GOP lawmakers see Pomerantz and Carey Dunne, who were top deputies tasked with running the investigation on a day-to-day basis, as catalysts for Bragg's decision to move ahead with the hush money case.

Both men started on the probe under former District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr., and Bragg asked them to stay when he took office in January. Both Vance and Bragg are Democrats.

The Trump indictment centers on allegations that he falsified internal business records at his private company while trying to cover up an effort to illegally influence the 2016 election by arranging payments that silenced claims potentially harmful to his candidacy. It includes 34 counts of falsifying records related to checks Trump sent to his personal lawyer and problem-solver to reimburse him for his role in paying off a porn actor who said she had an extramarital sexual encounter with Trump years earlier.

Pomerantz released a book earlier this year titled "People vs. Donald Trump: An Inside Account." In the book, he said that Vance authorized him in December 2021 to seek Trump's indictment. He has portrayed the hush-money payments — made or arranged by Cohen — as perhaps the most challenging and legally fraught of the potential cases against the former president.

Jordan wrote Thursday that Pomerantz should be allowed to cooperate since he has "already discussed many of the topics relevant to our oversight" in the book he published and promoted. He goes on to say that Pomerantz's own book details how the case looking into "Trump appears to have been politically motivated."

"Specifically, you describe your eagerness to investigate President Trump, writing that you were 'delighted' to join an unpaid group of lawyers advising on the Trump investigations, and joking that salary negotiations had gone 'great' because you would have paid to join the investigation," the Jordan letter continued.

---

Associated Press writer Michael R. Sisak in New York contributed to this report.

---

Follow the AP's coverage of former President Donald Trump at <https://apnews.com/hub/donald-trump>.

## Police: 4 dead in plane crash off Florida's Gulf Coast

VENICE, Fla. (AP) — The bodies of two men and two women have been recovered following a small plane crash just off Florida's Gulf Coast, police said Thursday.

The plane had just taken off from Venice Airport when it crashed into the Gulf of Mexico west of the city's fishing pier just after 9:30 p.m. Wednesday, Venice police said in a news conference.

Several people on the pier saw the plane crash and called 911, Venice police Capt. Andy Leisenring said. In addition video footage from the airport and the pier will be reviewed and turned over to the National Transportation Safety Board, which is conducting an investigation, he said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 71 of 83

Leisenring said police "were unable to deploy a dive team until we had daylight." The plane — a Piper PA-32R — was spotted just before noon under about 23 feet of water, he said. Crews also found the bodies of the two female passengers.

Authorities identified the victims as William Jeffrey Lumpkin, 64, who was piloting the plane, Patricia Lumpkin, 68, Ricky Joe Beaver, 60, and Elizabeth Anne Beaver, 57. The Lumpkins were from Fishers, Indiana, and the Beavers were from Noblesville, Indiana. The four were the only passengers of the plane, police said.

Leisenring said the two couples left St. Petersburg and flew to Venice around 5 p.m. Wednesday. They parked the plane at the airport and had dinner with friends at a restaurant on the pier. They returned to the airport after 9 p.m. and crashed shortly after 9:30 p.m.

Crews from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Sarasota Sheriff's Office and the U.S. Coast Guard were continuing to search the debris field Thursday morning.

The Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board have been notified. Venice is about 58 miles (93 kilometers) south of St. Petersburg on Florida's Gulf Coast.

A family of three — a couple and their daughter — died in a similar crash off Venice in December.

Leisenring called it "unusual" to have two plane crashes occur in that short period of time but said it was too early to conclude whether or not there was a connection between them.

## Ex-head of Michigan marijuana board admits he took bribes

By ED WHITE Associated Press

The former head of a Michigan medical marijuana licensing board has agreed to plead guilty to accepting \$110,000 in bribes when he led the panel over a two-year period, authorities said Thursday.

Rick Johnson acknowledged in a signed court filing that he acted "corruptly" when he accepted cash and other benefits to help businesses get licenses.

Charges against Johnson and three other men were announced by U.S. Attorney Mark Totten at a press conference near the Capitol in Lansing.

Johnson, 70, was chairman of the marijuana board for two years until spring 2019. The Republican years earlier also was a powerful lawmaker, serving as House speaker from 2001 through 2004.

"Public corruption is a poison to any democracy. ... That poison is especially toxic here," Totten said. "The marijuana industry has been likened to a modern-day gold rush, a new frontier where participants can stake their claim and just maybe return big rewards."

The marijuana board reviewed and approved applications to grow and sell marijuana for medical purposes. A message seeking comment from Johnson's attorney wasn't immediately returned.

Agreements with Johnson and others to plead guilty were filed simultaneously with charges in federal court in Grand Rapids. All are cooperating with investigators, which could help them at sentencing.

Johnson accepted \$110,200 in cash and benefits from at least two companies while voting in favor of granting them marijuana licenses, according to the bribery charge.

Johnson "provided valuable non-public information about the anticipated rules and operation of the board and assistance with license application matters," the court filing states.

John Dalaly, who got a marijuana business license, has agreed to plead guilty to providing at least \$68,200 in cash and other benefits to Johnson, including two private flights to Canada, according to court documents.

Two lobbyists, Brian Pierce and Vincent Brown, have agreed to plead guilty to conspiring to pass bribes to Johnson, filings show.

Brown voluntarily spoke to federal agents for hours in 2020 before he had a lawyer, defense attorney David Griem said.

"I only fight cases that I can win at trial or the government gives me no choice, the offer is so bad. We're not going to fight this," Griem told The Associated Press.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer abolished the medical marijuana board in 2019, a few months after taking office,

and put oversight of the industry inside a state agency.

Michigan voters legalized marijuana for medical purposes in 2008. A decade later, voters approved the recreational use of marijuana.

Follow Ed White at <http://twitter.com/edwritetz>

## Italy's Berlusconi has leukemia, lung infection, doctors say

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Former Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi is being treated for a lung infection that is a result of chronic leukemia, his doctors said Thursday, revealing the latest of string of health setbacks for the 86-year-old media mogul.

Berlusconi's personal physician, Alberto Zangrillo, signed off on a medical bulletin that said Berlusconi has had leukemia "for some time" but that the cancer of the blood cells was in a "persistent chronic phase."

The statement was the first official word from doctors since Berlusconi was admitted to Milan's San Raffaele Hospital on Wednesday. Dr. Fabio Ciceri, who is head of hematology, bone marrow transplantation and blood cancer at the hospital, co-signed it.

"The current treatment strategy envisions treatment of the pulmonary infection" as well as specialized treatment "aimed at limiting the negative effects" of the chronic leukemia, the bulletin stated.

Berlusconi is a media mogul who served three terms as Italy's premier and now serves in the Senate. He was admitted to an intensive care unit at San Raffaele Hospital on Wednesday for treatment of what aides indicated was a respiratory problem stemming from a previous infection.

Earlier Thursday, a close political ally, Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, quoting Zangrillo, reported that Berlusconi was alert and in stable condition at the hospital. Tajani is the coordinator of Forza Italia, the political party that Berlusconi created some 30 years ago.

Zangrillo, Berlusconi's longtime physician, is a chief anesthesiologist at San Raffaele Hospital. The former three-time premier and now senator had left the same hospital a week ago after several days of tests.

The medical bulletin didn't specify which treatment Berlusconi was receiving.

Berlusconi "is currently in intensive care for the treatment of a pulmonary infection," the bulletin said. It noted that his leukemia was in a "persistent chronic phase" and that tests have found an "absence of evolving characteristics of acute leukemia," which develops more quickly.

Doctors said the kind of leukemia afflicting Berlusconi usually appears in people of advanced age and is characterized by an increase in white blood cells known as monocytes.

Treatment for older patients could involve a stem cell transplant. But that could be difficult, according to an Italian non-profit association dedicated to combatting leukemia. Another treatment would involve controlling the white blood cell count.

Berlusconi's doctors said they were aiming to "get back the pre-existing clinical conditions."

Without citing any sources, Italian news agency ANSA reported that Berlusconi had received chemotherapy.

Berlusconi's party whip in the lower chamber of the Italian Parliament, Paolo Barelli, told reporters that Berlusconi "is responding to treatment," but Barelli declined to specify what kind.

A statement from Forza Italia said Berlusconi on Thursday morning had telephoned several party officials about political matters.

Meanwhile family members continued to visit Berlusconi. Spotted arriving at the hospital were his brother, Paolo, his eldest daughter, Marina, and his younger son, Luigi.

LaPresse news agency quoted Berlusconi's brother Paolo as saying that the family was "'relieved" and "hopeful" amid signs of improvement in his condition.

Fedele Confalonieri, Berlusconi's longtime confidant and chairman of his media empire Mediaset, told reporters Thursday that "we're more optimistic."

The last years have seen Berlusconi suffer numerous health problems, including heart ailments and COVID-19 in 2020, which saw him hospitalized then in critical condition with pneumonia.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 73 of 83

He has had a pacemaker for years, underwent heart surgery to replace an aortic valve in 2016 and overcame prostate cancer decades ago.

On March 31, Berlusconi tweeted when he left the hospital after a battery of tests that he was "ready and determined to commit myself as I've always done to the country I love."

His brother made no comment upon arriving at the hospital Thursday morning. But when he left the hospital the night before, Paolo Berlusconi said of his brother: "He's a rock. Thus, he'll make it this time, too."

With no political heir apparent despite Berlusconi's multiple health setbacks, Forza Italia has seen its popularity at the polls slump to a fraction of what it enjoyed years ago, when voters helped to repeatedly propel him into the premiership despite his legal woes.

Among the messages for a quick recovery was one from Premier Giorgia Meloni, who tweeted "Forza Silvio," riffing off the soccer chant that Berlusconi turned into the name of his political party, which is currently one of two junior coalition partners in Meloni's nearly six-month-old right-wing government.

On Wednesday, during a Senate confidence roll-call vote when Berlusconi's name was called and an official said "absent," a round of applause erupted from across the political spectrum in Parliament's upper chamber.

The Senate seat Berlusconi won in September is fruit of his latest political comeback. A decade ago, he was banned from holding public office over a tax fraud conviction stemming from dealings in his media empire.

Last year, he triggered an uproar with comments about his old friend, Russian President Vladimir Putin, boasting that the two had exchanged birthday greetings. Berlusconi also has blamed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for the war.

Luca Bruno in Milan contributed to this report.

## Idaho governor signs 'abortion trafficking' bill into law

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Legal limits on abortion-related travel are the focus of a new law and a new lawsuit in Idaho, with Gov. Brad Little signing a bill Wednesday that makes it illegal for an adult to help a minor get an abortion without parental consent.

Meanwhile, two doctors and a regional Planned Parenthood affiliate have filed a lawsuit over the state's newly released interpretation of a separate anti-abortion law because the attorney general says it prohibits physicians from even referring patients to out-of-state abortion providers.

The new "abortion trafficking" law signed on Wednesday, is the first of its kind in the U.S. It makes it illegal to either obtain abortion pills for a minor or to help them leave the state for an abortion without their parents' knowledge and consent. Anyone convicted will face two to five years in prison and could also be sued by the minor's parent or guardian. Parents who raped their child will not be able to sue, though the criminal penalties for anyone who helped the minor obtain an abortion will remain in effect.

The law also gives the attorney general the ability to prosecute someone for alleged violations of the law, even if the county prosecutor — who would normally be responsible for filing a criminal case — declines to prosecute.

To sidestep violating a constitutional right to travel between states, Idaho's law makes illegal only the in-state segment of a trip to an out-of-state abortion provider.

Still, Planned Parenthood Federation of America wrote in a press release that the law raises pressing concerns about the state's legal ability to restrict residents from traveling to neighboring states to access abortion care.

The law will isolate young people and put them in danger, including those who are in abusive situations, Planned Parenthood Federation of America president Alexis McGill Johnson said.

"They will stop at nothing to control what we do and where we go — even if it means holding people hostage when trying to access essential health services," McGill Johnson wrote in the release.

Opponents have promised a legal battle.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 74 of 83

"Yet again, Idaho's governor disregarded constituents and signed HB 242 into law, creating the nation's first crime of so-called 'abortion trafficking.' This legislation is despicable, and we're going to do everything in our power to stop it," Idaho State Director for Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates-West said Wednesday on Twitter.

Idaho, like many states, has multiple abortion laws on the books.

Two Idaho doctors and a regional Planned Parenthood affiliate sued Wednesday over the state's interpretation of another strict abortion ban, contending it unconstitutionally limits interstate travel for abortions. The strict ban makes it illegal for physicians to use "any means to intentionally terminate the clinically diagnosable pregnancy of a woman," if they know the termination will reasonably cause the death of the unborn child.

The strict ban went into effect shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade last summer. A legal opinion issued late last month by the state's new attorney general, Raul Labrador, says that the ban also prohibits Idaho health care providers from issuing prescriptions for abortion medications that patients could pick up in other states, or even referring them to a health care provider across state lines for abortion services.

Drs. Caitlin Gustafson and Darin Weyrich and Planned Parenthood Great Northwest are all represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Idaho. They say the attorney general's interpretation of the law violates the First Amendment's free speech provisions as well as the U.S. Constitution's commerce clause. The commerce clause generally prohibits states from imposing major roadblocks to interstate commerce or attempting to regulate out-of-state activity that is legal in the state where it occurs.

It's possible that any ruling in the new lawsuit could also affect the "trafficking" bill, because it too attempts to place limits on interstate travel.

Idaho is one of 13 states that already effectively ban abortion in all stages of pregnancy, and is one of a handful of states that already have laws penalizing those who help people of any age obtain abortions.

State leaders in Washington, Oregon and California have promoted the West Coast as a safe haven for abortion procedures, and lawmakers in Oregon and Washington are considering bills to shield abortion providers and patients from criminal liability. Oregon's bill would allow physicians to provide abortion to anyone regardless of age, and would bar them in certain cases from disclosing that information to parents.

Thirty-six states require parental involvement in a minor's decision to have an abortion, though most allow exceptions under certain circumstances like medical emergencies, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research group supporting abortion rights.

## Are robot waiters the future? Some restaurants think so

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

MADISON HEIGHTS, Mich. (AP) — You may have already seen them in restaurants: waist-high machines that can greet guests, lead them to their tables, deliver food and drinks and ferry dirty dishes to the kitchen. Some have cat-like faces and even purr when you scratch their heads.

But are robot waiters the future? It's a question the restaurant industry is increasingly trying to answer.

Many think robot waiters are the solution to the industry's labor shortages. Sales of them have been growing rapidly in recent years, with tens of thousands now gliding through dining rooms worldwide.

"There's no doubt in my mind that this is where the world is going," said Dennis Reynolds, dean of the Hilton College of Global Hospitality Leadership at the University of Houston. The school's restaurant began using a robot in December, and Reynolds says it has eased the workload for human staff and made service more efficient.

But others say robot waiters aren't much more than a gimmick that have a long way to go before they can replace humans. They can't take orders, and many restaurants have steps, outdoor patios and other physical challenges they can't adapt to.

"Restaurants are pretty chaotic places, so it's very hard to insert automation in a way that is really productive," said Craig Le Clair, a vice president with the consulting company Forrester who studies automation.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 75 of 83

Still, the robots are proliferating. Redwood City, California-based Bear Robotics introduced its Servi robot in 2021 and expects to have 10,000 deployed by the end of this year in 44 U.S. states and overseas. Shenzhen, China-based Pudu Robotics, which was founded in 2016, has deployed more than 56,000 robots worldwide.

"Every restaurant chain is looking toward as much automation as possible," said Phil Zheng of Richtech Robotics, an Austin-based maker of robot servers. "People are going to see these everywhere in the next year or two."

Li Zhai was having trouble finding staff for Noodle Topia, his Madison Heights, Michigan, restaurant, in the summer of 2021, so he bought a BellaBot from Pudu Robotics. The robot was so successful he added two more; now, one robot leads diners to their seats while another delivers bowls of steaming noodles to tables. Employees pile dirty dishes onto a third robot to shuttle back to the kitchen.

Now, Zhai only needs three people to do the same volume of business that five or six people used to handle. And they save him money. A robot costs around \$15,000, he said, but a person costs \$5,000 to \$6,000 per month.

Zhai said the robots give human servers more time to mingle with customers, which increases tips. And customers often post videos of the robots on social media that entice others to visit.

"Besides saving labor, the robots generate business," he said.

Interactions with human servers can vary. Betzy Giron Reynosa, who works with a BellaBot at The Sushi Factory in West Melbourne, Florida, said the robot can be a pain.

"You can't really tell it to move or anything," she said. She has also had customers who don't want to interact with it.

But overall the robot is a plus, she said. It saves her trips back and forth to the kitchen and gives her more time with customers.

Labor shortages accelerated the adoption of robots globally, Le Clair said. In the U.S., the restaurant industry employed 15 million people at the end of last year, but that was still 400,000 fewer than before the pandemic, according to the National Restaurant Association. In a recent survey, 62% of restaurant operators told the association they don't have enough employees to meet customer demand.

Pandemic-era concerns about hygiene and adoption of new technology like QR code menus also laid the ground for robots, said Karthik Namasivayam, director of The School of Hospitality Business at Michigan State University's Broad College of Business.

"Once an operator begins to understand and work with one technology, other technologies become less daunting and will be much more readily accepted as we go forward," he said.

Namasivayam notes that public acceptance of robot servers is already high in Asia. Pizza Hut has robot servers in 1,000 restaurants in China, for example.

The U.S. was slower to adopt robots, but some chains are now testing them. Chick-fil-A is trying them at multiple U.S. locations, and says it's found that the robots give human employees more time to refresh drinks, clear tables and greet guests.

Marcus Merritt was surprised to see a robot server at a Chick-fil-A in Atlanta recently. The robot didn't seem to be replacing staff, he said; he counted 13 employees in the store, and workers told him the robot helps service move a little faster. He was delighted that the robot told him to have a great day, and expects he'll see more robots when he goes out to eat.

"I think technology is part of our normal everyday now. Everybody has a cell phone, everybody uses some form of computer," said Merritt, who owns a marketing business. "It's a natural progression."

But not all chains have had success with robots.

Chili's introduced a robot server named Rita in 2020 and expanded the test to 61 U.S. restaurants before abruptly halting it last August. The chain found that Rita moved too slowly and got in the way of human servers. And 58% of guests surveyed said Rita didn't improve their overall experience.

Haidilao, a hot pot chain in China, began using robots a year ago to deliver food to diners' tables. But managers at several outlets said the robots haven't proved as reliable or cost-effective as human servers.

Wang Long, the manager of a Beijing outlet, said his two robots have both have broken down.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 76 of 83

"We only used them now and then," Wang said. "It is a sort of concept thing and the machine can never replace humans."

Eventually, Namasivayam expects that a certain percentage of restaurants — maybe 30% — will continue to have human servers and be considered more luxurious, while the rest will lean more heavily on robots in the kitchen and in dining rooms. Economics are on the side of robots, he said; the cost of human labor will continue to rise, but technology costs will fall.

But that's not a future everyone wants to see. Saru Jayaraman, who advocates for higher pay for restaurant workers as president of One Fair Wage, said restaurants could easily solve their labor shortages if they just paid workers more.

"Humans don't go to a full-service restaurant to be served by technology," she said. "They go for the experience of themselves and the people they care about being served by a human."

AP researcher Yu Bing contributed from Beijing.

## King Charles III supports probe into monarchy's slave ties

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III for the first time has signaled support for research into the British monarchy's ties to slavery after a document showed an ancestor with shares in a slave-trading company, a Buckingham Palace spokesperson said Thursday.

Charles takes the issue "profoundly seriously" and academics will be given access to the royal collection and archives, the palace said.

The statement was in response to an article in The Guardian newspaper that revealed a document showing that the deputy governor of the slave-trading Royal African Company transferred 1,000 pounds of shares in the business to King William III in 1689.

The newspaper reported on the document as part of a series of stories on royal wealth and finances, as well as the monarchy's connection to slavery.

Charles ascended to the throne last year after the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II. His coronation is planned for May 6.

Charles and his eldest son, Prince William, have expressed their sorrow over slavery but haven't acknowledged the crown's connections to the trade.

The king has said he's trying to deepen his understanding of "slavery's enduring impact" that runs deep in the Commonwealth, an international grouping of countries made up mostly of former British colonies.

During a ceremony that marked Barbados becoming a republic two years ago, Charles referred to "the darkest days of our past and the appalling atrocity of slavery, which forever stains our history." English settlers used African slaves to turn the island into a wealthy sugar colony.

The research into the monarchy's ties to slavery is co-sponsored by Historic Royal Palaces and Manchester University and is expected to be completed by 2026.

## Dramatic photos show how storms filled California reservoirs

By TERRY CHEA, NOAH BERGER and JOSH EDELSON Associated Press

FOLSOM, Calif. (AP) — Water levels fell so low in key reservoirs during the depth of California's drought that boat docks sat on dry, cracked land and cars drove into the center of what should have been Folsom Lake.

Those scenes are no more after a series of powerful storms dumped record amounts of rain and snow across California, replenishing reservoirs and bringing an end — mostly — to the state's three-year drought.

Now, 12 of California's 17 major reservoirs are filled above their historical averages for the start of spring. That includes Folsom Lake, which controls water flows along the American River, as well as Lake Oroville, the state's second largest reservoir and home to the nation's tallest dam.

It's a stunning turnaround of water availability in the nation's most populous state. Late last year nearly

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 77 of 83

all of California was in drought, including at extreme and exceptional levels. Wells ran dry, farmers fallowed fields and cities restricted watering grass.

The water picture changed dramatically starting in December, when the first of a dozen "atmospheric rivers" hit, causing widespread flooding and damaging homes and infrastructure, and dumping as many as 700 inches (17.8 meters) of snow in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

"California went from the three driest years on record to the three wettest weeks on record when we were catapulted into our rainy season in January," said Karla Nemeth, director of California Department of Water Resources. "So, hydrologically, California is no longer in a drought except for very small portions of the state."

All the rain and snow, while drought-busting, may bring new challenges. Some reservoirs are so full that water is being released to make room for storm runoff and snowmelt that could cause flooding this spring and summer, a new problem for weary water managers and emergency responders.

The storms have created one of the biggest snowpacks on record in the Sierra Nevada mountains. The snowpack's water content is 239% of its normal average and nearly triple in the southern Sierra, according to state data. Now as the weather warms up, water managers are preparing for all that snow to melt, unleashing a torrent of water that's expected to cause flooding in the Sierra foothills and Central Valley.

"We know there will be flooding as a result of the snowmelt," Nemeth said. "There's just too much snowmelt to be accommodated in our rivers and channels and keeping things between levees."

Managers are now releasing water from the Oroville Dam spillway, which was rebuilt after it broke apart during heavy rains in February 2017 and forced the evacuation of more than 180,000 people downstream along the Feather River.

The reservoir is 16% above its historic average. That's compared to 2021, when water levels dropped so low that its hydroelectric dams stopped generating power.

That year the Bidwell Canyon and Lime Saddle marinas had to pull most recreational boats out of Lake Oroville and shut down their boat rental business because water levels were too low and it was too hard to get to the marinas, said Jared Rael, who manages the marinas.

In late March, the water at Lake Oroville rose to 859 feet (262 meters) above sea level, about 230 feet (70 meters) higher than its low point in 2021, according to state data.

"The public is going to benefit with the water being higher. Everything is easier to get to. They can just jump on the lake and have fun," Rael said. "Right now we have tons of water. We have a high lake with a bunch of snowpack. We're going to have a great year."

The abundant precipitation has prompted Gov. Gavin Newsom to lift some of the state's water restrictions and stop asking people to voluntarily reduce their water use by 15%.

Newsom has not declared the drought over because there are still water shortages along the California-Oregon border and parts of Southern California that rely on the struggling Colorado River.

Cities and irrigation districts that provide water to farms will receive a big boost in water supplies from the State Water Project and Central Valley Project, networks of reservoirs and canals that supply water across California. Some farmers are using the stormwater to replenish underground aquifers that had become depleted after years of pumping and drought left wells dry.

State officials are warning residents not to let the current abundance let them revert to wasting water. In the era of climate change, one extremely wet year could be followed by several dry years, returning the state to drought.

"Given weather whiplash, we know the return of dry conditions and the intensity of the dry conditions that are likely to return means we have to be using water more efficiently," Nemeth said. "We have to be adopting conservation as a way of life."

\_\_\_\_\_  
Berger reported from Oroville, California.

## Japan's army says helicopter carrying 10 crashed into ocean

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A missing Japanese army helicopter carrying 10 crew members is believed to have crashed into the sea off a southern island after objects appearing to be aircraft parts were spotted in the area, an official said Thursday.

The UH-60JA Black Hawk helicopter disappeared from radar on Thursday afternoon while on a reconnaissance mission north of Miyako island, the head of the Ground Self Defense Force, Yasunori Morishita, said at a news conference.

Debris believed to be aircraft parts was spotted in the area, about 1,800 kilometers (1,120 miles) southwest of Tokyo, he said.

The government is aggressively building up its defense capability in southwestern Japan in response to China's increasingly assertive military activity in the region, including Taiwan.

Kyodo News said Japanese coast guard ships also found traces of oil that may be related to the missing helicopter, but officials declined to confirm the report.

Morishita said the helicopter was stationed at a key regional army base in Kumamoto prefecture on the southern main island of Kyushu, and one of its 10 crew members is the division commander, Yuichi Sakamoto.

Morishita said the helicopter disappeared from radar earlier than previously thought.

NHK public television earlier said the helicopter disappeared from radar about an hour after it departed from Miyako island and about half an hour before its scheduled return.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said the Defense Ministry is investigating.

## Snake on a plane! South African pilot finds cobra under seat

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — A pilot in South Africa made a hasty emergency landing after discovering a highly venomous cobra hiding under his seat.

Rudolf Erasmus had four passengers on board the light aircraft during Monday's flight when he felt "something cold" slide across his lower back. He glanced down to see the head of a fairly large Cape Cobra "receding back under the seat," he said.

"It was as if my brain didn't know what was going on," he told The Associated Press.

After taking a moment to compose himself, he informed his passengers of the slippery stowaway.

"There was a moment of stunned silence," he said. Everyone stayed cool, especially the pilot.

Erasmus called air traffic control for permission to make an emergency landing in the town of Welkom in central South Africa. He still had to fly for another 10 to 15 minutes and land the plane with the snake curled up by his feet.

"I kept looking down to see where it was. It was happy under the seat," Erasmus said. "I don't have a big fear of snakes but I normally don't go near them."

Brian Emmenis, who works at Welkom radio station Gold FM and is also an aviation expert, received a phone call to see if he could help. He called the fire and rescue department, which sent emergency responders and a snake handler to meet the plane at the airport. Emmenis was first at the scene and saw everyone disembark, "visibly shaken," Emmenis said, but all safe thanks to Erasmus.

"He stayed calm and landed that aircraft with a deadly venomous Cape Cobra curled up underneath his seat," Emmenis said.

Cape Cobras are one of Africa's most dangerous cobra species because of the potency of their venom.

The drama wasn't over for the poor pilot.

Welkom snake handler Johan de Klerk and a team of aviation engineers searched the plane for the best part of two days but still hadn't found the cobra by Wednesday and were uncertain if it had sneaked out unnoticed.

The engineering company Erasmus works for wanted its plane back in the city of Mbombela in northern

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 79 of 83

South Africa. So, he had to fly it back home, a 90-minute voyage with the possibility that the cobra was still onboard.

Unsurprisingly, his passengers decided to look for another way to get home.

This time Erasmus took some precautions: He wore a thick winter jacket, he said, wrapped a blanket round his seat, and had a fire extinguisher, a can of insect repellent and a golf club within arm's reach in the cockpit.

"I would say I was on high alert," Erasmus said.

The cobra didn't reappear on that flight and the plane has now been completely stripped, but still no sign of the snake, Erasmus said.

The theory is it found its way on board before Erasmus and his passengers took off at the start of their trip from the town of Worcester in the Western Cape province, where Cape Cobras are usually found in South Africa. It might have got out in Welkom or might still be hiding somewhere deep in the plane.

"I hope it finds somewhere to go," Erasmus said. "Just not my aircraft."

## China vows 'forceful' measures after US-Taiwan meeting

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — China vowed reprisals against Taiwan after a meeting between the United States House speaker and the island's president, saying Thursday that the U.S. was on a "wrong and dangerous road."

Speaker Kevin McCarthy hosted Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen on Wednesday in a show of U.S. support for the self-governed island, which China claims as its own, along with a bipartisan delegation of more than a dozen U.S. lawmakers.

The Biden administration maintains there is nothing provocative about the visit by Tsai, which is the latest of a half dozen to the U.S. Yet it comes as the U.S.-China relationship has fallen to historic lows, with U.S. support for Taiwan one of the main points of difference between the two powers.

But the formal trappings of the meeting, and the senior rank of some of the elected officials in the delegation from Congress, could lead China to view it as an escalation. No speaker is known to have met with a Taiwanese president on U.S. soil since the U.S. broke off formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1979.

In response to the meeting, Beijing said in a statement issued early morning by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it would take "resolute and forceful measures to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

It urged the U.S. "not to walk further down a wrong and dangerous road."

In December, China's military sent 71 planes and seven ships toward Taiwan in a 24-hour display of force after expressing anger at Taiwan-related provisions in a U.S. annual defense spending bill. China's military pressure campaign on Taiwan has intensified in recent years, and the Communist Party has sent planes or ships toward the island on a near-daily basis.

But as of Thursday afternoon, there was no overt sign of a large-scale military response.

"We will take resolute measures to punish the 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces and their actions, and resolutely safeguard our country's sovereignty and territorial integrity," China's Taiwan Affairs Office said in a statement Thursday, referring to Tsai and her political party as separatists.

Chinese vessels were engaged in a joint patrol and inspection operation in the Taiwan Strait that will last three days, state media said. The Fujian Maritime Safety Administration said its ship, the Haixun 06, would inspect cargo vessels and others in the waters that run between Taiwan and China as part of the operation.

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense said Wednesday evening it had tracked China's Shandong aircraft carrier passing southeast of Taiwan through the Bashi Strait. On Thursday morning, it tracked three People's Liberation Army navy vessels and one warplane in the area around the island.

U.S. congressional visits to Taiwan have stepped up in frequency in the past year, and the American Institute in Taipei, the de facto embassy, announced the arrival of another delegation Thursday. House

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 80 of 83

Foreign Affairs Committee head Michael McCaul of Texas is leading a group of eight other lawmakers on a three-day visit to discuss regional security and trade, AIT said.

At their meeting Wednesday, Tsai and McCarthy spoke carefully to avoid unnecessarily escalating tensions with Beijing. Standing side by side at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in California, the two acknowledged China's threats against the island's government.

"America's support for the people of Taiwan will remain resolute, unwavering and bipartisan," McCarthy said at a news conference later. He also said U.S.-Taiwan ties are stronger than at any other point in his life.

Tsai said the "unwavering support reassures the people of Taiwan that we are not isolated."

Tsai said she and McCarthy spoke of the importance of Taiwan's self-defense, of fostering robust trade and economic ties and supporting the island government's ability to participate in the international community.

But she also warned, "It is no secret that today the peace that we have maintained and the democracy which we have worked hard to build are facing unprecedented challenges."

"We once again find ourselves in a world where democracy is under threat and the urgency of keeping the beacon of freedom shining cannot be understated," she said.

McCaul was less circumspect upon arriving in Taiwan.

"By being here I think sends a signal to the Chinese Communist Party that the United States supports Taiwan and that we're going to harden Taiwan and we want them to think twice about invading Taiwan," he told reporters.

The group is to meet with Tsai on Saturday and will talk about weapons delivery to Taiwan, much of which has been delayed, he said.

The United States broke off official ties with Taiwan in 1979 and formally established diplomatic relations with the Beijing government. As part of its recognition of China, the U.S. agreed to a "one China" policy under which it acknowledges that Beijing lays claim to Taiwan, but does not endorse China's claim, and the U.S. remains Taiwan's key provider of military and defense assistance.

Washington also has a policy of strategic ambiguity in which it does not explicitly say whether it will come to Taiwan's aid in the case of a conflict with China.

In Taiwan, Tsai's visit did not make a huge splash, though fellow politicians paid close attention.

Ko Wen-je, a former Taipei mayor who is thought to have presidential aspirations, said he welcomed any exchange between Taiwan and international leaders.

"Taiwan hopes to have a greater space to operate globally, and the mainland shouldn't get flustered because of this," Ko said on Facebook. "It should show the attitude of a civilized nation and stop its suppression by military force."

Opposition lawmaker Johnny Chiang of the Nationalist party said Tsai's meeting with McCarthy was within the limits of the "one China" policy because it showed that while Congress was relatively free to support Taiwan, the White House was more constrained, according to local media.

In August, then House Speaker Nancy Pelosi traveled to Taiwan to meet with Tsai. China responded with its largest live-fire drills in decades, including firing a missile over the island.

Taiwan and China split in 1949 at the end of a civil war and have no official relations, although they are linked by billions of dollars in trade and investment.

---

Associated Press senior producer Johnson Lai contributed to this report.

## Coal capacity climbs worldwide despite promises to slash it

By SIBI ARASU Associated Press

The capacity to burn coal for power went up in 2022 despite global promises to phase down the fuel that's the biggest source of planet-warming gases in the atmosphere, a report Wednesday found.

The coal fleet grew by 19.5 gigawatts last year, enough to light up around 15 million homes, with nearly all newly commissioned coal projects in China, according to a report by Global Energy Monitor, an organization that tracks a variety of energy projects around the globe.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 81 of 83

That 1% increase comes at a time when the world needs to retire its coal fleet four and a half times faster to meet climate goals, the report said. In 2021, countries around the world promised to phase down the use of coal to help achieve the goal to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit).

"The more new coal projects come online, the steeper the cuts and commitments need to be in the future," said Flora Champenois, the report's lead author and the project manager for GEM's Global Coal Plant Tracker.

New coal plants were added in 14 countries and eight countries announced new coal projects. China, India, Indonesia, Turkey and Zimbabwe were the only countries that both added new coal plants and announced new projects. China accounted for 92% of all new coal project announcements.

China added 26.8 gigawatts and India added about 3.5 gigawatts of new coal power capacity to their electricity grids. China also gave clearance for nearly 100 gigawatts of new coal power projects with construction likely to begin this year.

But "the long term trajectory is still towards clean energy," said Shantanu Srivastava, an energy analyst with the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis who is based in New Delhi. Srivastava said the pandemic and the war in Ukraine temporarily drove some nations toward fossil fuels.

In Europe, where the Russian invasion of Ukraine meant a scramble for alternative energy sources and droughts stifled hydropower, the continent only saw a very minor increase in coal use.

Others went the other way. There were significant shutdowns in the U.S. where 13.5 gigawatts of coal power was retired. It's one of 17 countries that closed up plants in the past year.

With nearly 2,500 plants around the world, coal accounts for about a third of the total amount of energy installation globally. Other fossil fuels, nuclear energy and renewable energy make up the rest.

To meet climate goals set in the 2015 Paris Agreement, coal plants in rich countries need to be retired by 2030 and coal plants in developing countries need to be shut down by 2040, according to the International Energy Agency. That means around 117 gigawatts of coal needs to be retired every year, but only 26 gigawatts was retired in 2022.

"At this rate, the transition away from existing and new coal isn't happening fast enough to avoid climate chaos," said Champenois.

Srivastava added that it's important to make sure the millions employed in coal and other dirty industries are not left behind when transitioning to clean energy, although that gets more difficult the more coal projects get locked in.

"Every day we delay a transition to clean energy," Srivastava said, "it not only makes it harder to achieve climate goals but it also makes the transition more expensive."

---

This story has been corrected to make clear that the report looked into coal generation capacity, not coal use.

---

Follow Sibi Arasu on Twitter at @sibi123

---

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.

## Today in History: April 7, Billie Holiday is born

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, April 7, the 97th day of 2023. There are 268 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 7, 1984, the Census Bureau reported Los Angeles had overtaken Chicago as the nation's "second city" in terms of population.

On this date:

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 82 of 83

In 1862, Union forces led by Gen. Ulysses S. Grant and Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell defeated the Confederates at the Battle of Shiloh in Tennessee.

In 1915, jazz singer-songwriter Billie Holiday, also known as "Lady Day," was born in Philadelphia.

In 1922, the Teapot Dome scandal had its beginnings as Interior Secretary Albert B. Fall signed a secret deal to lease U.S. Navy petroleum reserves in Wyoming and California to his friends, oilmen Harry F. Sinclair and Edward L. Doheny, in exchange for cash gifts.

In 1945, during World War II, American planes intercepted and effectively destroyed a Japanese fleet, which included the battleship Yamato, that was headed to Okinawa on a suicide mission.

In 1949, the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "South Pacific" opened on Broadway.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower held a news conference in which he spoke of the importance of containing the spread of communism in Indochina, saying, "You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly." (This became known as the "domino theory," although Eisenhower did not use that term.)

In 1957, shortly after midnight, the last of New York's electric trolleys completed its final run from Queens to Manhattan.

In 1959, a referendum in Oklahoma repealed the state's ban on alcoholic beverages.

In 1962, nearly 1,200 Cuban exiles tried by Cuba for their roles in the failed Bay of Pigs invasion were convicted of treason.

In 1966, the U.S. Navy recovered a hydrogen bomb that the U.S. Air Force had lost in the Mediterranean Sea off Spain following a B-52 crash.

In 1994, civil war erupted in Rwanda, a day after a mysterious plane crash claimed the lives of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi; in the months that followed, hundreds of thousands of minority Tutsi and Hutu moderates were slaughtered by Hutu extremists.

In 2020, acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly resigned after lambasting the officer he'd fired as the captain of the USS Theodore Roosevelt, which had been stricken by a coronavirus outbreak; James McPherson was appointed as acting Navy secretary.

Ten years ago: A fierce battle between U.S.-backed Afghan forces and Taliban militants in a remote corner of eastern Afghanistan left nearly 20 people dead, including 11 Afghan children killed in an airstrike and an American civilian adviser. In Egypt, Christians angered by the killing of four Christians in sectarian violence clashed with a Muslim mob throwing rocks and firebombs, killing one and turning Cairo's main Coptic cathedral into a battleground.

Five years ago: Opposition activists and local rescuers said at least 40 people were killed in a suspected poison gas attack on the last remaining foothold for the Syrian opposition in the eastern suburbs of Damascus. Former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was taken into police custody after a showdown with his own supporters, who tried to keep him from surrendering to face prison time for a corruption conviction.

One year ago: The Senate confirmed Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court, shattering a historic barrier by securing her place as the first Black female justice and giving President Joe Biden a bipartisan endorsement for his effort to diversify the high court. In a Senate package targeted at stopping the coronavirus, U.S. lawmakers dropped nearly all funding for curbing the virus beyond American borders, a move many health experts described as dangerously short-sighted. Five-time champion Tiger Woods returned to golf at the Masters, shooting a 1-under 71 in his first competitive round since a devastating car wreck 14 months earlier. .

Today's Birthdays: Country singer Bobby Bare is 88. Former California Gov. Jerry Brown is 85. Movie director Francis Ford Coppola is 84. Actor Roberta Shore is 80. Singer Patricia Bennett (The Chiffons) is 76. Singer John Oates is 75. Former Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels is 74. Singer Janis Ian is 72. Country musician John Dittrich is 72. Actor Jackie Chan is 69. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer Tony Dorsett is 69. Actor Russell Crowe is 59. Christian/jazz singer Mark Kibble (Take 6) is 59. Actor Bill Bellamy is 58. Rock musician Dave "Yorkie" Palmer (Space) is 58. Rock musician Charlie Hall (The War on Drugs) is 49. Former

# Groton Daily Independent

**Friday, April 07, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 273 ~ 83 of 83**

football player-turned-analyst Tiki Barber is 48. Actor Heather Burns is 48. Christian rock singer-musician John Cooper (Skillet) is 48. Actor Kevin Alejandro is 47. Retired baseball infielder Adrian Beltre is 44. Actor Sian Clifford is 41. Rock musician Ben McKee (Imagine Dragons) is 38. Christian rock singer Tauren Wells is 37. Actor Ed Speleers is 35.